



# Child Protective Services Worker Manual

## Ongoing Assessment & Planning

### Volume 3

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## **CASE PLANNING**

Case planning addresses the contributing factors that have led to the abuse and/or neglect of the child. Case plans should provide a clear and specific guide for the caseworker and the family in order to change individuals' behaviors and the conditions that negatively influence safety, risk, and family functioning.

Information obtained through the Family Assessment informs what changes need to occur via case planning in order to resolve safety threats, reduce risk, and/or to enhance child well-being. A Family Assessment must be completed prior to the development of a case plan, except for Deserted Child, Emancipated Youth, or Permanent Surrender cases.

Case plans must be developed when services are provided to the child and one of the following occurs:

- In-home supportive services have been agreed upon by the parent.
- The court requests the PCSA to prepare a case plan when the child and his/her parent, guardian, or custodian do not attend a detention or shelter care hearing and the complaint alleged that a child was an abused, neglected, or dependent child.
- The PCSA files a complaint pursuant to 2151.27 of the Revised Code alleging that the child is an abused, neglect, or dependent child.
- The PCSA has court ordered temporary custody or permanent custody of the child.
- The court orders the PCSA to provide protective supervision for a child living in his/her own home.
- The court orders the PCSA to place a child in a planned permanent living arrangement.

The PCSA shall develop and complete the case plan within thirty (30) days based upon whichever of the following occurs first:

- The agreement for in-home supportive services.
- The date the complaint was filed.
- The date the child was first placed away from his/her own home.
- Prior to the adjudicatory hearing.

When sufficient information is not available to complete the case plan, the PCSA should specify in the case plan the additional information which needs to be obtained in order to complete the case plan and the steps that will be taken to obtain missing information. In this situation, the agency is provided an additional 30 days to complete the case plan.

## **Engaging the Family in Case Planning**

Developing a helping relationship with abused and neglected children and their families is critical to changing the conditions or patterns of behavior that contributed to maltreatment or risk thereof. A family-centered approach to engaging the family may

increase their readiness and ability to change. By involving families in the processes of family assessment, case planning, and service delivery, families are more likely to be receptive to service provision. When families are able to identify strengths and problems in their family functioning, they may contribute more to their own growth and can make more productive changes.

#### Techniques for Building Rapport<sup>1</sup>

- Approach each individual involved with an open mind.
- Find out what is important to the child and to the family.
- Use mirroring. Take note of words used by the child or family and try to incorporate them into the conversations.
- Listen to the child or parent's explanation of the situation without correcting or arguing.
- Ask questions rather than issue threats or commands.
- Clarify expectations and purposes. Clearly explain the helping process and the caseworker's role in working together toward solutions.
- Help the child and parent or caretaker retain a sense of control.
- Clarify commitment and obligations to the working relationship.
- Acknowledge difficult feelings and encourage open and honest discussion of feelings.
- Be consistent, persistent, and follow through.
- Promote participatory decision-making for meeting needs and solving problems.

Engaging the Resistant Client<sup>2</sup> Due to the involuntary nature of the majority of PCSA cases, it is not unusual for families to resist offers of help. Resistance is a normal and predictable response when people feel forced to change. Caseworkers should not personalize resistance. To deal with resistance effectively, caseworkers should first change their perspective of resistance and try to see the behavior as a potential strength. How the caseworker responds to resistance is crucial in avoiding continued abuse or escalation of inappropriate behavior.

#### Engaging families while avoiding resistance:

- Be clear, honest, and direct. Keep an open mind. Caseworkers should maintain a non-defensive stance.
- Acknowledge the involuntary nature of the arrangement. Caseworkers should explain the structure and content of intervention to the children and family.
- Be matter of fact and non-defensive in explaining the legal authority that permits intervention. Caseworkers should not get into a debate about authority; instead caseworkers should state what their authority is and what legal recourse the children and family may have to challenge it.

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<sup>1</sup> DePanfilis, D. and Salus, M.K. Child Protective Services: A Guide for Caseworkers. U.S. Department of Human Services. 2003.

<sup>2</sup> DePanfilis, D. and Salus, M.K. Child Protective Services: A Guide for Caseworkers. U.S. Department of Human Services. 2003.

