



CONNECTIONS Tip Sheet

Documenting Eligibility: Candidacy for Foster Care

revised January 2021

In order for a local Department of Social Services (LDSS) to receive federal IV-E reimbursement for certain allowable preventive/pre-placement administrative activities, timely and accurate documentation is required in CONNECTIONS of a child’s “candidacy for foster care”.

This tip sheet defines candidacy for foster care and describes the steps necessary for caseworkers and eligibility workers to document the information required to maximize IV-E reimbursement .

What is Candidacy?

A candidate for foster care is a child who is **not** currently placed in foster care, but who is at serious or imminent risk of being removed from his or her home and placed into foster care. This must be evidenced by the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) either (1) pursuing the child’s removal from the home or (2) making reasonable efforts to prevent such removal.

A child cannot be considered a candidate for foster care when the LDSS has no formal involvement with the child or simply because he or she has been described as being “at risk” due to circumstances such as a dysfunctional home environment or social/interpersonal problems.



An individualized determination that a child is a candidate for foster care must be completed and documented and, if the child is determined to be a candidate, must be re-determined every six months thereafter.

The LDSS caseworker must complete the Federal Foster Care Candidacy Determination Form (OCFS-4777) for each individual child who is receiving protective and/or preventive services. This form, along with the documentation that supports the finding must be maintained in the child’s case record.

OCFS-4777 (10/2019)

NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
FEDERAL FOSTER CARE CANDIDACY DETERMINATION FORM

Initial Determination Six-Month Redetermination (See Sections IV and V)

SECTION I. CASE INFORMATION

Child’s Name: [REDACTED]		Name of Person Completing Form: [REDACTED]
Child’s Date of Birth: [REDACTED] / [REDACTED] / [REDACTED]		Phone Number: ([REDACTED]) [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Case Number: [REDACTED]	CIN Number: [REDACTED]	Eligibility Determination Date: [REDACTED] / [REDACTED] / [REDACTED]
County/Tribal Agency: [REDACTED]		

Note: The *Federal Foster Care Candidacy Determination Form* must be done for each child in the household for whom federal Candidacy reimbursement is sought. A copy of this checklist must be maintained in the child’s case record.

Documenting Candidacy Determinations

To satisfy federal candidacy requirements based on the child’s case record, documentation must include:

1. A statement that the child is in “serious or imminent risk of placement into foster care”.
2. A description of the **specific** circumstances in the home that place the child at imminent or serious risk of removal from the home;
3. A detailed description of services offered or provided to the child/caregiver to keep the child safe and prevent removal;

4. The reason(s) that foster care will be the result if the services described in the plan are not offered or provided; and
5. The signature of the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) on the Family Assessment and Service Plan (FASP) **or** documentation as to why the parent refused to sign the FASP. Where applicable, this would include documentation of the parent or guardian's refusal or inability to participate.

To satisfy candidacy requirements based on evidence of a court proceeding, the child's case record must include both:

- a signed and dated petition filed in the Family Court under Article 3, 7, 10 or 10-C of the Family Court Act or section 358-a of the Social Services Law; and
- a description of the services offered or provided to the child to prevent removal.

Documenting Candidacy Redeterminations

After a child with a Protective and/or Preventive Choice has been initially determined to be a candidate for foster care, justification for continued candidacy must be re-determined and

If candidacy is based on documentation in the child's case plan, the re-determination must include the same findings and documentation as in the original determination. documented at least every six months. Redeterminations may be done sooner than six months to align subsequent redeterminations with the FASP cycle.

- Where candidacy is based on court proceedings, the re-determination must include documentation that the child remains in imminent or serious risk of placement into foster care but for the provision of preventive services, along with the services offered or provided to address such risk.

For children initially determined to not be a candidate for foster care, a new determination should be done whenever warranted by a change in case circumstances.

