

# **STANDARD FOR ON-GOING CONTACT BETWEEN THE SOCIAL WORKER, THE CHILD, THE FAMILY and RESOURCE PARENT(S) or OTHER ALTERNATE CARE PROVIDERS**

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this standard is to provide direction and guidance to the Child and Family Services (CFS) program regarding frequency and purpose of on-going contact between the social worker, the child, the parent/caregiver, and resource parent(s) or other alternate care providers in in-home and out of home cases. This standard is intended to achieve statewide consistency in the development and application of CFS core services and shall be implemented in the context of all applicable laws, rules and policies. This standard will also provide a measurement for program accountability.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Findings from the initial federal Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) found significant improvements in the outcomes of child safety, permanency, and well-being when social workers have consistent, purposeful, and frequent contact with parents and children. Contact should be used to continually assess the child's safety and to review the family's progress towards achieving the desired results of service plans. Regular contact between the social worker and the child's parents can serve as motivation for parents to make progress on their case goals and provides a means of monitoring, redirecting, and supporting their efforts.

It is equally critical for CFS staff to maintain frequent and regular contact with resource parents or other alternate care providers as a means of assuring the safety and well-being of children placed in their care. Frequent contact also allows the social worker to continually assess the resource family's ongoing needs and to provide additional supports that will enhance the stability of placements for children. This standard establishes minimum requirements and methods for child welfare social worker contact with children, parents, resource families, and other alternative care providers in in-home cases and out of home case

**All services provided under this Standard are to be delivered in accordance with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.**

## **TERMS**

### **Alternate Care**

24-hour a day care provided for children in a location other than the family home. Examples of alternate care settings include: resource family, residential facility, treatment homes.

**Contact**

Contact is communication between the assigned worker and the child, the child's parents or caregivers, resource family members or other alternate care providers. Contact serves as a basis for assessing the child's safety, permanency, and well-being. As well as promoting the achievement of the family's case goals. Methods of contact include face-to-face visits, phone calls, letters, and reports.

**In-Home Case**

Cases where one or more of the children in a family are determined to be unsafe and the safety of all the children in the family can be managed in the home.

**Legal Case**

A legal case is when a court has found a child to come under the purview of the Child Protective Act.

**Non-Legal Case**

A non-legal case is when CFS is providing services to a family without court intervention.

**Out of Home Case**

Cases where one or more children in the family are determined to be unsafe and one or more children's safety can only be managed with one or more children temporarily placed outside the home.

**Responsible Party**

*A Department social worker, clinician, or contracted service provider who maintains responsibility and authority for case planning and case management IDAPA.16.06.01.012.17*

Workers who have authority to complete contacts with a child, parent or caregiver, resource family or other alternate care provider. Workers must be assigned responsibility for case management and/or assigned responsibility for completing contact. In either case, the worker completing the contact must actively conduct on-going assessment regarding the child's safety, well-being, and permanency, and must utilize the family/child's case plan to promote achievement of case goals. In some cases there may be more than one worker assigned to a case and both have authority to complete contact with a child. A CFS social work intern does not meet the definition of a responsible party. Therefore CFS social work interns cannot independently complete monthly contact with children, parents, and resource parents or other alternate care providers.

## IMPLEMENTING THE STANDARD

### **I. Contact With Children**

#### Frequency

Every child in a family who is involved in an in-home or out of home case must be seen face-to-face every month. Every child involved in a Comprehensive Safety Assessment which has been open more than 45 days must be seen face-to-face every month. More frequent contact with the child and contact in various settings may be indicated depending upon the needs of the child or family. An exception for monthly face-to-face contact is permitted for children residing in out of state residential/treatment facilities.

#### Responsible Party

Contact with a child must be conducted by a worker assigned to the case, a worker assigned to provide courtesy supervision from a field office, a worker assigned to provide courtesy supervision through ICPC, a worker assigned through a contract provider, or an assigned worker's supervisor. In some cases, more than one worker is assigned to a case and both have authority to complete contact with a child. CFS social work interns cannot independently complete monthly contact with children.

### **A. Children Living In-State**

#### (1) In-home Cases

- All children living in the home of their parent or guardian must be seen monthly, in their own home.
- Children visiting non-custodial parents, short term, (such as weekend visits or for one or two weeks) do not need to be seen monthly because the custodial parent can assess the child's safety and report his/her concerns. However, if a child is visiting long term (for the entire summer), or in the home for repeated visits in close succession (every weekend), the visiting child must be included in monthly face-to-face contact and on-going assessment.