- Contact children and families in a manner that is courteous and respectful, and assesses strengths as well as risks.
- Elicit the parent's concerns and wishes for assistance and convey understanding of the parent's viewpoint, including reservations about PCSA's involvement.
- Reduce the children's and family's opposition to interaction by clarifying available choices, even when choices are constrained, by emphasizing freedoms still available and by avoiding labeling.
- Earn the respect of the children and family (and gain psychological influence) by being a good listener who strives to understand their point of view.
- Respect the right of the children and family to express values and preferences different from those of the caseworker.
- Acknowledge difficult feelings and encourage open and honest discussion of feelings.
- Reframe the family's situation. This is particularly useful when the children and family are making arguments that deny a safety threat, risk contributor or other need or problem; it acknowledges their statements, but offers a new meaning or interpretation for them. The children's and family's information is recast into a new form and viewed in a new light that is more likely to be helpful and support change.

### **Developing the Case Plan**

Case planning has five permanency planning goal options:

- Maintain child in his/her own home; prevent removal
- Return child to his/her own parent/guardian/or custodian
- Placement of a child in a planned permanent living arrangement, excluding adoption
- Independent living
- Adoption

Regardless of the method of involving the family, both the family and caseworker must decide which risk contributors identified in the family assessment should be addressed through the provision of services. Interventions intended to resolve safety threats should be prioritized first, with decreasing risk contributors next, followed by increasing well-being. Family strengths should also be identified and utilized to assist families in addressing needs within the family system. Strengths can help counterbalance the effects of the concerns and can provide a stronger foundation for the ongoing stabilization of the family system.

A well written Case Plan is one that is tailored to the family's needs. It should be family-friendly, meaning that the caseworker writing the Case Plan takes into account the family's unique qualities (e.g., reading ability, intellectual difficulties). It must clearly promote an understanding of the behavioral changes the family is expected to make, how they are expected to make these changes, and how the family and agency will know the expected changes have been made.

Each expected change/service should identify the following:

- Specific behaviors or conditions that need to change
- Service activities for facilitating change
- Agency/Caseworker role in assisting family make identified changes
- Methods, standards, and/or criteria for measuring progress regarding change
- Points in time when progress will be measured

The behavior changes identified in the case plan that need to occur to address safety and reduce risk, should be:

- Strength-based
- Concrete
- Specific
- Measurable
- Culturally sensitive

Once the case plan has been completed, the parent, guardian, or custodian and other parties, such as the guardian *ad litem* (GAL) or court-appointed special advocate (CASA) shall sign the case plan and copies shall be provided to all parties to the case plan.

The appendix of this manual contains a "Case Plan Task List." This task list is a tool which may be used with families during home visits or other contacts to assist in the completion of the case plan activities. It involves the identification of specific tasks and the responsible person(s) and expected completion dates of each assigned task.

### **Amending the Case Plan**

The case plan must be amended if any of the following occur:

- The conditions of the child and his/her parent, guardian, or custodian, or pre-finalized adoptive parent change and the changes affect the provision of supportive services.
- There are changes in the goals for the child and/or changes family members need to address to alleviate concerns.
- The child needs to be placed in a substitute care setting, returned to his/her parent, guardian, or custodian or pre-finalized adoptive parent, or moved to another substitute care setting.
- The child has attained the age of sixteen (16) and programs and life skill services will be offered, if appropriate.
- A change in the visitation plan for a child in substitute care needs to be made;

- Relevant factors within the parent, guardian, or custodian, or pre-finalized adoptive parent's environment are identified by the PCSA.
- A party must be added or deleted from the case plan.

The agency must seek agreement to implement the amended case plan by obtaining signatures of the parent, guardian, or custodian and/or other parties to the case plan. If agreement cannot be obtained, the PCSA shall follow procedures as outlined in Ohio Administrative Code rules 5101:2-38-01 and 5101:2-38-05.

### **Supplemental or Concurrent Planning**

Concurrent planning or supplemental planning (the term Ohio uses) means that the agency is working toward family reunification, while at the same time establishing an alternative permanency plan to be implemented if children cannot safely return to their biological parents.<sup>3</sup> The primary plan is to get children and parents back together. However, at the same time, there is an alternative plan for the child to live in another permanent home in case the child cannot return to his/her own family.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning. Tools for Permanency. 1998.

<sup>4</sup> McCarthy, Jan; Marshall, Anita; Collins, Julie; Arganza, Girlyn; Deserly, Kathy; Milon, Juanita. A Family's Guide to the Child Welfare System. 2003.

