

Case Plans

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Overview

This policy provides an overview of the process for creating an Initial Case Plan and a Case Plan update.

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Version Summary

This policy guide was updated from the 06/12/19 version to clarify the language regarding the timeframe for completion of the Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP). This version also reflects updated terminology replacing the term “Youth” with the words “children/Nonminor dependents (NMDs)”. Lastly, **gender** binary language has been updated with gender-neutral language.

POLICY

Purpose of the Case Plan

The purpose of a Case Plan is to:

- Identify strategies for a family to address the effects of maltreatment and to change the behaviors or conditions contributing to its risk;
- Provide a clear and specific guide for a CSW and a family to execute these strategies;
- Establish a benchmark to measure client progress for achieving outcomes;
- Develop a framework for case decision-making.

When discussing the Case Plan process, CSWs can provide eligible children/NMDs with a Youth Policy Guide regarding Case Plans to help them better understand the process

The Case Plan must:

- Include a written assessment of the child’s/Nonminor dependent’s (NMD) needs;

- Be updated as the service needs of the child and family dictate, no less than once every six (6) months;
- Include how often the CSW will visit the child/NMD

Whenever a [Child and Family Team Meeting \(CFTM\)](#) has been convened, it must be [documented in CWS/CMS](#). The case plan must also include the following:

- Child and family or NMD's goals
- Child and family or NMD's perception of their needs
- Resource Parent's perception of the child's needs, if applicable
- Summary of the [action steps](#) as outlined in the CFTM
- CFT recommendations
- Including placement recommendations, as applicable
- If there are any [inconsistencies between the case plan recommendations and that of the CFT](#), include the rationale for the recommendations

Family Maintenance Case Plans must also include:

- The types of services needed for the child to remain safely in their home.
- A description of the circumstances, including behavioral issues, that place the child at risk of removal from the home absent the indicated services
 - Include why these issues will result in out-of-home placement if services are not provided.
- A statement that, absent the effectiveness of services, out-of-home care is the planned arrangement for the child, and identifies the type of placement.

Assigning the Initial Case Plan

The ER CSW is [responsible for completing](#) the Initial Case Plan, unless noted otherwise below.

The following outlines who is responsible for completing the initial case plans based on assignment or case specific situation.

Type of Case or Specific Situation	CSW Responsible for Completing the Initial Case Plan
Voluntary cases	ER CSW

If a CFTM was convened and a Continuing Services (CS) CSW or representative was not present at the CFTM	ER CSW
If the case remains in ER within the 45-60 day timeframe following the out-of-home placement	ER CSW
2PEN cases	MART CSW or DI CSW
Initial Case Plan duties and responsibilities from regionally opened cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ When CFTMs are convened for the families for whom Court FM or FR cases are opened and ■ The DI, and/or CS CSWs are present at those CFTMs 	DI CSWs, and/or CS CSWs
Court FM cases	ER CSW / MART CSW

If a CFTM is not convened following the out-of-home care placement, the ER CSW must transfer the case no later than ten (10) calendar days from the date of placement to allow the CS CSW to convene a CFTM and complete the Initial Case Plan within the forty-five- (45) to sixty- (60) day timeframe.

Case Plan Timelines

Case Plan Update

The Case Plan Update should be updated as the service needs of the child and family dictate.

- At a minimum, the Case Plan must be updated in conjunction with each status review hearing but no less frequently than once every six (6) months.
- It must reflect any updates or new recommendations made by the CFT during subsequent CFT meetings, when applicable.
- These updates must be completed on CWS/CMS, and the parties must sign any new Case Plan Update.
- The Case Plan Update must document the reason the child remains in foster care, if applicable.
- If the services provided have eliminated the needs for foster care placement, this must be documented in the Case Plan Update.

- Completed goals should be noted in the Case Plan.
- Manually annotating an existing Case Plan is not acceptable.
- When terminating a case, a Case Plan Update is not necessary.
- A Case Plan Update is required for children and NMDs, including those residing with a Resource Parent.

The Case Plan must include a written assessment of the child/NMD's needs and it must be updated no less than once every six (6) months. The Case Plan must also include how often the CSW will visit the child/NMD. The visits must be at least once every six (6) months. The frequency of visits should be determined based on the needs of the family.

Initial Case Plan

The Initial Case Plan must be completed within forty-five (45) to sixty (60) calendar days of:

- The in-person investigation (first face-to-face contact) or initial removal date; or
- The date of the dispositional hearing, whichever comes first

Sibling Relationships

For siblings (including half-siblings) who are not placed together, the Case Plan must include provisions for the development and maintenance of [sibling](#) relationships (unless the court orders a suspension of sibling visitation). The Case Plan should include a [sibling family bonding time \(visitation\) plan](#) that provides for [ongoing and frequent interaction](#) among siblings until family reunification is achieved, or, if parental rights are terminated, as part of developing the permanent plan for the child.

Concurrent Planning

[Concurrent planning](#) should be incorporated into Case Plans and court reports. This requires a comprehensive family history, which is obtained by interviewing parents and extended family members and recording their information on the appropriate [Family Background forms](#). This process begins with the initial contact with the family and continues throughout the case.

Case Plan Documentation Requirements

All minors and nonminors in foster care [have the right](#) to be involved in the development of their case plans, including placement and gender-affirming health care, with consideration of their gender identity.

Case Plan Documentation for Children Age Ten (10) and Older

When a child is ten (10) years of age or older and has been in out-of-home placement for six (6) months or longer, the case plan shall include an identification of individuals (other than the child's siblings) who are important to the child, and the actions necessary to maintain the child's relationship with those individuals -- provided that those relationships are in the best interest of the child. The social worker shall ask every child who is ten (10) years of age or older and who has been in out-of-home placement for six (6) months or longer to identify individuals (other than the child's siblings) who are important to the child. The social worker shall make efforts to identify as many other individuals who are important to the child as possible, consistent with the child's best interests.

