

Policy Name: Organizing and Closing Case Files

Policy Number: IA 39.00
OCM 33.00
IIHS 16.00

Subject: Electronic and paper records; records retention and destruction; case file transfer

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Contact Div/Bur/Sec: Division of Safety and Permanence
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Any information referenced within this document is considered to be a part of this policy with the exception of the "related resources" section.

Summary

This policy and the accompanying job aid provide guidance to BMCW staff on creating, maintaining, and storing child welfare case files.

Related Resources

Records Retention/Disposition Authorization [RDA1087 A-H Wisconsin Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System \(eWiSACWIS\)](#) and [RDA1057 Child Protected Services Case Files](#); Child Welfare Licensing Memo series 2012-11 [Use of Electronic Records](#); DSP Memo Series 2010-10, [Contents of a Child Welfare Case Record and Imaging](#).

Policy

All Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare CPS case records are the property of the State of Wisconsin, Department of Children and Families and are maintained for a period of 20 years after the case is closed. Contracted agencies must maintain all child welfare records, as outlined in *DSP Numbered Memo Series 2010-10, October 6, 2010*. [Contents of Child Welfare Case Record & Imaging](#).

Child welfare records are maintained both electronically in eWiSACWIS and in paper case files according to the policies listed above and in accordance with *RDA1057 Child Protected Services Case Files*. Adding them to eWiSACWIS and destroying the paper documents as allowable not only reduces the size of paper case files that need to be stored for 20 years, but also facilitates the location of specific information needed to complete new safety assessments on closed cases, CAPTA appeals, and other record searches.

All paper case file records for closed cases must be submitted to the BMCW records office within 45 days of closing the case via your Office Associate (OA) and/or clerical staff. Prior to submission, the

contracted agency must perform quality control to ensure:

- That the paper case file contains only those records which are to be maintained as paper documents, and
- That all documents which can be maintained in the electronic database only have been scanned and verified with the originals removed from the paper case file and destroyed confidential.

Staff are to keep in mind that the case file is a legal record that can be used at Court to establish the history of the case and document progress as well as services provided. In determining if a document not listed on a job aid is to be saved, IA specialists /case managers should consider its relevance to the case history.

Procedure

Initial Assessment Files

1. At case opening in Initial Assessment, an OA will provide a properly formatted accordion file to the assigned Initial Assessment staff with the eWiSACWIS case number on it.
2. The Initial Assessment specialists (IA specialist) will complete records in eWiSACWIS as part of their work flow. They will also scan items into eWiSACWIS and maintain paper records that cannot be scanned in accordance with the Job Aid titled *Maintaining CPS Case Files*. Once the document is scanned, the IA specialist should open the electronic file to verify all pages have scanned and that the image is clear, including any signatures. Original copies of any scanned documents may be destroyed confidentially once scanning has been done and verified according to RDA1057 Child Protective Services Case Files.
3. For family cases that are being re-opened:
 - If the new case is moving to Ongoing Case Management (OCM) or Intensive In-Home Services (IIHS), the IA specialist will ask the designated OA to request the closed records. The OA will follow the established process in ending the file to OCM / IIHS.
 - If the new case is closing without services, the OA who receives the closed file will check the inventory on the *BMCW – Open and Closed Records* SharePoint Site.
 - If the case is in the Inventory, the case file is in Milwaukee. The OA will request the case, add any new paperwork from the new case, update the closed date on the accordion file, and return the case to the Records Room.
 - If the case file is not in the Inventory the file is in Madison. Procedures for these records will be developed and accomplished by the records manager.
 - If, at any time, the IA specialist determines that looking at a case file will assist with the current assessment, the case file can be requested through the assigned OA.
4. Upon case closure or two business days prior to the scheduled case transfer meeting if the case is to transfer to OCM or IIHS, the IA specialist will fill out and sign the *IA Paper Case File Transfer/Closing Authorization* sheet and put it upright in the file, then give the file to the IA supervisor for review.

