

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 8: Out-of-Home Services	Effective Date January 1, 2012
	Section 10: Minimum Contact	Version: 5

POLICY

[REVISED] Contact with Children in Out-of-Home Placement

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will have **monthly** face-to-face contact with all children under DCS care and supervision regardless of placement type. Contact can occur on a monthly alternating cycle between the placement home, and other locations (e.g., school, relatives home, day care center, etc.).

Contact During Critical Junctures

During critical episodes involving the child or resource family (e.g., Trial Home Visits (THV), potential placement disruptions, new Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) allegations, potential runaway situations, pregnancy of the child, lack of parental contact, etc.), contact with the child, parent, guardian, custodian, and/or resource parent must be made weekly by the assigned Family Case Manager (FCM). The FCM will monitor and evaluate the situation. The FCM may convene a Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting, to assess whether the situation warrants continued weekly visits. See separate policy, 5.7 Child and Family Team Meetings.

Contact with Resource Families

DCS will have face-to-face contact with resource families, at a minimum, every other month. DCS will communicate (e.g., face-to-face, telephone, e-mail) with the resource parent after the scheduled visitation to determine the post visitation reaction, activities, and emotions of the child. The visitation plan should state the frequency of the communication between the FCM and resource parent. It is essential that DCS communicates and partners with the resource family to discuss the progress and any concerns or comments about the reunification timeline at the next CFT Meeting.

Contact with Children in Out of State Placement

For children placed out of state through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), DCS must make a formal request, through the state utilizing the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Request/100A (SF106), for the receiving state to visit the child every other calendar month. DCS must have face to face contact once every four (4) months with Indiana children placed out of state through the ICPC program, and will request that the receiving state visit the child in the off months. The FCM should notify the receiving state interstate worker of the intent to visit.

Contact with Child's Parent, Guardian, or Custodian

DCS will have face-to-face contact with the child's parent or guardian according to the following minimum service level contact standards:

1. Low service level case - DCS will have one (1) face-to-face contact per month with the child's parent, guardian, or custodian in their residence;

2. Moderate service level case - DCS will have two (2) face-to-face contacts per month with the child's parent, guardian, or custodian with one (1) contact being in their residence. One (1) of the two (2) contacts can be designated to a service provider;
3. High service level case - DCS will have three (3) face-to-face contacts per month with the parent, guardian, or custodian with one (1) contact being in their residence. Two (2) of the three (3) contacts can be designated to a service provider; and
4. Very High service level case - DCS will have four (4) face-to-face contacts per month with the child's parent, guardian, or custodian with two (2) contacts being in their residence. Three (3) of the four (4) contacts can be designated to a service provider.

DCS will ensure that sufficient time and opportunity is given to observe and evaluate the parent-child relationship during the parent-child visits for as often as necessary at least one (1) month prior to reunification. This observation will be documented in the Indiana Child Welfare Information System (ICWIS) within 'Contacts' and in the hard copy file. Any and all safety concerns that are identified must be reported to the Supervisor immediately. Child safety must always be addressed.

Note: During every visit with the parent, workers should be assessing for the presence of domestic violence through questioning and observation skills.

DCS must have a signed agreement with the service provider. The following list represents what must be in the agreement:

1. Purpose of the contacts;
2. Frequency of the contacts;
3. Starting date of the service;
4. Duration of the agreement;
5. Parties to be contacted;
6. Procedure for the feedback; and
7. A plan of action if risk is perceived.

Code References

N/A

PROCEDURE

Contact with the Child

The FCM will see each child in out-of-home care at least monthly. At each visit with the child, the FCM will:

1. Assess the child's safety, health, and well-being. Does the child:
 - a. Have any visible injuries,
 - b. Appear to be ill, and/or
 - c. Appear to be emotionally unhealthy (withdrawn, angry, scared, etc.).
2. Choose a setting that affords the child an opportunity to speak freely and to discuss the following:
 - a. Any positive or negative feelings the child may have about the placement (e.g. the resource family members, other people who visit the home, etc.), and
 - b. The child's interests (e.g., friends, hobbies, extracurricular activities, etc.).

Contact with the Resource Family

The FCM will see the resource family at a minimum of every other month. At each visit with the resource family, the FCM will:

1. Utilize the Visitation Checklist (SF53557/CW3112) form to gather information and discuss any updates with the resource family;
2. Observe the overall condition of the home or facility, and discuss any areas of concern with the resource family;
3. Discuss the child's overall progress including behavioral management, school adjustment, etc;
4. Assist the resource family with problem-solving and accessing community resources as needed; and
5. Initiate an emergency removal if the child is in immediate danger. See separate policy, 4.28 Involuntary Removals.