Documenting Candidacy in Activities

In addition to case record documentation requirements, three new Activities codes have been developed to document the results of candidacy determinations :

- S400 - Initial Candidacy Determination
- S410 - Six-Month Candidacy Redetermination
- S420 - Candidacy Ended

The screenshot shows a form with the following fields and labels:

- Date of Activity:** A date selection field with a dropdown arrow. A red arrow points from the label "Date of Activity" to this field.
- Type of Activity:** A dropdown menu currently showing "Special". A red arrow points from the label "Type of Activity" to this field.
- Event:** A dropdown menu currently showing "S400 - Initial Candidacy Determination". A red arrow points from the label "Event" to this field.
- Modifiers:** A section containing a "Status : (Field A)" dropdown menu. The menu is open, showing "CN - Candidate" (highlighted) and "NC - Not a Candidate". A red arrow points from the label "Modifier A" to this dropdown.
- Based On : (Field B):** A dropdown menu. A red arrow points from the label "Modifier B" to this field.

Activity Code	Determination	Event Date	Modifier A Status	Modifier B Based On	Comments
S400 Initial Candidacy Determination	Child is a Candidate	Enter Date the child specific determination was completed	Candidate	CA - Case Record or CO - Court Petition/Order	An S400 code is used either (1) when the first determination for a child's is made or (2) when the determination that a child <u>is</u> a candidate is made on a child who was initially determined <u>not</u> to be a candidate. Thus, some children may correctly have <u>two</u> consecutive S400 codes entered without an S420 (Candidacy ended) code.
	Child is not a Candidate	Enter Date the child specific determination was completed	Not a Candidate	NA - N/A	
S410 6-Month Candidacy Re- Determination	Child continues to be a Candidate	Enter Date the child specific redetermination was completed	Candidate	CA - Case Record or CO - Court Petition/Order	A Candidacy Redetermination is only required for children who were initially determined to be a candidate. An S410 code is used to indicate (1) continuing candidacy or (2) that candidacy has ended. <i>If the child's initial determination was "Not a Candidate" and that status changes,, a second S400 should be entered, not an S410.</i>
	Child is no longer a Candidate	Enter Date the child specific redetermination was completed	Not a Candidate	NA - N/A	
	Child is no longer a Candidate	Enter Date the child specific redetermination was completed	None	None	An S420 should be entered as soon as the determination is made that a child is no longer a candidate for foster care, such as when a child enters placement.



Reminder: It is essential that candidacy information be entered in a timely and accurate way so that districts are able to receive the maximum allowable federal and state reimbursement for which they are eligible.

Correcting Entry Errors in Activities

Because data accuracy is tied to federal claiming of IV-E administrative expenses, it is essential that Activities entries be correct.

If a child is determined not to be a candidate for foster care, but an S400 with a Mod A of "Candidate" is entered in Activities, it must be corrected by invalidating the incorrect entry and re-entering it as an S400 with a Mod. A of "Not a Candidate". Entering an S420 to indicate that "Candidacy Ended" is not a suitable correction as this would result in a claim of the child having been a candidate, even briefly, when they were not.

Additional Information on Candidacy

Additional information on candidacy requirements are available on the 2018 Policy Directives page of the OCFS website:

- 18-OCFS-LCM-04
https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/ocfs_2018/LCM/18-OCFS-LCM-04.pdf
- Form OCFS-4777
https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/ocfs_2018/LCM/18-OCFS-LCM-04-OCFS-4777.docx
- Frequently asked questions:
https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/ocfs_2018/LCM/18-OCFS-LCM-04-QAs.pdf
- Candidacy Mailbox: ocfs.sm.TitleIV-E.CandidacyforFosterCare

Resources

- CONNECTIONS Job Aids and Tip Sheets: <http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/jobaides/jobaides.asp>
- CONNECTIONS Regional Implementation Staff: <http://ocfs.state.nyenet/connect/contact.asp>
- CONNECTIONS Application Help Mailbox: ocfs.sm.conn_app@ocfs.state.ny.us

(NOTE: address contains an underline)

A Helpdesk ticket is now required before sending requests to the Triage Unit. This can be acquired by emailing FixIt@its.ny.gov.

ITS Enterprise Service Desk
1-844-891-1786