Comprehensive Sexual Health Education (CSHE)

For children ten (10) years of age and older and for NMDs, [the case plan must also document](#) whether or not the child/NMD has received [comprehensive sexual health education](#) (CSHE) which meets the requirements established in the [California Healthy Youth Act \(CHYA\)](#) at least once in junior high school and once in high school. If the child/NMD has not received or will not receive this instruction through school, [the case plan must document](#) how the county has ensured the child/NMD received or will receive the education through an alternative source that meets the standards of the CHYA.

For foster children ten (10) years of age or older (including NMDs), case management workers must also [update the case plan](#) annually to indicate that the case management worker has:

- [Informed](#) the child or NMD that they may [access](#) age-appropriate, medically accurate information about [reproductive and sexual health care](#), including, but not limited to, unplanned pregnancy prevention, abstinence, use of birth control, abortion, and the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections
- [Informed](#) the child or NMD, in a developmentally and age appropriate manner, of their right to consent to sexual and [reproductive health services](#) and their confidentiality rights regarding those services
- [Informed](#) the child or NMD how to access [reproductive and sexual health care](#) services and facilitated access to that care, including by assisting with any identified barriers to care, as needed

Only the CSW's efforts and actions to provide the child/NMD with this type of information can be shared absent the child's written consent. Without written consent, shared information shall only include such statements as, "The CSW and child/NMD discussed topics of reproductive health;" "The CSW provided resources regarding reproductive health," "The CSW offered to remove any barriers the child/NMD may experience accessing

reproductive health.” Legally protected information (i.e., whether or not the child/NMD is sexually active, a child/NMD’s birth control methods, a child/NMD’s pregnancy, a child/NMD’s SOGIE, or a child’s decision to terminate a pregnancy) may not be documented in the case plan or elsewhere without the written consent of the child/NMD (unless there is suspected abuse/exploitation).

In addition, the case plan for a child or NMD who is, or who is at risk of becoming, the victim of commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC), shall document the services provided to address that issue.

Case Plan Documentation Regarding Youth Age Fourteen (14) and Older

In addition to the above requirements, for children who are fourteen (14) or fifteen (15) years of age, the case plan shall include a written description of the conversation about future schooling, vocational and housing goals that will help the child to prepare for the transition from foster care to successful adulthood, consistent with the child’s best interests. This information should be documented in the case plan.

The case plan shall be developed in consultation with children/NMDs age fourteen (14) years or older, including NMDs. At the child/NMD’s option, the consultation may include up to two (2) members of the case planning team who are chosen by the child/NMD and who are not Resource Parents of, or caseworkers for, the child/NMD. DCFS, at any time, may reject an individual selected by the child/NMD to be a member of the case planning team if DCFS has good cause to believe that the individual would not act in the child/NMD’s best interest. One individual selected by the child/NMD to be a member of the case planning team may be designated to be the child/NMD’s adviser and advocate with respect to the application of the reasonable and prudent parent standard to the child/NMD, as necessary.

Rights of children/NMDs in Foster Care

All minors of any age and NMDs in foster care must receive information about their rights every six (6) months. These include, but are not limited to, the right to:

- Work and develop job skills at an age-appropriate level, consistent with state law
- Attend Independent Living Program classes and activities if age requirements are met
- Attend school and participate in extracurricular, cultural, and personal enrichment activities, consistent with their age and developmental level, with minimal disruptions to school attendance and educational stability
- Receive medical, dental, vision and mental health services
- Be free of the administration of medication or chemical substances, unless authorized by a physician

- Contact family members, unless prohibited by court order, and social workers, attorneys, foster youth advocates and supporters, Court Appointed Special Advocates, or probation officers
- Have Family Bonding time and contact siblings unless prohibited by court order
- Attend court hearings and the opportunity to speak to the judge
- Confidentiality of all juvenile court records consistent with existing law
- Have access to age-appropriate, medically accurate information about [reproductive health care](#), the prevention of unplanned pregnancy, and the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections at [twelve \(12\) years of age or older](#)
- Have access [at sixteen (16) years of age or older] to existing information regarding the educational options available, including, but not limited to, the coursework necessary for vocational and [postsecondary educational programs](#), and information regarding [financial aid](#) for postsecondary education

Children/NMDs are to be provided with the [Foster Youth Bill of Rights](#) upon entry into foster care and at least once every six (6) months at the time of scheduled contact. The Foster Youth Bill of Rights (FYBOR) is included in the [Foster Youth Rights Handbook](#) which includes a signature page for children/NMDs to sign acknowledging receipt of their FYBOR.

Case Plan Documentation for Children/NMDs Age Sixteen (16) and Older

In addition to the above age requirements, for children/NMDs who are sixteen (16) or older, the case plan shall include a written description of the programs and services that will help the child/NMD prepare for the transition from foster care to successful adulthood, consistent with the child's best interests. This information should be documented in the Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) document, which must be incorporated into the case plan.

In addition to the [above age requirements](#), for children sixteen (16) years of age or older and NMDs, the case plan [shall identify](#) the person(s) who shall be responsible for [assisting the child or NMD with applications for postsecondary education and related financial aid](#), unless the child or NMD states that they do not want to pursue postsecondary education -- including career or technical education. (This responsible person may include the child's high school counselor, Court Appointed Special Advocate, guardian, or other adult). If, at any point in the future, the child or NMD expresses that they wish to pursue [postsecondary education](#), the case plan shall be updated to identify an adult individual responsible for assisting the child or NMD with applications for postsecondary education and [related financial aid](#). Refer to [Documenting Postsecondary Education Support Persons in a New or Existing Case Plan in CWS/CMS](#) .