When a child is placed with a parent or guardian, a significant distance from the assigned field office, the assigned field office may request courtesy supervision from another field office in closer proximity to the child. If the request is accepted, the receiving field office will assign a worker to complete monthly face-to-face contact.

#### (2) Comprehensive Safety Assessments open more than 45 days.

- All children who are included in a Comprehensive Safety Assessment open for more than 45 days from the first date of any PI associated with the assessment must be seen face-to-face at least monthly until the assessment is closed.
- Timeframes for initial contact with a child included in a Comprehensive Safety Assessment are outlined in the Standard for Initial and On-going Assessment and the Priority Guidelines.

(3) Out of Home Cases - Child in a Resource Family Home

- Children living in a resource family home may be seen in settings other than the resource family home as long as contact occurs in the child's resource family home a minimum of once every 60 days.
- If a child is removed from his/her home and another child(ren) is left in the home, the worker is required to conduct an initial and ongoing assessment of any child(ren) remaining in the home. Although the assigned worker is not required to see the child(ren) remaining in the home every month, frequency of contact should be determined by the ongoing safety assessment and consultation with the assigned worker's supervisor.
- When a child is placed a significant distance from the assigned worker's field office, the assigned worker's field office may request courtesy supervision from another field office in closer proximity to the child. If the request is accepted, the receiving field office will assign a worker to complete monthly face-to-face contact.

(4) Out of Home Cases - Child in an In-State Residential/Treatment Facility

- Contact with a child placed in a residential/treatment facility may be made in settings other than the residential/treatment facility as long as contact occurs in the child's residential/treatment facility a minimum of once every 60 days.
- When a child is placed a significant distance from the assigned worker's field office, ideally the assigned worker will continue to have face-to-face contact with the child monthly. However, the field office may choose to assign a worker through a contract provider agency to see the child face-to-face monthly. When this is the case, face-to-face contact between the assigned Department worker and the child is required a minimum of once every ninety (90) days. Communication by phone, between the child and the assigned Department worker, shall occur monthly.
- Courtesy supervision from a field office closer in proximity is not the standard for children placed in in-state residential/treatment facilities.

**B. Children Living Out-of-State**

The Fostering Connections Act (Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act P.L. 109-239) requires a child placed out of state to be seen face-to-face no less than once every six (6) months by an assigned worker from the sending state, an assigned worker from the receiving state, or a worker assigned through a contract. However, there is also the expectation children in state custody will be seen face-to-face monthly by an assigned worker wherever they are residing.

(1) Out-of- State with a Resource Family or Parent

- The assigned worker in Idaho will request the state in which the child is placed, via the ICPC, to see the child face-to-face on a monthly basis. The receiving state will assign a worker to complete monthly face-to face contact within thirty (30) days of receiving notification the child has been placed.

- The receiving state's worker will complete a written supervisory report every ninety (90) days. The report will include dates of face-to-face contact, an assessment of the child's safety and well-being, recommendations regarding continued placement, and other pertinent information as described under Regulation 11 of the ICPC.
- The assigned worker in Idaho will have monthly contact with the receiving state's worker to ensure communication is adequate to meet the needs of the child and promote the achievement of case goals.
- If the state where the child is residing with a parent refuses to accept a request for an ICPC an Idaho child welfare social worker may conduct face to face contact with the child in the other state for the purpose of completion of monthly contact to ensure the child's safety. An Idaho child welfare social worker may not conduct formal assessment (i.e. Comprehensive Safety Assessment or Home Study) in any other state than Idaho.

(2) Out-of-State in a Residential/Treatment Facility

- Out-of-state residential/treatment placements are made through the ICPC, but contacts are the sole responsibility of the sending state. The receiving state does not provide courtesy supervision for face-to-face contact with the child.
- Contact with a child placed in a residential/treatment facility may be made in settings other than the residential/treatment facility as long as contact occurs in the child's residential/treatment facility a minimum of once every 60 days.
- When a child is placed in an out-of-state residential/treatment facility, ideally the assigned worker will continue to have face-to-face contact with the child monthly. However, face-to-face contact between the assigned worker and the child is required a minimum of once every sixty (60) days. Communication by phone, between the child and the assigned worker, shall occur monthly.
- Courtesy supervision from a field office or through a contract provider is not the standard for children placed in out-of-state residential/treatment facilities.

## **II. Contact With Parents**

### Frequency

Each parent, regardless of where their child is placed, must be contacted face-to-face a minimum of once per month. More frequent contact and contact in various settings and through various methods may be indicated depending upon the needs of the child or family.

