

0205A.0 Caseworker Contact with Children, Parents and Caregivers

0205A.1 Policy Approval Clearance Record

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaborative Policy Date Effective: 06/20/08 | This policy supersedes: | Number of pages in Policy: 11 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DCFS Child Welfare Policy Date Effective: 3/29/13 | 200 Caseworker Contact with Children, Parents and Caregivers, effective 1/18/2008 0205A Caseworker Contact with Children, Parents and Caregivers | Date Policy Effective: 06/21/13 |
| Review by Representative from the Office of the Attorney General: | Date: 9/24/2012 | Policy Lead: Otto Lynn, Alice LeDesma and Betsey Crumrine |
| DCFS Deputy Administrator Approval | Date: 2/4/13 | |

0205A.2 Statement of Purpose

0205A.2.1 Policy Statement: In accordance with the state plan requirements of title IV-E of the Social Security Act the child welfare agency must ensure that children in foster care under the responsibility of the agency are “visited on a monthly basis and that the caseworker visits are well-planned and focused on issues pertinent to case planning and service delivery to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children. This provision also applies to in-home cases.

0205A.2.2 Purpose: Monthly caseworker visits must focus clearly on child safety, case planning and service delivery and be documented in case notes. The exception to the above outlined monthly caseworker visitation is when there is a safety plan involving the child which requires more frequent visitation.

0205A.3 Authority

42 U.S.C. 622(b)(17)
NAC 432B.405

0205A.4 Definitions

0205A.4.1 Caregiver: refers to the person or persons providing foster, adoptive or relative or fictive kinship care for a child, or a person who provides care in a treatment home or residential facility in which a child is placed.

0205A.4.2 Caseworker: workers whom the State or local title IV-B/IV-E agency has assigned or contracted case management or visitation responsibilities (to include supervisors as appropriate). Service providers, such as therapists, will not be able to fulfill this caseworker visit role.

0205A.4.3 Contact: refers to a face-to-face contact, a visit to the home or facility, participation in a child and family team meeting, court hearings, telephone or electronic communication, written documents, or other means similarly defined.

0205A.4.4 Confirming Safe Environments (CSE): refers to an assessment of four categories within placement families/homes which contain indicators of a safe placement environment. The four categories are evaluated by 9 kin placement assessment questions and 10 foster placement assessment questions.

0205A.4.5 Face-to-Face: refers to an in-person interaction between individuals that will allow for the caseworker to observe the child, parents and/or caregivers.

0205A.4.6 Full Disclosure: The birth family, foster/resource family, child welfare and legal system are all informed and share pertinent information regarding the case, family history, case planning and permanency planning options.

0205A.4.7 In-home case: Any case open for services following a determination of investigation finding i.e. substantiated, unsubstantiated, whether formal, court ordered custody or informal, where no child in the family was in out of home placement for 24 hours or more. Children on trial home visits are **not** In-home cases.

0205A.4.8 Monthly: Refers to every calendar month.

0205A.4.9 Parent: refers to the birth parent or legal guardian of a child.

0205A.4.10 Safe Environment: refers to a family and home situation where there is an absence of perceived or actual threats, a refuge exists and is experienced, family members have perceptions and feelings of security and there is confidence in consistency.

0205A.4.11 Safety Plan: A time limited, written plan that is put into place upon contact with the family when present and/or impending danger is manifested to ensure immediate protection of a child. The safety plan must be sufficient to manage and control safety threats, based on a high degree of confidence that it can be implemented and sustained.

0205A.4.12 UNITY: Refers to the Unified Nevada Information Technology for Youth: Nevada's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS)

0205A.4.13 Well-Being: refers to promoting emotional, physical health and educational child well-being.

0205A.5 Procedures

0205A.5.1 Benefits of Caseworker Visits

- A.** Caseworker visits with children, parents and caregivers are one of the most important ways to assess safety, plan for permanency and ensure that all of the child's needs are being met, regardless of placement, i.e., with parent, relative, foster home, treatment homes. Some of the benefits of purposeful caseworker visits with children, parents and caregivers include:
- Identification of child and family strengths and needs.
 - Parental engagement in the case planning process;
 - Timely notification (within 48 hours) to parents, either in writing or verbally of any out of home placement changes and/or decisions to alter parental/child visitation schedule.
 - Full disclosure, in which all parties involved understand the importance of sharing pertinent information for the purposes of case planning and permanency options

- Strong parent-worker alliance in order to achieve positive outcomes for children; and
- Placement support.
- Observation of safe environment attributes.

