

TAPA (Temporary Alternative Placement Agreement) Form Instructions (CD-295)

PURPOSE:

The TAPA (Temporary Alternative Placement Agreement) Form (CD-295) is to be completed when a child is determined to be unsafe and able to be temporarily placed outside of the home with a relative to allow for time, beyond three (3) business days, to reduce or eliminate the safety threat(s) to the child(ren).

Pursuant to Section 210.123, RSMo, a TAPA is a voluntary agreement between the Children's Division, a relative of the child, and the parent or guardian of the child to provide a temporary out of home placement for a child if the parent or guardian is temporarily unable to provide care or support for the child and the child is not in imminent danger of death or serious bodily injury, or being sexually abused such that the Children's Division determines that a referral to the juvenile office with a recommendation to file a petition or to remove the child is not appropriate.

A TAPA requires the agreement and signature of the following parties:

1. The parent/guardian;
2. The relative; and
3. The Children's Division

If the parties are unable to reach an agreement regarding the terms of the TAPA, staff should make a referral to the juvenile officer by submitting a CD-235 as soon as possible, but no later than three (3) business days from the date of the relative diversion placement.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION:

If it is determined the child can be safely diverted to a relative and a TAPA is therefore necessary, staff must complete the Temporary Alternative Placement Agreement (CD-295) as soon as possible, but no later than three (3) business days from the date the relative diversion placement was made and shall be signed by the parent/guardian, the relative, and appropriate Children's Division staff. Staff must begin the CD-295 at the time of diversion placement, but do not have to have the CD-295 finalized at that time. For example, staff may develop a rough draft of the CD-295 with the family at the time of the diversion, but may choose to utilize the initial TDM meeting to finalize the CD-295 once more information is gathered and the TAPA has been fully discussed with the relative. **NOTE:** Pursuant to Section 210.123 RSMo, the CD-295 must be reduced to writing within three business days of the diversion and is not a final agreement until the parent/legal guardian, relative, and the Children's Division has signed it. The CD-295 must be uploaded into OnBase.

If the parent/legal guardian voluntarily places the children with the same relative, siblings may be included under one CD-295. Staff must make sure to assess and identify each child's specific vulnerabilities to the safety threat and should identify action steps/safety interventions for each child depending on their individual needs. The CD-295 should be specific to the relative diversion placement. Therefore, if siblings will not be staying together, separate CD-295's should be completed.

A copy of the CD-295 is to be provided to the parent/legal guardian and the relative, as well as the juvenile officer immediately upon completion, but no later than three (3) business days from the date of the relative diversion placement.

Parties Involved with a TAPA Agreement:

A TAPA requires the full agreement of the parent/guardian, relative diversion placement, and the Children’s Division in order for the TAPA to be implemented. As such, contact information for the child, parent/guardian, and relative diversion placement must be fully included on the TAPA form.

What immediate safety threat(s) to the child(ren) exists?

A safety threat is defined as a behavior, emotion, motive, perception, or capacity of a person who has access to the child that is out of control, imminent, and likely to have severe effects on a vulnerable child. When identifying safety threat(s), they need to be child specific. Safety threats to a child are evident when a child is vulnerable to the particular situation and the parent/legal guardian do not have protective capacities to resolve the threat.

What are the child(ren)’s vulnerabilities to the safety threats and what are the concerns with the parent/caretaker’s protective capacities?

Vulnerabilities of a child are a significant factor in evaluating safety and immanency of the identified safety threat(s). Child vulnerabilities are the degree to which a child is susceptible to threats to his or her safety and the degree in which a child is capable of protecting him/herself against those threats. Things that contribute to child vulnerabilities are age, developmental level and mental capacities, physical disabilities and illness, behaviors, ability to communicate, isolation/visibility, ability to meet basic needs, access to perpetrator(s), and child relationship to perpetrator(s).

The protective capacities of a parent/legal guardian are another vital element to consider when evaluating safety. Caregiver protective capacities are personal, behavioral, cognitive and emotional characteristics that are directly associated with child protection. There are several things that can impact the protective capacities of a parent/legal guardian, including mental capabilities, physical health, access to resources, relationship to the perpetrator(s), behavioral history, age, and substance misuse.

What actions has the parent/legal guardian taken in the past to keep the child safe when the safety threat(s) have occurred? What supports have been utilized in the past (or presently) to keep the child safe?

By exploring previous safety threat(s) and what the parent/legal guardian did in the past to keep the child safe, strengths within the family are identified. Similarly, once past and/or present supports to keep the child safe are explored, possible support networks (either formal or informal supports) are identified that can assist with the current TAPA (CD-295). By expanding on strengths within the parental protective capacities and identifying natural supports within each family, staff are more easily able to assist the family in developing realistic plans that are specific to their family, making follow through more likely. It also allows the parent/legal guardian an opportunity to feel actively involved in the plans for their family, instead of being directed of what to do from an outside agency.

Facts and Circumstances that Led to the Implementation of the TAPA

In this section of the TAPA form (CD-295), staff will identify the facts and circumstances of alleged abuse/neglect that led to the implementation of the TAPA, including:

- CA/N incident numbers that led to Children’s Division current involvement with the family;
- Specific allegations and existing safety threat(s) to each child named in the TAPA and who/what poses the threat(s);

- How the parent protective capacities are insufficient to protect the child from the safety threat(s) and describe what makes the child vulnerable to the threat(s);
- Factual documentation from any relevant service providers/collateral contacts that contribute to the concern for child safety; and
- Actions taken thus far, and by whom, to ensure immediate safety of the child involved in the TAPA

What needs to happen for this TAPA to successfully end and the child to safely return to the parent(s)/legal guardian(s)?

Staff should identify the action steps needed, and by whom, to resolve each identified safety threat to each child named in the TAPA form. Each action step/plan shall include timeframes for completion as well as the behavioral changes that are needed to be made by each parent/legal guardian in order to ensure each child's safety, best interest, and welfare upon returning home. When identifying specific steps that need to happen for the TAPA to successfully terminate, staff should be sure not to be heavily reliant on services, but rather on the behavioral changes needed to ensure safety. For example, the plan should not simply identify that a parent should participate in parenting classes. Instead, the plan should describe the behavior the parent needs to demonstrate in order for the Children's Division to be assured the parent has developed sufficient protective capacities to protect the child from the safety threat(s). In this scenario, the parenting class is simply a resource the parent may utilize to help them be able demonstrate the desired behavior. It is not the parenting class itself that will keep the child safe, but the parent's behavior as a result of attending the parenting class.

Similar to completing an Immediate Safety Intervention Plan, the TAPA should:

- Be realistic and time limited;
- Ensure the parent(s)/guardian(s) and relative(s) are in agreement with the TAPA plan;
- Utilize the family's own resources by focusing on existing strengths and natural family support network;
- Assess the reliability of resources and providers of the action/steps;
- Develop interventions to accommodate time elements (for example, weekends and holidays may require different actions than daytime hours during the week, etc.);
- Take into consideration the tradeoffs the family may have to make in order to successfully terminate a TAPA; and
- Be conscious to not create further trauma to the family/child

What safety-related resources/support services are currently in place or still need to be referred to assist with the behavioral changes needed to resolve the threat(s) of safety to the child? What services will the Children's Division offer to the family? What supports have been utilized in the past that can be utilized during the TAPA to eliminate the safety threat(s)?

This section of the CD-295 is separated from the actual plan for safety, as a TAPA should not be reliant on services to make immediate behavioral change.

In this section of the CD-295, staff shall identify all safety-related services, service providers, and specific resources being offered to any and all parties involved in the CD-295, as well as what safety-related services and supports the family still needs to be connected with in an effort to prevent the removal of the child. These can be direct services provided by the Children's Division as well as any other services from community agencies that have been offered to the family to assist with the success of the TAPA and to reduce the risk of future CA/N. Safety-related services are appropriate services that are provided

to or arranged for the family with the goal of ensuring child safety. For example, if there are safety concerns related to the parent's ability to manage child-specific needs, Intensive In-Home Services (IIS) can be an appropriate safety-related services.

Staff should be sure to include timeframes for each service/resource and how the implementation of such service(s)/resource(s) will assist with the successful termination of the CD-295.

When staff determine safety-related services are needed during a CA/N report staff should clearly articulate and document the safety concern to include areas of need such as, but not limited to: basic needs, living conditions, the family's support system, health, mental health, educational concerns, and help address the needs through community resources and/or the family's safety network.

What is the plan for visitation and contact for each parent and all child(ren) with the participation of all parties?

In this section of the TAPA form (CD-295), staff should develop a visitation plan for each parent and each child. The visitation plan should be agreed upon by all parties of the TAPA and made in the best interest of the child and/or sibling group. The visitation plan is meant to enhance and increase the bond between the parent, child, and siblings for the duration of the TAPA. These standards should be considered by the parties when developing and reviewing the visitation plan.

Whenever possible, visits should occur in the parental home or in a homelike environment. This may include the home of the relative. Opportunities should be provided to allow the parents to participate in their child's normal day-to-day activities, when possible. For example a parent could attend parent teacher conferences, extracurricular activities, and doctor or dentist appointments.

What steps should the family and/or safety network members take in the event this TAPA is violated? Provide the name(s) and contact information for all members of the family support network as well as all individuals who must be immediately notified if this TAPA is violated or there are concerns for the safety of the child(ren) involved in this plan.

The TAPA (CD-295) must include an action step(s) for notification if the plan is violated or concerns arise regarding the safety of the child. This action step(s) should be developed so that all those involved in the TAPA (including formal/informal family supports, collaborative team members, service providers, etc.) will know what to do in the event the plan is violated. This should include contact information for all those who must be immediately notified if the plan is violated or concerns arise regarding the safety of the child.

Once the CD-295 is developed, the worker should make sure the family and any safety network members actively involved in the plan have a copy. The worker can take a picture of the plan for the record and provide the family with the paper copy. A copy must be retained and uploaded to OnBase.

By agreeing to this TAPA, parent(s)/legal guardian(s) agree and understand the following:

Staff must explain all of the legal requirements for entering into a TAPA and have the parent/legal guardian and the relative initial their respective sections on the TAPA form (CD-295).