

Travel Case Scenarios

NOTE: unless otherwise specified "youth", "child", or "children" refers to someone under the age of 18

1. Q. A 12 year old youth in care wants to spend the night at his friend's house. Do I need to do a Travel form?

A. No. Foster parents/caregivers can approve overnights using the "Who Can Watch my Foster Child" guidelines. Caregivers must contact and have prior approval from the social worker for all overnights that exceed one night. The social worker will need to obtain a criminal history background clearance for overnights exceeding one night. (See Guidelines for Foster Parent Activities).

2. Q. Parents have given permission for children to travel to Canada for the weekend with the foster parents. Do I still need a court order?

A. Yes. Even with written parental approval, a specific court order allowing travel to Canada is needed.

3. Q. Caregivers are planning an out of state trip and are going to leave in two days. One parent does not agree to the travel and there isn't a court order allowing the children to go. Can I still approve the travel?

A. No. Since one parent objects, a court order allowing the travel needs to be obtained. Since there is less than 3 weeks' notice, it is the responsibility of the social worker to obtain the court order. If notice occurs 3 weeks or more in advance of the travel, it is the parents' responsibility to bring the issue back to court.

4. Q. I have not been able to reach either parent of a child on my caseload to obtain their written consent for travel with her aunt to British Columbia for two weeks. What do I need to do next?

A. You must make reasonable efforts to obtain written approval from both parents. Reasonable efforts include:

- Visiting the parent in jail
- Conducting a home visit
- Seeing the parents at a parent/child visit
- Talking to the parent at court
- Calling the parent and setting up a time to meet
- E-mailing the parent (make sure e-mail communication from the parent clearly states their name) informing them of the visit and requesting approval
- Sending a letter notifying them of the travel and requesting approval
- Seeking the parent's attorney's assistance in notifying the parent

Document efforts to notify the parents and obtain their approval in the case file. Document when the parent does not respond or the whereabouts are unknown on the travel form (DSHS 03-478).

Next, obtain a court order for travel to Canada.

5. Q. A youth in care wants to travel out of state for a school trip (or go to camp, etc). Do I need to run background clearances for all of the adults on the trip?

A. No. Verify background clearance process for the program. School programs and accredited camp programs require background checks. You should know the supervision/chaperone plan for the trip.

6. Q. Does a caregiver need to get approval from the caseworker for in-state day trips out of the area?

A. No. The caregiver can approve/make decisions regarding these routine activities.

7. Q. What if the travel is to a border county/city in Oregon or Idaho?

A. Caregivers should notify the social worker via e-mail or voicemail if they will be going on a day trip out of state to a border county/city. If the travel is routine and brief – such as for shopping, or medical appointments, this can be discussed with the social worker at a health and safety visit and the plan regarding these trips documented in a case note. Follow the approval table based on the length of the trip.

8. Q. I have a child on my caseload that is legally free. Her foster parents plan on taking her to Disney World for two weeks. Do I need written parental approval?

A. No, the parental rights have been terminated and they have no legal authority to provide approval, permission or consent. However, all other expectations are to be met, including notification from the foster parents in advance of travel, a case note by the social worker documenting caregiver notification, a complete/approved travel form, and approval by the Area Administrator.

9. Q. I have a youth on my caseload who spends one weekend (48 hours) a month with her grandmother in a neighboring county (in state). She spends two nights, Friday and Saturday nights, and returns to the foster home on Sunday. Do I need to follow the travel policy for this travel?

A. Yes. Case notes need to be made regarding the caregiver notification and the supervisor's approval and a background check needs to be completed for the grandmother. If it is regularly scheduled and clearly documented, the approval can cover multiple dates.

10. Q. A youth in care is flying to Minnesota as an unaccompanied minor. Are there additional requirements?

A. Details about who is taking the youth to the airport and who is picking up the youth should be documented on travel form (DSHS 03-478).

11. Q. A sibling group of three children in care is traveling to Georgia for a pre-placement visit to their aunt and uncle's home. Do I need the ICPC 100A approved?

A. No, not for a pre-placement visit. The ICPC 100A needs to be approved prior to placement. You must make sure that background and CPS checks have been completed for the caregivers and that there are no identified safety concerns.

12. Q. Does the caregiver need to carry a letter/form giving them permission to travel and sign for medical treatment for the child while in travel status?

A. Yes, the caregiver should carry some type of verification for travel with the child. Caseworkers may want to use the Children's Administration Placement and Travel form (DSHS 10-454).

13. Q. Why do I have to scan and upload parental approval documents and the travel form into FamLink?

A. So others who receive inquiries or may be covering in your absence can access the documents in case of an emergency.

14. Q. A youth between the ages of 18-21 in the extended foster care program wants to go on a road trip with friends. Do I need to get a court order and do background checks on the people with whom the youth will be travelling?

A. Youth in extended foster care are considered "children" for the purposes of the dependency action only; otherwise, the participant has the legal status and legal rights of an adult. (WAC 388-25-0542) A background check on individuals they are traveling with is not mandatory. The youth must notify the caregiver and obtain approval from their social worker for extended absence from the placement of more than 3 days. (WAC 388-25-0546) It is important to document the travel plans and means of contacting the youth so their whereabouts are known and they can be reached in an emergency. It is also important that they be playful in their travel and not be considered to have left care.