B. Minimum visitation requirements: A face-to-face visit must occur with the child (ren) and caregivers at least every calendar month.

- For cases where the child is placed in foster care, the visit must take place in the foster home a majority of the time (greater than 50%).
- During all types of visitation, the caseworker must spend at least a portion of each visit alone with the child; and
- During all types of visitation, the caseworker must spend at least a portion of each visit alone with the caregiver/foster parent, if requested.
- During all types of visits, the caseworker must consider the CSE attribute assessment questions.

C. Activities: During any type of contact between the caseworker, parents and child, the caseworker must:

- Assess child safety, adjustment to placement and well-being;
- Assess attributes of a safe environment.
- Review case plan goals, services to parents, caregivers and children.
- Document case plan progress specifically related to services and goals in case notes.
- Observe the parent/ caregiver and child in order to gather information regarding family functioning.

0205A.5.2 Caseworker Contact with Children:

A. The caseworker is a vital constant in the life of a child in the child welfare system representing stability, dependability and trust. It is the caseworkers' responsibility to ensure the child's continuing safety and to ensure that all of the needs of the child are being met in the family home or out-of-home placement.

In addition to casework activities for visitation, the caseworker **must**:

- Assess the child's adjustment to the placement;
- Observe the child and gather information from the child and when present, the child's parents, legal guardians or caregivers;
- Visit with the child in a comfortable and age appropriate setting;
- If appropriate, considering the child's age and level of maturity, discuss with the child the status of the current case plan, services involved, and any legal changes in the case; and
- Gather and maintain in the child case file information about the child's educational, medical/dental, mental health needs, case plan progress and/or any other pertinent information.

- B.** The caseworker must implement the confirming safe environment process during contact with a placed child. The caseworker must:
- Evaluate whether children are openly assertive and feel free to speak their minds.
 - Assess continuing vulnerability and ability for self-protection – making their safety needs known.
 - Consider whether the child has an accurate awareness of his/her environment and the people within it.
 - Evaluate whether supportive relationships exist among all the children in the home.
 - Always inquire into specific treatment the child receives and signs of child maltreatment.
 - Always evaluate whether there are any signs of child maltreatment.

0205A.5.3 Caseworker Contact with Emancipating Youth (ages 15 ½ to 18)

- A.** In addition to the other activities outlined for caseworker visitation/contact, during the emancipation phase of a case, it is critical that planning occurs in which the caseworker and youth have discussion regarding the following:
- Discussion regarding the youth's goals, to include educational, vocational and other goals that require planning efforts.
 - Discussion and creation of a transition plan to include referrals for Independent Living services; and
 - Discussion regarding positive relationships that the youth has with family and/or friends or the need for the youth to establish healthy relationships with others. This is critical for youth who have not achieved legal permanency and need life-long connections to adults in their life in order to support healthy adult living.
 - Discussion with youth and youth's attorney at least 120 days before a youth ages out of foster care at the age of 18 regarding Court Jurisdiction Program and the youth's desire to opt in or out at the age of 18.

0205A.5.4 Caseworker Contact with Children placed out-of-state

- A.** The Caseworker must have monthly contact with the state the child has been placed in to address the following:
- Determine if at least one contact was made for the month, including the date and location of contact.
 - Assess whether the case plan goals are continuing to be addressed and any progress made related to the case plan.
 - Ensure that all of the needs of the child are being met in the out-of-home placement.
 - Assess the child's adjustment to the placement and any information about the child's educational, medical, dental and mental health needs or any other pertinent information.
- B.** The Caseworker **MUST** be diligent in attempting to obtain the date the child was seen by the out of state ICPC worker. Some form of written confirmation (for example through email, letter) from the caseworker (in the state the child

was placed) that the contact occurred and where the contact took place should be received and placed in the file to support the contact case note.

- C. The information gathered from the out of state caseworker's report must be documented and listed as a "Non-Nevada Worker" type of contact "with child" and with the location of visit into UNITY within 5 days of the contact
- D. Children placed out-of-state on an approved ICPC will be seen by a case worker in the receiving state once a month, face-to-face in the placement. A Quarterly Supervision Report will be provided to the sending state, which will include contact dates and an update on how the child is doing in the placement.
- E. Children placed in out-of-state institutions MUST be contacted monthly via telephone or secure video drop and case noted as a "child contact".