### Responsible Party

Contact with a parent must be conducted by a worker assigned to the case, a worker assigned to provide courtesy supervision from a field office, a worker assigned to provide courtesy supervision through ICPC, a worker assigned through a contract provider, or an assigned worker's supervisor. In some cases, more than one worker is assigned to a case and both have authority to complete contact with a parent. CFS social work interns cannot independently complete monthly contact with parents.

## **A. Non-Legal Cases**

### **(1) In-Home Cases**

There is no requirement to search for or contact a parent not living in the family home when:

- § contact could result in a safety concern for the child or the other parent;
  - § the parent has not been involved in the child's life;
  - § there is no identified relationship between the child and the parent; or
  - § the parent would not be expected to contribute toward reducing safety threats.
- If one of the parent's whereabouts are unknown and that parent does not meet one of the criteria above, efforts to locate, contact, and involve that parent must be ongoing. All efforts to locate and involve parents and other family members in planning for the child must be documented.
  - Please see the Temporary Child Resident Standard for additional information regarding contact requirements for non-custodial parents of temporary child residents.

### **(2) Out-of-home Cases**

- If one parent's whereabouts are unknown, efforts to locate, contact, and involve an absent parent must be ongoing. All efforts to locate and involve parents and other family members in planning for the child must be documented.
- Please see the Temporary Child Resident Standard for additional information regarding contact requirements for non-custodial parents of temporary child residents.

## **B. Legal Cases**

### **(1) Out-of-home and In-home Cases**

- If one parent's whereabouts are unknown, efforts to locate, contact, and involve an absent parent must be ongoing. All efforts to locate and involve parents and other family members in planning for the child must be documented.
- If the child's parent(s) are unavailable for monthly contact due to special circumstances such as distance, hospitalization, or incarceration, other means of communicating, including telephone or written communication should be used on a monthly basis. In such cases, if it is feasible to see the parent(s) and they are available, they must be seen face-to-face.

### **(2) Contact with hard to reach or unavailable parents**

Despite efforts of workers to engage parents, some individuals refuse to be present for home visits, answer their calls, or respond to written communication. At times, a worker may be unable to locate or otherwise engage a parent. Workers must continue to make concerted efforts each month by conducting a variety of the following activities:

- Make contact by going to the parent's home at different times in an attempt to reach him/her;
- Identify other suitable locations where contact could occur;
- Call the parent by telephone;
- Contact the parent's attorney;
- Call relatives or collateral contacts who may know how to reach the parent;
- Send a certified letter to the last known address, asking the parent to contact the social worker regarding their child and progress of their case; and
- Utilize parent locate services.

**NOTE:** Concerted efforts to contact parents must be ongoing. Document all efforts in iCARE on the monthly contact/visitation screens.

### **C. Worker Safety**

Although monthly face-to-face contact with parents or caregivers is extremely important, a worker's safety must not be compromised in making those contacts. In cases where a parent has made threats against a worker or is known to be dangerous to others, face-to-face contact must only occur in the office or another location that is considered to be safe. Alternative means of contact, such as letters or phone calls may be used in lieu of face-to-face contact if direct contact is deemed unsafe. In rare cases, any type of contact may be contraindicated. The social worker must document the specific reasons for any deviation from making monthly face-to-face contact in a narrative in the contact/visitation screens in iCARE.

### **D. Purpose of Contact with Children and Parent(s)**

Each contact with the family members must have a defined purpose related to assessing and monitoring the family's progress toward reducing safety threats and monitoring the child's safety and well-being. The following represent some issues to consider:

- Observation and assessment of the child's safety, emotional and physical health, developmental status and general well-being;
- Assessment of the adequacy of the home environment;
- Observation of the child with other children or individuals living in the home;
- Observation of any changes in the household composition;
- Assessment of services provided to the child and parent and identification of additional services that may be needed;
- Review of the child/parent visitation plan (out-of-home cases);
- Review of progress towards service plan goals and objectives; and
- Discussion of court recommendations or plans for closing the case when applicable.

## **III. Contact With Resource Parents And Other Alternate Care Providers**

### Frequency

Resource parents or other alternate care providers must be seen face-to-face a minimum of one time each month. More frequent contact and contact in various settings and through various methods may be indicated depending upon the needs of the child or family. An exception for monthly face-to-face contact is permitted for out of state residential/treatment facilities.