## Techniques for Building Rapport

	<b>Parent</b>	<b>Child</b>
<b>Help Parents Retain A Sense Of Control and/or Comfort</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When there are no presenting safety issues, ask the parents if this is a good time to meet if it is an unannounced visit.</li> <li>• Ask the parents if you can come into their home.</li> <li>• Ask the parents how they would like you to address them.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Set aside time during each visit so that each parent has time to voice his/her concerns and to share what is important to him/her.</li> <li>▪ Consider the parents' schedule and activities when scheduling a visit.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the child if you can speak/visit with him/her.</li> <li>• Ask each child how they would like you to address him/her, such as a nickname.</li> <li>• Engage the child in an activity that is enjoyable to the child when visiting. Such as coloring, passing ball, listening to music.</li> <li>• Use language that is at the child's developmental level.</li> <li>• Explain to the child the agency involvement is not a result of his/her actions. (It is not "your" fault.)</li> <li>• Set aside time during each visit so that each child has an opportunity to voice his/her concerns and to share what is important to him/her.</li> <li>• Consider the child's schedule and activities when scheduling a visit.</li> </ul>
<b>Clarify Commitment and Obligations to the Working Relationship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and explain your, the caseworker's, role with the family.</li> <li>• Provide assistance to meet the parents' needs in order to provide for the safety of the child.</li> <li>• Clearly explain the helping process and the caseworker's role in working together toward solutions.</li> <li>• If a safety plan is active, discuss the purpose of the plan and each action step to reinforce the importance of the safety plan and determine its effectiveness.</li> <li>• Identify it is not the caseworker's responsibility to keep the child safe in the parents' home.</li> <li>• Inform the family why the agency is involved with them.</li> <li>• Clearly communicate what needs to occur in order to reduce the agency's concerns for the family.</li> <li>• Identify the role of the caseworker/agency and that of the service providers to the family.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain to the child the role of the caseworker/agency and of service providers.</li> <li>• Inform the child why the agency is involved with his/her family.</li> <li>• Clearly communicate what needs to occur in order to reduce the agency's concerns for the family.</li> <li>• Identify the role of the caseworker/agency and that of the service providers to the family.</li> <li>• Explain the different roles of the employees within the agency that will be assisting the family (e.g. case aide involved in assisting with transportation).</li> <li>• Identify the different agencies that are involved with the family and why.</li> </ul>

<b>Techniques for Building Rapport</b>		
	<b>Parent</b>	<b>Child</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the different roles of the employees within the agency that will be assisting the family (e.g. case aide involved in assisting with transportation).</li> <li>• Identify the different agencies that are involved with the family and why.</li> </ul>	
<b>Approach Each Individual Involved With an Open Mind</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important to review and be aware of the history an individual has with the agency; however, the history should not frame what a caseworker expects.</li> <li>• Ask open ended questions to garner expectations and input without using leading questions.</li> <li>• Engage the parents in discussion so that they may identify the strengths for their family.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important to review and be aware of the history an individual has with the agency; however, the history should not frame what a caseworker expects.</li> <li>• Ask open ended questions to garner expectations and input without using leading questions.</li> <li>• Engage the child in discussion so that they may identify the strengths for their family.</li> </ul>
<b>Acknowledge difficult feelings/encourage open and honest discussion of feelings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use strength based language.</li> <li>• Do not assign blame to the parents; acknowledge their challenges and barriers that impact deficits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use strength based language.</li> <li>• Do not assign blame to the child's parents; acknowledge their challenges and barriers that impact deficits.</li> </ul>
<b>Be consistent, persistent, and follow through</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you make a commitment, keep it. This demonstrates to the parents that you have the same expectation of yourself that you do of them.</li> <li>• Avoid canceling appointments if at all possible.</li> <li>• If there are activities that you can assist with volunteer to do so.</li> </ul> <p><i>Examples: Provide a list of local counseling centers. Assist in scheduling an initial appointment. Provide phone numbers and addresses for resources. Provide transportation to medical appointment.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you make a commitment, keep it. This demonstrates to the child that you have the same expectation of yourself that you do of them.</li> <li>• Avoid canceling appointments if at all possible.</li> <li>• If there are activities that you can assist with volunteer to do so.</li> </ul> <p><i>Examples: Provide a list of local resources. Assist in contacting local organizations to be involved in activities that may interest the child (YMCA, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Youth Soccer league or extracurricular activities.etc.).</i></p>
<b>Find out what is important.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize family centered practice. View the family as a system of interrelated people that requires an individualized array of informal and formal services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the child to identify his/her likes and interests.</li> <li>• Ask the child what he or she would like to see change in his/her family.</li> <li>• Engage the child in discussion so that the child may identify his/her talents</li> </ul>

