

FAMILY-CENTERED PRACTICE

Out-of-County Services (OTI)

Family-centered practice recognizes the strengths of family relationships. Family-centered practice, along with federal law, requires a rigorous examination of extended family for possible placement. When family outside of the state is identified, the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children is used as the process for placement of the child with the relative. When relatives are identified within the state yet out of the circuit with jurisdiction, out-of-county services are required. This document outlines provisions from DCF's Chapter 65C-30.018, F.A.C. regarding out-of-county services in dependency cases (also referred to as Out of Town Inquiries - OTI). Most of the rules and procedures pertain to requirements of the department and occur outside of court hearings and do not relate strictly to actions for judges. However, it is important for judges to be aware of the department's procedures.

- When a child relocates to a county other than the county of jurisdiction or when supervision services are needed in another county, specific actions are required to ensure the safety and well-being of the child and to coordinate the request for supervision and services and are required whether or not the child has been adjudicated dependent.
- If after the completion of a home study, the court in the sending county orders the child into the placement, the contracted service provider in the sending county must immediately send a referral for out-of-county supervision to the contracted service provider in the receiving county.
- A request for a home study, a referral for out-of-county services, or the initiation of supervision in another county is required when:
 - A child's emergency placement in another county is being considered;
 - There are plans to place a child outside the sending county, including placement in a shelter;
 - There are plans to release a child to a parent outside the sending county, and continued supervision is needed toward meeting the case plan goal;
 - A family under supervision has plans to move to another county;
 - The parent or caregiver with whom reunification is planned, lives in or is planning to move to another county, regardless of whether the child is residing in the same county;
 - The other parent lives in or is planning to move to another county, regardless of whether the child is residing in the same county;
 - A case participant who is central to meeting the case plan goal lives in or is planning to move to another county, regardless of whether the child is residing in the same county;
 - An adoptive placement is planned in another county;
 - A child who is placed in a Department of Juvenile Justice secure detention facility or residential program or other non-Family Safety program in another county requires continued supervision; or

- When it becomes known that a child, family, or parent under the supervision of the department or a contracted service provider has relocated to another county prior to the primary worker in the county of jurisdiction requesting a home study or case supervision by the contracted service provider in the other county.
- When placement of a child in a relative or non-relative home is being considered, the criminal, delinquency, and abuse/neglect history check and home study and other requirements must be met.
- If a child is in shelter status with a relative or non-relative, a criminal, delinquency, and abuse/neglect history check and an on-site inspection of the proposed placement must be requested by the worker in the county of jurisdiction and performed by a worker in the receiving county prior to placing the child.
- At the time services are requested, the primary worker or CPI in the county of jurisdiction is responsible for providing the services worker or CPI in the receiving county with:
 - The child's name and case number
 - The prospective caregiver's name, address, and telephone number
 - The name of the sending county's primary worker or CPI and supervisor; and
 - A copy of the case plan and all case materials necessary for determining the appropriateness of the request and for providing supervision and services
- Once a child has relocated or services have been accepted in the receiving county, the worker in the receiving county performs all case supervision and related documentation requirements upon notification of the placement, including the provision of case planning and judicial review information to those in the county of jurisdiction.
 - The responsibility to perform these duties continues until the child's case is closed, the person receiving services is no longer a case participant, or the child and family move from the service area.
 - The primary worker in the county of jurisdiction continues to be the primary case manager and retains primary responsibility and accountability for the case as long as the case remains open in that jurisdiction.
- The final decision on whether to recommend to the court for or against the placement of the child is made by the receiving county, unless placement is court-ordered without an opportunity for the receiving provider to provide input prior to the placement decision. Once the court has ordered placement, the receiving county must accept the placement as approved.
- Once a case has been accepted for supervision services, communication regarding the case is made directly between the contracted service provider units in the two counties involved.
- Cases cannot be closed and jurisdiction cannot be transferred to the contracted service provider in the receiving county prior to the following:
 - Prior to recommending case closure to the court, the worker in the county of jurisdiction must inform the worker in the receiving county of the planned action and ensure that the receiving county has an opportunity to comment on the advisability of the planned action.

- Cases involving court-ordered supervision cannot be terminated without court approval. The worker in the receiving county must be provided with a copy of the court's termination order.
- A recommendation to the court to transfer jurisdiction must not be considered unless the family has reunified in the receiving county, is expected to remain in that county, and the contracted service provider in that county agrees to the transfer.
- When termination of supervision is being recommended to the court, the service provider in another county who requests the termination must also request that the court retain jurisdiction over any future dependency involving with the family.

When a child is placed in another county:

- Prior to completion of the homestudy, review the case frequently to ensure that the homestudy request has been sent to the receiving county.
- If possible, arrange for the proposed caregiver to appear personally in court to ensure the caregiver's willingness to care for the child. If a personal appearance is not possible, then arrange for the caregiver to appear electronically.
- At each regularly scheduled hearing, inquire as to the status of the homestudy request.
- After placement of the child in another county, review the child's status frequently as well as at each regularly scheduled hearing.
- To avoid delays in permanency for the child, order that the department request a preadoptive homestudy on the child.

Remember that young children placed out-of-county are more difficult to reunify because visitation is complicated by the placement.