For any children age sixteen (16) and older with a case plan goal of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA), case plans must include the identification of the intensive and ongoing efforts to return the child to the home of the parent, place the child for

adoption or tribal customary adoption, establish a legal guardianship or place the child or nonminor dependent with a fit and willing relative, as appropriate. [Efforts](#) must include the use of technology, including social media to find biological or other family members of the child.

Case Plan Documentation for Children Approaching Age Seventeen and a Half (17.5)

The [Extended Foster Care \(EFC\) Program](#) allows foster Children over the age of eighteen (18) to continue to remain in foster care and to receive foster care payment benefits and services. Before a foster child turns eighteen (18), CSWs must work collaboratively with the child to develop a Case Plan and a [Transitional Independent Living Plan \(TILP\)](#).

If a child is likely to remain in foster care beyond their eighteenth (18th) birthday and those in a Non-Dependent, Non-Related Legal Guardianship (NRLG), the following information must be [discussed](#) with them and included in the Case Plans (in addition to the [above age-related requirements](#)):

- Efforts to achieve permanence, including developing permanent connections with committed and caring adults;
- Opportunities to have incremental responsibility to prepare to transition to independent living;
- Services that will assist him/her in meeting one (1) of the participation criteria for eligibility

The [Case Plan must be attached to the court report](#) and presented to the court for the six (6) month review hearing before the child turns eighteen (18) years old.

Case Plan Documentation for Nonminor Dependents (NMDs)

NMDs must have a Case Plan and a [Transitional Independent Living Plan \(TILP\)](#). The Case Plan for a NMD must be updated at least every six (6) months. The [above](#) age-related case plan documentation requirements also apply to NMDs.

For children seeking to reenter foster care as a NMD, a Case Plan Update must be submitted to court at the hearing to address reinstatement of dependency. The Case Plan Update must include the following:

- How the NMD plans to meet the eligibility criteria for EFC Program;
- A Case Plan Goal of "Permanent Connections for Independence;"
- Goals and objectives that:
- Are centered around employment, education, and the development of skills that will help the NMD to be successful as independent adults;

- Enable the NMD to meet one (1) of the participation criteria for the EFC Program;
- Identify, develop, and maintain permanent connections;
- Prepare the NMD in transitioning to successful adulthood;
- Allow the NMD to assume incremental responsibility for adult decision-making.

If illness or injury prevents the NMD from meeting the eligibility requirement(s) identified in the Case Plan, a Case Plan Update is required to indicate that a medical condition renders the NMD incapable of participating in any other eligibility requirement.

Case Plan Documentation for Expectant and Parenting Youth (EPY)

For [expectant and parenting youth](#) (including an NMD parent residing in a whole family foster home) whose child is not subject to the jurisdiction of the dependency court but is in the full or partial physical custody of the child/NMD, a written [Shared Responsibility Plan](#) must be developed and included in the Case Plan. The plan must not conflict with the [child/NMD's Case Plan](#) and in no way should limit the child/NMD's legal right to make decisions regarding the care, custody and control of their child. In addition, Partnership for Families (PFF) services may be considered for a NMD who has a 0-2 year old child who is not under DCFS jurisdiction. NMDs can self-refer as community clients.

Case Plan Documentation for Children Placed with a Fit and Willing Relative

Placement with a “fit and willing relative” is a permanency option for all children. With a permanent plan of fit and willing relative, DCFS must continue to provide services that will address the barriers identified by the court to a more stable permanent plan, such as adoption or legal guardianship, at subsequent permanency hearings.

Case Plan Documentation for NMDs in Group Home/STRTP Placement

If admission to, or continuation in, [a group home or Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program \(STRTP\)](#) is being considered for a NMD, the NMD's Case Plan must address:

- The reason(s) why admission to, or continuation in, a group home or STRTP is the best alternative available to meet the special needs or well-being of the NMD;
- How the placement will contribute to the NMD's transition to independent living;
- Treatment strategies that will be used to prepare the NMD for a less restrictive, more family-like setting.
- Target date for discharge from the group home or STRTP placement, and the placement options post-discharge

Case Plan Documentation for Children in Adoption, Legal Guardianship, or Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)

If the case plan has as its goal for the child a permanent plan of adoption, legal guardianship, or another planned permanent living arrangement, it shall include a statement of the child's wishes regarding their permanent placement plan and an assessment of those stated wishes. The agency shall also include documentation of the steps the agency is taking to find an adoptive family or other permanent living arrangements for the child; to place the child with an adoptive family, an appropriate and willing relative, or a legal guardian, and to finalize the adoption or legal guardianship. At a minimum, the documentation shall include child-specific recruitment efforts, such as the use of state, regional, and national adoption exchanges, including electronic exchange systems, when the child has been freed for adoption. Regardless of whether the child has been freed for adoption, documentation shall include a description of any barriers to achieving legal permanence and the steps the agency will take to address those barriers. Keep in mind that for children in adoption with barriers, they may wish to consider Adoption Promotion & Support Services APSS. If a child has been in out-of-home care for three (3) years or more, the documentation shall include a description of the [specialized permanency services](#) used or, if specialized permanency services have not been used, a statement explaining why the agency chose not to provide these services. If the plan is for [kinship guardianship](#), the case plan shall document how the child meets the kinship guardianship eligibility requirements.

