

CASE PLANNING

Purposeful Visitation and Contact Standards

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Policy

All children and families with whom the Department of Children and Families are involved shall be visited regularly by the assigned Social Worker to assess progress and to assure that appropriate, effective services are provided to achieve the case goal and the needs of the family.

Every interaction with a child and family shall be purposeful and derive from the case plan. During each contact, the Social Worker shall make concerted efforts to ensure that he or she sees each child and talks to him or her alone. The Social Worker shall make concerted efforts to contact each parent, guardian or other caregiver.

Visits shall be frequent enough to effectively address the child's safety, permanency and well-being and achievement of case goal.

Cross reference: "Case Planning Practice Guide."

Identification of "Family"

The specific definition of "family" - which members must be visited - and the type of visitation that must occur shall be discussed and decided in supervision and shall be documented in a Supervisory Conference Note during each period under review.

Mandatory Visitation with Parents

The Social Worker shall visit with the parents in all case types including in-home, OPPLA, permanency and Voluntary Services Program. Visitation is required unless any of the following situations exist:

- a parent is deceased;
- the whereabouts of a parent are unknown and there is documentation of DCF's ongoing concerted efforts to locate him or her;
- a parent has indicated he or she does not want to be involved in the child's life after contact and concerted efforts to engage have been made by DCF;
- Social Worker visitation with a parent would not be in the child's best interests and the reasons are clearly documented in the case record; and
- parental rights have been terminated and there are no further plans for parental involvement.

The plan for visitation between the Social Worker and the parents shall be reassessed every six months or as circumstances change. The reasons for a decision to not visit a parent shall be documented at least once every six months.

See also: "A Practice Guide to Purposeful Visitation."

Minimum Contact Standard for In-Home Cases

The ongoing Social Worker shall visit the family once per week for the 30 days after transfer from intake. After the first 30 days, the Social Worker shall visit with the child(ren) where the child(ren) resides twice per month and shall visit with the parents, guardian or other caregiver twice per month.

Note: This standard shall also apply following a child's return home from placement.

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Minimum Contact Standard for High Risk Newborns

If a child is determined to be a high risk newborn, the Social Worker shall provide or arrange for intensive in-home supervision of the infant and services to begin within three days of discharge from the hospital.

In-home visits shall occur at least twice a week for at least four weeks.

In-home supervision and services may be provided by any of the following, as appropriate:

- DCF staff;
- parent aides;
- public health nurses;
- Visiting Nurse Association; or
- other contracted services.

Cross-reference: DCF Policy 21-11, "High Risk Newborns."

Minimum Contact Standard for the Child in Placement Cases

Out-of-home care shall include:

- traditional foster care (core, TFC, and FCT);
- relative/kin foster care;
- pre-adoptive foster care; and
- congregate care.

When a child is placed in any of the above out-of-home placements, the Social Worker shall visit the child as follows:

- following all placements, in-person contact shall occur within two working days;
- weekly contact for the first month after transfer from intake to on-going services; and
- in-person contact shall occur at least once per month thereafter.

Note: Children/youth should be visited in the environment in which they reside.

Minimum Contact Standard for the Parent in a Child in Placement Case

Contact is expected with parents (*i.e.*, biological, legal guardian or adoptive) of children in out of home care.

The Social Worker shall have contact with the parents as follows:

- when the child's permanency plan or concurrent plan is reunification, face-to-face contact shall occur at least once per month with the parent(s) with whom the child will reunify;
- when the permanency plan is other than reunification, face-to-face contact or telephone contact shall occur at least once per month.

In cases in which there is less than monthly contact with a parent, the record shall reflect substantial justification for the deviation from the minimum standard. This shall be reassessed at least once every six months.

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Minimum Contact Standard with Child in Placement Caregivers

Regular contacts shall include (and be inclusive of all case-related children placed in that setting, regardless of permanency goal):

- relative and fictive kin foster parents;
- core foster parents;
- TFC and FCT foster parents;
- pre-adoptive parents; and
- congregate-setting caregivers.

The Social Worker shall contact the caregivers as follows:

- following all placements, in-person contact within two working days;
- weekly contact for the first month after transfer from intake to on-going services; and
- in-person contact at least once per month thereafter.

Minimum Contact Standard with Parent (when Children are in the Home and there is at least One Child in Placement)

The Social Worker shall contact a parent who has a child in the home and at least one child in placement as follows:

- in-person contact at least twice per month when there are moderate to high risk factors regarding the child(ren) in the home; or
- if the assessment of risk is determined to be low regarding the children who remain in the home, in-person contact at least once per month.

Contacts with parents in this type of case shall address issues pertaining to the safety, permanency and well-being of the child in placement; promote achievement of the CIP case goal and actively involve the parent in case planning for the child in placement, as well as any risk and safety factors impacting the children in the home.

In cases in which there is less than monthly contact with a parent, the record shall reflect substantial justification for the deviation from the minimum standard. This shall be reassessed at least once every six months.

Minimum Contact Standard with Children (when Children are in the Home and there is at least One Child in Placement)

Contact with the child in placement shall be at least monthly.

Contact with the children remaining in the home shall be determined by the risk and safety factors as well as the case goal.

The Social Worker shall have face-to-face contact with the children in the home as follows:

- twice per month when there are moderate to high risk factors regarding those children; or
 - less than twice per month in cases in which the assessment of risk is determined to be low and there is an assessed need for less than twice per month contact (this shall require substantial justification in the record and be reassessed at least once every six months).
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Minimum Contact Standards for Child Placed in a Hospital

Whenever a child in DCF care is hospitalized *for any reason*, a formal plan for support and visitation shall be developed and implemented within two business days of admission for unplanned or emergency admissions and at the time of admission for planned admissions.

The plan shall be informed by appropriate medical and clinical consultations with providers involved in the child's care and the nature of the child's primary relationships and existing supports. The assigned Social Worker and Social Work Supervisor are responsible for the formulation, execution and documentation of the plan.

Cross Reference: DCF Policy 21-5, "Health and Wellness" and the "Health Care Standards and Practice for Children and Youth in Care"

Contact Standards for Children Placed Out-of-State

The Department's Out-of-State Visitation Unit shall be located at the Department's Central Office.

The purpose of the Out-of-State Visitation Unit is to ensure that a Department representative visits children and youth placed in out-of-state residential facilities, group homes, and job corps on a bi-monthly basis.

The area office social worker shall visit the youth at least once per year. The visits by the Area Office Social Worker and the Out-of-State Visitation Social Worker shall take place independently of each other.

At the time of the visit, the Out-of-State Visitation Social Worker shall:

- meet with the youth individually to assess functioning (visits with the youth should be for a minimum of thirty (30) minutes),
 - meet with the youth's case manager/and/or clinician regarding progress and functioning, and
 - review the youth's record.
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Provider Contact Standard

The Social Worker shall contact each service provider, including any professional who is assisting with assessment services, at least once per month in person or by telephone. Documented written reports and emails are also acceptable forms of provider contact.
