

Effective Visitation between Parent and Child

Requirements

The PCSA and PCPA are required to arrange and provide each child in temporary custody an opportunity for regular and frequent visitation with the child's parent, guardian or custodian.

Such visitation schedule must be contained in the case plan.

Withholding of visits must never be used as a threat or form of discipline to the child or to control or punish the parent, guardian, or custodian for failure to work with the agency or other community providers.

The PCSA and PCPA are required to ensure that the child has an opportunity for other forms of communication with the child's parent, guardian, or custodian on a regular basis.

Purpose

Children in substitute care have a right to visitation with parents, guardians, custodians, siblings and other kin. Visitation is essential for supporting the child in care, maintaining family connections, and speeding reunification.

Strategies for Accomplishing

Ask the foster parents.

Visits in the foster home allow the parent to observe a positive approach to child care; allow the child to see all those who care for him/her as allies; and begin the building of a potential permanent resource for the future. This promotes a sense of partnership between the foster parents and birth parents.

Think about school and day care.

Most children would welcome lunch with their parents and most schools not only allow it but encourage this. Day care providers may also cooperate with encouragement. The parent can learn about this most important aspect of their child's life, and meet the teacher or day care provider.

Include the parents at the doctor or dentist appointments.

This provides the parent with the opportunity to take the responsibility for medical concerns when possible and keeps the parent informed. It can also reassure the child who may be fearful.

Take the visits outside the agency.

Parks, playgrounds, fast-food restaurants, and other places allow for visits that more

closely resemble normal parent child interaction.

Recruit volunteers and make them visitation specialists.

Transportation and the need for supervision should not limit the opportunity for visits. Volunteers may also become role models and mentors.

Things to Consider

Frequency of visits

Frequency of visits are be based on:

- Attitudes and feelings between the child and parent, guardian or custodian in the present relationship
- Case plan goal is reunification or an alternative living situation
- Need to maintain or enhance the bonding relationship between the parent, guardian or custodian and child
- Determined to be in the child's best interest, and is conducive to the child's physical and emotional well-being.

More frequent parent-child visits are associated with shorter placements in substitute care.

Children who are visited frequently by their parents are more likely to be returned to their parent's, guardian's or custodian's care and have less behavior problems.

Duration of visit

Duration of the visit is based on:

- Amount of time needed to maintain or enhance the bonding relationship between the parent, guardian, or custodian and child
- Determination based upon the current relationship between the child and parent, guardian, or custodian on the length of time that would be in the child's best interest

Location of the visit

Location of the visit is to be in:

- Least-restrictive setting consistent with the goals of the case plan.
 - Home of parent, guardian, or custodian
 - Home of friend, relative, substitute caregiver or other noninstitutional setting
 - Agency or other institutional setting
- Location providing a safe setting for the child

Restrictions of visits

Restrictions on the frequency, duration, location and supervision of visits shall be based on the following:

- Potential harm to the child as a result of the parent's, guardian's or custodian's behavior or pattern of conduct toward the child
- Special needs or problems of the child

- Parent's, guardian's or custodian's failure to be available for more frequent or longer visits

Resources

Applicable Ohio Administrative Code Rules:

5101:2-42-92 Parent, guardian or custodian visits with a child in temporary custody.

5101:2-42-93 Procedural requirements regarding change of placement or visitation plan prior to journalization of case plan.

5101:2-9-16 Visiting and communications.

5101:2-38-05 PCSA case plan for children in custody or under protective supervision.

5101:2-39-10 PCPA case plan for children in custody or under court-ordered protective supervision.

5101:2-39-11 Required contents of a private PCPA case plan document.

<http://emanualstest.odjfs.state.oh.us/emanuals/>

Ohio Revised Code:

2151.412 Case plans.

5153.16 Duties of agency

<http://codes.ohio.gov/orc>

Other Information and Resources

D.C. Child and Family Services Agency, Out-of-Home Practice Model, 2009 @ www.cfsa.dc.gov

Wentz, Rose Marie. Parent Child Visits: Summary of Laws, Research and Best Practices. National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections @ www.nrcpfc.org

State of North Carolina, Department of Health and Human Services, Child Placement Services Manual, Section on Parent/Child Visitation @ <http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/csm-10/css1201c5-10.htm>

Child Welfare Information Gateway, Introduction to Parent-Child Visits @ <http://www.childwelfare.gov/outofhome/casework/birth/visiting.cfm>