

Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement Completion Instructions

Which Cases

The Out-Of Home Family Services Agreement must be completed

- for all children in DSS custody
- for children for whom DSS has placement responsibility who are placed outside the home.
- for children who are placed with parents or relatives or other court-approved placements when DSS has been given legal custody.
- for families with children who are returned home on a trial visit so long as the DSS retains custody.

Purpose:

The purpose of the Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement is to specifically describe the basis for agency custody and/or placement outside the home, the plan for permanency and the concurrent plan if objectives are not met. The agreement is used to document the family's progress toward meeting objectives. The agreement also documents justification for the placement choice and provides structure for information needed for case plans and court reviews.

Out-of-Home Family Service Agreements must be completed within 30 days of placement and reviewed and updated at least every six months until the child returns home or permanency is achieved, or until the agency is relieved of this requirement by the juvenile court. These reviews should track with the Permanency Planning Action Team Meetings. **Note: In cases where reunification is the plan, use page 3a. If the permanency plan changes from reunification, use page 3b.**

Development of Agreement:

The Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement is completed jointly by the social worker, the parents/caretakers, the child if 12 to 18 years of age, and other persons who are involved in and critical to the successful completion of the agreement and the safety and welfare of the children. If the child is a member or is eligible to be a member of a Federally recognized Indian Tribe or is the biological child of a tribal member, a person appointed by and representing the tribe must be involved in the development of the agreement.

Completion of Agreement:

Note: separate Out-of-Home Family Services Agreements are completed for each child.

Page 1-Face Sheet

I. Identifying Information:

- Include the child's name, date of birth, current age and Social Security number.
- List the names of both birth parents, their dates of birth, social security numbers, addresses and telephone numbers.
- List the names of other caregivers, the social worker, GAL, attorneys and others as appropriate with requested information.

Participants in the Agreement

- Print the names of all persons participating in the development of the agreement. These persons will generally be in the room at the time the agreement is developed. If a person provided input prior to the development of the agreement and their input was incorporated, print their name and the date of their participation in one of the spaces provided.

Permanency Plan:

- Check the block that most closely reflects the permanency plan for the child. Note: reunification means that the child returns to the home from which he was removed.
- List the anticipated date the plan will be completed.
- List the effective date of the agreement and the date of the next review, which will be six months from the effective date.
- Indicate whether or not the Indian Child Welfare Act applies. ICWA will apply only when the child is a member or is eligible to be a member of a Federally recognized Indian Tribe and is the biological child of a member of a Federally recognized tribe.
- Determine if there are other active case plans that impact this agreement, and attach copies. Many children have Individual Educational Plans, and families may be receiving services from other providers. It is important to assure that all plans coordinate with each other. List the attached plans by name and effective date, e.g. "Raleigh Behavioral Services 4/03; IEP 9/01," etc.

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II. Placement Information

Place a check by the type of current living arrangement and enter the date this placement started. List the address and telephone number of the child's current

placement provider. If safety factors prohibit divulging this information, indicate this next to the space provided.

Discuss briefly why the placement was chosen for this child. Discussion **must** address the following elements:

- Why it is the least restrictive/most family like setting which serves the child's individual needs;
- How close it is to the home community;
- Whether or not it is in the child's school district; and
- Whether or not it is a relative placement.

Other factors influencing the placement choice may include:

- Child's functioning and behaviors;
- Child's medical, educational, and developmental needs;
- Child's history and past experience;
- Child's religious and cultural needs; or
- Child's connection with the community, school, or faith community.

State the **most recent** date the child was removed from his or her home as a result of a court order or as a result of a voluntary placement by the parent/caretaker. Discuss briefly what precipitated that removal. If the child has never been removed, check the space next to Not Applicable.

If the child has siblings and is not placed with them, discuss the reasons for that decision. Some examples of reasons for placing siblings separately are:

- Placement with the sibling is not in the child's best interests; (state why)
- Placement is due solely to the child's own behavior; (specify)
- Placement is with a non-custodial parent who is not the parent of all the siblings.

Attach court-ordered visitation/contact plan for the child (with parent, caretaker, siblings, placement provider and other family members or friends) including frequency, supervision, etc. and the date of the court order authorizing visitation. (NCGS 7B-905).

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<p>Note: If the permanency plan is not reunification, replace sections III-a and IV-a with sections III-b (page 4) and IV-b (page 5).</p>
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III-a. Objectives and activities to address identified needs

1. Need

Identify each of the three highest priority needs from the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment using separate "Page 3's". The greatest need should be

addressed first in the Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement. Only one need per page should be addressed. (e.g. Substance Abuse)

2. Describe behaviors that are of concern

Specify the conditions/behaviors identified in the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment and Family Reunification Assessment Tool that need to be resolved before reunification can occur or that place the child at risk of future harm.

