

Closing Cases

(Revised 3/29/18)

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Forms

The following forms are referenced in this file:

- 04-76 Case Closing Template
- 04-120 Case Closing Checklist (*CWS/CMS Template*)
- 04-232 Exit Outcomes for Foster Youth (*CWS/CMS Template*)
- 07-65 Placement Information and Payment Authorization (*CWS/CMS Template*)

Introduction

Closing a case **is a planned component of casework**. It requires careful planning, consultation and family involvement. Skills involved in terminating a helping relationship are as important as the skills used in initiating it.

If the relationship has ultimately been a rewarding experience for the family and/or the SW, the prospect of termination may be met with ambivalent feelings. It is not unusual for parents and children to regress prior to termination of dependency.

NOTE: Terminating services is not the same as **closing a case**. When parents fail to reunify within the statutory time limits, the court terminates services but does not terminate jurisdiction (at least, not at the same time). For further information, see Termination of Services.

Closing criteria

The following criteria will be considered in **all** CWS programs when the SW is recommending closing a case:

Closing Criteria	Examples
Objectives Met	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The service objectives stated in the case plan are achieved and the child is no longer at risk.• The identified risk factor(s), as stated in the petition or referral, either no longer exist or exceed minimum health and safety standards, and the child has been released from protective custody.

Closing criteria
(cont.)

Closing Criteria	Examples
<p>Objectives Met (cont.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parent and their safety and support network appear able to protect the child from future abuse/neglect. • The family crisis is resolved and no further substantial risk exists. • The family meets the minimum standards of health, safety and parenting, even if the SW believes that the family may have a variant lifestyle, or be a chronic, multi-agency user, dependent on other services, with minimal attempt to change. • The parent has demonstrated acts of protection and the danger to the child has been resolved. • The child lives with a relative or stepparent, the parent/perpetrator poses no threat to the child, and the relative is willing and able to seek intervention if the child becomes at risk. • The child’s adoption has been finalized. • The child’s legal guardianship has been finalized.
<p>Child and/or parent no longer living in San Diego County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another county in California accepts jurisdiction (See Inter-County Transfers (ICTs). • A supervising state authorizes termination under Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) provisions, and the objectives have been met. • Reasonable attempts to locate the family/child have failed and child is not a dependent (see ER - Investigations). • The child has been abducted by the parent, the SW has made intensive search efforts and both parent and child remain absent for 30 days on Voluntary cases. If the child is a dependent, the case must remain open until the court terminates jurisdiction, which may not be until the child reaches age 18.
<p>Child/Family Not Appropriate for Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The case is dismissed or terminated by the court with or without a true finding and the situation does not meet the criteria for child welfare services. • The child emancipates. • The child dies. • The child is over 14 years, is not a dependent, exhibits behavior that is out-of-control, and the child: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ refuses to be protected or refuses to accept the services of CWS/Juvenile Court, and/or ○ exhibits chronic truancy, runaway behavior, and/or ○ exhibits delinquent behavior, and/or ○ has been AWOL for 30 days, and/or

**Closing criteria
(cont.)**

Closing Criteria	Examples
<p>Child/Family Not Appropriate for Services (cont.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ is declared a ward under the jurisdiction of the Probation Department (see Dual Status). ● The SW determines and documents that there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the allegation(s). ● The family becomes uncooperative, refuses Voluntary Services, or requests that their services be terminated, and does not meet the criteria for court action. ● One of the parents is able to protect the child(ren) but the other parent is not, and the protecting parent obtains Family Court custody orders that protect the child(ren).
<p>Youth turns 18 and opts out of EFC</p>	<p>See Terminating when Youth Are Turning 18 in the Termination of Jurisdiction file.</p>
<p>Youth turns 18 and will be extending foster care until 21</p>	<p>Refer to the EFC policies.</p>

Case closure requirements

Prior to closing FM and VS cases, the SW will:

Step	Action
<p>1</p>	<p>Complete an SDM In-Home Risk Reassessment (see Structured Decision Making (SDM)) not more than 65 days prior to closure to help inform the case-closing decision.</p> <p>Complete an SDM Safety Assessment.</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>Consult with PSS regarding reasons to close the case.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Confer with the family and their safety and support network regarding plans to close (after consultation and agreement of PSS).</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>If a court case, confer with the parents' and child(ren)'s attorneys (after consultation and agreement of PSS).</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Conduct a Case Consultation on all Highly Vulnerable Children cases (see Highly Vulnerable Children Protocol).</p>

Case closure requirements (cont.)

