

## Chapter 17: Case Records - Table of Contents

---

### Table of Contents

#### [17.000](#) Using SEMS Screens as the Case Record

What is SEMS (Support Enforcement Management System)?

What information do I enter into the case record?

#### [17.005](#) Keeping the Case Record Accurate

How do I keep the case record accurate?

What if a party asks me to change his or her address?

[Chart](#) - Review Code 93 Reference Sheet

#### [17.010](#) Using Uniform Case Comment and Review Codes on SEMS

[Chart](#) - Review/CC Codes

[Chart](#) - Prosecutor Review/CC Codes

[Chart](#) - Review Code 93 Reference Sheet

#### [17.015](#) Making Case Comment Screen Entries

What are some guidelines for making case comments?

#### [17.020](#) Posting Results on the Forms Table (FT) and Lien (LN) Screens

Why do I post results of DCS forms or actions?

How do I release forms using the FT or LN screens?

#### [17.025](#) Maintaining the Documents in an Open Case

What case records does DCS maintain?

What records are imaged?

Are any documents purged from the image record?

How do staff process mail for imaging?

What mail will staff continue to route in paper format?

What documents must DCS not image?

What do I do if DCS lost or destroyed a copy of a document, such as an administrative notice or order?

What if the missing document is an administrative notice or order, but it is not available on **AS**?

When do I tell the parties that we no longer have the file copy of the original document?

### **17.030 Archiving a Case or Retrieving Case Records**

When are closed cases sent to CARS for archiving?

What if I need documents that are in CARS?

How do I transfer a case from R (CARS) to a field office on SEMS?

### **17.035 Determining Where a Case Belongs**

If the NCP lives in Washington, when should I transfer the case to another field office?

Do I transfer the case when paternity is at issue?

How do I verify an address is valid before transferring the case?

When do I not transfer a case to another field office?

If the NCP lives outside Washington State, when should I transfer the case to another field office?

Where should setup staff send a new referral?

What do I do if I discover multiple non-paternity NCP cases in different field offices?

What if the CP or NCP is an employee of my field office, or is a friend or family member of a field office employee?

*Revised June 20, 2005*

Pre.

---

[DCS Home](#) [Director](#) [Field Ops](#) [Policy / Legal](#) [Central Services](#) [SEMS](#) [MAPS](#) [Fiscal Ops](#)  
[Communications](#) [/CRU](#) [Training](#) [Personnel](#) [Tribal Facilities](#)  
[Seattle](#) [Tacoma](#) [Everett](#) [Yakima](#) [Spokane](#) [Olympia](#) [Wenatchee](#) [Vancouver](#) [Fife](#) [Kennewick](#)

View

## Chapter 17: Case Records

### Section 17.000: Using SEMS Screens as the Case Record

This section describes the purpose of SEMS and SEMS screens and the required information that SEMS must contain.

#### Contents

Laws	<a href="#">45 CFR 302.15</a> Maintain records for state IV-D plan <a href="#">45 CFR 303.6</a> Maintain effective system <a href="#">45 CFR 303.72</a> (a)(4) Records required for IRS cert <a href="#">45 CFR 307.10</a> Computerized system
Policy	Use only approved SEMS (Support Enforcement Management System) codes designated for the specific purpose. State Office approves the official usage of case comment and review codes for specific purposes. Maintain records on each IV-D case in accordance with the state IV-D plan. Supplement the SEMS record with documents pertaining to the case.
Procedure	SEMS is the official case record recognized by federal auditors. Update and maintain all screens with correct information. Use <b>EV</b> and <b>RCs</b> to prompt actions to take on the case.
Visual Aids	<a href="#">Chart - Some SEMS Screens and Their Functions</a>
Automated Actions	EV evaluates a case using the following screens: <a href="#">BC</a> , <a href="#">BI</a> , <a href="#">CF</a> , <a href="#">FT</a> , <a href="#">IA</a> , <a href="#">LN</a> , <a href="#">MI</a> , <a href="#">OR</a> , <a href="#">LI</a>
SEMS Screens	All
Forms Used	
Hearing and Conference Board Rights	
Personal Notes <a href="#">[Add a note]</a>	You have not added any notes to this handbook section.
See Also	<a href="#">SEMS Manual</a>

## Procedures

### 1. What is SEMS (Support Enforcement Management System)?

1. SEMS stands for the Support Enforcement Management System, which is the DCS computer system.
2. SEMS is the official case record recognized by federal auditors.
3. The SEMS computer records provide an audit trail showing a case's history and current status.
4. SEMS codes and data fields prompt staff to take specific actions on the case using an evaluation (EV) notice.
5. It is important that SEMS records are accurate. SEMS data are used for federal statistical reports to show the effectiveness of Washington's IV-D program.
6. Use SEMS help features to access a complete list of pass-off codes and options for specific screens. For some frequently used SEMS screens and their functions, listed by pass-off code, see [Chart - Some SEMS Screens and Their Functions](#).
  - Enter the pass-off code in the action code field to bring up the screen.

### 2. What information do I enter into the case record?

1. Information pertaining to the case and the receipt of documents, as well as all relevant facts, dates, actions taken, contacts made, and the results in a case.
2. Relevant sources of information and records, unless the source is confidential, such as from FIDM or IRS.
3. Credit bureau checks. You may make a comment "credit bureau check".
  - Do **not** post assets or information from the credit report in the case record.
4. Applications, receipt dates, and type of services requested or that DCS must provide given the family's public assistance status. See Section [2.005](#).
5. **Locate information for** of the NCP or the NCP's assets and the CP's current address. **SEMS** automated actions also meet this requirement. See Section [20.000](#).
6. Actions taken to establish paternity, or to obtain and/or enforce support. See Section [3.000](#).
7. Order information, including the date and place that support is officially established and/or recorded, or the action dismissed.
8. Payment history, including the amount and sources of DCS support collections and the distribution of these collections. See Section [19.000](#).
9. Case closure reasons and dates. See Section [18.000](#) [chart](#).
10. **Information needed for** IRS certification, **including** all of the following:
  1. A copy of the NCP's support order(s) used to calculate the NCP's debt. See [8.000](#); and,
  2. A copy of the NCP's payment record or other items showing payment, such as the CP's declaration of payments, such as a **Child Support Referral**, DSHS [14-057](#), **Locate Inquiry Letter to Custodial Parent**, DSHS [18-001](#), or **Declaration of Support Payments**, DSHS [18-433](#); and,
  3. If applicable, the signed copy of the nonassistance application.

11. **Reasons supporting** any deviation from the Washington State Child Support Schedule (WSCSS). See Section [6.090](#).

*Revised June 20, 2005*

---

[DCS Home](#) [Director](#) [Field Ops](#) [Policy / Legal](#) [Central Services](#) [SEMS](#) [MAPS](#) [Fiscal Ops](#)  
[Communications](#) [/CRU](#) [Training](#) [Personnel](#) [Tribal](#) [Facilities](#)  
[Seattle](#) [Tacoma](#) [Everett](#) [Yakima](#) [Spokane](#) [Olympia](#) [Wenatchee](#) [Vancouver](#) [Fife](#) [Kennewick](#)

Previous

**Pre**

## Chapter 17: Case Records

### Section 17.005: Keeping the Case Record Accurate

This section describes how to keep the SEMS data accurate to ensure the next appropriate action.

### Contents

Laws	<a href="#">45 CFR 302.15</a> Maintain records for IV-D plan <a href="#">45 CFR 303.6</a> Maintain effective system <a href="#">45 CFR 307.10</a> Computerized system
Policy	Maintain accurate data on SEMS to prompt the next appropriate action on the case.
Procedure	Update and maintain all screens with correct information. Use the SEMS record to document activities on the case. Use <b>EV</b> and <b>RCs</b> to prompt actions to take on the case.
Visual Aids	Chart - <a href="#">Review Code 93 Reference Sheet</a>
Automated Actions	<a href="#">EV</a> evaluates a case using the following screens: <a href="#">BC</a> , <a href="#">BI</a> , <a href="#">CF</a> , <a href="#">FT</a> , <a href="#">IA</a> , <a href="#">LN</a> , <a href="#">MI</a> , <a href="#">OR</a>
SEMS Screens	All
Forms Used	
Hearing and Conference Board Rights	
Personal Notes <a href="#">[Add a note]</a>	You have not added any notes to this handbook section.
See Also	<a href="#">SEMS Manual</a>

## Procedures

### 1. How do I keep the case record accurate and actions timely?

1. Keep each SEMS screen up-to-date. Use SEMS codes that accurately reflect case information.
2. Use review codes (**RCs**) to monitor case activities or to follow up on an action or new information. Other DCS or Prosecutor staff may set a review code on your case to bring your attention to a particular matter. Some **RCs** have a higher priority than others. See [17.010](#).
3. Some **RCs** require action within a short time and should be worked earlier as a higher priority than other review codes.  
**Example:** A review code 81 is Immediate Wage Withholding (IWW). Federal guidelines require actions on these cases within 2 working days.
4. Use case comment (**CC**) to document:
  1. Actions taken on the case and any results;
    - The **FT** screen alone may not sufficiently detail the results of an action. For example, the **FT** may show the results for an **Order/Notice to Withhold Income for Child Support**, DSHS [09-857](#), as successful and the **CC** shows the employer is withholding 50% which is less than current support.
  2. Changes to the case type or case status;
  3. Changes to the Case Financial (**CF**) screen or amounts certified for offset;
  4. Verbal communications, such as telephone calls or contact attempts. See Section [23.005](#);
  5. Written communications, such as **letters or documents**; and,
  6. Case transfers to other field offices or to the Prosecutor. See Section [17.035](#).
5. Use uniform **CC** codes when making Case Comment (**CC**) entries. Use uniform **RC** codes when setting review codes. See Section [17.010 Chart](#).
6. SEMS periodically archives old **CC** screen entries. These entries can be viewed by typing **CC** at the action line and selecting **All**.  
**Note:** Staff in Prosecutor offices that do not yet have new SEMS can access the archived comments through SEMS Web.
7. If SEMS sets a code 93 **RC** as a result of the case evaluation (**EV**) process, determine if you need to take the action suggested or correct inaccurate data on SEMS screens. See [Chart - Review Code 93 Reference Sheet](#).
8. Use **CC 47** entries and White Board (**WB**) entries to show unusual circumstances that exist on a case, such as Limited English Proficiency (LEP) issues (see Section [23.020](#)), when domestic violence is an issue (see Section [5.020](#)), or when there is a signed **Waiver of Statute of Limitations Defense**, DSHS [09-508](#) form (see Section [9.075](#)).

### 2. What if a party asks me to change his or her address?

1. If the noncustodial parent (NCP) or the custodial parent (CP) requests an address change:
  1. Encourage the party to make the request in writing and sign the request. **Accept** a written request **as** valid and change the address.
  2. If the CP receives Washington Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), tell the CP

to contact the Community Service Office (CSO). The Automated Client Eligibility System (ACES) interface will update the CP's address on the **IA** three days from receipt.

- You may update the TANF CP's address if there is an immediate need.
3. If you accept an NCP's or a nonassistance CP's address change over the phone, identify the caller with at least two identifiers, such as SSN and child's DOB.
    1. Document the call on the **CC** screen noting that you checked the ID of the caller.
    2. Update the party's **IA** screen and make the prior address "former".
  2. On a responding interstate case, refer a CP to the initiating jurisdiction (IJ). Do not change the IJ's address to the CP's address. If a hearing or conference board requires direct contact with the out-of-state CP, you may use the CP's address for this purpose only.

*Revised June 20, 2005*

---

[DCS Home](#) [Director](#) [Field Ops](#) [Policy / Legal](#) [Central Services](#) [SEMS](#) [MAPS](#) [Fiscal Ops](#)  
[Communications](#) [/CRU](#) [Training](#) [Personnel](#) [Tribal Facilities](#)  
[Seattle](#) [Tacoma](#) [Everett](#) [Yakima](#) [Spokane](#) [Olympia](#) [Wenatchee](#) [Vancouver](#) [Fife](#) [Kennewick](#)

## Chapter 17: Case Records

### Section 17.010: Using Uniform Case Comment and Review Codes on SEMS

This section lists the uniform codes used by DCS for case comments and case reviews.

### Contents

Laws	<a href="#">45 CFR 302.15</a> Maintain records for IV-D plan <a href="#">45 CFR 303.6</a> Maintain effective system <a href="#">45 CFR 307.10</a> Computerized system
Policy	<p>Use uniform case comment codes to provide case history and an audit trail of actions and communications on a case.</p> <p>Use only approved codes designated for the specific purpose. State Office approves the official usage of case comment and review codes for specific purposes.</p> <p>Use uniform case review codes to flag cases on SEMS for SEO review.</p>
Procedure	<p>Use specific codes to record actions taken on a case.</p> <p>Set a review code to remind yourself what will be the next case action.</p>
Visual Aids	<p>Chart - <a href="#">Review /CC Codes</a></p> <p>Chart - <a href="#">Prosecutor Review/CC Codes</a></p>
Automated Actions	<p>The Auto Eval (<b>EV</b>) will review the case and set a Result Code (RC) for the RSEO:</p> <p><b>RC 93</b> - for the RSEO to take an action</p> <p><b>RC 94</b> - a form is pending to print</p> <p><b>RC 96</b> - partial paying NCP stopped paying/FYI for SEO</p> <p><b>RC 97</b> - SEO should do something but EV can't suggest a form</p>
SEMS Screens	<b>EV</b> uses <a href="#">BC</a> , <a href="#">BI</a> , <a href="#">CF</a> , <a href="#">FT</a> , <a href="#">IA</a> , <a href="#">LN</a> , <a href="#">MI</a> , <a href="#">OR</a> , <a href="#">LI</a>
Forms Used	
Hearing and Conference Board Rights	
Personal Notes <a href="#">[Add a note]</a>	You have not added any notes to this handbook section.
See Also	<a href="#">SEMS Manual</a>

---

[DCS Home](#) [Director](#) [Field Ops](#) [Policy / Legal](#) [Central Services](#) [SEMS](#) [MAPS](#) [Fiscal Ops](#)  
[Communications](#) [/CRU](#) [Training](#) [Personnel](#) [Tribal](#) [Facilities](#)  
[Seattle](#) [Tacoma](#) [Everett](#) [Yakima](#) [Spokane](#) [Olympia](#) [Wenatchee](#) [Vancouver](#) [Fife](#) [Kennewick](#)

Pr

## Chapter 17: Case Records

### Section 17.015: Making Case Comment Screen Entries

This section discusses how to accurately post entries on the Case Comment (CC) screen.

### Contents

Laws	<a href="#">45 CFR 302.15</a> Maintain records for IV-D plan <a href="#">45 CFR 303.6</a> Maintain effective system <a href="#">45 CFR 307.10</a> Computerized system
Policy	<p>The case comment screen is the official business record of the Division of Child Support.</p> <p>Use the case comment screen to maintain an accurate narrative record of all case activity when the information is not recorded on another SEMS screen.</p> <p>Use specific case comment codes to document certain case circumstances or actions.</p> <p>Make a case comment entry on each case to which it pertains.</p> <p>Use the case comment screen to record debt calculations and the reasons for changes to the case financial screen.</p>
Procedure	Document all activities on a case, using clear, concise, and professional entries.
Visual Aids	Chart - <a href="#">Review /CC Codes</a>
Automated Actions	
SEMS Screens	<a href="#">CC</a>
Forms Used	
Hearing and Conference Board Rights	
Personal Notes [ <a href="#">Add a note</a> ]	You have not added any notes to this handbook section.
See Also	<a href="#">SEMS Manual</a>

## Procedures

### 1. What are some guidelines for making case comments?

1. Remember that the case comment screen is the official business record of the Division of Child Support .
2. Make clear and concise comments, documenting relevant information.
3. Use professional language at all times.
  - **Note:** It may be necessary to directly quote a caller's less-than-professional language to document information necessary to the case, such as a threat. See Section [5.020](#) if the threat concerns family violence.
4. Use approved abbreviations whenever possible to save SEMS space. See abbreviations/acronyms in [Chapter 25 Glossary](#).
5. Post all contacts and attempted contacts, such as unanswered phone calls. See Section [23.005](#).
6. Post forms and correspondence you send and receive if they do not post automatically when SEMS generates them.
7. Post debt calculations as needed to support the amounts posted to the **CF** as well as any changes to the **CF**. See Section [19.060](#).
8. Post an explanatory **CC** for any **CC** made in error, such as a **CC** entered on the wrong case, and then suppress both **CCs**.
9. When posting a certified-mail return receipt (code 39) showing service on the NCP, document the date of service and who signed the receipt or whether the signature is illegible. See Section [6.015](#) if the CP signed the return receipt.
10. Be aware that all case comment entries (and the identity of the person who entered the CC) are subject to public disclosure. The fact that disclosure might embarrass the SEO is not an acceptable reason for DCS to deny disclosure.

Revised June 27, 2005

---

[DCS Home](#) [Director](#) [Field Ops](#) [Policy / Legal](#) [Central Services](#) [SEMS](#) [MAPS](#) [Fiscal Ops](#)  
[Communications /CRU](#) [Training](#) [Personnel](#) [Tribal Facilities](#)  
[Seattle](#) [Tacoma](#) [Everett](#) [Yakima](#) [Spokane](#) [Olympia](#) [Wenatchee](#) [Vancouver](#) [Fife](#) [Kennewick](#)

## Chapter 17: Case Records

### Section 17.020: Posting Results on the Forms Table (FT) and Lien (LN) Screens

This section identifies the reasons to update the FT and LN SEMS screens.

### Contents

Laws	<a href="#">45 CFR 302.15</a> Maintain records for IV-D plan <a href="#">45 CFR 303.6</a> Maintain effective system <a href="#">45 CFR 307.10</a> Computerized system
Policy	Document all case information on SEMS that allows and prompts staff to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take the next appropriate action on the case.</li> <li>• Take the action timely and within federal time frames.</li> </ul>
Procedure	Record the results of each action as necessary so that auto evaluation ( <b>EV</b> ) can correctly evaluate the case.
Visual Aids	
Automated Actions	<b>EV</b> evaluates <a href="#">CF</a> , <a href="#">BC</a> , <a href="#">OR</a> , <a href="#">BI</a> , <a href="#">IA</a> , <a href="#">FT</a> , <a href="#">LN</a> , <a href="#">MI</a> , <a href="#">LI</a> . To suggest the next action, <b>EV</b> looks at <a href="#">FT</a> to determine whether DCS needs to send a form, has already sent a form, has received a returned form, and the result.
SEMS Screens	<a href="#">CF</a> , <a href="#">BC</a> , <a href="#">OR</a> , <a href="#">BI</a> , <a href="#">IA</a> , <a href="#">FT</a> , <a href="#">LN</a> , <a href="#">MI</a> , <a href="#">LI</a>
Forms Used	
Hearing and Conference Board Rights	
Personal Notes <a href="#">[Add a note]</a>	You have not added any notes to this handbook section.
See Also	<a href="#">SEMS Manual</a>

## Procedures

### 1. Why do I post results of DCS forms or actions?

1. It ensures that our official records accurately reflect what has occurred on the case.
2. Posting results of DCS forms and new information also avoids unnecessary review codes. If you do not fill in **FT**, **IA** or **LN** fields, **EV** may post an **RC 93** suggesting you take an action that you've already taken. See Section [17.005 Review Code 93 Reference Sheet](#).

### 2. What FT fields affect EV?

- o The following **FT** fields affect **EV**:

<i>Result</i>	Tells what happened to the form. Updates verification codes on <b>IA</b> . (i.e., a code <i>15 No Longer Employed</i> posted to <b>FT</b> will update an employer address on <b>IA</b> to <i>former</i> ). <b>EV</b> looks here to determine whether SEMS should set an <b>RC</b> for follow up action.
<i>Result Date</i>	For most forms, the result date is the date you update the <b>FT</b> . For wage withholds where the NCP is no longer employed, enter the date the NCP stopped working for the company.
<i>Service Date</i>	The date someone signed the green receipt or someone personally served the form. The earliest date associated with proof of service on a person or entity.
<i>Address #</i>	Addresses on <b>FT</b> and <b>IA</b> are connected by having the same address number. Before deleting a duplicate employer/asset address posted to <b>IA</b> , compare the address # to the address # on <b>FT</b> . Do not delete the <b>IA</b> address # that has a number that matches the <b>FT</b> address #. If the wrong address is deleted, <b>EV</b> will suggest an enforcement action even though an OWI has already been sent.

### 3. How do I release forms using the FT or LN screens?

1. Go to the **FT** screen to release withholding actions. After you have generated a release from **FT**, SEMS will automatically update the form's status on **FT**.
2. In **FT**, select the appropriate form. Select *Release/Replace* to bring up the release for that form. Choose the desired option (*Full release or Replace with PDN*).
3. Release liens from the **LN** screen selecting the *Release Lien* option so that SEMS will automatically update the form's status on **FT** and **LN**.
4. A pre-existing lien might not appear on the **LN** screen. If there is an old pre-existing lien, search through the case comments to find the lien filing number for a release. Then add the lien information to the **LN** screen using the following steps:
  1. Select the *Add Lien* tab on the **LN** screen;

2. Select the County;
3. Select the check box at the bottom left corner of the screen (this tells SEMS to not print a lien);
4. Click on the *Add IV-D#* tab to add appropriate cases to the lien release and select *Update*;
5. Select the *Lien Detail* tab. Update the lien information on the new entry just made; and,
6. Release the lien using the *Release Lien* option.

---

[DCS Home](#) [Director](#) [Field Ops Policy / Legal](#) [Central Services](#) [SEMS](#) [MAPS](#) [Fiscal Ops](#)  
[Communications /CRU](#) [Training](#) [Personnel](#) [Tribal Facilities](#)  
[Seattle](#) [Tacoma](#) [Everett](#) [Yakima](#) [Spokane](#) [Olympia](#) [Wenatchee](#) [Vancouver](#) [Fife](#) [Kennewick](#)



## Chapter 17: Case Records

### Section 17.025: Maintaining the Documents in an Open Case

This section describes how case records are maintained and imaged.

#### Contents

Laws	<p><a href="#">45 CFR 302.15</a> Maintain records for IV-D plan <a href="#">45 CFR 303.72</a>(a)(4)(i) &amp; (ii) Required documents in agency records <a href="#">RCW 5.46.010</a> photographic copies of public records <a href="#">Chapter 40.14 RCW</a> Records preservation/destruction <a href="#">RCW 40.20.030</a> photographic copies of public records <a href="#">RCW 46.20.118</a> DOL photo restrictions</p>
Policy	<p>DCS maintains electronic case records consisting of SEMS records, imaged court orders, and imaged case-related documents.</p> <p>Maintain all documents which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Are necessary to establish or enforce a child support obligation.</li><li>○ Are necessary to complete future required case actions.</li><li>○ The division might reasonably be expected to produce during a legal proceeding such as a hearing or trial.</li></ul> <p>DCS no longer maintains paper copies of case files.</p> <p>Central Services staff image and then route in hard copy certain documents needed for the Prosecutors office to pursue actions.</p> <p>Field office staff image:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Documents received over the counter, <b>and</b></li><li>○ Mail that is sent out by staff.</li></ul> <p>Image all case-related documents, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Orders</li><li>○ Correspondence</li><li>○ Documents received over-the-counter</li><li>○ Public disclosure requests and responses</li><li>○ Hearing related documents</li><li>○ Conference board decisions</li></ul> <p>Do not image IRS or federal tax intercept information, credit bureau reports, Financial Institution Data Match (FIDM) information, drivers license photos from any source, or medical brochures. You may image tax information provided by the parties on the case.</p>

	If a record has been lost or destroyed, DCS attempts to obtain a copy of a document or recreates a document using the best evidence available to prove its existence.
Procedure	DCS Central Services staff process and image DCS mail.  Field office mailroom staff image: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Outgoing mail, and</li> <li>o Case-related documents received at the field office.</li> </ul>
Visual Aids	<a href="#">Case File Document Retention Chart</a> (.pdf)
Automated Actions	Once each month, SEMS automatically deletes all imaged <b>Postmaster Letter</b> , DSHS 18-360 forms that are over three months old.
SEMS Screens	<a href="#">Case File Image Retrieval (CI)</a> <a href="#">Court Order Image Retrieval (CO)</a> <a href="#">Route Box Image Retrieval (RB)</a>
Forms Used	<a href="#">09-954</a>
Hearing and Conference Board Rights	NCP and CP have a conference board right to contest use of duplicate for lost or destroyed document.
Personal Notes <a href="#">[Add a note]</a>	You have not added any notes to this handbook section.
See Also	<a href="#">20.030</a> Locate Information Available Through Credit Bureaus <a href="#">Imaging Web site</a> DCS Administrative Policy <a href="#">7.00</a> Records Retention/Disposition DCS Administrative Policy <a href="#">7.01</a> IRS Confidentiality and Security DCS Administrative Policy <a href="#">9.15</a> Cases Involving Potential Conflicts of Interest <a href="#">22.000</a> General Information about Public Disclosure <a href="#">Retention Schedule</a> 04-07-60752 for public disclosure documents

## Procedures

### 1. What case records does DCS maintain?

1. DCS maintains electronic case records consisting of SEMS records, imaged court orders, and imaged case-related documents.
2. DCS no longer maintains paper copies of case files. **Exception:** Claims Officers and Public Disclosure Coordinators must maintain temporary limited paper files due to the requirements of the hearing process and of the public disclosure process. These hearing files and public disclosure files are retained for a specified period of time according to local field office practice and then are purged according to the retention schedule.

### 2. What records are imaged?

All case-related documents are imaged, including:

1. Correspondence
2. Documents received over the counter
3. Court orders, administrative orders, and worksheets
4. Public disclosure requests and responses
5. Hearing related documents
6. Conference board decisions
7. Certified Mail Return Receipt (CMRR) green receipts. Headquarters retains hard copies of CMRR green receipts.

**Exception:** Do not image any IRS or federal tax intercept information, Financial Institution Data Match (FIDM) information, credit bureau reports, driver's license photos from any source or medical provider brochures. You may image tax information provided by the parties on the case.

**Note:** You may request a Certification of Imaged Document DSHS 09-954 which was developed for use by the Imaging Supervisor to certify that an imaged document is a true and accurate representation of an original document entered into DCS records. If you have a request for this form, contact CentralizedMail@dshs.wa.gov

### 3. Are any documents purged from the image record?

- Yes, the **Postmaster Letter**, DSHS [18-360](#) is purged every three months by SEMS.

### 4. How do Central Services staff and field office mailroom staff process mail for imaging?

1. For mail that is clearly identified with a case number, staff identify the appropriate documents category and associate the document with the corresponding case. The categories are:
  1. DCS Forms
  2. Legal Documents
  3. Referrals

4. Correspondence
  5. Court Orders
  6. Other Agency
  7. Backfile Conversion
  8. Miscellaneous
  9. Photos (**Note:** Do not image driver's license photos from any source.)
  10. Total vs. Total
2. Staff assign each document a barcode, image the document, and index the document to a case.
  3. For mail that does not include a case number or the case is closed and archived, staff cross-reference it in SEMS to identify the case number.
  4. If there is still not sufficient information to identify the case, Central Services staff will return the mail to the sender with a note requesting they return it with a social security number or case number. If the sender is an employer, Central Services staff call the employer to attempt to get more information to identify the case.
  5. If there is insufficient information to identify the sender, Central Services staff will place the document in the "unidentified mail box" and retain it for ninety (90) days. Central Services has set up a closed case called "Unidentified Mail" case number 1684835 to allow staff to view unidentified mail to determine if it belongs to one of their cases. If you are looking for a piece of mail:
    1. Access the **CI** screen for case number 1684835, using the time period you expected DCS to receive the mail (limited to two weeks), and the type of mail you expected.
    2. If you find mail that belongs to one of your cases, send an email to [CentralizedMail@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:CentralizedMail@dshs.wa.gov) and ask staff to index it to the correct case.
5. **What mail does Central Services staff and field office mailroom staff route in paper format?**
1. Staff will route non-case related correspondence, including magazines, books, and publications, and all mail from the Washington State Bar Association (WSBA).  
**Note:** Claims officers sometimes receive confidential information from WSBA. If Central Services staff receive this mail, it may be opened to ensure it does not contain a payment before routing it to the identified recipient. If you are a Claims Officer and you wish to receive unopened mail, change your address to your office administrative post office box.
  2. Staff will image and then route in hard copy the following:
    1. Modification packets;
    2. UIFSA packets;
    3. Certified orders;
    4. Original birth certificates;
    5. Original genetic test results;
    6. **Address Disclosure Request**, DSHS [18-176A](#);
    7. Photos; and

8. Original affidavits (notarized signatures).

6. **What documents must DCS not image?**

1. Driver's license photos from any source.
2. Federal tax information provided by the IRS.
3. Credit bureau reports.
4. Financial Institution Data Match (FIDM) information.
5. Medical brochures.

7. **What do I do if DCS lost or destroyed a copy of a document, such as an administrative notice or order?**

1. If the missing document is a final notice or order, the notice or order still exists, even if DCS cannot produce a copy of the original order.
2. If the document was created in NewSEMS and New FormsGen, print a duplicate by accessing the Archives Search **AS** screen. **AS** will provide an exact copy of the entire form packet created.
3. If DCS cannot reproduce the document, check any other sources where there may be a copy of the document, such as:
  1. Any other DCS cases with the same children.
  2. Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH), Board of Appeals (BOA), prosecutor, or court files.
  3. The CP, NCP, or their attorney.
  4. If the case is an interstate case or another state has or had a child support case with the same parties, try to obtain the records from them.
4. If you are unable to locate a copy of the document, rely upon other DCS business records to prove the existence of the order, such as case comments, **OR**, and **FT**.

8. **What if the missing document is an administrative notice or order, but it is not available on AS?**

1. "Re-create" a similar duplicate by using information in SEMS, such as from the case comment information entered when the original document was created. Be sure to mark on the similar duplicate that it is a "re-creation".
2. Contact the [Forms and Records Manager](#) in SEMS if you need the version of the form that existed when the document was originally generated.

9. **How do I tell the parties that we no longer have the file copy of the original document?**

1. Tell the parties that we no longer have the file copies of the original document when we need a copy to conduct our normal business, such as when DCS makes a referral to another state

or for a hearing.

2. Send both parties a copy of the duplicate document with a cover letter. Tell them:
  1. DCS lost, misplaced, or accidentally destroyed the copy of the original document.
  2. The enclosed document is a duplicate of the original order.
  3. If they believe that the duplicate does not contain the same information as the original, they can request a conference board.

## 10. How do I use the Document Retention Chart?

1. Do not purge any document listed as "Permanent" on the [Document Retention Chart](#).
2. DCS also follows the [Retention Schedule for Division of Child Support](#) and the public disclosure retention schedule for the minimum time frame records must be retained.
3. The chart and the schedules requires staff to retain certain documents for a given length of time or until a certain event occurs. Staff may consider purging documents following the passage of the time limit or event.

## 11. What other criteria do I use besides the chart to decide if I may purge a document?

1. Consider the following criteria in making the decision to purge documents not listed in the Document Retention Chart:
  1. Is it likely DCS will need the document in the future to take a necessary case action, such as establishment or enforcement of an order?
  2. Is it likely an AAG, prosecutor, or claims officer may need the document to represent the division in a legal proceeding, such as fraudulent transfer, employer noncompliance, contempt, late hearing request, Petition to Vacate, or dismissal?
  3. In general, if a party with hearing rights requests a hearing on a document, retain the document permanently unless the Document Retention Chart indicates otherwise.
2. When in doubt, err on the side of retaining a document. Consult with your supervisor, lead worker, or claims officer.

## 12. How do I dispose of documents?

1. Dispose of printed IRS information as prescribed by DCS Administrative Policy [7.01](#).
2. Ensure the shredding of all papers provided by the IRS which show federal tax information. This includes IRS tax intercept letters received from the post office.
3. You may [image](#) tax information provided by the parties on the case.
4. Dispose of all other printed case specific information in your recycle bin. Never recycle papers that contain Federal tax information.
5. Contact DCS Headquarters Centralized Mail to remove an imaged document from the file.

---

*Revised June 21, 2005*

---

[DCS Home](#) [Director Field Ops Policy / Legal Central Services SEMS MAPS Fiscal Ops](#)  
[Communications /CRU Training Personnel Tribal Facilities](#)  
[Seattle Tacoma Everett Yakima Spokane Olympia Wenatchee Vancouver Fife Kennewick](#)

Previous

## Chapter 17: Case Records

### Section 17.030: Archiving a Case or Retrieving Archived Case Records

This section describes CARS and how staff send cases to and retrieve cases from CARS.

#### Contents

Laws	<a href="#">45 CFR 303.6</a> Maintain effective system <a href="#">45 CFR 307.10</a> Computerized system <a href="#">Chapter 40.14 RCW</a> Records preservation/destruction
Policy	<p>DCS archives file records and images in SEMS.</p> <p>DCS uses Computer Assisted Retrieval System (CARS) to maintain older archived records.</p>
Procedure	<p>Closed cases are electronically archived and retained in SEMS. Staff contacts Central Services to request imaging of older archived cases that are not available in SEMS.</p>
Visual Aids	
Automated Actions	<p>SEMS automatically transfers closed cases to FO - R (Archived) after they have been closed 12 months. Closed PSO cases are transferred immediately to FO - R.</p>
SEMS Screens	<a href="#">BC</a> , <a href="#">CC</a>
Forms Used	
Hearing and Conference Board Rights	
Personal Notes [ <a href="#">Add a note</a> ]	You have not added any notes to this handbook section.
See Also	

## Procedures

### 1. When are closed cases archived?

1. After a case is closed, the case remains assigned to the field office for twelve (12) months. After 12 months, SEMS automatically transfers the closed case to Field Office (FO) - R (Archived) on SEMS.

**Exception:** Closed PSO cases are transferred immediately to Field Office R.

2. Documents in cases closed after June 1999 are imaged and can be accessed through SEMS.

**Note:** Documents in cases closed before June 1999 are on microfilm . If the case documents are not available through the SEMS system, the case is in the CARS archives.

### 2. What if I need documents from cases that are in CARS?

1. Send a DCS Central Operations Service request by selecting *Start, DCS Misc, Service Requests, Central Ops Service Request* and *CARS (Archive Request)* and entering the case information.

2. The requested documents will be retrieved and imaged. This usually is done within three business days. Check under the CARS or case file portion of the imaging database to see if documents have recently been imaged.

**Note:** Due to limited staffing, CARS personnel do not send e-mail responses to requests received. However, a case comment (CC) 18 is made on those cases where no documents were found in R.

### 3. How do I transfer a case from R (CARS) to a field office on SEMS?

1. Select *Transfer* or enter *T* in the action code from the **BC** Screen. Type the field office designation in the space provided. SEMS automatically adds a case comment (18) to document the transfer, noting the prior field office designation and the case closure date from the **BC** screen.
2. After the case is transferred to the field office, you have 45 days to open the case. If you do not open the case, the case will automatically revert back to R.

Preview

*Revised June 20, 2005*

---

[DCS Home](#) [Director](#) [Field Ops](#) [Policy / Legal](#) [Central Services](#) [SEMS](#) [MAPS](#) [Fiscal Ops](#)  
[Communications /CRU](#) [Training](#) [Personnel](#) [Tribal](#) [Facilities](#)  
[Seattle](#) [Tacoma](#) [Everett](#) [Yakima](#) [Spokane](#) [Olympia](#) [Wenatchee](#) [Vancouver](#) [Fife](#) [Kennewick](#)

## Chapter 17: Case Records

**This section is superseded by [Director's Memo New Case Transfer Policy](#)**

### Section 17.035: Determining Where a Case Belongs

This section explains where cases are assigned and when it is appropriate to transfer a case.

### Contents

Laws	<a href="#">45 CFR 303.100(h)</a> In rem cases
Policy	<p>Maintain all cases in the field office assigned to the zip code where the noncustodial parent (NCP) resides unless the NCP requests that the case move to another field office, or DCS policy requires transfer.</p> <p>Do not transfer a case to another field office when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ NCP is homeless and using a shelter address.</li> <li>■ NCP moves because of incarceration or in-patient treatment.</li> </ul> <p>Transfer the case to another field office when you verify that the NCP has moved out of your field office region unless the exceptions listed above apply.</p> <p>When Central Services transfers a case to the field office, address verification is not required.</p> <p>In most circumstances, maintain the case in the field office assigned to the zip code where the child lives during the paternity proceedings.</p> <p>If the CP has address confidentiality or domestic violence concerns, he or she can request case transfer to the Olympia Field Office for paternity action in Thurston County.</p> <p>Transfer the case to the region where the NCP lives after paternity has been established.</p> <p>If the case is a responding interstate case, maintain the case in the field office that handles the zip code where the NCP lives.</p> <p>When the NCP lives out of state, maintain the case in the field office that handles the zip code where the CP lives except for certain circumstances.</p>

	<p>If both parties move out of Washington State and the CP requests that Washington State keeps the case active, the case remains in the field office that last worked it.</p> <p>When a case has a current judicial action such as contempt or judicial enforcement, consult with the appropriate Prosecutor or Assistant Attorney General (AAG) before transferring the case.</p> <p>Transfer Payment Services Only (PSO) cases to the appropriate field office just as you would any other case. If both parties on a PSO case live out-of-state, the case belongs in the Olympia Field Office.</p>
Procedure	Field office staff must verify addresses before transferring a case.
Visual Aids	Index - <a href="#">County Zip Code Field Office Index</a> Flow Chart - <a href="#">Determining Where a Case Belongs</a>
Automated Actions	
SEMS Screens	<a href="#">IA</a> , <a href="#">CC</a>
Forms Used	<a href="#">18-360</a> , <a href="#">18-604</a> , <a href="#">18-615</a>
Hearing and Conference Board Rights	A party may request a conference board if he or she disagrees with a case transfer.
Personal Notes <a href="#">[Add a note]</a>	You have not added any notes to this handbook section.
See Also	<p><a href="#">Section 2.005</a> Identifying Applications for Services and Other Sources of Cases</p> <p><a href="#">13.030</a> Transferring a Tribal Case</p> <p>DCS Administrative Policy <a href="#">9.15</a> Cases Involving Potential Conflicts of Interest</p> <p><a href="#">Homeless Shelters - Seattle Area</a></p>

## Procedures

### 1. If the NCP lives in Washington, when should I transfer the case to another field office?

1. In general, all cases belong in the field office assigned to the zip code where the NCP lives. **Exception:** The NCP may request that DCS maintain the case in a different field office.