(Example: Mrs. White’s frequent use of marijuana interferes with her ability to provide care and supervision for her two children.)

3. Objective: Describe specifically what the desired behavior/condition or expected changes will look like when the need is met so the caregiver and the worker are clear about what is expected and when it has been accomplished. The family should be involved in the development of these outcome statements.

(Example: Mrs. White will assure that her children receive age-appropriate supervision at all times. She will assure that her children receive sufficient nutritious food to stimulate normal growth and development.)

The three-column activity chart provides spaces to put the person responsible for activities, the planned activities, and the target date for starting or accomplishing the activity. All activities and persons responsible for completing activities toward the achievement of this objective should be included in this section. Be specific about each activity to be conducted.

Example

Activity	Who’s responsible	Target Date
Attend weekly treatment group for substance abuse at Martin MHC	Mrs. White	Start by 10/1/02
Transport Mrs. White to appointments at MHC weekly and to Child Development class	Jane Smith, IHA	Start by 10/1/02
Successfully complete a 6-week class on child development at the Agricultural Extension office that focuses on nutrition and age-appropriate supervision.	Mrs. White	Complete by 4/1/03

IV-a. Progress toward meeting the identified objective

The caseworker should note the date of the review of the Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement and check the appropriate outcome. There is room on this form for three progress updates toward achieving the objective. If the block “no longer appropriate” is selected, please explain why, and explain why this does not negatively affect the child’s safety and risk of future harm. If some but not all of the objectives are achieved, check “partially achieved” and explain in the space provided.

Note: If the permanency plan is not reunification, replace Sections III-a and IV-a with Sections III-b (page 4) and IV-b (page 5).

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III-b. Barriers to the accomplishment of alternative permanency plan of custody to non-removal parent, adoption, custody or guardianship with relative, or custody with a court-approved caretaker.

1. Barrier to Permanence: Describe what factor is preventing permanence for this child. Use separate “Page IIIb’s” for each identified barrier.
2. Describe current status of efforts to overcome this barrier: What are the agency and its partners doing to help overcome this barrier, and what progress has been made?
3. Desired outcome: What will the situation look like when the child can move to permanence?

Describe the activities that will be undertaken during this time period, listing who is responsible and the target date for completion of each activity.

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IV-b. Progress Toward Overcoming Barrier

The caseworker should note the date of the review of the Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement and check the appropriate outcome. There is room on this form for three progress updates toward achieving the objectives. If the block “no longer appropriate” is selected, please explain why. If some but not all of the objectives are achieved, check “partially achieved” and explain in the space provided.

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Attach the most recent Strengths and Needs Assessment (and Reunification Assessment, if appropriate.)

State the permanency plan and the concurrent plan if the permanency plan is not achieved.

Enter the scheduled date of the next court review.

If the youth is 16 or 17 years of age, describe or attach a Transitional Living Plan that addresses

- The estimated date of discharge from Out-of-Home care;
- The youth’s anticipated living arrangement;
- What specific steps are being taken to help the youth prepare for discharge, including life skills training, work experience, a savings plan, education and job

- training, medical and mental health care, development of a personal support network; and
- Supportive adults who are working with the youth as they progress toward discharge.

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VI. Services to Placement Provider:

Describe agency services to the placement provider that are designed to assure that this child's needs are being met. Describe the frequency and purpose of meetings between the agency and the caregiver, the frequency of meetings and/or other communication between the caregiver and the parent/guardian; training that will be provided to the caregiver that is specific to the needs of the child; opportunities for respite care, referrals to community resources, and other services provided to the caregiver.

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VII. Signatures of persons involved in the agreement (Complete new page 8 at each review)

By signing the agreement, the family, the worker, the child and any others who are involved with the development of the agreement are acknowledging that they understand their role in the agreement and in meeting the identified needs. The signatures may also include service providers who have a role with the parent or child.

If a caregiver refuses to sign the Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement, the worker should try to address the caregiver's concerns and stress the need for working together to reunify the child with the family. The caregiver may verbally agree to the agreement even if they refuse to sign the agreement. In this case, the social worker should document that the parent verbally agreed to the agreement. If a parent agrees with the objective but not with the activities, he or she should be given an opportunity to define activities that he or she feels would be appropriate to achieve the objective. If the parent chooses not to participate in working toward the desired objectives of the agreement, then the concurrent permanency option should be considered immediately.

The date of the signature must be documented on the form. A copy of the agreement must be given to all parties involved in the development of the agreement and the date the copy was provided must be recorded on the Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement.