

QUALITY CHILD WELFARE PROFESSIONAL VISIT

Quality contacts are purposeful interactions between child welfare professionals, children, and parents and should reflect engagement and contribute to the assessment and case planning processes. A visit is defined as a face-to-face contact between the child welfare professional or other responsible party and the child. The responsible party would include parents, foster parents, and relative and non-relative caregivers. Quality visits improve safety, permanency, and well-being. Child welfare professionals can use this as a guide to assist with consistent quality contact. Federal and state guidance was used to develop this tool for frontline staff.

QUALITY VISITS WITH CHILDREN

- Visits should occur as frequently as needed but no less than every 30 days.
- The child welfare professional shall see the child alone if the child is older than an infant (1-year-old), for at least part of the visit.
- If the child is older than an infant but has not reached the stage in development where he or she is comfortable being away from the parent, visitation should be conducted in a way that is sensitive to the child's needs but allows the child welfare professional to determine the safety and well-being of the child.
- The child welfare professional shall assess the child's home environment/living arrangement at each visit for new danger threats and parents social, emotional and behavioral capacities.
- Observe the child's interaction with the caregiver to assess the Six Information Domains along with the family's strengths and needs for effective decision-making.
- Topics discussed during the visits will include issues pertaining to the child's needs, safety, and service delivery. When a family has a need for or is under service intervention, workers shall include goal achievement and case planning in discussion with the child.
- Ask developmentally appropriate questions.

QUALITY VISITS WITH PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

- Contact should focus on issues pertinent to case planning, service delivery, and goal achievement.
- Inform the caregiver of court hearings including the type of hearing and date and time.
- Discuss all tasks on the case plan and the parent's progress.
- Discuss case goals, progress toward goals since the last visit, and actions needed-in language that all participants can understand.
- If the child is placed with a relative or non-relative, inquire at every visit if they are interested in becoming a Level I Foster Parent unless they are already foster parents.
- If the parent is incarcerated, all efforts should be made to have contact with the parent.

- Assess child safety and risk (including identification of safety threats, vulnerabilities, and protective capacities).
- Explore the well-being of the child or youth and family.
- Observe what is happening in the home.
- Discuss what the agency will do to support the family to meet identified needs and expectations for the child or youth and family.
- Don't forget to include the father.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Prepare for the visit. Review all necessary documents, meet with children's legal services, and consult with Supervisor, as needed.
- Understand that engagement is an ongoing process.
- The length of the visit (e.g., was it of sufficient duration to address key issues with the parent or was it just a brief visit?).
- The location of the visit (e.g., was it in a place conducive to open and honest conversation, such as a private home, or was it in a formal or public environment that might be uncomfortable for the parent, such as a court house or restaurant?).
- All contact with children, parents, and caregivers must be documented in FSFN within two business days of contact.
- Each visit should build upon the previous visit.
- All family members should be included in the visit.
- Make sure children, youth, parents, and caregivers feel comfortable discussing challenges and needs.
- Make any needed changes to the case plan.
- Communicate support and partnership.
- If the child is out-of-home, have the conditions for return been satisfied?
- Provide feedback from any previous conversations or visits.
- Discuss any barriers and solutions to those barriers.
- Document any follow-up that is needed.