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Topic: Clarification for **SSRMS Reconciliation and COF Changes – Candidate for Foster Care Guidance**

Attached is a document prepared by the Office of Families and Children as an update to RMS Code 770 and the discussion on Candidates for Foster Care. This document discusses in more detail how and where to document candidacy.

Please contact the Office for Children and Families help-desk at HELP-DESK-OCF@jfs.ohio.gov if you have any further questions.

Candidates for Foster Care – RMS Code 770

The “BCTFA Update” dated October 5, 2010, indicated ODJFS Office of Families and Children would notify counties of related changes in SACWIS reports. This update is to provide instructions on how to currently document Candidates for Foster Care using the case plan method in SACWIS and identify future enhancements in SACWIS which will ease documenting Candidates for Foster Care when using the case plan method. In addition, this update will provide clarity on the two other federally acceptable methods of documenting candidacy which are eligibility determinations and court proceedings.

As stated in the attachment to the aforementioned update, a Candidate for Foster Care is defined as a child at imminent or serious risk of removal from their home as evidenced by the State agency either pursuing his/her removal from the home or making reasonable efforts to prevent such removal. To view the aforementioned update and attachment, use the following link: http://jfs.ohio.gov/ofs/bcfta/BB/2010-1005_BCFTAUpdate_2011-02A.pdf Additionally, there are three Federally acceptable methods of documenting candidacy which are a defined case plan, eligibility determination or evidence of court proceedings in relation to the removal of the child.

Case Plan Method of Documenting Candidacy

Using this method requires a defined case plan which clearly indicates that, absent effective preventive services, the child is at serious risk of removal into foster care. County agencies using this method should document their initial determination of candidacy for a child in the JFS01410 Case Plan, Section 2: Concerns OR in the JFS01418 Alternative Response Family Service Plan in the “The Family Participated in the Development of This Service Plan In the Following Way(s)” section. This will allow the agency to provide a statement that the child has been determined to be a Candidate for Foster Care. Such statement should meet the federal definition of a Candidate for Foster Care. The agency should also clearly demonstrate why the child has been determined to be a Candidate for Foster Care by identifying the risk factors and identify the services/reasonable efforts that are being provided to prevent the removal of the child into foster care. The services identified should clearly address the risk and/or safety factors that make the child a Candidate for Foster Care. This will assist in addressing key issues raised in Ohio’s Child and Family Service Review (CFSR).

A re-determination of candidacy is also required to be completed every six months from the initial determination or previous re-determination. Re-determinations of candidacy should be documented in Section 5B of the Semi-Annual Review (SAR). This text box will allow the agency to provide a statement that the child has been re-determined to a Candidate for Foster Care. Such statement should meet the federal definition of a Candidate for Foster Care. The agency should also clearly demonstrate why the child continues to be a Candidate for Foster Care by identifying the risk factors and identifying the continued services that are being provided to prevent the removal of the child into foster care.

Changes to the JFS01410 case plan, JFS 01418 "Alternative Response Family Service Plan, Semi-Annual Review and enhancements in SACWIS are being reviewed for future enhancements and will be made dependent upon available funding and federal approval as applicable. Such changes will require reviews and modifications of state policies/rules and will require coordination with such. The enhancements in SACWIS to support documentation of "Candidate for Foster Care" status are expected to occur in the case plan and SAR functionality and include specific questions counties will respond to indicating whether a child meets the criteria for a "Candidate for Foster Care". A text box will be provided to allow the agency to clearly demonstrate why the child has been determined to be a Candidate for Foster Care by identifying the risk factors and identify the services that are being provided to prevent the removal of the child into foster care. These changes will be made in collaboration with feedback from county agencies and will include requirements documentation and JAD Sessions.

Eligibility Determination Methodology of Documenting Candidacy

Completing the documentation to establish a Child's Title IV-E eligibility is an indication that the State is anticipating the child's entry into foster care and that s/he is a serious risk of removal into foster care. Eligibility forms used to document a child's candidacy for foster care should include evidence that the child is at serious risk of removal from the home. Evidence of AFDC eligibility in and of itself is insufficient to establish a child's candidacy for foster care.

Currently, SACWIS allows for eligibility determinations to be completed on children in custody only. Thus, when using this methodology to establish candidacy of a child complete the JFS01452 Form which can be found at the following link. <http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/file.asp?id=44087>. Before downloading this form, open MS Excel, click on Tools/Security/Macro Security and click the Medium Radio button. Once this is completed, click the link, click save and save the form. Once saved open the form by using MS Excel and click enable Macro's. This will allow all of the functionality of the form to be used. Completion of the form will be difficult as you will not have a best interest nor reasonable efforts statements in court orders. Additionally, you will not have a removal to determine if the child is removed from a specified relative. However, the remainder of the form can be completed especially the AFDC Eligibility criteria.

As stated above, evidence of AFDC eligibility in and of itself is insufficient to establish a child's candidacy for foster care. Therefore, when using this methodology, provide a statement that shows child has been determined to be a Candidate for Foster Care on the "Additional Documentation" tab. Such statement should meet the federal definition of a Candidate for Foster Care. The agency should also clearly demonstrate why the child has been determined to be a Candidate for Foster Care by identifying the risk factors and identify the services that are being provided to prevent the removal of the child into foster care. Print the completed form to include the "Additional Comments" information and keep it in the child's case file.

A new eligibility determination with a candidacy statement, identifying risk factors and services that are being provided to prevent the removal of the child into foster care will need to be completed every six months if the child continues to be a Candidate for Foster Care. Once completed, print the form and “Additional Comments” information and keep it in the child’s case file.

Court Proceedings Methodology of Documenting Candidacy

According to Federal guidelines, if the agency has initiated court proceedings to effect the child’s removal from home, s/he is a serious risk of removal from the home. Therefore, initiating court proceedings in relation to the removal of the child from the home, in the form of a petition to the court, a court order or transcript of the court proceedings is sufficient documentation to prove the child is a Candidate for Foster Care. Such petition, court order or transcript should be kept in the child’s case file.

A new or amended petition, new court order or new transcript will need to be completed every six months if the child continues to be a Candidate for Foster Care. Such petition, court order or transcript should be kept in the child’s case file.