



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES**

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**Manual Transmission Letter (MTL)
Family Programs Office: Statewide Policy Manual**

2008 – MTL #0205-123008
12/30/2008

TO: Barbara Legier, Deputy Director - Division of Child and Family Services – Central Office
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FROM: Cynthia Freeman, Social Services Chief III
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POLICY DISTRIBUTION: Enclosed find the following policy for distribution to all applicable staff within your organization:

- **0205 Caseworker Contact with Children, Parents and Caregivers**

This policy is effective as revised on 06/20/08:

Updates to the following areas have been made in this policy (policy page number/summary of change):

- Typographical errors were corrected.

NOTE:

- This policy has been placed into the new Family Programs Office Policy Format. Please read the policy in its entirety and note any areas of Jurisdictional Action that are additionally required by your agency to be in compliance with the policy enclosed.
- This is an **All STAFF MEMO** and it is the responsibility of the Agency Director listed above to disseminate the policy enclosed to appropriate staff within his/her organization and to ensure compliance.
- Please direct questions to Cynthia Freeman, (775)-684-4410, or via email cfreeman@dcs.nv.gov.

0205.0 Caseworker Contact with Children, Parents and Caregivers

0205.1 Policy Approval Clearance Record

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaborative Policy Date Effective: 06/20/08	This policy supersedes: 200 Caseworker Contact with Children, Parents and Caregivers	Number of pages in Policy: 9
PART Review & Approval DMG Approval DCFS Administrator Approval Review by Representative from the Office of the Attorney General:	06/20/2008 06/20/2008 06/09/2008	Policy Lead: Chris Lovass-Nagy, LSW Policy Lead: Chris Lovass-Nagy, LSW Signature: On File

0205.2 Statement of Purpose

0205.2.1 Policy Statement: In accordance with 45 CFR 1355.20 "Children in foster care or children under the placement and care responsibility of the state agency who are placed away from their parents or guardians" must be visited by their caseworker every calendar month." This provision also applies to in-home cases.

0205.2.2 Purpose: Monthly caseworker visits must focus clearly on case planning and service delivery and be documented in case notes. The exception to the above outlined monthly caseworker visitation is when there is safety plan involving the child which requires more frequent visitation. If a child is unavailable for any calendar month home visit (for example, child is on an extended vacation with their foster family) it is imperative that caseworkers enter the change in the child's placement status into UNITY in that calendar month. Please Note: Per Federal requirements, children on runaway status will be counted in the caseworker contact report as requiring a visit. Do not change placement status in UNITY.

0205.3 Authority

45 CFR 1355.20
NAC 432B.405

0205.4 Definitions

0205.4.1 Caregiver: refers to the persons providing foster, adoptive or relative care for a child or person who provides care in a treatment home/facility in which a child is placed.

0205.4.2 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.

0205.4.3 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.

0205.4.4 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.

- 0205.4.5 Full Disclosure:** means that 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.
- 0205.4.6 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.
- 0205.4.7 Monthly:** Refers to every calendar month.
- 0205.4.8 Parent:** refers to the birth parent or legal guardian of a child.
- 0205.4.9 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.
- 0205.4.10 State:** The Family Programs Office (FPO) at the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS).
- 0205.4.11 UNITY:** refers to the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS), in which all case information is documented.
- 0205.4.12 Well-Being:** refers to promoting emotional, physical health and educational child well-being.

0205.5 Procedures

0205.5.1 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.

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 (greater than 50%) of the time.
- The majority (greater than 50%) of visits must take place in the child's residence.
- 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.

The purpose of all caseworker contacts is to review child safety, adjustment, well-being and case plan progress.

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

- Assess child safety and well-being;
- Review case plan goals, services to parents and children.
- Document case plan progress specifically related to services and goals in case notes.
- Observe the parent and child in order to gather information regarding family functioning.

0205.5.2 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.

0205.5.3 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.

0205.5.4 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 obtain some form of written confirmation (for example through email, letter or form) from the caseworker (in the state the child was placed) that the contact occurred and where the contact took place (jurisdictions can develop a standardized form that can be faxed to the state for signature and use as confirmation as well).
- 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 in out-of-state institutions are subject to the same requirements.

0205.5.5 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.

0205.5.5 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) services to the needs of the child(ren).

0205.5.6 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. In dependency cases, the court shall be informed of any significant changes in visitation. A court order is required prior to the change in visitation, unless the child's safety is jeopardized.
- 5. 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 of 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 from 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, in the client's case file. 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.
2. Parent not living in the same community as child. Examples include parent living in another state or are incarcerated.

0205.5.7 Timelines: None

Table 0205.1: 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 CWS cases.	CWS caseworker	Visit children and families on caseload every calendar month

205.5.8 Forms: None

0205.6 Jurisdictional Action

0205.6.1 Development of Internal Policies: None needed. All three jurisdictions are expected to follow this statewide collaborative policy as written.

0205.6.2 Timelines: None

0205.6.3 Tools & Forms: None

0205.6.4 Documentation: Documentation of caseworker contact is mandatory to all parties as it provide a concrete method of reporting progress, child’s adjustment, case plan progress and any other concerns. Any type of contact or visitation with a child or regarding a child must be documentation in UNITY case notes within five working days of said contact (per documentation policy).

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).

A. Case File Documentation (paper): None

B. UNITY Documentation (electronic):

Table 0205.2: 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
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

0205.6.5 Supervisory Responsibility: None

0205.7 State Responsibilities

0205.7.1 Participants in Policy Development

- A. FPO Staff:** Foster Care Specialists
- B. Jurisdictional Representatives:** PART and DMG
- C. External Stakeholders:** None

0205.7.2 Technical Assistance

- A. Requesting Technical Assistance:** None
- B. Relaying TA Information:** None
- C. Evidenced Based Practice:** None

0205.7.3 Clearance Process

- A.** Approved by DMG 06/20/08

0205.7.4 State Oversight

- A.** Compliance with this policy will be monitored via state agency's oversight methodology.

0205.8 Policy Cross Reference

- 0205.8.1** **0204** Case Planning Policy
- 0601** Documentation Policy

0205.9 Attachments: None