



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services | Division of Social Services

Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement Completion Instructions

Which Cases

The Out-Of Home Family Services Agreement must be completed

- for all children and youth in the legal custody of a local child welfare agency
- for children and youth for whom the local child welfare agency has placement responsibility who are placed outside the home.
- for children and youth who are placed with parents or relatives or other court-approved placements , including youth who are living in Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement, when the local child welfare agency has been given or retains legal custody.
- for families with children/youth who are returned home on a trial visit so long as the local child welfare agency 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 primary plan for permanency and any secondary plans 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/youth or youth returns home or legal 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. Section V. Objectives and Activities to Address Identified Needs should be completed regardless of which permanency plan is the primary permanency plan and which plan or plans is/are the secondary permanency plan or plans. Use Sections VII., VIII., IX., and X. to address barriers to permanency as they relate to either primary or secondary plans.

Development of Agreement:

The Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement is completed jointly by the child welfare worker, the parents/caretakers, the youth 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 or youth 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:

Separate Out-of-Home Family Services Agreements are completed for each child or youth.



I. Identifying Information and Participants in the Agreement:

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

II. Primary Permanency Plan:

- Check the box that most closely reflects the primary permanency plan for the child/youth. Reunification means that the child or youth returns to the home from which he or she was removed.
- List the anticipated date the primary permanency plan will be completed.
- List the effective date of the agreement.
- List the date of the next review, which will be six months from the effective date.
- The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) applies only when the child or youth 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. The Multi Ethnic Placement Act applies to placement of Indian children and youth who are not covered by ICWA such as those who are members of a state recognized tribe. When considering placement for any Indian child or youth, every effort should be made to involve the tribal community in planning for the child or youth in a setting that reflects his or her Indian culture. If there is any indication/question that the child may be an Indian child, refer to IV. Placement Decision Making section of 1201 – Child Placement Services (<http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/csm-10/man/CSs1201c4.pdf>), as well as the DSS-5291 Indian Child Welfare Act Compliance Checklist (<http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/DSS-5291-ia.pdf>) for guidance.
- Determine if there are other active case plans that impact this agreement and attach copies. Many children and youth have Individual Educational Plans (IEPs), and families may be receiving services from other providers. It is important to ensure that all plans coordinate with each other. List the attached plans by name and effective date, e.g. "Raleigh Behavioral Services 4/15; IEP 9/15," etc.

III. Secondary Permanency Plan(s)

- Check the box or boxes that reflect the secondary permanency plan for the child/youth.

Notes: Regarding permanency plans, Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) is a permanency option for youth age 16 and older who are placed in stable, emotionally permanent living situations but who remain in agency custody. It may only be used in very specific circumstances. See 1201 – Child Placement Services,



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VI. Permanency Planning (<http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/csm-10/man/CSs1201c6.pdf>) for definitions and procedures. Reinstatement of Parental Rights is a permanency option established in October 2011 for youth at least 12 years of age. Circumstances that would allow this permanency option are very narrow. See 1201 – Child Placement Services. VI. Permanency Planning (<http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/csm-10/man/CSs1201c6.pdf>) for more information.

IV. Current Placement Information

Check the box by the type of current living arrangement and enter the date this placement started. List the address and telephone number of the current placement provider. If safety factors prohibit divulging this information, leave the space blank and indicate the reason next to the space provided.

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

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

Other factors influencing the placement choice may include:

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

State the most recent date the child/youth 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 or youth 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/youth's best interests; (state why)
- Placement is due solely to the child/youth'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 or youth (with parent, caretaker, siblings, placement provider and other family members or friends) including frequency, supervision, and the date of the court order authorizing visitation in accordance with N.C.G.S. § 7B-905.1 (http://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/BySection/Chapter_7B/GS_7B-905.1.html).



V. Objectives and Activities to Address Identified Needs

1. Need

Identify each of the three highest priority needs from the Family Assessment of Strengths and Needs using separate pages for each. The greatest need should be addressed first in the Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement. If Independent Living/LINKS services are to be provided, either Section V. Objectives and Activities to Address Identified Needs, Section VII. Barriers to Accomplishment of Primary Permanency Plan, or Section IX. Barriers to Accomplishment of Secondary Permanency Plan(s) is used to document the assessed IL training needs.

As a parent that has been described as absent or noncustodial becomes involved with the planning for their child, their needs should also be addressed within the Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement either on the same one or a separate agreement.

2. Describe behaviors that are of concern

Specify the conditions or 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 or youth 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.)

