TN Department of Children's Services

POLICY

16.23, Foster Home Records	
Application: DCS Foster Care Staff and Supervisory Staff	
Authority: TCA 37-4-201-207; Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children; TCA 37-5-105(3), 37-5-106;37-5-107.	**Standards: COA:** PA-PRG 1, PRG 2, PA-RPM 5.01, PA-RPM 5.02
Commissioner: Margie Quin	**Date Signed:** 9/30/2025
Original Effective Date: 03/05/2007 Current Effective Date: 10/30/2025	Supersedes: 05/30/2024 Last Review Date: 07/14/2025
Glossary: ○ None	

Policy Statement:

The Department of Children's Services (DCS) reviews and maintains foster home records with the Department's electronic tracking system, ensuring safeguards are in place to protect the record from unauthorized and improper disclosure.

Purpose:

To ensure that foster home records are protected and maintained in an organized, confidential manner and contain all pertinent information required to manage the foster home.

Procedures:

A. <u>Record Confidentiality and Access to Information</u>

1. Documents related to the foster family are maintained in the Department's electronic tracking system and are considered the official record for the foster family.
2. Foster parents may have access to information in their foster home record except for third-party documentation, documents deemed confidential by DCS, including foster child or birth family identifying information or protected health information pursuant to HIPAA. Refer to ***Guide to Documentation Sharing for Staff, Foster Parents, Advocates and Mentors***.

3. DCS may release copies of a foster parent home study to another agency upon receipt of a signed release of information for each adult member noted in the home study. Portions of the foster parent home study may be considered public record and can be released upon request to the DCS Office of Communications. In such cases, consultation with the DCS Central Office Legal Counsel is required.

B. Maintaining Electronic Records

1. The electronic record will be maintained as dictated by current structure of the electronic tracking system.
2. All documents will be uploaded as outlined by the storyboards located on the DCS website under ***TFACTS Knowledge Base***. For information on the document storage functionality and category types, see form **CS-1202, Electronic Case File Checklist**, ***Work Aid for Scanning Foster Home Approval Documentation*** and the ***Document Storage Tip Sheet***.
3. Once entered into the electronic tracking system, documents and other information, including case recordings, assessments and service plans should not be printed for the purpose of sharing with other program areas, audits, case reviews or case records. This information should be accessed directly from the electronic record. Information relative to case evidence that cannot be uploaded into the electronic record is maintained in a supplementary hard copy record (i.e. DVDs, large medical records, birth certificates).

C. Documentation

1. Foster home case recordings document contacts by Foster Care Support (FCS) staff and should contain all contact or activities related to the foster home, highlighting the strengths demonstrated in the foster home and the challenges faced by the family. Any contacts that occur with the family are documented as per DCS policy ***31.14, Case Documentation Requirements*** and recorded in the Electronic Record System. Refer to form **CS-0709, Foster Home Monthly Visit Checklist** for topics to be discussed monthly and documenting home visit outcomes.
2. The foster home case recording is written:
   a) In clear, concise sentences avoiding usage of slang language or subjective/personal value judgments.

b) In a manner that is sensitive to the emotional well-being of the participants involved in the case by carefully considering terminology without sacrificing accuracy and completeness;

c) Reflect foster parent's right to confidentiality and does not include information about persons unrelated to the case, unless those persons have a direct effect on the foster family; and,

d) Abbreviations and acronyms used are commonly understood and acceptable.

D. Methods of Records Disposal

1. Foster home records are maintained and destroyed as outlined in the ***Placement RDA***.
2. Any documentation related to the foster home that does not yet exist in the electronic file should be scanned into the electronic file before closure of the home or disposal of the record.
3. Protected Health Information (PHI) records and databases are destroyed in accordance with federal and state laws, rules and regulations and applicable Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) policies and procedures.

Forms:

CS-0709, Foster Home Monthly Visit Checklist

CS-1202, Electronic Case File Checklist

Collateral Documents:

Guide to Document Sharing for Staff, Foster Parents, Advocates and Mentors

Document Storage Tip Sheet

Work Aid for Scanning Foster Home Approval Documentation