Case Plan Documentation for Children in Group Home/STRTP Placement

If a child is placed in a group home or [STRTP](#), the Case Plan must indicate:

- The necessity for placement in a group home/STRTP (including how the specific needs of the child/NMD cannot be met in a less restrictive placement);
- That the group home/STRTP placement is for the purposes of providing short-term, specialized, and intensive treatment for the child, and the specific treatment that will be provided to the child/NMD;
- The need for, nature of, and anticipated duration of this treatment;
- The plan for transitioning the child/NMD to a [less restrictive environment](#) and the projected timeline for this transition

Case Plan Documentation for Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs)

County child welfare departments are required to [document](#) all [CFTMs](#) in both the CWS/CMS Case Plan Notebook and the Contact Notebook. The CSW should also document the rationale for any inconsistencies between the case plan and the recommendations of the CFT. [Refer to Child and Family Teams for detailed data entry instructions.](#)

Educational Stability

Case Plans must include an [educational stability plan](#) for ensuring the educational stability and success of a child while in foster care. Additionally, the Case Plan should include, at a minimum:

- The status of the [Holder of Educational Rights \(HER\)](#), including the HER's involvement in the child's education
- Whether the child is remaining in their school of origin (if not, whether they should be returned to their school or origin and what steps are being taken in this area), and
- Any special needs the child may have related to school, including any disability requiring an [Individualized Education Program \(IEP\)](#)/[Section 504/Individualized Family Service Plan \(IFSP\)](#)/[Individual Program Plan \(IPP\)](#), and what steps are being taken to secure appropriate services.

Spanish-Speaking Cases

A Spanish Case Plan and Case Plan Family Assessment can be created on CWS/CMS. Only the Case Plan headings, however, will be in Spanish, the body of the report is not translated. The CSW will need to verbally translate the case plan and CANS assessment for the family.

Case Planning

All parents and children should be involved in case planning from the beginning of the process. This includes both parents in a child's home. Decisions regarding outcomes, goals, and tasks should collaboratively be made by the CFT, including the child/NMD, family, caregiver, other support systems identified by the family, CSW and other providers.

During case planning, all parents need to be informed:

- Of the benefits and consequences of not abiding by the Case Plan within the prescribed time;
- That they have the option to [relinquish their parental rights](#) at all stages of case planning.

During case planning, CSWs must:

- Engage the child and family or NMD using [Integrated Core Practice Model \(ICPM\)](#) principles and explain the CFT process;

- Help a family maintain a realistic perspective on what can be accomplished and how long the process will take;
- Provide full disclosure to the parents in all stages of case planning;
- Engage parent(s) with [safety plans](#), [Concurrent Planning](#), Permanent Placement Services, and [Community-Based Resources](#) including CFTMs.
- Take into consideration a child/NMD's [gender identity](#) and keep in mind that affirming behaviors from parents/resource parents of the child/NMD's Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) may vary and can be a fluid process. To that effect, a goal of the case planning process is to be affirming of the child/NMD, as well as their peers and parents/resource parents, wherever they may be in their own process. Therefore, the child/NMD's SOGIE shall be a consideration in all case planning processes. A subject-matter expert, with demonstrated competency, may be retained to support this process, if necessary. In addition, the expert may be involved in CFTMs with the child/NMD's permission. This includes but is not limited to office-designated LGBTQ+ champions and external stakeholders/providers.

Voluntary Cases

If a parent/legal guardian refuses to sign the Case Plan in [a voluntary case](#), voluntary services cannot be provided and [established procedures](#) should be followed, including consultation with Intake and Detention Control (IDC) or the out-stationed County Counsel to determine whether there are appropriate grounds to file a petition.

Incarcerated, Institutionalized, Detained, or Deported Parents

Incarcerated parents are entitled to services unless the court orders otherwise (i.e. unless the court denies services). Case plans for [parents/legal guardians who are incarcerated or institutionalized](#) and who are receiving court-ordered [Family Reunification Services](#) must contain:

- Provisions for services;
- Contact with the CSW;
- Family Bonding time with the child(ren) while the parent/legal guardian is in and out of custody.

Families in CalWORKS

[CalWORKS](#) service activities must be incorporated into Case Plan Updates. The DCFS CSWs and the DPSS case-carrying [GAIN](#) Services Workers (GSWs) must make attempts to [collaborate](#) to integrate the Welfare-to-Work service plan activities with the CSW's Case Plan activities in order to establish a Case Plan appropriate to the family's needs. The CS CSWs and GSWs should try to maintain ongoing communication with each other to jointly monitor and assess the parent's compliance and progress with the Case Plan.

PROCEDURE

Preparing for Creating an Initial Case Plan

CSW Responsibilities

1. Complete an assessment for each child for whom child welfare services are to be provided:
 - Complete the [SDM Safety Plan](#) (if applicable), Safety Assessment, Risk Assessment, and [Family Strengths and Needs Assessment \(FSNA\)](#) or the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessment.
 - Review the SDM Safety Plan, and, if applicable, address any safety threats and the planned services to address those threats within the Initial Case Plan.
 - Do not attach the SDM Safety Plan to a Court report unless specifically ordered by the Court to do so.
 - Review the [Up-Front Assessment](#), the [Multidisciplinary Assessment Team \(MAT\) Summary of Findings Report](#), and the [Child and Family Team's \(CFT\) Action Plan](#) and recommendations, and identify what aspects of these assessments will be incorporated into the Initial Case Plan. Document the rationale for any inconsistencies between the case plan and the CFT recommendations.
2. Provide the [relinquishment option](#) to the parents and full disclosure to all Case Plan participants.
3. Assess each child for [Fast Track to Permanency](#) and [Concurrent Planning](#).
4. Review the case record to ensure that all identifying information is recorded and current. If necessary, update the case record.
5. Engage the parent/legal guardian and child in the development of the Case Plan.
 - Provide the parent/legal guardian and child the opportunity to express their preference for foster care placement.
 - Discuss with the parent/legal guardian family bonding time and the planning for it, including but not limited to, days, times, locations, and activities.
 - The child/NMD's SOGIE shall be a consideration in all case planning processes.

Preparing for Creating the Case Plan Update

CSW Responsibilities

1. Complete a reassessment of the needs of the family and the child/NMD prior to the completion of the Case Plan Update.
 - Ensure that all case record information is current and accurate.
 - Collect family background information using:
 - [Family Background #1](#)
 - [Family Background #2](#) – DI
 - [Family Background #3](#) – Medical and Social History Information About the Birth Mother/Father
 - [Family Background #3](#) – Cover Sheet
 - Gather the child's educational information by interviewing the child, parent/legal guardian, caregiver, [Educational Rights Holder \(ERH\)](#), [Local Education Agency](#), [DCFS Education Liaison](#), as well as appropriate others involved with the child's education. Request any records from Regional Center, including Individualized Family Service Plans (as applicable).
 - Initiate the [DCFS 1726](#), Request for School Report, to obtain and record the child's educational information. This may include their grade level, performance, educational need for an Individualized Education Program (IEP), or other special services.
 - Request written progress reports from therapists, drug treatment counselors, parenting class instructors, etc.
2. Enter all information in the Education Notebook and Case Plan.
 - Include a summary of progress reports in your assessment.
 - Document the receipt of progress reports from service providers and update the Service Provider Notebook.
 - File reports in the [model case format \(MCF\)](#).
 - Collect the parent's psychological and medical history.
 - Document all pertinent information that was obtained in all appropriate CWS/CMS Notebooks, [DCFS 561\(a\)](#) Medical Examination Form, [DCFS 561\(b\)](#) Dental Examination Form, and [DCFS 561\(c\)](#) Psychological Examination Form.
 - Document all pertinent information that was obtained from FB forms in order to capture information needed for future due diligence efforts and to provide children whose parents' whereabouts become unknown with important information regarding their parents.
3. Engage and encourage the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and the child/ NMD to participate in the development of the Case Plan Update.
 - Interview the child, parent(s)/legal guardian(s) or NMD regarding the Case Plan Update and the Case Plan goals including family bonding time.
 - Provide [relinquishment options](#) and full disclosure to the Case Plan participants. This objective may be accomplished during the [CFTM](#).

- Ensure that the family and child/NMD have a support [network](#) at the [Child and Family Team \(CFT\)](#) Meeting. If appropriate, children ages ten (10) and older may participate in the CFTM.
- 4. Review the SDM Safety Assessment, Risk Assessment, Safety Plan, FSNA or CANS Assessment, and SDM Reassessment documents prior to completing the Case Plan Update.
 - Incorporate the information gathered from these documents into the [Family Assessment](#) portion of the case plan.
 - Use the identified areas of need from the FSNA or CANS Assessment as the starting point for the planned services.
 - For Family Maintenance cases, complete the SDM Risk Reassessment and the FSNA or CANS.
 - For Family Reunification cases, complete the SDM Reunification Reassessment and the FSNA or CANS Assessment.
 - If any safety factors are present, address these issues in the Case Plan.
 - Do not attach any SDM tools when submitting documents to court, unless ordered by the court.
- 5. Review the on-line case record on CWS/CMS to ensure that all identifying information (i.e., names, addresses) is recorded and current.
 - If necessary, update the case record.

Creating the Initial Case Plan and Case Plan Update

CSW Responsibilities

1. Create a new Case Plan from CWS/CMS.
 - For the Initial Case Plan, use the guidelines in the CWS/CMS Training Guide, [Creating an Initial Case Plan](#) for completing each section of the CWS/CMS procedure.
 - For the Case Plan Update, use the guidelines in the CWS/CMS Training Guide, [Creating a Case Plan Update](#) for completing each section of the CWS/CMS procedure.
2. Use the guidelines in the [Sample Case Plan Family Assessment](#), [Sample Out of Home Care Information](#) document, [Sample Initial Case Plan](#), and/or [Sample Case Plan Update](#) to complete each section of the Child Welfare Service Case Plan or child Welfare Service Case Plan – Update document.
3. Run the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) [navigation tool](#) to ensure all necessary data have been entered:
 - In CWS/CMS, start the "Navigation Tools" from the "Tool" drop-down menu or the Tool Man button and select "AFCARS."

- Once in the AFCARS navigation screen, any incomplete AFCARS fields will display a green background (completed AFCARS fields will display a white background; shadowed fields do not yet apply to the case).]
 - To update the green AFCARS fields, click on the "Open File" button next to the field and follow the instructions. The updated AFCARS fields will display a white background when you return to the AFCARS navigation screen.
4. Print the Initial Case Plan or Case Plan Update.
 - Sign and date the hard copy.
 5. Submit a hard-copy version of the Case Plan to the SCSW for approval.
 - Attach other supporting documents as appropriate.
 6. If the SCSW returns the Case Plan for correction, make the needed corrections in CWS/CMS and return a hard copy to the SCSW for approval.
 7. When the SCSW approves and signs the Case Plan, submit the document electronically in CWS/CMS for approval.
 8. Once the hard copy is approved by the SCSW, review the Case Plan with parents/legal guardians, children twelve (12) years and older who are in permanent placement, or NMDs, and complete the following tasks:
 - Obtain the signatures of the participants.
 - Document the date the parent/guardian and the child signed the Case Plan in the "In Effect" Initial Case Plan notebook, and the "ID" Page in the "Parental Review Page".
 - Provide a copy of the approved Case Plan to the parent/ guardian, and to a child who is twelve (12) years of age or older and in a permanent placement.
 - If the child, parent/legal guardian declines to sign, provide an explanation in the signature block.
 - Case Plans for NMDs need to be signed by the NMD only. The signature of the parent/legal guardian is no longer required as the NMD is an adult; however, the signature of the caregiver is strongly encouraged, especially if an agreement has been made for the [Resource Parent](#) to support and assist the NMD.
 9. File the signed Initial Case Plan in the [Case Activity Recording Folder](#) (Green).

SCSW Responsibilities

1. Attend the [CFTM](#) with the CSW, as needed.
2. Review the Initial Case Plan or Case Plan Update and each supporting document for compliance with DCFS policies, mandatory and/or regulatory issues, appropriate selection of the Case Plan goals, and for the services necessary to meet the goals.
 - a. These documents may include the SDM Safety Assessment, Risk Assessment, and FSNA or CANS Assessment.
3. If not approved, return it to the CSW for corrective action.

