

3.2.1 CASEWORKER VISITS WITH CHILDREN, PARENTS, AND CAREGIVERS

AUTHORITY:

AS 47.10	Children in Need of Aid
42 U.S.C. 622(b)(17)	State Plans for Child Welfare Services (Title IV-B)
42 U.S.C. 623(e)	Payment to States
42 U.S.C. 675(5)(A)(ii)	Definitions (Titles IV-B and IV-E)

PURPOSE: To establish standards to ensure the quality of caseworker visits with children, families, and out-of-home caregivers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - FEDERAL LAW:

- A. Children in out-of-home care must be visited by a caseworker on a monthly basis and the caseworker visits must be well-planned and focused on issues pertinent to case planning and service delivery to ensure child safety, permanency, well-being, and cultural continuity.
- B. Children Placed Out-of-State:
 - 1. A child who has been placed in out-of-home care in a different state than has custody of the child must be visited by a caseworker not less frequently than every six months. The visit may be made by a caseworker who is on the staff of:
 - a. the State agency of the State that has custody of the child; or
 - b. the State in which the child has been placed; or
 - c. a private agency under contract with either such State.
 - 2. The visit must take place in the home or institution where the child is placed, and the caseworker in the receiving state who makes a visit must submit a written report on the visit to the State agency of the State that has custody of the child. Caseworker visits must be well-planned and focused on issues pertinent to case planning and service delivery to ensure child safety, permanency, well-being, and cultural continuity.

POLICY:

- A. Caseworker Visits with Children
 - 1. Any child with an open case will be visited and seen by the assigned primary or secondary OCS worker at least one time a month. These visits will occur regardless whether the case is in the initial assessment phase, regardless of the legal custody status, and whether the child is living in their own home or in out-of-home placement.
 - 2. Caseworker visits will occur at least once a month, or more if the family needs

indicate, with the majority of the visits being in the home in which the child resides.

3. Visits between the OCS worker and the child will include observation and a discussion with the child regarding their current placement, their safety, well being, cultural continuity, and permanency.
4. During each visit, the worker will reassess the child's initial needs and assess their ongoing needs. These activities should be appropriate to the child's age and reflect the child's developmental level. The initial assessment of needs includes making an inquiry to the child if the services and activities on the case plan are still meaningful and helpful to the child. Conducting ongoing assessment of needs means determining through discussion with the child if there are other areas that need to be worked on or addressed through services and included on the case plan. These areas of inquiry should encompass the child's functioning including mental health needs, physical health needs, educational needs, social needs, recreational needs, family relationships, and adjustment to the out of home placement setting.
5. All visits should be in person, face to face. For children who are placed outside of their own region or in a community in the same region that is served by another office, but within the state, the primary worker will request a secondary worker as outlined in section 6.6.2 Out-of-Town Requests (OTR). The receiving office will assign a secondary worker who will visit the child in person at least once a month.
6. Children who live out of state will have at least once a month telephonic contact with the assigned worker. For children placed in foster care or with unlicensed relatives, the Deputy ICPC Administrator will request monthly visits with written reports.
7. For a child placed in an out-of-state residential facility, face-to-face visits with the child are required every six months. The worker will have unsupervised phone contact with the child once a month to discuss the child's placement, activities on the case plan, and any safety or well being issues. The worker or psychiatric nurse will have weekly contact with facility and child to exchange treatment information and help facilitate discharge planning. (for further details see section 5.2.4 Supervising Out-of-State Placements).
8. Visits that occur in a setting that does not provide for the privacy and the time necessary for a meaningful observation and conversation will not meet the requirement for a monthly contact.

B. Caseworker Visits with Parent/s (or Indian Custodian):

1. Any parents and/or Indian custodian with an open case will be visited and seen by the assigned primary or secondary OCS worker at least one time a month. More frequent visitation should occur as family needs indicate. These visits will occur regardless whether the case is in the initial assessment phase, regardless of the legal custody status, and whether the child is living in their own home or in out-of-home placement.
2. Caseworker visits with parents will occur at least once a month, or more if the family needs indicate, with the majority of the visits being in the home in which the parent

resides.