**Note:** See *D* below for other possible reasons to not transfer a case.

### 2. When do I transfer the case if paternity is at issue?

1. If paternity is at issue, the case belongs in the field office assigned to the zip code where the child lives during the paternity proceedings.
2. If the case is a responding interstate, maintain the case where the NCP resides.
3. If the child is in foster care or has moved in with a relative and DCS has transferred the case to the Prosecutor for paternity establishment, keep the new case in the field office where the mother lives for as long as paternity continues to be worked on the original case.
4. If the child is in foster care or has moved in with a relative and DCS has not yet transferred the case to the Prosecutor for paternity establishment, transfer the case to the field office where the child lives.  
**Note:** If the CP has address confidentiality or domestic violence concerns, the CP may enroll in the [Address Confidentiality Program \(ACP\)](#). The case will then be transferred to the Olympia field office for paternity action in Thurston County.
5. See [Section 13.030](#) prior to transferring a case with tribal connections.

### 3. How do I verify an address is valid before transferring the case?

1. Field office staff must verify an address within 30 days before case transfer. The following sources qualify as valid address verification sources.
  1. Direct contact with the NCP via phone or letter.
  2. NCP receipt of unemployment compensation (UC), Labor and Industries (L&I), or public assistance (TANF, GAU, or GAX).

**Note:** Receipt of Medicaid only or Food Stamps only is not sufficient to transfer the case. Use a second source of verification before transferring these cases.

**Also Note:** Do not transfer a case when NCP is using a shelter address or is in inpatient treatment. See *D* below.

3. New employee reporting programs.
  1. From Washington State Employer Reporting source code **10** on the NCP **IA** screen is valid information for transfer.

2. However, from a Federal New Hiring source code **29** on NCP **IA** screen must be verified with a **Postmaster Letter**, DSHS [18-360](#) before transferring the case.

4. A verified DSHS [18-360](#).

1. If the DSHS [18-360](#) goes to an address that is General Delivery or is an in-care of address, use a second source of verification before transferring the case.

**Note:** If there are conflicting 18-360s that create doubt about where NCP actually lives, verify NCP's address with a second source such as a phone call. The intent of the transfer policy is to have the case where the NCP lives.

2. After you verify that the case belongs in another field office, use the **Case Transfer Notification**, DSHS [18-615](#) to notify CPs and NCPs that DCS is transferring their case to another field office.

#### 4. When do I not transfer a case to another field office?

1. Do not transfer a case to another field office when:

1. The NCP is homeless and using a shelter address, even if the NCP is receiving assistance in that field office's area.
2. The NCP moves because of incarceration or in-patient treatment, even if service is an issue, keep it in the field office servicing the region where the NCP lived prior to moving.

2. Do not transfer a case to another field office during the hearing process. Exceptions can be made on a case specific basis.

3. See Section [13.030](#) prior to transferring a case with tribal connections.

#### 5. If the NCP lives outside Washington, when should I transfer the case to another field office?

1. In general, when an NCP lives out of state, the case belongs where the CP resides.

1. **If** multiple cases exist, the lowest case number with current and future support determines where the case belongs.

**Exception:** SEOs from all affected field offices may agree on a different field office.

2. If all of the NCP's cases are DSHS subroson or CP arrears-only, maintain all of the cases in the field office with the lowest D#.
3. If both parties move out of Washington, maintain the case in the field office that worked the case last.
4. If the NCP moves out of state and the CP has an Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) address, transfer the case to the Olympia field office.
5. If there is only one case, and that case is PSO, and both parties live out of state, the case belongs in the Olympia field office.

2. Field office staff must verify the out-of-state address within 30 days prior to case transfer. Follow C above.
3. If both parties live out of state and DCS receives a request from another IV-D agency to attach the NCP's WA assets, maintain the case in Headquarters Central Registry.
  - These cases are called *in rem* cases.

## 6. Where should set-up staff send a new referral?

1. If an open case already exists with the same CP/NCP, send the case to that field office. See [2.035](#).
2. If a new case has an order with immediate wage withholding (IWW) language, set up the case and route it to the appropriate field office, based on the zip code of the NCP's home address.
3. If there is not a case on Support Enforcement Management System (SEMS), set up the case and use the address in the referral or the Washington State Support Registry (WSSR) order as the basis to determine the appropriate field office for the case.
4. Case set-up staff in a field office will set up a case even when the case will have to be transferred to another field office.

**Note:** Set-up staff do not have to verify an address.

## 7. What do I do if I discover multiple non-paternity NCP cases in different field offices?

1. Contact the Responsible Support Enforcement Officers (RSEOs) and ask that they transfer the cases per the procedures outlined above.
2. If you discover a reverse case that doesn't show the child's change of custody, notify the RSEO handling the reverse case.

## 8. What do I do if the CP or NCP is an employee of my field office, or is a friend or family member of a field office employee?

- See DCS Administrative Policy [9.15](#), **Cases Involving Potential Conflicts of Interest**.

*Revised October 3, 2006*