### Responsible Party

Contact with resource parent(s) or other alternate care providers must be conducted by a worker assigned to the case, a worker assigned to provide courtesy supervision from a field office, a worker assigned to provide courtesy supervision through the ICPC, a worker assigned through a contract provider agency, or an assigned worker's supervisor. In some cases, more than one worker is assigned to a case and both have authority to complete contact with resource parent(s) or other alternate care providers. CFS social work interns cannot independently complete monthly contact with resource parents or other alternate care providers.

#### **A. Resource Parents Living In-State**

- The assigned worker must have face-to-face contact with resource parents in the resource family home at least every 60 days.
- When a resource family resides a significant distance from the assigned worker's field office, the assigned worker's field office may request courtesy supervision from another field office in closer proximity to the resource home. If the request is accepted, the receiving field office will assign a worker to complete monthly face-to-face contact.

#### **B. In-State Residential/Treatment Facilities**

- The assigned worker must have face-to-face contact with the residential/treatment facility provider in the residential/treatment facility at least every 60 days.
- When a child is placed a significant distance from the assigned worker's field office, ideally the assigned worker will continue to have face-to-face contact with the residential/treatment facility provider. However, the field office may choose to assign a worker through a contract provider agency to see the residential/treatment facility provider face-to-face monthly. When this is the case, face-to-face contact between the assigned Department worker and the residential/treatment facility provider is required a minimum of once every ninety (90) days. Communication by phone, between the residential/treatment facility provider and the assigned Department worker, shall occur monthly.
- Courtesy supervision from a field office closer in proximity is not the standard for in-state residential/treatment facilities.

#### **C. Resource Parents Living Out-of-State**

- The assigned worker in Idaho will request the state in which the child is placed, via the ICPC, to see the resource parent(s) face-to-face on a monthly basis. The

- receiving state will assign a worker to complete monthly face-to face contact within thirty (30) days of receiving notification the child has been placed.
- The assigned worker in Idaho will have monthly contact with the receiving state's worker to ensure communication is adequate to meet the needs of the child and promote the achievement of case goals.
  - The assigned worker in Idaho will have monthly contact with the resource parent to ensure communication is adequate to meet the needs of the child and promote the achievement of case goals.

#### **D. Out-of-State Residential/Treatment Facility**

- When a child is placed in an out-of-state residential/treatment facility, ideally the assigned worker will continue to have face-to-face contact with the residential/treatment facility provider monthly. However, face-to-face contact between the assigned worker and the residential/treatment facility provider is required a minimum of once every sixty (60) days. Communication by phone, between the residential/treatment facility provider and the assigned worker, shall occur monthly.
- Courtesy supervision from a field office or through a contract provider is not the standard for out-of-state residential/treatment facilities.

#### **E. Purpose of Contact with Resource Families and Other Alternate Care Providers**

- Face-to-face contact and monthly communication with the resource parents or other alternate care providers must include a review of the following:
- Assess the child's safety, emotional and physical health, developmental status and general well-being;
  - Assess the safety and adequacy of the resource home environment;
  - Assess the child's adjustment to foster care placement;
  - Assess services provided to the child and resource parents and determine if additional or different services are needed, including respite or financial supports;
  - Notify regional resource family licensing staff if there are concerns or issues that need to be addressed;
  - Assess the ability and willingness of the resource family/alternate care provider to preserve connections between children, their parents, and their support systems; and
  - Using the concept of full disclosure, assess the resource family's ability and willingness to be a permanent resource and/or home for the child.

#### **IV. Documentation Of Contact**

- The following data must be recorded in iCARE in the contact/visitation screens:
- Date and time of contact
  - Type of contact (face-to-face, telephone, etc.)
  - Duration of contact
  - Person contacted – mother, father, resource parent, child, etc.

- Location of contact– family home, resource family home, office, etc.
- Result of the contact: a short summary of the product of the contact
- Name and title of the assigned worker making the contact.

All communication made in lieu of or as a supplement to face-to-face contact must be documented. Reasons for not meeting face-to-face contact and communication standards with the child, the child's parents, the child's resource parents or other alternate care providers must be documented in iCARE.

**Any action taken not consistent with this standard must be pre-approved by the FACS Division Administrator or designee. The action, rationale and approval must be documented in the file.**

### **Social Worker References**

Practice Guidance: Unannounced Contact with Families

[http://hwteamsites/facs/cw/Social\\_Worker\\_Resources/Unannounced%20Contact%20Guidance.pdf](http://hwteamsites/facs/cw/Social_Worker_Resources/Unannounced%20Contact%20Guidance.pdf)

To be used in conjunction with the STANDARD FOR CONTACT BETWEEN THE SOCIAL WORKER, THE CHILD, THE FAMILY, and RESOURCE PARENT(S) or OTHER ALTERNATE CARE PROVIDERS.