0205A.5.5 Caseworker Contact with Parents

- A. Quality visits with parents are the foundation for engaging the family in an effective casework relationship. Visits between workers and parents should be focused on safety, strengths and needs of the child and family, case planning, family progress and identification of resources and services the family needs in order to achieve case plan goals. Visits provide an excellent opportunity for:
 - Parent engagement in the case planning process, to include participation in the Child and Family Team;
 - Developing and maintaining a good working relationship with the parent;
 - Assess changes in parental functioning; and
 - Discuss and review the progress of the current case plan, permanency goal, changes in the child's placement, and any legal changes in the case.
- B. Visits should occur at a time and place that is favorable for the parents. In some cases, multiple staff and service providers are involved with families. The case plan may involve parents having face-to-face contacts with other staff or with providers with a contractual relationship to augment worker visits. However, these visits are not a substitute for worker visits with parents. Workers should make concerted efforts to conduct frequent face-to-face visits with both mothers and fathers who are involved in their children's lives, including non-custodial parents. In some cases this may require development of separate plans.

Caseworkers shall notify the parent(s) either orally or in writing of any changes in the visitation schedule with the child. Notification will be documented in the UNITY case notes.

0205A.5.6 Contacts with Caregiver

- A. Visits between the caseworker and caregiver/relative should be focused on issues such as child's safety; well-being, adjustment, family visitation/contact and case plan goals. Visits provide a venue for caregiver participation in case planning and decision-making, based on the needs of the child and caregiver. The caseworker must collect information from the caregiver such as:
 - Discussion of the child strengths and needs;

- Gather information about the child's educational, medical or dental, mental health needs or any other pertinent information;
 - Discussion regarding services required to support placement;
 - Discuss and review the progress of the current case plan, permanency goal and any legal changes in the case.
 - Discuss support services the caregiver may need such as respite care, assistance accessing services, additional training and or non-residential (wrap around) services to the needs of the child (ren).
- B.** At the onset of each new placement the Washoe County or DCFS Emergency Placement Checklist; to include the CSE, Present Danger Assessment MUST be completed at the time of placement.
- C.** Throughout the duration of the placement the caseworker should consider the following areas in order to assess the safety of the placement:
1. Evaluate the extent to which caregivers are open and willing to reveal themselves and what is happening in the home. Assess whether adult caregivers demonstrate respect and empathy in relationships and interactions with each other and specifically with the children in the home.
 2. Evaluate the level of bonding between caregivers and their own children and/or children who've been with them for a long period of time.
 3. Determine how evident and plentiful protective behavior is.
 4. Consider the extent to which caregivers are products of nurturing environments themselves.
 5. Evaluate whether caregivers acknowledge and take responsibility for all aspects of family life including family home management and roles – in particular those related to parenting.
 6. Assess caregiver motivation.
 7. Assess whether caregivers express enjoying personal support from within the family and from others with respect to their care giving role.
 8. Consider family members physical, emotional and cognitive capacity.
 9. Assess whether caregivers and family members are reality oriented.
 10. Evaluate roles for caregivers, children and relationships.
 11. Assess whether relationships and communication are honest and open.
 12. Examine levels of stress and coping.
 13. Assess the extent of family integration into the community.
 14. Assess whether caregivers are available and accessible to protect all family members in practical ways.
 15. Evaluate whether living conditions and arrangements are safe.
 16. Consider if and how caregivers receive support and assistance from sources within the community and others.

0205A.5.7 Additional Contact Procedure and Requirements

A. Parents Right to Contact/ Visitation with Children in Out-of-Home Placement

1. The caseworker shall not limit visitation as a sanction for the parent's lack of compliance with court orders or as a method to encourage a child to improve his/her behaviors. Visitation is determined by the best interest, health, safety and well-being of the child. Visitation shall only be limited or terminated when the child's best interest, safety, health or well-being is

compromised. Recommendations to limit or terminate visitation must be presented to the court and supported by any of the following;

- Evidence that the child is at risk of physical or emotional abuse during the visit.
 - The fact that the visitation supervisor is threatened.
 - The parent appears intoxicated. The visit should be stopped that day, but may resume on another day, if safe for the child.
 - Therapist's recommendation to decrease or suspend visitation as it is harmful to the child.
 - The court adopts a permanency plan other than return home and if the family visits continue it would not be in the best interest of the child.
2. Any significant change in visitation shall be staffed with the caseworker, supervisor, Court and Child and Family Team when necessary. Shared decision making should be employed including meeting with parents and caregivers when visitation plans change.
 3. Termination of face-to-face contact may still allow for other communication such as monitored phone calls or letters. When a parent has demonstrated improved parenting skills and/or decrease in inappropriate behaviors, face-to-face visits may be restarted.
 4. Visits after the parental rights are terminated or relinquished are done to meet the child's needs. In many cases these types of visits are for goodbye, family information or re-connection to family members.