<b>Techniques for Building Rapport</b>		
	<b>Parent</b>	<b>Child</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the parents what changes they feel are important for their family. Parents who are engaged in identifying what changes are needed and identifying the approach or method to facilitate change are more likely to engage in the steps to achieve the desired outcome.</li> <li>• Ask the parents what they believe they have accomplished.</li> </ul>	and needs.
<b>Listen to the parents' explanation without correcting or arguing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow each parent to fully respond and provide his/her input or view point.</li> <li>• Dialogue should be conversational. The conversation should not bombard parents with question after question.</li> <li>• Use reframing of the parents' experience in the discussion in order to assess the underlying conditions and concerns.</li> <li>• Engage in solution focused dialogue.</li> <li>• Attempt to resolve barriers with a solution focused approach.</li> <li>• Empower the family to resolve barriers and identify the resources readily available to the parents; even if they are not acknowledged by the parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively listen to the child without interruption.</li> <li>• Allow the child to fully respond and provide his/her viewpoint.</li> <li>• Do not speak negatively of the child's parents.</li> <li>• Dialogue should be conversational.</li> <li>• Re-frame the child's experience in the discussion in order to assess the underlying conditions and concerns.</li> </ul>
<b>Use mirroring</b>	<b>Parent</b>	
	<p>Take note of words used by the parents and try to incorporate them into the conversations.</p> <p>Notice if parents use a nick name for a child. Incorporate the family's language into the conversation, not your own.</p>	



<b>Review</b>	
<b>Date Visit Held:</b>	<b>Location of Visit:</b>
<b>Time of Visit:</b>	<b>Duration of Visit:</b>
<b>Individuals Present/Attending</b>	
<b>What did you like best about today's visit? Why?</b>	
<b>What did you like the least about today's visit? Why?</b>	
<b>How do you feel about the progress of the visit today?</b>	
<b>1 (Terrible)</b>	<b>2 (poor)</b>
<b>3 (ok)</b>	<b>4 (Good)</b>
	<b>5 (Great)</b>
<b>How do you feel we stayed on focus with our plan today?</b>	
<b>1 (Terrible)</b>	<b>2 (poor)</b>
<b>3 (ok)</b>	<b>4 (Good)</b>
	<b>5 (Great)</b>
<b>How well did we address your concerns and questions?</b>	
<b>1 (Terrible)</b>	<b>2 (poor)</b>
<b>3 (ok)</b>	<b>4 (Good)</b>
	<b>5 (Great)</b>
<b>What are your suggestions that may assist in making our future visits better?</b>	

## **Effective Home Visitation Between Worker and Child**

### **Requirements**

The PCSA is required make face-to-face contact with each child participating in and being provided services through the case plan no less than monthly to monitor progress on the case plan objectives.

At least one contact every two months must be made in the child's home.

In the event that the initial attempt to complete a face-to-face contact with the child is unsuccessful, the PCSA shall attempt to make a minimum of two additional attempts to complete the face-to-face contact within the calendar month.

When a safety plan has been implemented, the PCSA is required to monitor the effectiveness of the safety plan through visits to the family.

- An in-home safety plan requires a weekly home visit that includes face-to face contact with the child.
- An out-of-home safety plan requires a weekly contact with the child or persons responsible for an action step either by telephone or face-to-face.
- A legally authorized out-of-home placement is the most restrictive safety plan. The PCSA is required to have face-to-face contact with a child based on the following placement types:
  - A relative or non-relative home, a foster home, or group home:
  - During the first week of placement (not including the first day of placement) in the substitute care setting.
  - During the first four weeks of placement.
  - Monthly in the substitute care setting. A treatment or medically fragile foster home:
  - During the first week of placement (not including the first day of placement) in the substitute care setting.
  - Every two weeks in the treatment or medically fragile foster home.

