



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Rafael López, Secretary

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** February 19, 2026

**TO:** Directors, Local Department of Social Services  
Assistant Directors for Services, Local Department of Social Services

**FROM:** Dr. Alger Studstill, Jr., Executive Director   
Social Services Administration

**SUBJECT:** Directive on Case Documentation Requirements for Out-of-Home Care -  
effective **March 1, 2026**

### Purpose

This memorandum clarifies the timelines for documentation of casework concerning children in out-of-home care, as a result of ongoing discussions with the Office of Inspector General (OIG), Attorney General's Office (AAG), and Department of Budget and Management (DBM) regarding audits of Local Department Operations. This memorandum supersedes [Guidance for Timeliness of Casework Documentation](#), which was issued on July 14, 2022. This memo is intended to provide guidance to staff until policies are revised and developed to clarify expectations and requirements for casework documentation.

### Background

[COMAR 07.02.11.17\(G\)](#) requires that documentation for "Every visit with the child shall be documented **as immediately as possible** in the case record **but not later than 5** business days after the visit occurs". However, the COMAR provision does not expressly define a "visit" but lists certain elements that must be addressed in "each visit."

[COMAR 07.02.11.13](#) requires that case planning be completed and documented within 60 days after removal. Additional specific casework activities are also required within specific timeframes prior to 60 days, such as visitation plans, school enrollment, scheduling initial and comprehensive medical exams, establishing permanency plans, etc.

Recent Local Department of Social Services audits have revealed misunderstandings regarding this documentation timeline. Specifically, confusion exists over whether "every visit" refers only to the required "monthly visit," or if other non-monthly visits fall under the "all case activities" category, which the July 14, 2022 memo allows up to 30 days for documentation.

Effective **March 1, 2026**, any time a worker has in person face-to-face contact with a child in out-of-home care, it shall be considered a "visit" and the worker shall follow the required documentation timeline. This includes the monthly visit and all other

face-to-face contact with the children in care.

### **Actions Required**

Documentation of casework activities includes all contacts, monthly visits, supervisory consults, etc. Whenever possible, staff should use State-issued devices for real time remote documentation. All information should be noted in the appropriate CJAMS documentation fields. **The day of the contact counts as day one.**

1. Within **1 business** day:
  - a. All placements and/or changes in living arrangements must be documented within 1 business day of the physical change.
  - b. The fields pertaining to exit reasons and least restrictive placement must be completed, even for a change in living arrangement.
2. Within **2 business** days
  - a. Per SSA/CW #12-27 SAFE-C OHP Policy the SAFE-C OHP is to be documented in CJAMS within 2 business days of making the safety decision.
  - a. Supervisors (or appropriate designees) are expected to review, approve, and sign SAFE-C OHP, within 1 business day of SAFE-C OHP submission.
3. Within **3 business** days:
  - a. A visitation plan must be created and documented in CJAMS within 3 business days of a youth entering care.
4. Within **5 business** days:
  - a. All face-to-face visits with a child in out-of-home care shall be documented as soon as possible in the case record but no later than 5 business days.
  - b. All face-to-face contact with parents or legal guardians of a child in out-of-home care shall be documented as soon as possible but no later than 5 business days.
  - c. All attempts to complete a face-to-face visit with a child in out-of-home care shall be documented as soon as possible in the case record but no later than 5 business days.
  - d. Education: The Best Interest Determination (BID) form shall be completed as soon as possible but no later than 5 business days from the date of the BID meeting.
  - e. Medical: Within 5 business days of receiving a medical record, the documents shall be uploaded to the electronic system of record and updated in Parts I and II of the Health Passport.
5. Within **30 calendar** days:
  - a. **All other case management activities** shall be documented in CJAMS as soon as possible but no later than 30 calendar days. Including but not limited to education (SSA/CW #23-04), health (SSA-CW #25-08), court, and case plans.
  - b. For the purposes of this directive, "case management activities" encompass any statutorily, COMAR, or SSA Policy-required casework, provided it does not involve face-to-face contact with a child in

out-of-home care or the child's parent or guardian. This also includes any action taken to address the clinical or practical needs of the family.

Please ensure this memorandum is distributed to all DHS staff across Maryland's 24 jurisdictions who have any responsibilities related to Out-of-Home care. This memorandum should be discussed in unit meetings and individual/group supervision to ensure expectations are clearly communicated and understood.

**Contact**

Please contact the SSA Out-of-Home team at [dfostercarepermanencyunit\\_dhs@maryland.gov](mailto:dfostercarepermanencyunit_dhs@maryland.gov) with any questions.

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