



Policy and Procedures

Department Name Quality Management		
CHAPTER:	SUBJECT: Visitation And Other Contact With Children in Out-of-Home Care	POLICY NUMBER: QM-016
APPROVAL:	EFFECTIVE DATE: 1-9-06 Revised 11-28-07	REPLACES (policy # and date): CFOP 175-50

- I **PURPOSE:** This policy establishes the minimum requirements concerning parent and sibling visitation and other contact with children in out-of-home care as well as case manager visitation.

- II **REVIEW HISTORY:** Revision to policy QM-016, Visitation and Other Contact with Children in Shelter, dated January 9, 2006.

- III **CONTACT:** The Director of the Quality Management Department.

- IV **PERSONS AFFECTED:** Children’s Network Staff and the contracted Case Management Organizations.

- V **POLICY:** This policy defines the type of visitation required between a child in out-of-home care and their parent(s) and siblings as well as between the child and case managers.

- VI **RATIONALE:** Children need contact with their parent(s), siblings and other people involved in their case. They are entitled to know about the progress in the case and what will be happening to them (if they are able to understand).

- VII **CROSS REFERENCES:** Department of Children and Families policy 175-50. Pursuant to section 39.402(9) Florida Statutes and Children’s Network’s policy QM-016 dated January 9, 2006.

- VIII **DEFINITIONS:** For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:
 - A. **Case Management Organization:** CMO, an agency in which the CBC provider contracts with to provide case management services to families and children who have been adjudicated dependent.

- B. Case Manager: a certified child protection professional who is responsible for the coordination of services, completion of court reports and supervision of families and children who have been adjudicated dependent and require protective services. Specific case managers assigned to children in shelter are referred to as Shelter case managers.
- C. Child: Any person served by this contract who is under the age of eighteen.
- D. Department: The Department of Children and Families.
- E. Out of Home Care: the placement of a child in licensed and non-licensed settings, arranged and supervised by the department or contracted service provider, outside of the home of the parent.
- F. Supervised Visits: Visits that are supervised by the provider's staff or the provider's volunteers who are trained to observe, monitor and intervene as deemed necessary between the children and their non-custodial parents/families.

IX Procedures:

- A. Visitation and Other Contacts between the Child and Parent(s) and Separated Siblings:
 - 1. Visitation between the child, the child's parents and any separated siblings under supervision shall occur in accordance with court orders setting such visitation as reflected in the case plan. If at any time, the safety of the child precludes visitation, the visitation shall be suspended and the case manager shall immediately, not to exceed 72 hours, request a court hearing to address the issue.
 - 2. If the court specifically orders that no visitation shall take place, or that visitation shall be at a certain location or time, that order must be followed until modified by the court. If visitation between the child, the parent(s) and any separated siblings is not recommended to the court, the court shall be advised of the reasons for the recommendation. When there is a recommendation of no visitation or less than monthly visitation for parent(s), the court must be provided documentation of the reason. This information must also be included in the case file. When there is a recommendation of no visitation or less than weekly visitation for separated siblings, the court must be provided with clinical documentation of the reason. This information must also be included in the case file.

3. If supervised visitation is ordered but location or time is not specified by the court, visits between the child, the parent(s) and any separated siblings must be arranged by the case manager and supervised by an approved individual or agency.
4. If there is not an assigned location ordered by the court then the assigned case manager or designee shall arrange for the child's transportation to a neutral setting and ensure that sight and sound supervision is available during the visit. The shelter parent, facility or facility staff must be notified in advance of a planned visit and be provided with the name of the person who will be providing transportation for the child.
5. If approved by the court, a caregiver can arrange and supervise visitation between the child and their parent(s) and the child and any separated siblings. The caregiver must provide written documentation of the outcome of the visits and this documentation must be included in the case file. If the caregiver is unwilling or unable to arrange visitation then visitation will be arranged by the case manager and supervision will be provided by the case manager or an approved individual or agency. The approved individual or agency must provide written documentation of the outcome of the visits and this documentation must be included in the case file.
6. Telephone calls and letters should also be considered as a way to maintain contact between the child and the parent(s) and the child and any separated siblings of suitable age. Calls may be arranged by the assigned case manager to occur at the case manager's office or some other appropriate location. The case manager will manage written communication between parent and child.
7. When a parent or caregiver has been the subject of an abuse report alleging sexual abuse of any child, or has been found guilty of, or has plead guilty to any of the following:

Removing minors from the state or concealing minors contrary to court Order;
Sexual battery;
Lewd and lascivious behavior;
Lewdness and indecent exposure;
Incest,

Or has been determined by a court to be a sexual predator, then certain guidelines for visitation and contact must be addressed. The parent or caregiver may visit or have contact with the child only after a hearing and an order by the court that allows the visitation or contact. Any person or agency that has been designated to supervise these visits must have special training in the dynamics of child sexual abuse or the visits must be conducted in a supervised visitation program that has an agreement with the court and has agreed to comply with the minimum standard guidelines.

B. Contacts Between the Case Manager and the Child:

1. Once a case has been accepted at the ITR staffing for services an initial face to face home visit must be completed within two (2) working days with the child and caregiver. The case manager must complete and document, at a minimum, at least one face-to-face home visit every seven (7) days in each case involving a child in shelter status until disposition. This visit shall be with the child and the shelter parent or provider to discuss the child's adjustment, to explain to the child what is happening and why, and to address any other concerns that may be expressed by the child or the shelter parent or provider. The case manager must complete and document, at a minimum, at least one face-to-face home visit every seven (7) days in each case involving a child placed with a relative or non-relative for the first thirty (30) days in placement and, at a minimum, every thirty (30) days thereafter. The case manager must complete and document, at a minimum, at least one face to face home visit every (30) days with the child and caregiver once the case has been disposed. An unannounced face to face home visit to the child's place of residence must occur at least quarterly. In cases where the case manager is unable to communicate with the child due to age or other incapacity, the contact will be made directly with the provider or caregiver. Documentation of these contacts must be made in FSFN within 48 hours.
2. During contacts the case manager is required to note the condition of the home or facility, the number of children currently placed there, the treatment that the children receive from the caregiver or provider, and other factors which affect the child. All concerns noted must be discussed with the provider who is responsible for the supervision of the home or facility and to licensing staff, if appropriate.

C. Contacts By Attorneys and Professionals not Involved in Case Management:

1. The assigned case manager must arrange visits by attorneys, CWLS attorneys and other professionals who are working with the child, except for the guardian ad litem.

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2. The guardian ad litem is allowed to visit the child at the home or facility and to take the child away from the home or facility without the permission of the assigned case manager. The case manager must advise the caregiver or provider of the guardian ad litem's involvement with the child and the ability of the guardian ad litem to remove the child from the home or facility. Case Management Organization staff shall work with the guardian ad litem to ensure that proper notice is given to the child, caregiver or facility so they may have input into the time and place of visits.