

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 8: Out-of-Home Services	Effective Date: January 1, 2009
	Section 10: Minimum Contact	Version: 2

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 30 day alternating cycle between the placement/home, and other locations (e.g., school, relatives home, day care center, etc.). DCS will ensure that sufficient time and opportunity is given to observe and evaluate the parent-child relationship during the parent-child visits for no more than one month. 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.

[REVISED] Contact During Critical Junctures

During critical episodes involving the child or resource family (e.g. trial home visits, potential placement disruptions, new abuse or neglect allegations, potential runaway situations, pregnancy of the child, lack of parental contact, etc.), contact with the child, parent, guardian, and/or resource parent must be made weekly by the assigned Family Case Manager (FCM). The FCM will monitor and evaluate the situation as well as convene CFT, to assess whether the situation warrants continued weekly visits. See separate policy, [5.7 Child and Family Team Meetings](#).

[REVISED] Contact with Resource Families

DCS will have face-to-face contact with resource families, at a minimum, every 60 days. 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 Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting.

Contact with Children in Out of State Placement

For children placed out of state through the Interstate Compact Program, DCS must make a formal request, through the state utilizing the [Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Request form SF 106 CW 0100A](#), for the receiving state to visit the child every 60 days. DCS must have face-to-face contact with the child once every other month in the opposite month that the child has received a visit from the interstate worker. See separate policy, [5.7 Child and Family Team Meetings](#).

Contact with Child's Parent/Guardian/Custodian

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

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

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

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| a. Purpose of the contacts, | e. Parties to be contacted, |
| b. Frequency of the contacts, | f. Procedure for the feedback, and |
| c. Starting date of the service, | g. A plan of action if risk is perceived. |
| d. Duration of the agreement, | |

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?
 - 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.)
 - b. The child's interests (e.g. friends, hobbies, extracurricular activities)

Contact with the Resource Family

The FCM will see the resource family at least every 60 days. At each visit with the resource family, the FCM will:

1. Utilize the [Visitation Checklist \(SF53557/CW 3112\)](#) form to gather information and discuss any updates with the resource family.
2. Observe the overall condition of the home/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.

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 to Indiana Child Welfare Information Services (ICWIS) within one business day. See separate policies, [8.27 Health Records - Medical Passport](#) and [8.20 Educational Services](#).
2. For interstate cases, send the receiving state a report of each visit made, and document in ICWIS both the reports of FCM visits and reports of visits from the receiving state.

Contacts with the Child's Parent/Guardian/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/Custodian** above).
2. For moderate, high, and very high service level cases where an LCPA (licensed child placement agency) 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/Custodian**, above.
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

N/A

FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Visitation Checklist \(SF 53557/CW3112\)](#)
2. [Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Request form](#)

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 for children and families served by DCS
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.
5. Help the child prepare for family reunification, or another permanent living situation, if family reunification has been ruled out

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/her feelings comfortably.

[NEW] Changes in a Parent's Personal Circumstances

During contact with the family, changes noted regarding a parent's income, employment status, and place of residence or diagnosis of physical/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 the Department's administrative costs

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