B. Scheduling Contact

Caseworkers should regularly schedule visits with children, parents, legal guardians and caregivers in accordance with rules set forth in this policy. However there may be a need to have unscheduled visits with the child, parents or caregiver in order to ensure the safety and well-being of the child. In these instances, the visit will occur in a manner that is consistent with the purpose if the visit and is respectful of the child and the parents or caregiver involved in the visit.

C. Caseworker Back-Up

On rare occasion it may be necessary to meet the caseworker contact requirements with someone other than the child's caseworker. A worker whom the State or local title IV-B/IV-E agency has assigned or contracted case management or visitation responsibilities with (to include supervisors as appropriate) can meet the visit requirements. Service providers will not be able to fulfill this caseworker visit role.

D. Exceptions

After reviewing the safety and service plan for the child, the caseworker's supervisor or manager may approve an exception, on an individual case basis, to the requirement for a child's caseworker to have face-to-face contact with the child, parents, legal guardians or caregivers. The decision to approve an exception to the face-to-face contact requirement must be consistent with meeting the needs and permanency goal of the child. The caseworker or supervisor will document in UNITY case notes the reason for the exception to the face-to-face contact, including the criteria for approving an exception and the length of time the exception will be in effect. Reasons for granting an

exception to the face-to-face contact requirements may include, but are not limited to:

1. Unavailability of the child(ren). Examples include a child on vacation with the caregiver or a child on runaway status.

E. Confirming Safe Environments (First month conclusion)

1. Within the first month of a new placement, the child welfare worker must have personal contact with the placement provider or child's caregiver at least once per week. The contact may be face-to-face; by telephone; or electronically. The purpose of this contact is twofold: 1) to oversee the safety of the child and the implementation of arrangements for the placement plan; and 2) to begin collecting information in order to confirm the safe environment.
2. By the end of the first month of placement, the caseworker must document in case notes their impressions, based on information collected, about the attributes of the safe environment. The impressions result from conversations with the placed child; other children in the home; kin or foster caregivers; and collateral sources. These conversations ought to be directed at indicators and appearances of a safe environment.
3. By the conclusion of the first month of placement, the caseworker must consult with a supervisor to review confirming safe environment information collected, current impressions and current conclusion.
4. If, at the conclusion of the first month of placement, the caseworker and supervisor conclude that there are not sufficient attributes which indicate a safe environment, the CSE instrument must be completed. If the CSE conclusions indicate an unsafe environment immediate steps must occur to revise and enhance the safety plan or move the child to a different setting, and immediately make a referral to licensing if applicable.

F. Monthly Oversight

As monthly contact continues, the caseworker must remain diligent about considering attributes of a safe environment. Because things can change, it is necessary to be concerned about safety on a continuing basis.

Once CPS has confirmed a safe environment (E, 4. above) then, all subsequent caseworkers MUST continue to observe the home to assure that the same acceptable conditions remain and that changes occurring do not pose a threat to child safety.

G. Confirming Safe Environment Five Month Conclusion

The caseworker must review and document the status of attributes of a safe environment based upon the information collected through monthly contacts and complete the Confirming Safe Environment Instrument.

1. The five month review is the official evaluation and conclusion about the safe environment. This review does not require additional worker-placement home casework activity. It is based upon sufficient contact and information collection conversations occurring during monthly contacts.
2. The caseworker must assure that monthly documentation about the attributes of a safe environment are current and correct at the time of the five month review.
3. To comply with the five month conclusion, the caseworker must review the documentation related to the monthly/continuing oversight.