Following each visit with the child and/or resource family, the FCM will:

1. Document the visit and any new information gained (e.g., health, educational services, etc.) in MaGIK within one (1) business day. See separate policies, 8.27 Maintaining Health Records - Medical Passport and 8.20 Educational Services; and
2. For interstate cases, send the receiving state a ICPC Supervision Report of each visit made, and document in ICWIS both the reports of FCM visits and reports of visits from the receiving state. See separate policy, 9.9 Placement Updates and Supervision Reports.

Contact with the Child's Parent, Guardian, or Custodian

The FCM will:

1. Determine the minimum service level contact based upon the service level of the case (see policy statement **Contact with Child's Parent, Guardian, or Custodian** above);
2. For moderate, high, and very high service level cases where an Licensed Child Placing Agency (LCPA) is providing the out-of-home care, establish a signed agreement regarding the delegation of some visits to that provider agency, in accordance with the policy statement **Contact with Child's Parent, Guardian, or Custodian** above; and
3. At each visit, assess family progress, discuss services the family needs or is receiving and provide assistance to the family as needed.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Below is a suggested list of specific questions in the areas of Safety, Stability, Well-being and Permanency that the FCM should consider when completing a visit. These questions are taken from the Quality Service Review (QSR) Protocol (Version 2.1).¹

1. **Safety** – Is the child free of abuse, neglect, and exploitation by others in his or her place of residence and other daily settings? Are there shared protective strategies with the team? Is the family utilizing informal supports and resources to keep the child(ren) free from harm? Have all team members been afforded the opportunity to provide input into the development of a Safety Plan (SF51455/CW0440), if applicable?
2. **Stability** – Does the child have consistent routines, relationships, etc.? Has the child experienced changes in their school setting?

¹ Quality Service Review Protocol for Use by Certified Reviewers. "A Reusable Guide for a Child/Family-Based Review of Locally Coordinated Children's Services", April 2007.

3. **Well-being** – If there are identified special needs for the child, does the parent have the capacity and supports necessary to address these needs? Is the child achieving his or her optimal or best attainable health status? Is the child achieving key developmental milestones? Does the child express a sense of belonging and demonstrate an attachment to family and friends? Is the child achieving at a grade level appropriate for their age?
4. **Permanency** – Safety, stability and sufficient caregiver functioning are simultaneous conditions of permanency for a child or youth. Is the child's daily living and learning stable and free from risk of disruption? Was there a change in adults residing in the home? Has the child experienced a change resulting from behavioral difficulties or emotional disorders in the past year?

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. Visitation Checklist (SF53557/CW3112)
2. Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Request (SF106)
3. ICPC Supervision Report- Available in ICWIS
4. Visitation Plan- Available in ICWIS
5. Case Plan (SF2956) – Available in ICWIS
6. Safety Plan (SF51455/CW0440)

RELATED INFORMATION

Regular Contact is Paramount

Regular contact with the resource family, the parent, guardian, custodian, and the child is the most effective way that DCS can:

1. Promote timely implementation of Case Plans (SF2956) for children and families served by DCS; and
2. Monitor progress and revise service plans as needed.

Regular contact with the child allows the FCM to:

1. Assess the child's health, safety, and well-being;
2. Develop and maintain a trusting and supportive relationship with the child;
3. Assess the child's progress in out-of-home placement;
4. Discuss the child's thoughts and feelings about being away from home and living with the resource family; and
5. Help the child prepare for family reunification, or another permanent living situation, if family reunification has been ruled out
6. **[REVISED]** Spend time with families and to build relationships with families. The Federal Government has established monthly contact standards because it believes that one of the most important ways to promote positive outcomes for children and their families is to ensure that monthly casemanager visits occur with all children under DCS supervision. This visit will occur each calendar month whether or not it has been less than 30 days since the last visit.

Note: Any concerns should be discussed with the resource family and the parent, guardian, custodian, and the child (as appropriate, based on the child's age and development).

Choose an Appropriate Setting

The FCM should choose a setting that allows the child to talk (i.e., candidly express) his or her feelings comfortably.

Changes in a Parent's Personal Circumstances

During contact with the family, changes noted regarding a parent's income, employment status, place of residence, diagnosis of physical, and/or mental illness should be documented in the case file and in ICWIS. Income and employment information should be noted on the Employment/Income Tab in ICWIS and change in address on the 'Profile Screen'. Illness that prevents the parent from providing care to the child should be documented on the 'Deprivation Screen'. These changes can have a direct impact on whether the child is considered deprived of parental care and support which is a requirement of eligibility for federal funding that covers the costs of substitute care and DCS's administrative costs