Social Worker Contacts with: <b>Children</b>		Face to Face	In the home	In alternative care location at least every 60 days	At least once per month	Assigned Department Worker	Courtesy Supervision By Field Office	ICPC Courtesy Supervision	Assigned Worker's Supervisor	Worker Assigned through a Contract
Child living In-State:	In-home Cases	ü	ü		ü	ü	ü		ü	ü
Child living In-State:	Child In Resource Home	ü		ü	ü	ü	ü		ü	
Child living In-State:	Residential/Treatment Facility	ü		ü	ü	ü			ü	ü
Child living Out of State:	Resource Family or Parent	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü		ü	ü	
Child living Out of State:	Residential/Treatment Facility	ü*		ü	ü*	ü			ü	

\* When a child is placed in an out-of-state residential/treatment facility, ideally the assigned worker will continue to have face-to-face contact with the child monthly. However, face-to-face contact between the assigned worker and the child is required a minimum of once every sixty (60) days. Communication by phone, between the child and the assigned worker, shall occur monthly.

To be used in conjunction with the STANDARD FOR CONTACT BETWEEN THE SOCIAL WORKER, THE CHILD, THE FAMILY, and RESOURCE PARENT(S) or OTHER ALTERNATE CARE PROVIDERS.

Social Worker Contacts with: Parents		Face to Face*	Contact with both Parents	At least once per month*	Assigned Department Worker	Courtesy Supervision By Field office	ICPC Courtesy Supervision	Assigned Worker's Supervisor	Worker Assigned through a Contract
Non-Legal:	Child living in the home	ü	ü**	ü	ü	ü		ü	ü
Non-Legal:	Child living out of the home	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü		ü	ü
Legal Case:	In-State, Child living in the home	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü		ü	
Legal Case:	In-State, Child living out of the home	ü	ü	ü	ü			ü	
Legal Case	Out of State, Child living in the home	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü
Legal Case:	Out of State, Child living out of home	ü	ü	ü	ü		ü	ü	

\* Each parent, regardless of where their child is placed, shall be contacted face-to-face a minimum of once per month. More frequent contact and contact in various settings and through various methods may be indicated depending upon the needs of the child or family.

\*\* There is no requirement to search for or contact a parent not living in the family home when: contact could result in a safety concern for the child or the other parent; the parent has not been involved in the child's life; there is no identified relationship between the child and the parent; or the parent would not be expected to contribute toward reducing safety threats. If one of the parent's whereabouts are unknown and that parent does not meet one of the criteria above, efforts to locate, contact, and involve that parent must be ongoing. All efforts to locate and involve parents and other family members in planning for the child must be documented.

To be used in conjunction with the STANDARD FOR CONTACT BETWEEN THE SOCIAL WORKER, THE CHILD, THE FAMILY, and RESOURCE PARENT(S) or OTHER ALTERNATE CARE PROVIDERS.

Social Worker Contacts with: Resource Parents And Other Alternate Care Providers	Face to Face	In alternative care location at least every 60 days	At Least once per month	Assigned Department Worker	Courtesy Supervision by Field Office	ICPC Courtesy Supervision	Assigned Worker's Supervisor	Worker Assigned through a Contract
Resource Parent living In-State	ü	ü	ü	ü	ü		ü	
In-State Residential/Treatment Facility*	ü	ü*	ü	ü			ü	ü*
Resource Parents living Out of State	ü	ü	ü	ü		ü	ü	
Out of State Residential/Treatment Facility**	ü**	ü	ü**	ü				

\* When a child is placed a significant distance from the assigned worker’s field office, ideally the assigned worker will continue to have face-to-face contact with the residential/treatment facility provider. However, the field office may choose to assign a worker through a contract provider agency to see the residential/treatment facility provider face-to-face monthly. When this is the case, face-to-face contact between the assigned Department worker and the residential/treatment facility provider is required a minimum of once every ninety (90) days. Communication by phone, between the residential/treatment facility provider and the assigned Department worker, shall occur monthly.

\*\*When a child is placed in an out-of-state residential/treatment facility, ideally the assigned worker will continue to have face-to-face contact with the residential/treatment facility provider monthly. However, face-to-face contact between the assigned worker and the residential/treatment facility provider is required a minimum of once every sixty (60) days. Communication by phone, between the residential/treatment facility provider and the assigned worker, shall occur monthly.