

CHILD WELFARE UPDATE

Title:	Changes to Trial Home Visits (THVs)
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Effective Date:	February 1, 2021
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Background Information:	<p>Background Information: Trial Home Visits (THVs) have been utilized to extend an episode of out-of-home care for up to six months when a child who has been in out-of-home care returns home to a parent, to the home from which the child was removed, or to another home that is intended to become a permanent home. A THV is considered temporary and a step toward the child's permanent plan. Internally, the Department Of Human Services (DHS) information system has automatically triggered a THV when a child exits the episode of care.</p> <p>Stakeholder Engagement: Various DHS stakeholders were engaged in the change process to ensure a coordinated effort between policy, systems, funding, and field. Additionally, judicial feedback was sought to determine impact from the legal community perspective.</p> <p>Reason for the Change: Changes to THV policy and practice align with the Family First philosophy.</p>
What Is Changing:	<p>What Is Changing: <u>Department Definition:</u> The definition of THVs will no longer be all inclusive of situations in which a child is leaving foster care, but will be limited to situations in which THVs are court ordered. Moving forward, DHS will consider the following situations Court Ordered THVs:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child is returned to the home of a parent, to the home from which they were removed, or to another home that is intended to become the child’s permanent home and custody is/remains with DHS via a court order. <p>DHS will NOT consider the following situations Court Ordered THVs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child is returned to the home of a parent, to the home from which they were removed, or to another home that is intended to become the child’s permanent home and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a court order gives conditional custody to the caretaker; or ○ a court order no longer places custody with DHS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ by specifically placing custody with the caretaker or ▪ by remaining silent regarding custody upon the return of the child. <p><u>DHS Internal Information system and Practice:</u> All THVs currently open in the DHS information system will be closed effective January 31, 2021 unless they meet the new definition of Court Ordered THV as outlined above. When there is no Court Ordered THV, each removal or re-entry into out of home care will be a new episode of out of home care and no longer considered actions within the same episode. Each new episode will need judicial determination that continuation in the home would be contrary to the welfare of the child and that reasonable efforts have been made to prevent the removal of the child from the home.</p> <p>Who Is Impacted: Changes to DHS’s informational system will directly impact DHS field staff who will be responsible for ensuring accurate entry of episodes of care and services. Additionally, changes in certain data points around foster care, such as the rate of abuse while in foster care and the rate of re-entry into foster, will be noticed by external stakeholders including but not limited to county attorneys, judges, and contracted service providers.</p>
<p>What Is Not Changing:</p>	<p>This is an internal DHS policy and practice change based on information currently contained in court orders. This does not change the legal process regarding custody, foster care, or removal. THVs will continue to end after six months if there is no court order extending the Court Ordered THV.</p>
<p>Expected Benefits:</p>	<p>Viewing exit and re-entry separately allows for more streamlined and standardized processes for reviewing supports and services that assist in a safe transition, maintaining stability, and preventing re-entry.</p>