4. The caseworker must assess and select each assessment question in the CSE Instrument corresponding to the type of placement (kin or foster.)
 - Children: *What are the attributes of a safe environment for the children currently living in the home?*
 - Caregivers: *What are the attributes of a safe environment for the adult caregivers currently living in the home?*
 - Family: *What are the attributes of a safe environment within the kin or foster family?*
 - Community: *What are the attributes of a safe environment within the placement family's community?*
 - Acceptance: *Do/will kin or foster family members accept the child into the home?*
 - Plan: *Is the kin or foster family's plan sufficient to assure the child's safety?*
 - Oversight: *Are kin or foster family and home conditions amenable to CPS oversight?*
 - Natural Family - Kin: *What is the nature of the relationship among these kin?*
 - Placed Child - Kin: *What is the nature of the relationship between the placed child and the kin family?*
 - Fostering Experience: *Is there anything within the foster care history/experience that could affect the placed child's impending safety?*
 - Interaction Dynamics: *What interaction dynamics could potentially affect the placed child's impending safety?*
 - Current Status: *What current issues within the home could affect the child's impending safety?*
5. The caseworker must consult with a supervisor to review the conclusions from the CSE Instrument and justification as contained in the caseworker documentation.

0205A.5.8 Timelines:

Table 0205A.1: Timelines for Caseworker Visitation

| Requirement | Deadline | Starting Date | Responsible Party | Actions to be Taken |
|--|---|--|-------------------|---|
| Caseworkers visit with children, parents and caregivers every calendar month | Every calendar month | At onset of placement and care responsibility of state/ county agency for children who are placed away from their families and after completion of the NIA for all other on-going in-home cases. | CW caseworker | Visit children and families on caseload every calendar month. |
| CSE PDA | Prior to placing child in out of home placement | At time placement is being made | CW caseworker | Complete CSE, PDA. If present danger is identified, placement cannot be made. |
| CSE First Month Conclusion | Within 30 days of placement | At onset of placement | CW caseworker | Document attributes of a Safe Environment in caseworker contact visit notes. If sufficient attributes do not exist complete CSE |

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| | | | | Instrument. If the CSE conclusions indicate an unsafe environment immediate steps MUST be taken to revise the safety plan (ex. revise and enhance safety plan or move child to a different setting) and immediately make a referral to licensing, if applicable. |
| CSE Instrument completion at 5 months and every 6 months thereafter. | Every 6 months or before semiannual court hearing. | At onset of placement | CW caseworker | Completion of Instrument and supervisor approval. |

0205A.6 Documentation

0205A.6.1 Documentation of caseworker contact is mandatory as it provide a concrete method of documenting ongoing assessment of safety and the child's adjustment to placement, case plan progress and any other concerns. Any type of contact or visitation with a child or regarding a child must be documented in UNITY case notes within five working days of said contact (per documentation policy).

At a minimum, documentation should contain the following information:

- Date of caseworker contact/visit;
- Location of caseworker contact /visit;
- Who participated in the contact/visit;
- Other specific information to demonstrate quality of visits; and
- Purpose of contact;
- Review child's status in services (educational, mental health, physical health, dental health) and any unmet needs, pending or needed referrals;
- Outcome of visit (i.e., follow-up required);
- Observations of CSE attributes.

0205A.6.2 Case File Documentation (paper):

1. CSE, Present Danger Assessment (PDA) must be completed, prior to an out of home placement. Hard copy form is attached to DCFS/WCDSS Emergency Placement Checklist.
2. In the fifth month of an out of home placement and at minimum every 6 months thereafter the CSE instrument (located in the UNITY forms system) MUST be filled out and placed in the agency file.

0205A.6.3 UNITY Documentation (electronic):

Table 0205A.2: UNITY Documentation for Caseworker Contact with Children, Parents and Caregivers Policy

| Applicable UNITY Screen | Data Required |
|-------------------------|---|
| CFS 085 Case Notes | Document contact in UNITY case notes within five working days of said contact |

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| CFS 086 Case Note Directory | Document contact in UNITY case notes within five working days of said contact |
| Child Contact Note | Document contact in UNITY case notes within five working days of said contact |

0205A.7 Policy Cross Reference

0204 Case Planning Policy
0601 Documentation Policy
0508 Nevada Initial Assessment Policy

0205A.8 Attachments:

FPO 0205A DCFS Emergency Placement Safety Checklist
FPO 0205B DCFS Confirming Safe Environments Present Danger Assessment
FPO 0205C Confirming Safe Environments Safety Assessment Instrument and Instructions
FPO 0205D WCDSS Emergency Placement Safety Checklist
FPO 0205E WCDSS Confirming Safe Environments Present Danger Assessment