Step	Action
6	Ensure that a safety network has been established and that the family knows how to utilize support systems and resources independently.
7	Develop with the family and their safety and support network, any aftercare services and the dates of the termination of contracted services. Consider scheduling a informal/consultation safety mapping if it would be helpful.
8	Evaluate carefully with the family and their safety and support network the progress that the family has made. Recognize and highlight positive changes as well as plan for any issues that may remain.
9	If concerns arise as closure nears, explore the possible reasons with the family and their safety and support network, problem-solve and plan as necessary.
10	Provide the family and their safety and support network with community resources and give them permission to contact the SW if they need advice on accessing resources.
11	Make a final face-to-face contact with the child(ren) during the calendar month the case is closing but before the case is closed (see regulatory and statutory terminations in this file for closure effective dates), and enter it into CWS/CMS.
12	Complete the 04-120 (Case Closing Checklist CWS/CMS Template).
13	Complete the 04-76 (Case Closing Template).
14	<p>Ensure that every family member's Client Notebook includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The client's DOB (or approximate age if the DOB is unknown), race, Hispanic/Latin origin, language • Each client's relationship to other family members • The correct address, with zip code. Any old addresses must be end-dated.
15	Purge any unnecessary documents from the case file according to the Case Retention and Purges file.

Case closure requirements (cont.)

Step	Action
16	If a client has an active Compass Card issued through CWS (see Transportation by Bus/Trolley for Clients), inform the Regional Fiscal Clerk that the case is closing, retrieve the Card(s) from the client(s), and return them to the Regional Fiscal Clerk.
17	If the youth is 18 or older, complete the Exit Outcomes for Foster Youth (04-232 - CWS/CMS template) before closing the case. Refer to the Termination of Jurisdiction PM file for the procedure.

NOTE: When a child is a **dependent** of the Juvenile Court, the court must order dependency terminated before the SW can close the CWS case.

Regulatory and statutory termination time frames

California’s Division 31 regulations (31-084, 31-086, 31-088, and 31-090) govern the identification of, and reporting time frames for, cases receiving ER, FM, FR, or PP services.

The table below displays when closing the case may occur and the corresponding effective date.

Event	Effective Date of Case Closure
Petition is dismissed.	Date court dismisses petition.
FM services are no longer needed for a dependent (e.g., the case plan goals and objectives have been met and the child is no longer endangered).	Date court terminates jurisdiction.
Youth reaches age 18 and opts out of Extended Foster Care.	Date court terminates jurisdiction.
Dependent child’s/family’s whereabouts unknown.	Maximum 6 months from date court is notified that child’s/family’s whereabouts are unknown (per State regulations [31-086.261, 31-088.271, and 31-090.261]). HOWEVER- The SW must keep the case open until/unless the court terminates jurisdiction.

Regulatory and statutory termination time frames (cont.)

Event	Effective Date of Case Closure
Child is emancipated.	Date of Hearing.
Child dies.	No later than 30 days from date SW is informed.
Guardian appointed and AFDC-FC discontinued.	Date AFDC-FC is discontinued. EXCEPTION: If a relative is appointed as a legal guardian but the court continues dependency, PP services must continue.
Adoption finalized.	Date court finalized adoption. NOTE: Even though AAP remains active after finalization, the CWS case must be closed.
VS no longer needed for a non-dependent child/family (e.g., case plan goals and objectives have been met and child no longer endangered).	Date PSS approves case closure. NOTE: See Chapter 4's Voluntary Services policies for additional information.
Parent(s) request termination of voluntary services for a non-dependent child.	Date the parent(s) make the request. NOTE: If the SW has reason to believe that closing the VS case would be unsafe for the child, the SW will immediately consult with the PSS about screening a petition.
Non-dependent child's/family's whereabouts are unknown.	The earlier of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 days from the date the SW is first informed that the whereabouts are unknown, or • 60 days from the date the SW made the last visit with the child/family.