Specify training/experiential needs identified on the Life Skills Assessment that need to be addressed to enhance the youth's abilities to become a self-sufficient adult.

(Example: John wants to develop his time management skills in order to increase his ability to handle school work and other responsibilities)

3. Objectives

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 to be 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 chart provided below.



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Activity	Who's responsible	Target Date
Attend weekly treatment group for substance abuse at Martin MHC	Mrs. White	Start by 10/1/15
Transport Mrs. White to appointments at MHC weekly and to Child Development class	Jane Smith, IHA	Start by 10/1/15
Successfully complete a 6-week class on child/youth development at the Agricultural Extension office that focuses on nutrition and age-appropriate supervision.	Mrs. White	Complete by 4/1/16
John will attend two time management classes with his LINKS group	Beverly Godwin, LINKS coordinator	April 5 and May 8
The DSS will purchase a calendar/day planner for John	Beverly Godwin	April 3
John will use the day planner and other techniques he learns in class to manage his time more effectively.	John White	April, May
John will report his progress to his social worker and will demonstrate mastery through improving his grades.	John White	May 30

VI. Progress toward Meeting the Identified Objective

The child welfare worker 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 four 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/youth’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.

Section V. Objectives and Activities to Address Identified Needs should be completed regardless of which permanency plan is the primary permanency plan and which plan or plans is/are the secondary permanency plan or plans. Use Sections VII., VIII., IX., and X. to address barriers to permanency as they relate to either primary or secondary plans.

VII. Barriers to Accomplishment of Primary Permanency Plan

1. Barrier to Permanence:

Describe what factors are preventing permanence for this child/youth. Use separate pages for each identified barrier or training need.

2. Describe current status of efforts to overcome this barrier or to address the training need:



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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/youth 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.

VIII. Progress toward Overcoming Barriers to Primary Permanency Plan

The child welfare worker 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 four 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.

IX. Barriers to Accomplishment of Secondary Permanency Plan(s)

1. Barrier to Permanence:

Describe what factors are preventing permanence for this child/youth. Use separate pages for each identified barrier or training need.

2. Describe current status of efforts to overcome this barrier or to address the training need: 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/youth 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.

X. Progress toward Overcoming Barriers to Secondary Permanency Plan(s)

The child welfare worker 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 four 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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XI. Review Family Assessment of Strengths and Needs or Reunification Assessment

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

State the primary permanency plan and any secondary (concurrent) permanency plan or plans, if the primary permanency plan is not achieved.

Enter the scheduled date of the next court review.

If the youth is 14 years of age, describe or attach a Transitional Living Plan including:

- 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.

XII. Services to Child or Youth

Describe agency services to the child or youth that are designed to assure the child or youth's needs are being met, including face-to-face and other contact between the child or youth and the agency, visitation with parents and siblings, opportunities for the child to participate in case planning, opportunities for the child or youth to engage in age and/or developmentally-appropriate activities and how these opportunities connect to the meeting the child's needs and supporting the child's development, education and health services, certification that an explanation of the child or youth's rights has been provided to the child or youth, referrals to community resources, and other services provided to the child or youth. Describe the frequency and purpose of these services.

XIII. Services to Placement Provider

Describe agency services to the placement provider that are designed to assure that this child/youth's needs are being met. Describe the frequency and purpose of meetings between the agency and the placement provider, the frequency of meetings and/or other communication between the placement provider and the parent/guardian; training that will be provided to the placement provider that are specific to the needs of the child/youth (including information and support for placement providers in implementing the reasonable and prudent parent standard), opportunities for the child or youth to engage in age and/or developmentally-appropriate activities and how these activities connect to the child or youth's development, opportunities for respite care, referrals to community resources, and other services provided to the placement provider.

XIV. Signatures (complete new signature page at each review)

The signature page is to be signed by persons involved in the development of the agreement, including, but not limited to, the parent(s), child(ren), placement provider, child welfare worker, child welfare supervisor, Guardian ad Litem, Tribal Representative, or others. By signing the



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agreement, the family, the worker, the child or youth 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, child, or youth.

If a parent or caregiver refuses to sign the Out-of-Home Family Services Agreement, the worker should try to address the individual's concerns and stress the need for working together to reunify the child or youth with the family. The parent or 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 or caregiver verbally agreed to the agreement. If a parent or caregiver 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 or caregiver chooses not to participate in working toward the desired objectives of the agreement, then the secondary permanency plan(s) 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 agreement.