4. If approved, sign and date the Case Plan.
 - a. Approve the Case Plan on CWS/CMS the same day that the hard copy Case Plan Update is signed.
 - i. If not approved on the same day, go to the ID page of the Case Plan notebook and backdate it to the date it was signed
 - b. Return it and any supporting documents to the CSW if higher level approval is not required.
5. If higher level approval is required, sign and date the Case Plan and send the hard copy and the CWS/CMS version marked, "Pending Higher Approval" to the ARA.
6. If the Case Plan is not approved by the ARA, take necessary corrective action and return the Case Plan and any supporting documents to the CSW for correction.
7. When the court does not approve the CSW's recommendation and/or makes its own orders:
 - a. Immediately upon receipt of the minute order or court-ordered Case Plan/Referrals to be Given document, or notification from the court, modify the Case Plan online.
 - b. Print a hard copy of the Case Plan, obtain the CSW's and parent(s)/legal guardian(s)' signature
 - i. Sign it and request that the CSW file it in the Case Activity Recording Folder.
 - c. If the parent/legal guardian(s) is not willing to sign, document in the Case Activity Recording Folder the reason(s) why.

ARA Responsibilities

1. **When applicable**, review the Initial Case Plan or Case Plan Update and each supporting document for compliance with DCFS policies, mandatory and/or regulatory issues, appropriate selection of the Case Plan goals, and for the services necessary to meet the goals.
 - These documents may include the SDM Safety Assessment, Risk Assessment, FSNA or CANS Assessment.
2. If not approved, return them to the SCSW for corrective action.
3. If approved, sign and date the Case Plan return it and all supporting reports to the SCSW, and approve it on CWS/CMS.

RA/Division Chief Responsibilities

1. **When applicable**, review the Initial Case Plan or Case Plan Update and each supporting document for compliance with DCFS policies, mandatory and/or regulatory issues, appropriate selection of the Case Plan goals, and for the services necessary to meet the goals.

- These documents may include the SDM Safety Assessment, Risk Assessment, and FSNA or CANS Assessment.
- 2. If not approved, return them to the ARA for corrective action.
- 3. If approved, sign and date the Case Plan, and return it and all supporting reports to the ARA.

Juvenile Court Service CSW (Court Officer) Responsibilities

1. Request that the parent sign the Case Plan Update at the Juvenile Court hearing.
2. If the hearing officer changed the Case Plan, document the changes on the signature page prior to requesting parental signature.
3. If the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) refuse to sign the Case Plan Update, record the reason on the signature page.

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APPROVALS

SCSW Approval

- Initial Case Plan
- Case Plan Update

ARA Approval

- For the Initial Case Plan when:
 - The child is fifty-nine (59) months or younger, the allegations are physical or sexual abuse, failure-to-thrive, or parental substance abuse, and the plan is to allow the child to remain in the home;
 - The recommendation is Family Reunification for a case that meets the [Fast Track to Permanency \(FTP\)](#) criteria;
 - The placement exceeds thirty (30) days in a temporary/emergency shelter care facility;
 - The child is placed in [a group home/STRTP](#);
 - There is a recommendation for Family Maintenance for at least one (1) child and the CSW is recommending Family Reunification or Permanent Plan for one or more other children in the home;
 - A Family Maintenance case and there is an allegation of sexual abuse;
 - Family Maintenance services were provided on a voluntary basis or under Court supervision in the past five (5) years for the same or similar allegations;

- For the Case Plan Update when:
 - The child is fifty-nine (59) months or younger and:
 - The allegations are physical or sexual abuse, failure-to-thrive, or parental substance abuse, and the plan is to allow the child to remain in the home;
 - There is a new allegation on an open case and the plan is for the child to remain in the home;
 - The Court has ordered the return of the child to the home against the recommendation of the Department and at the next hearing the Department is recommending that the child continue to remain in the home;
 - The recommendation is changed from suitable placement to home of parent;
 - The recommendation is Family Reunification for a case that meets the [Fast Track to Permanency \(FTP\) criteria](#);
 - The placement exceeds thirty (30) days in a temporary/emergency shelter care facility;
 - The child is placed in a [group home/STRTP](#);
 - There is a recommendation for Family Maintenance for at least one (1) child and the CSW is recommending Family Reunification for one (1) or more other children in the home;
 - Recommendations for continued jurisdiction for NMDs age eighteen (18) who are not in school or a training program and/or all NMDs age nineteen (19) or older;
 - All Family Maintenance [sexual abuse](#) cases;
 - Providing an additional three (3) months of FM services for court and voluntary cases beyond the initial six (6) months (including 9, 12, and 12+ months).

RA/Division Chief Approval

- Providing an additional three (3) months of FM services for court and voluntary cases beyond (9) months (including 12+ months).
- Extending FM services for court cases beyond the twelve (12) months.

Deputy Director Approval

- Extending VFM services beyond the twelve (12) months allowed by State regulation.
- Extending beyond six (6) months the time specified in a Case Plan for a child between the ages of six (6) and twelve (12) who is placed in a group home [or STRTP](#)

to continue receiving short-term, specialized, and intensive treatment. Approval for an extension is required no less frequently than every sixty (60) days.

[Back to Approvals](#)

HELPFUL LINKS

Attachments

[Case Plan Family Assessment](#)

[CFTM Data Entry Instructions for CWS/CMS](#)

[Child Welfare Services Case Plan Update](#)

[Creating a Case Plan Update](#)

[Creating an Initial Case Plan](#)

[Documenting Postsecondary Education Support Persons In a New or Existing Case Plan in CWS/CMS](#)

[Foster Youth Bill of Rights](#)

[Foster Youth Rights Handbook](#)

[Instructions for Documenting Comprehensive Sexual Health Information and Reproductive Rights](#)

[Instructions for Documenting STRTPs in CWS/CMS Case Plans](#)

[John Burton Advocates for Youth Foster Youth Postsecondary Education Planning](#)

[Resources: For Adults](#) (tools for social workers who assist foster youth between grades 6-12 to achieve their college and career goals.)

