

P-2370 Case Management Procedures for Temporary Absence

A. General Procedures

In certain cases where a child or parent/caretaker is or will be absent from the home for a period greater than 30 days, but not expected to exceed 180 consecutive days, the household may continue to receive Reach Up assistance.

Temporary absence may be allowed for a parent when they are absent from the home to receive inpatient or outpatient care from a hospital, substance abuse treatment facility, or other medical treatment institution. Temporary absence may be allowed for a child when a child(ren) is placed in the custody of Family Services Division (FSD); when they are absent from the home to receive care from a hospital, substance abuse treatment facility, or other medical institution; or when the child is incarcerated. Temporary absence based on the parent's voluntary agreement to place the child in someone else's care may also be eligible.

Example of a voluntary placement:

Mom has been experiencing an increase in mental health symptoms and is considering checking into Brattleboro Retreat for a period of time. Mom is supported by her mental health clinician and her primary care provider. Family Services is not involved. Providers write letters of support asking that it is in Mom and child's best interest child be separated from Mom and returned within 180 days. Child can stay temporarily with maternal grandmother, but Mom continues to need financial assistance so she can maintain her apartment. Case may be eligible for Temporary Absence.

Shared custody and Conditional Custody Orders (CCO) do not necessarily indicate a need for temporary absence unless the child(ren) is out of the household more than 50% of the time.

Homelessness alone doesn't disqualify the parent for continued benefits if the intent is for the parent and the child to be again living together within 180 days.

1. Reporting Temporary Absence

The household is responsible for reporting an absence, but if reported by FSD, Economic Services must act on the information.

- a. In cases involving children in FSD custody, FSD can either provide:

P-2370 Case Management Procedures for Temporary Absence

A. General Procedures (Continued)

- i. form [FS201FC-M](#) indicating if household is receiving Reach Up.
 - ii. an email to ESD stating that a child(ren) were removed that the current plan includes reunification.
- b. If the household reports to Case Management, the case manager reports temporary absence to Eligibility if not already reported.
 - c. In all cases where case management is involved, the case manager will help explain the temporary absence process to the family. It will be assumed that participants will want their Reach Up benefit continued, but participants can opt out.

2. Determining Eligibility

- a. Eligibility will follow procedures to gather verification of absence. If case manager receives any verification it will be shared with Eligibility.
- b. The most common Temporary Absence cases involve FSD custody. If FSD reports at any point that the court approved plan for the family has changed to no longer include reunification as a goal, the case manager reports this to the Reach Up Supervisor who will send an email to AHS.DCFESDCOReachUp@vermont.gov for review of the case. If the decision is to close, the case manager will inform Eligibility and the Reach Up grant must close or be reduced.
- c. Each District will keep a list of all Temporary Absence decisions and submit a copy to Reach Up Central Office on a quarterly basis.

3. General Case Management Responsibilities:

- a. Case manager continues to administer the services component of the Reach Up Program.
- b. Family Development Plan requirements that were applicable prior to the absence still apply, unless in direct conflict with what is being required of the participant by FSD. FDP activities that support the parent's engagement with Family Services is recommended.

P-2370 Case Management Procedures for Temporary Absence

A. General Procedures (Continued)

- c. If it is unlikely that reunification will occur before the 180 days is completed, but the household remains eligible for a Temporary Absence, it is best practice to help the participant plan ahead for their transition off of Reach Up after their 180 day period has expired.

B. Temporary Absence of Child(ren)

ESD will use a teaming approach to monitor those cases where the temporary absence is due to custody or placement of the child by Family Services. The Family Services social worker assigned to the family, the parent/caretaker's Reach Up case manager, and Eligibility will work together to assist the family. In cases of a child only Reach Up grant, case management will not be set up and communication will remain between Family Services and the District Management Team.

1. Case Management Responsibilities

- a. The case manager will assist in obtaining a [201WC](#) release from the parent/caretaker in situations where the child's absence is due to incarceration, medical care, or a voluntary placement and contact the appropriate parties (including the parent/caretaker) two or more times per month including face to face, phone and email contact.
- b. In cases of FSD custody, case manager will have contact two times or more per month with the parent/caretaker and the Family Services social worker. This will include a monthly team meeting, as well as phone and email contact.
- c. Case manager will specifically inquire
 - i. Is the absence still expected to be less or no more than 180 days?
 - ii. Does the parent/caretaker still plan on having the child return home?
 - iii. What is the parent/caretaker's living situation? (Is she maintaining a home for the child's return? Up-to-date on rent? Looking for housing if "homeless"? ...etc.)

10/15/18

Bulletin No. 18-12

P-2370 p.4

P-2370 Case Management Procedures for Temporary Absence

B. Temporary Absence of Child(ren) (Continued)

- d. Case manager will share pertinent information received from Eligibility or an institution with the Family Services social worker.
- e. Case manager will report any changes to Eligibility that might affect continuing eligibility for the Reach Up grant.

C. Temporary Absence of Parent/Caretaker

1. Case Management Responsibilities

- a. The case manager will assist in obtaining a [201WC](#) from the parent/caretaker and contact the hospital, substance abuse treatment facility or other medical institution.
- b. Case manager will code absent parent/caretaker as medically deferred from the work requirement.
- c. Case manager will have a minimum of contact two times per month with the absent parent/caretaker, if the facility and situation permit, in part to monitor the parent/caretaker's continuing ability to return within 180 days. This requirement can be waived in situations where it has been verified with the hospital, substance abuse treatment facility or other medical institution, that contact is not allowed, would be unreasonably difficult to arrange, or would be detrimental to the parent/caretaker's treatment plan.
- d. See B (1) c and d above.