5. The IA supervisor will review the paper case file at the same time as reviewing the case closure/transfer work in eWiSACWIS to ensure completeness and preparedness for closing/transfer. The IA supervisor will ensure there is no redundancy of paperwork and that documents to be scanned in have been scanned in.
6. The IA supervisor will sign the *IA Paper Case File Transfer/Closing Authorization* and give the file to the designated OA for tracking in *Case Inventory History – eWiSACWIS* on the *BMCW Open and Closed Records* SharePoint Site. The OA will forward the case file, via courier, to the appropriate agency's clerical staff.
7. Prior to shipping the files to OCM or IIHS, the OA will add the case file dividers.
 - If the case was re-opened on a previous case with the same eWiSACWIS number and the file is in the BMCW inventory, the new information from IA will be added to the *front* of the old file with new case file dividers to indicate a new *episode*. (An episode is defined as the time between a new safety assessment and the case closing with or without services being provided. Each time a case is opened on a family is a new episode.)
8. In cases that transfer to OCM or IIHS, the designated assigned agency's clerical staff will document the receipt of the case file in *Case Inventory History – eWiSACWIS* on the *BMCW Open and Closed Records* SharePoint Site and will take the file to the assigned case manager as indicated in the tracking database as soon as it is received.
9. Any additional paperwork that comes to the IA specialist after the file has been transferred should be clipped together with the *Confidential Information Cover Sheet* and sent directly to the private agency staff person assigned to the case via courier.
10. Any additional paperwork that comes to the IA specialist after the file has been sent to closed records must be placed in a properly formatted accordion file and given to the designated OA for shipping to BMCW's records room. The designated OA is responsible for providing the IA specialist with the properly formatted accordion file.

Ongoing Case Management / Intensive In-Home Services Files

NOTE: Files in the Ongoing Case Management (OCM) and Intensive In-Home Services (IIHS) programs are handled the same way. Files must be shipped to BMCW's closed records within 45 days of case closure. OCM cases close after post-reunification services have ended.

1. Paper case files will be transferred from IA and processed by the OA and/or clerical staff and forwarded to the appropriate agency via the BMCW courier. Case transfer files will have the following statement entered in "Remarks" section of *Case Inventory History – eWiSACWIS* on the *BMCW Open and Closed Records* SharePoint Site; "Case transferred to (location & case worker name)". Upon receipt of the case transfer file, the OA and/or clerical staff will enter in the "Remarks" section of the *Case Inventory History – eWiSACWIS* receipt of the file; example: "Received case transfer record and forwarded to (case worker name)". The private agency clerical staff is responsible for making the file available to the OCM/IIHS case manager prior to the case file transfer meeting.
2. Case managers (or agency designee) are responsible for scanning in documents and attaching them in eWiSACWIS according to the *Maintaining CPS Case Files* job aid (see attachment). Once the document is scanned, the case manager should open the electronic file

to verify all pages have scanned and that the image is clear, including any signatures. Original copies of any scanned documents may be destroyed confidential according to [RDA1057 Child Protected Services Case Files](#).

3. Case file dividers come with the case file at case transfer from IA. Documents to be filed in the paper case file should be filed under the case file divider as indicated in the *Maintaining CPS Case Files* job aid. The most recent documents are filed to the front of the divider. Documents of one episode are to be kept separately from previous filed paperwork. (An episode is defined as the time between a new safety assessment and the case closing with or without services being provided. Each time a case is opened on a family is a new episode. Each episode has its own case file dividers)
4. If a case moves toward termination of parental rights, a child folder will be created that separates the child from the family. This is done according to the Adoption Records policy.
5. If a file is requested for legal discovery, the case manager will follow the private agency's guidelines for preparing that file.
6. Upon case closing, the file must be reviewed and any duplicate paperwork removed. The file will also be checked according to the agency's procedure to ensure paperwork that can be scanned into eWiSACWIS has been verified in eWiSACWIS and the originals destroyed.
7. The private agency is responsible for ensuring quality control of all files is completed before shipping to BMCW's closed records department. Files not in compliance with these standards will be sent back to the agency by the BMCW records manager.
8. After a quality control review, the file must be taken to the designated clerical staff who will complete the *Closed Records Return* form ([DCF-F-429- E](#)), enter the *Date Returned to Records Room* block and number of files being returned in *Case Inventory History* – eWiSACWIS on the *BMCW Open and Closed Records* SharePoint Site. The OA/agency clerical staff will forward the case file(s), via courier, BMCW's Records Room.

Responsibilities

Assigned office associates and clerical staff; Initial Assessment specialists; Ongoing and Intensive In-Home Services case managers; Initial Assessment supervisors; Ongoing and Intensive In-Home Services unit supervisors; BMCW records manager

Attachments

Maintaining CPS Care Files Job Aid
Case Filing Guide