[Know Your Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights \(PUB 490\)](#)

[Out of Home Care Information](#)

[Out of Home Care Information Update](#)

[Sample Case Plan Documents Combined](#) (Case Plan Family Assessment, Out of Home Care

Information, Initial Case Plan with Family Assessment, Out of Home Care Information Update,
and Case Plan Update with Family Assessment document)

You Have Rights Too! [PUB 395 \(brochure\)](#), [PUB 396 \(poster\)](#)

Youth Policy Guide

Forms

CWS/CMS

DCFS 1726, Request for School Report

DCFS 561(a) Medical Examination Form

DCFS 561(b) Dental Examination Form

DCFS 561(c) Psychological Examination Form

Family Background #1

Family Background #2 DI

LA Kids

[DCFS 159](#), Youth Advisement of Nonminor Dependency (Extended Foster Care)

[DCFS 179](#), Parental Consent and Authorization for Medical Care and Release of Education Records

[DCFS 561\(a\)](#), Medical Examination Form

[DCFS 561\(b\)](#), Dental Examination Form

[DCFS 561\(c\)](#), Psychological Examination Form

[DCFS 6074](#), CFT Meeting Notes

[DCFS 1726](#), Request for School Report

[Family Background #1](#)

[Family Background #2, DI](#)

[Family Background #3 \(Spanish\)](#), Medical and Social History Information About the Birth Mother/Father

[Family Background #3](#), Cover Sheet

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REFERENCED POLICY GUIDES

[0080-502.25](#), Court Family Maintenance and Voluntary Family Maintenance

[0070-548.00](#), Community-Based Resources

[0070-548.01](#), Child and Family Teams

[0070-548.10](#), Investigation, Disposition and Closure of Emergency Response Referrals

[0070-548.25](#), Structured Decision Making (SDM) Safety Plans

[0080-503.00](#), Contacts with the Child Support Services Department (CSSD)

[0080-505.10](#), Child/NMD Development: Transitional Independent Living Planning

[0080-506.16](#), Selecting and/or Arranging for Appropriate Services for Incarcerated, Institutionalized, Detained or Deported Parents

[0080-507.20](#), Concurrent Planning and the [Concurrent Planning Assessment \(CPA\)](#)

[0080-508.05](#), Fast Track to Permanency (FTP)

[0100-510.40](#), Services for Teen Parents

[0100-510.55](#), Screening and Placement of Children, Youth and Nonminor Dependents (NMDs) in a Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP)

[0100-535.25](#), Extended Foster Care Program

[0100-570.05](#), Quality of Life in Out-of-Home Care

[0200-508.10](#), Relinquishment Procedures and the Statement of Understanding

[0300-503.16](#), Writing the WIC 366.3 Status Review Hearing Report for Minor Dependents

[0300-508.30](#), Identifying and Notifying the Court of Recurring Efforts to Locate Relatives and Nonrelative Extended Family Members (NREFMs)

[0400-504.00](#), Family Time

[0600-500.05](#), Multidisciplinary Assessment Team (MAT) Assessments and Meetings

[0700-504.20](#), Referring Children for Special Education or Early Intervention Services

[0700-507.10](#), Appointment of an Educational Representative, Educational Surrogate Parent, or [Developmental Services](#) Decision-Maker

1200-500.01, LGBTQ+ Children/Non Minor Dependents

[1200-500.90](#), Model Case Format (MCF)

[Back to Referenced Policy Guides](#)

STATUTES AND OTHER MANDATES

[All County Letter \(ACL\) 12-70](#) – Educational Stability and Case Plan Assurances.

[ACL 14-36](#) – Title IV-E Foster Care Candidacy Policy and Procedures

[ACL 16-28](#), Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)

[ACL 16-30](#) – Case Plan Changes for Youth Age 14 Years and Older

[ACL 16-32](#) – Documentation of Pregnancy and Parenting in the Child Welfare Services/Case Management system for Minor and Nonminor Dependents

[ACL 16-82](#) – Reproductive and Sexual Health Care and Related Rights for Youth and Nonminor Dependents (NMD) in Foster Care

[ACL 16-88](#) – California's Plan for the Prevention of Unintended Pregnancy for Youth and Nonminor Dependents (NMDs) in Foster Care

[ACL 17-104](#) – Documentation of Child and Family Teams (CFTs) in the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS)

[ACL 17-122](#) – Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs) Placement Criteria, [Interagency Placement](#) Committees (IPCs), Second Level Review for Ongoing Placements Into Group Homes and STRTPs

[ACL 18-61](#) – New Mandates Regarding Case Plan Documentation and Training Related to Reproductive and Sexual Health Care Needs and Rights of Foster Youth

[ACL 18-104](#) – Additional Case Plan Documentation for Postsecondary Education Support

[California Department of Social Services \(CDSS\) Manual of Policies and Procedures \(MPP\) Division 31-201-235](#) – Details the requirements for the completion of both Initial Case Plans and Case Plan Updates.

[CDSS MPP Division 31-205](#) – States that the social worker shall document the assessment.

[CDSS MPP Division 31-206](#) – States that CSW shall document Case Plan objectives for each person named in the Case Plan.

[CDSS MPP Division 31-210](#) – States the Case Plan time frames and administrative requirements for children for whom a dependency petition has been filed.

[CDSS MPP Division 31-220](#) – States that the Case Plan shall be updated as service and permanency needs of the child and family dictate and to assure achievement of service and permanency objectives.

[CDSS MPP Division 31-225](#) – States that the Case Plan Update shall be considered complete only if all of the elements specified in Section 31-225 have been documented and the social worker's supervisor has signed and dated the Case Plan Update.

