

DISCHARGE POLICY

A child may be discharged from a foster care setting to any of the following settings:

Own Home
Relative Home
Independent Living
Adoptive Home
Another Foster Home
Group Home
Children's Center
Psychiatric Hospital

Discharge of a child from a foster care setting to his/her own home, a relative home or independent living is based on the following criteria, as applicable to the child's age and needs:

1. Satisfactory progress of family in attaining case plan goals and objectives and a satisfactory reduction/elimination of risk to the child in returning home or to a relative; and/or
2. Satisfactory progress of the child in the attainment of goals and objectives (e.g., improved behavior, improved mental health status, stable medical condition, etc.); or
3. Attainment by the child of adult age and termination of Agency custody.

Discharge of a child from a foster care setting to an adoptive home is based on the following criteria, as applicable to the child's age and needs:

1. Agency's attainment of permanent custody and legal clearance for adoptive placement of the child.
2. Child's acceptance of adoption.

Selection of an adoptive home based upon the child's best interest and special needs, including, but not limited to, factors such as the placement of siblings together, the information contained in the child study inventory, the child's case plan, the adoptive family home study, and the JFS 01689 "Documentation of the Placement Decision-Making Process."

Discharge of a child from a foster care setting to another foster care setting or to a group home or residential setting may be based on criteria, as applicable to the child's age and needs, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Movement of a child to another foster home in order to reunite siblings;
2. Change in status of a foster home (e.g., voluntary withdrawal, illness of foster caregiver, etc.);
3. Concern with the care provided to a child by a foster caregiver;

4. Behavior problems of child or treatment needs of child.

The Caseworkers, Supervisors, service providers, foster caregivers, family (as applicable), child (if age and developmentally appropriate), and other involved parties participate in the decision to discharge a child. All discharges require supervisory approval and require the Caseworker to complete the appropriate paperwork and ensure an exchange of information about the child and his/her care and needs.

When the child's Caseworker and Supervisor determine that the family has shown satisfactory progress or that a relative home is approved for placement, the Caseworker arranges for prior visitations of the child with the parents or relatives to prepare them for the child's return. During these visits, the child's Caseworker will assess the family's ability to care for the child and their demonstration of positive parenting techniques. As part of the Family-to-Family program, the foster caregivers may also provide some information about the family's care of the child based upon the contact between the foster caregivers and the family. Once the Caseworker and Supervisor determine that the family is ready for the child's return, the Agency petitions the court for a hearing if one is not already set and requests the transfer of custody to the family. Once the court approves the child's return to the family, the Caseworker may continue to provide ongoing casework assistance to the family.

When an adoptive family is identified for a child and the adoptive family has received the background information about the child and agrees to potential placement of the child, the Caseworker arranges for prior visitations of the child with the potential adoptive parents in order for all involved parties to assess the viability of the adoptive placement. Following successful visits between the child and adoptive parents, the involved parties identify an adoptive placement date. Following adoptive placement, ongoing services are provided to the child and adoptive family.

For the planned discharge of a child from a foster home to another substitute care setting (e.g., foster home, group home, residential center, psychiatric hospital, etc.), the Caseworker arranges for at least one visit prior to the discharge of the child to another substitute care setting. When the involved parties identify a discharge date, the Caseworker facilitates the placement of the child in the new substitute care setting and ensures the exchange of required information and completion of required paperwork.

Although most discharges are planned, an emergency discharge of a child or a discharge which is not in accordance with the case plan may be required in circumstances including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Severe behavior problems of the child;
2. Mental health issues which pose a risk to the child or caregiver's safety;
3. Abuse or neglect of a child in a substitute care setting which requires the child's immediate discharge;
4. Immediate need of the substitute caregiver for discharge of the child

For an emergency discharge of a child from a foster home to another substitute care setting (e.g., foster home, group home, residential center, psychiatric hospital, etc.), the Resource Caseworker arranges for the discharge of the child to another substitute care setting. All substitute care resources who meets the

criteria needed for the child will be considered. The ongoing Caseworker facilitates the placement of the child in the new substitute care setting and ensures the exchange of required information and completion of required paperwork.

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