

 <b>VERMONT</b> DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>81</h1>
Chapter:	Working with Families in Court	
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## Purpose

To outline the necessary tasks in entering into a voluntary care agreement with a family.

## Policy

Voluntary care will be used only as a means to assist a family when a child's caretakers are unable, due to temporary incapacitation due to injury, illness or other uncontrollable external factors, to provide necessary care for the child. In other instances, appropriate remedies are available and appropriate through the court.

Before exploring the option of voluntary care, the social worker will thoroughly explore options available through the family's kinship and informal support network and through the community service system. The district director must approve the voluntary care before it is offered to the family.

Since voluntary care is designed to be a short-term remedy and not for protective services reasons, special attention must be given to maintaining frequent and open contact between the child and his or her parent(s).

Any voluntary care agreement that will extend beyond 180 days must receive judicial approval before the completion of the 180 days.

## Social Worker Tasks:

- Upon agreement of supervisor, completes Voluntary Care Agreement (CWYJ-310A) for review and approval by district director.
- Discusses the proposed agreement and plan with the family. Whenever possible, obtains the signatures of both parents if they live together or have joint custody of the child.
- Provides copies of agreement to parent(s); retains original in case record.

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- If the voluntary care agreement will be extended, completes Voluntary Care Stipulation (CWYJ - 310B).
- If the child will be in voluntary care in excess of 180 days, submits agreement, Request for Judicial Approval (see format in Appendix 1), Reasonable Efforts Affidavit (CWYJ -602) to the juvenile court at least two weeks prior to the expiration of the agreement.
- Holds administrative review no later than six months from the date of the initial agreement and every six months thereafter.
- If the parents request termination of the agreement, makes arrangements for the child's immediate return, or requests emergency detention order if sufficient cause exists.