Closing procedures

The SW will follow these steps when closing a case:

Step	Action
1	Does case meet termination criteria? (see Termination of Jurisdiction) If yes , go to Step 2. If no , STOP. Case cannot be closed.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make a final face-to-face contact with the child(ren) during the calendar month the case is closing, and document it in CWS/CMS.• Make sure that ALL contacts have been entered into CWS/CMS.
3	Is child a dependent of the Juvenile Court or is there court action pending? If yes , go to Step 4. If no , go to Step 6.
4	Recommend termination of jurisdiction to the Juvenile Court through regular hearing, Special Hearing, or ex parte. NOTE: Ensure any outstanding Pickup and Detain orders are canceled.
5	Did the court terminate jurisdiction? If yes , go to Step 7. If no , go to Step 6.
6	Continue to provide services described in the case plan and court order until jurisdiction is terminated by the court.
7	Enter a closing summary in Case Notes. There must be complete information in the appropriate CWS/CMS Notebooks prior to completing the closing summary.

**Closing procedures
(cont.)**

Step	Action						
7 (cont.)	<p>The closing summary must be completed, and approved by the PSS, within the following time frames:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>TYPE</th> <th>TIME FRAME</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Court case</td> <td>Within 5 working days of the court order dismissing the petition or terminating dependency.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>VS case</td> <td>Within 5 working days of the date the PSS approves the closing of the case.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The intent of the additional 5 days is to give the SW and PSS a grace period to ensure that all contacts are entered into CWS/CMS, all forms have been completed, etc. It is not to give staff time to make any final contacts.</p> <p>NO in-person contacts are to be made after the case is closed, even if the family requests it. For more information, see Contacts - General. The minimum requirements are listed on the 04-120 (Case Closing Checklist, which is a CWS/CMS Template).</p> <p>NOTE: The closing summary should be copied and pasted into the End Case Closure Statement, as well as into the files of any siblings whose cases are also closing at the same time.</p>	TYPE	TIME FRAME	Court case	Within 5 working days of the court order dismissing the petition or terminating dependency.	VS case	Within 5 working days of the date the PSS approves the closing of the case.
TYPE	TIME FRAME						
Court case	Within 5 working days of the court order dismissing the petition or terminating dependency.						
VS case	Within 5 working days of the date the PSS approves the closing of the case.						
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit a completed 07-65 to the Registrar. • Complete all AFCARS (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System) fields before ending the case. 						
9	Complete the 04-120 (Case Closing Checklist), ensuring all required forms are present and properly filed in the hard case folder per the list on the 04-120.						
10	Obtain PSS approval/signature within five working days of termination of jurisdiction.						

The PSS will send hard file to Registrar.

The Region will keep the closed case file on-site for 30 days, so it is available when any final paperwork needs to be filed.

HVC cases

Cases designated as Highly Vulnerable Child(ren) (HVC) require additional review prior to closing a case (see the Highly Vulnerable Children Protocol).

Child fatalities and near-fatalities

Whenever a case involves a child fatality or near-fatality, the SW will follow the Child Fatality and Near Fatality Protocol and/or the Critical Incident Protocol.

All fatalities and near-fatalities that are determined to be the result of child abuse or neglect must be reported to the state, so **before a case involving a child fatality or near-fatality can be closed, the SW must consult with the PSS of the Office of the Ombudsman.**

In the case of a near-fatality, the SW will need to provide specified information (see [ACL 16-109](#): Child Fatality And Near Fatality Reporting And Public Disclosure Requirements), which the Office of the Ombudsman can assist with.

Community Services for Families (CSF)

Community Services For Families (CSF) is designed to provide a continuum of support services for families at-risk for child abuse or neglect. Services are provided through collaborative entities composed of community-based partners and County staff.

SWs should confer with families and their safety and support networks to determine whether it would be appropriate to refer a family to CSF when closing a case.

NOTE: If a client has a SAT HOUSING VOUCHER, then a referral to CSF is **required** as a condition of maintaining the voucher.

Alignment with SET

This policy supports the following SET Values and Key Expectations:

- [Value 1](#): Relationships With Children, Youth and Families Are the Foundation and the guiding principle of partnering with the whole family to create long-term safety, ongoing permanency, and well-being.
 - [Value 2](#): Collaborative Partnerships With Kinship and Resource Families and the guiding principles of seeking and creating opportunities for biological families, kinship, and resource families to communicate and work together for the child/youth's best interest, and the agency practice of discussing permanency with parents, caregivers, and support networks initially and throughout the life of the case.
 - [Value 5](#): A Strong Working Relationship With the Legal System and the guiding principle of ensuring that all parties have a mutual understanding of, and respect for one another's roles, the law, and the rights of children, youth, and families.
 - Key Expectation: Open and Clear Communication.
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