3. For a parent that resides out of state the contact will be telephonic.
4. During each visit, the worker will reassess the parent's initial needs and assess their ongoing needs. These activities should be appropriate to the case situation and reflect the behavioral needs of the parents. The initial assessment of needs includes making an inquiry to the parent if the services and activities on the case plan are still meaningful and helpful to the parent. Conducting ongoing assessment of needs means determining through discussion with the parent if there are other areas that need to be worked on or addressed through services and included on the case plan. These areas of inquiry should encompass the issues which compromise the safety of the child and which address the enhancement of the protective capacity of the parents.
5. Visits on a monthly basis are required until the court determines that reasonable efforts towards reunification are no longer required (AS 47.10 086(c)). In ICWA cases, active efforts must continue, unless the court rules no further active efforts are needed.
6. Worker safety must be considered for face-to-face visits. If a worker has concerns about personal safety regarding contact with a parent, they will consult with their supervisor.
 - a. If in-home visits are determined to be unsafe, the supervisor will document in ORCA the reasons for this decision and what the alternative plan for monthly contacts will be.
 - b. Parent contact setting will be reassessed and documented by the supervisor as circumstances change.

C. Caseworker Visits with Out-of-Home Caregivers:

1. Foster care providers and unlicensed relative care providers will be contacted by the worker during the course of their routine monthly contact with the child. In two-parent homes, it is strongly recommended that efforts are made to visit both providers whenever possible. The majority of the visits will be in the care provider's home and face-to-face. This contact will be directed at meeting the needs of the substitute caregiver as pertains to the children placed in their home as well as the individual needs of the child(ren).
2. During each visit, the worker will reassess the caregivers' initial needs and assess their ongoing needs. Any services should be appropriate to the family situation and reflect the needs of the caregiver to provide care for the child. The initial assessment of needs includes making an inquiry to the caregiver if the services and activities being provided are still meaningful and helpful to the caregiver and/or child. Conducting ongoing assessment of needs means determining through discussion with the caregiver if there are other areas that need to be worked on or addressed through support.

- D. Some case visits should be scheduled with the parents/caregiver/child and some visits should be unannounced.
- E. All visits will be documented in ORCA as a Caseworker Visit Activity note.

PROCEDURE:

A. Caseworker Visits with Children:

1. The caseworker will contact the child's caregiver to schedule a time to visit with the child in the home in which the child lives.
2. The caseworker will visit with the child every month, and more frequently if needed to help meet the child's needs. The majority of the visits will in the home in which the child resides.
3. Prior to the initial meeting with the child, the worker will consult with their supervisor to ensure they have the needed information for the visit. This may include whether or not more frequent visits are needed, strategies on interviewing the child, and other case related information that needs to be addressed.
4. If a child changes homes, the caseworker will help move the child as needed and as appropriate. Within one week of the child's placement change, the worker will visit with the child to help with the transition and ensure the child is safe and their needs are being met.
5. For children who are being visited by secondary workers from other regions or offices, the secondary worker and primary worker will communicate at least monthly to exchange information in accordance with section 6.6.2 Out-of-Town Requests.
6. For children who are placed out of state, the worker will call the child monthly on the phone to talk with them. The child must be spoken to alone for at least a portion of the call.
7. Contact with the child will be meaningful and purposeful:
 - a. Visits include the worker interacting with the child and observing interactions between the child, caregiver, and other household members.
 - b. The child must be seen alone for a portion of each visit.
 - c. The following must be discussed in an age appropriate manner or assessed during the visits:
 - 1) the child's safety in the home in which they live;
 - 2) cultural continuity;
 - 3) the reason why the child was placed out-of-home;
 - 4) the child's permanency goal and the time frames for implementing the permanency goal,

- 5) services and activities in the case plan, including independent living services for youth age 16 or older, or other needed services;
- 6) the child's wellbeing including:
 - the appropriateness of the placement;
 - physical health and mental health issues;
 - educational needs;
 - parent, sibling, and other family contact, including impact of being separated from family;
- 7) social/recreational needs, including connection to friends.

B. Caseworker Visits with Parents:

1. The caseworker will contact the parent to schedule a time to visit with the parent wherever the parent lives.
2. The caseworker will visit with the parent every month, and more frequently if needed to help meet the parent's needs. The majority of the visits will be in the home in which the parent resides.
3. Prior to the initial meeting with the parent, and when necessary for worker safety reasons, the worker will consult with their supervisor to ensure they have the needed information for the visit. This may include whether or not more frequent contact is needed, strategies on interviewing the parent, worker safety concerns, and other case related information that needs to be addressed.
4. For parents who are being visited by secondary workers from other regions or offices, the secondary worker and primary worker will communicate on a regular basis to exchange information in accordance with section 6.6.2 Out-of-Town Requests.
5. For parents who live out of state, the worker will call the parent on the phone each month to talk with them.
6. Contact with the parent will be meaningful and purposeful. The following must be discussed and/or assessed during caseworker visits with parents:
 - a. any safety issues in the home at the time;
 - b. reasons for OCS involvement based on safety, high risk, and need for enhanced protective capacities;
 - c. any safety plan that may be in place at the time, whether it is sufficient and any changes that need to be made;
 - d. the parents' protective capacities, are diminished capacities enhanced in order to reduce threats to safety; what protective capacities the parents are working on addressing;
 - e. cultural continuity;
 - f. the current permanency goal and the time frames for implementing the permanency goal;
 - g. the appropriateness of the services and activities in the case plan in order to increase protective capacities and alleviate the conditions that brought the child into care, including services needed to effect change in the parent's ability to safely care for their child;

- h. parent's participation in services that are provided for the purpose of keeping the child safe and/or implementing the permanency goal; discuss any updates received from collateral sources regarding progress made toward case plan goals (feedback from therapists, police reports, etc);
- i. the child, regardless of placement, including:
 - medical/counseling issues;
 - educational needs;
 - family and sibling contact;
 - social/recreational needs;
 - physical health;
- j. whether the level of family contact is adequate or whether the family contact plan needs to be adjusted;
- k. explain and prepare the parent for any upcoming court hearings or review meeting.

C. Caseworker Visits with Out-of-Home Caregivers:

1. The caseworker will contact the out-of-home caregiver to schedule a time to visit. This may be done at the same time the worker comes to visit with the child in the home.
2. It is strongly recommended that the caseworker has contact with the out-of-home caregiver every month, and more frequently if needed to help meet the caregiver's needs. The majority of the visits will be in the home in which the care giver resides.
3. Prior to the initial meeting with the caregiver, the worker will consult with their supervisor to ensure they have the needed information for the visit. This may include whether or not more frequent contact is needed, strategies on interviewing the caregiver, and other case related information that needs to be addressed.
4. For out-of-home caregivers who are being visited by workers from other regions or offices, the secondary worker and primary worker will communicate on a regular basis to exchange information in accordance with section 6.6.2 Out-of-Town Requests.
5. For out-of-state caregivers, the worker will have regular communication to ensure the child's and caregiver's needs are being met in a meaningful and purposeful manner.
6. Contact with the caregiver will be meaningful and purposeful. Visits include the worker interacting with the caregiver and observing interactions between the child, caregiver, and other household members.
7. The following must be discussed and/or assessed during caseworker visits with caregivers:
 - a. the safety of the child;
 - b. cultural continuity;
 - c. the appropriateness of the services and activities in the case plan;

- d. the permanency goal for the child and long terms needs if appropriate;
- e. the child's wellbeing, including:
 - the appropriateness of the placement;
 - physical health and mental health needs;
 - educational needs;
 - referrals being made for any necessary evaluations, assessments, and services;
 - social/recreational needs;
- f. services that the caregiver needs in order to provide care for the child;
- g. the caregiver's role in working with the parents, including mentoring, facilitating family contact, and communicating with the parent about their child;
- h. any new documentation that is included in the placement packet.

D. Supervisor Role:

1. During weekly supervision, the supervisor will help ensure the worker has plans to visit their children, parents, and out-of-home caregivers.
2. Prior to the visits, the supervisor will consult with the worker to ensure the worker understands the purpose and focus of the visit and has the information needed for their visit, including any support that may be needed to ensure the worker is safe while in the field.
3. Every month, the supervisor will review the caseworker visit reports in ORCA to determine if any visits were missed for the month. If visits were missed, the supervisor will consult with the worker to ensure the worker makes their contacts before the month ends.
4. If the worker is unable to make their visits, the supervisor will strategize on ways for the contacts to be made for the month. For team case management cases, the supervisor should contact the primary office with as much notice as possible so the primary staff can make arrangements to meet the contact standards.
5. For all visits which are not made, the supervisor must document in a supervision note in ORCA why the contacts for the month were missed.

E. Documenting Caseworker Visits:

1. Workers will record their visits as a Caseworker Visit Activity note in ORCA within 7 calendar days.
2. The worker will document the following information in the narrative of the Caseworker Visit Note:
 - a. any safety issues assessed, identified, or discussed;

- b. any permanency, well-being, and cultural continuity issues assessed or discussed; and
 - c. observations and conclusions that may necessitate revision of the case plan, the safety plan, or the permanency goal.
3. If the required visits were not met, the worker will document in a caseworker activity note the reason why the visit did not occur that month.

