

Text Communications with Clients

2-3-5**Purpose**

Engagement with families is a critical component of the work conducted by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and is impacted by the quality and method of communication. Meaningful dialogue with families supports partnership, mutual understanding, and accurate assessments of a family's strengths, needs, and progress. The utilization of texting to communicate important information to families does not align with these objectives.

Texting with families may be utilized only in limited circumstances, such as confirming or scheduling appointments, requesting a return call, identifying a time to talk, or providing a reasonable accommodation requested by the client under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Staff shall limit the amount of information communicated by text messages and adhere to all confidentiality requirements. Texts shall not contain case-related information, sensitive videos/images or personally identifiable information.

Conversations related to court processes, case planning, family needs and progress shall occur in person or, when in-person communication is not possible, through a confidential phone call.

Communication with clients by phone call, email, or text shall occur utilizing state-issued equipment and in a manner that protects client confidentiality.

Cross reference: [DCF Policy 2-3-1, Employee Code of Conduct](#)

Documentation

Messages or photos that are received or sent to clients shall be entered into the electronic case record by taking a screen shot of communication and uploading into the case narrative in CT-KIND. Text communications are considered part of the record and shall not be deleted after documentation in the electronic case record.

Documentation in the electronic case record shall occur within 5 business days in accordance with the case narrative policy.

Cross reference: [DCF Policy 8-2, Case Narratives](#)

Cross references: CT KIND Where to Document Job Aid
(Notes>>General Note>>Case Activity)

Continued on next page

Text Communications with Clients

2-3-5

Guidance

1. **Verify Identity First:** Staff shall confirm the sender's identity before responding to a text.
2. **Be Brief and Factual:** Texts shall be limited to scheduling, logistical coordination or requests to speak by phone or in person. Legal documents, information protected under HIPAA, serious allegations and other sensitive documents or matters shall not be communicated by text.
3. **Document and Retain Communication:** Texts shall be retained on the state-issued phone until entry into the CT KIND system.
4. **No Expectation of Privacy:** Text messages are considered DCF records and may be subject to disclosure or used as evidence.
5. **Safety concerns:** Any safety concerns identified through text (e.g. domestic violence, self-harm language, threats, etc.) shall be addressed immediately in accordance with agency policy and procedure.
6. **Professional tone:** Staff are expected to maintain a professional, respectful and appropriate tone in all communications with clients and families.
7. **Clear expectations:** Staff shall communicate clear expectations to families regarding the limited and appropriate use of text messaging as a form of communication with DCF.

**This policy addresses texting between employees and clients. Texting images or videos may be necessary in the ordinary course of business between staff in the field to their supervisors and/or managers within DCF to assist in safety assessment or planning. Those messages are also DCF records and shall be recorded consistent with existing email procedures and practice.*