[CDSS MPP Division 31-230](#) – States that a Case Plan shall be updated as often as the service needs of the child and family dictate (but no less than once every six months) and as is necessary in order to assure achievement of service objectives.

[Family Code \(FC\) Section 6925](#) – States that a minor may consent to medical care related to the prevention or treatment of pregnancy.

[FC Section 6926 \(a\) and \(b\)](#) – States that a minor who is twelve (12) years of age or older and who may have come into contact with an infectious, contagious, or communicable disease may consent to medical care related to the diagnosis or treatment of the disease. A minor who is twelve (12) years of age or older may consent to medical care related to the prevention of a sexually transmitted disease.

[Welfare and Institutions Code \(WIC\) Section 301\(c\)](#) – States that if the parent is a dependent of the Juvenile Court at the time that a social worker seeks to undertake a program of supervision pursuant to subdivision (a), including a voluntary family reunification program or a voluntary family maintenance program, and if counsel has been appointed for

the parent pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 317, the program of supervision shall not be undertaken until the parent has consulted with his or her counsel.

WIC Section 319.2 – Identifies the requirements for placement under **temporary custody** in a group home for children under the age of six (6).

WIC Section 361.2(e)(9)(A) – Limits the placement period in a group home or STRTP for children ages six (6) to twelve (12) months unless specific requirements are met.

WIC Section 361.5(a)(3)(A) – States the rights of incarcerated, institutionalized, detained or deported parents/legal guardians, including parents ordered into a residential substance abuse treatment program, as they relate to case planning.

WIC 366.26(c)(4)(B) – Defines a "fit and willing relative" as an approved placement with a **relative** who is willing and capable of providing a stable and permanent home environment for the child, but is unable or unwilling to commit to legal permanence through adoption, tribal customary adoption, or guardianship at the time of the hearing.

WIC Section 11405 – States that a Case Plan is required for those children/youth/NMDs living with a non-related legal guardian and the Case Plan must be updated at least once every six (6) months.

WIC Section 16001.9 – Lists the rights of all minors and nonminors in foster care.

WIC Section 16501.1 – States that the foundation and central unifying tool in child welfare services is the Case Plan which ensures that the child receives protection and safe and proper care and case management, and that services are provided to the child and parents or other caretakers, as appropriate, in order to improve conditions in the parent's home, to facilitate the safe return of the child to a safe home or the permanent placement of the child, and to address the needs of the child while in foster care.

WIC Section 16501.1(b)(4) – States in part that, in determining the reasonable services to be offered or provided, the Case Plan shall include information about a parent's incarceration in a county jail or the state prison during the time that a minor child of that parent is involved in dependency care.

WIC Section 16501.1(d)(3) – Defines the use of out-of-home placements, including Supervised Independent Living Plans. States that if out-of-home care is used to attain Case Plan goals, the Case Plan shall include a description of the type of home or institution in which the child is placed and the reasons for the placement. Discusses group home placement required documentation and preparing a NMD for independent living.

[WIC Section 16501.1\(d\)\(5\)](#) – States that a Case Plan shall ensure the educational stability of the child while in foster care by including information about the educational setting, proximity of the placement to the school, coordination with educational agencies, transfer of school records, and alternative arrangements should the school setting change.

[WIC Section 16501.1\(e\)](#) – Defines the purpose of a Case Plan, the time frame in which it should be completed, and provides guidelines for the information that should be included in the Case Plan.

[WIC Section 16501.1\(g\)](#) – Lists the case plan documentation requirements regarding comprehensive sexual health information for youth in foster care; specifies the requirement for a case plan to be developed with the youths participation plus up to two (2) members chosen by the youth, and lists case plan documentation requirements for children or NMDs who are, or who are at risk of becoming, victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

[WIC Section 16501.1\(g\)\(5-22\)](#) – Defines information that should be included in a Case Plan when out-of-home services are used.

[WIC Section 16501.1\(g\) \(13\)](#) – States that when developing a Case Plan a child shall be given a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development of the Case Plan and state his or her preference for foster care placement. A child who is twelve (12) years of age or older and in a permanent placement shall also be given the opportunity to review, sign, and receive a copy of the Case Plan.

[WIC Section 16501.1\(g\)\(16\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) – States that for youth sixteen (16) years of age and older and for nonminor dependents, the Case Plan must include the transitional independent living plan, a written description of the program and services that will help the youth prepare for transition from foster care and assist the youth in meeting eligibility criteria, including steps on how the agency is ensuring that the nonminor dependent achieves permanence and connections to caring and committed adults. States that for NMDs, if applicable, the CSW shall describe the Supervised Independent Living Placement.

[WIC Section 16501.1\(h\)\(i\)\(j\)](#) – Provides guidelines for the Case Plan when a child is ten (10) years of age or older and has been in out-of-home placement for six (6) months or longer.

[WIC Section 16501.25](#) – Defines “teen parent,” shared responsibility plan, and the development and content of the shared responsibility plan.

[WIC Section 16002\(b\)](#) – States that the responsible local agency shall make a diligent effort in all out-of-home placements to ensure sibling group placement and sibling interaction, and to explain why they are not placed together, efforts to ensure sibling group placement, or why such efforts would be contrary to the safety and well-being of any of the siblings. When

sibling group placement is not possible, a Case Plan should provide for ongoing and frequent interaction among siblings until family reunification is achieved, or, if parental rights are terminated, as part of developing the permanent plan for the child. If the Court determines by clear and convincing evidence that sibling interaction is contrary to the safety and well-being of any of the siblings, the reasons for the determination shall be noted in the Court order, and interaction shall be suspended.

[WIC Section 16010](#) – States that the Case Plan shall include a summary of the health and education information or records. The summary may be maintained in the form of a health and education passport and it shall include all relevant health and education information.

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