A children's residential center (CRC) certified in Ohio:

- Monthly in the CRC.
- An independent living arrangement:
  - Within seven days of placement in the living environment.
  - Monthly in the living environment.

## **Purpose**

A home visit with a child is face-to-face contact within their residence and provides an opportunity to assess the family. A successful home visit incorporates effective communication based on the child's age and developmental level. In addition it aides in the relationship building between the child and the caseworker. A home visit should include the ongoing assessment of:

Safety Risk

Services

Child vulnerability (social, emotional, behavioral, physical development)

Family dynamics

## **Strategies for Accomplishing**

### **Techniques for Building Rapport**

- Approach each child involved with an open mind.
  - It is important to review and be aware of the child's history with the agency.
  - Ask the child open ended questions to garner the child's expectations and input.
- Find out what is important to the child.
  - Ask the child for his/her likes and interests.
  - Ask the child what he or she would like to see change in his/her family.
  - Engage the child in discussion so that the child may identify his/her talents and needs.
- Actively listen to the child without interruption.
  - Allow the child to fully respond and provide his/her viewpoint.
  - Do not speak negatively of the child's parents.
  - Dialogue should be conversational.
  - Reframe the child's experience in the discussion in order to assess the underlying conditions and concerns.

Clarify expectations and purposes. Clearly explain the helping process and the caseworker's role in working together toward solutions.

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- During the first week of placement (not including the first day of placement) in the substitute care setting.
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- A children's residential center (CRC) certified in Ohio:
- Monthly in the CRC.

An independent living arrangement:

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- Services
- Child vulnerability (social, emotional, behavioral, physical development)
- Family dynamics

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  - Ask the child what he or she would like to see change in his/her family.
  - Engage the child in discussion so that the child may identify his/her talents and needs.
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  - Do not speak negatively of the child's parents.
  - Dialogue should be conversational.
  - Reframe the child's experience in the discussion in order to assess the underlying conditions and concerns.
- Clarify expectations and purposes. Clearly explain the helping process and the caseworker's role in working together toward solutions.
  - Inform the child why the agency is involved with their family.
  - Clearly communicate what needs to occur in order to reduce the agency's concerns for the family.
  - Identify the role of the caseworker/agency and that of the service providers to the family. Explain the different roles of the employees within the agency that will be assisting the family (e.g. case aide involved in assisting with transportation, independent living caseworker, foster case licensing worker).
- Help the child retain a sense of comfort.
  - Ask the child if you can speak/visit with him/her.
  - Ask each child how they would like you to address him/her, such as a nickname.
  - Engage the child in an activity that is enjoyable to the child when visiting. Such as coloring, passing ball, listening to music.
  - Use language that is at the child's developmental level.
  - Explain to the child the agency involvement is not a result of his/her actions. (It is not "your" fault.)

- Set aside time during each visit so that each child has an opportunity to voice their concerns and to share what is important to him/her.
  - Consider the child's schedule and activities when scheduling a visit.
- Clarify commitment and obligations to the working relationship.
  - Explain to the child the role of the caseworker/agency and of service providers. For example, clarify the different roles of the caseworkers within the agency that will be assisting the family. Such as a caseworker, case aide, and counselor.
- Acknowledge difficult feelings and encourage open and honest discussion of feelings.
  - Use strength based language.
  - Do not assign blame to the parents or other family members; acknowledge challenges and barriers that impacts the child's daily life.
  - The ability of a child to interact positively and articulate their feelings is one factor that allows a family to create healthy, nurturing environments that promote the positive development of children.<sup>1</sup>
- Be consistent, persistent, and follow through.
  - If you make a commitment, keep it. This demonstrates to the child that you have the same expectations of yourself that you do of him/her.
  - Avoid canceling appointments if at all possible.
  - If there are activities that you can assist a child with, do so (such as providing a list of providing information regarding local resources, organizations or activities that may interest the child, such as the YMCA, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and extracurricular activities).
- Promote participatory decision-making for meeting needs and solving problems, dependent upon the child' age and abilities.
  - Explain to the child when the next visit is scheduled.
  - Identify any activities the child should work on or is expected to engage in prior to the next visit. For example, assist parents by completing agreed upon chores, journal their feelings, demonstrate self-control by walking away or listening to music when feeling angry.

- Observation during a home visit should include:
  - The parental interaction with the children.
  - The interaction with the family in their home setting to identify strengths, areas of difficulty or stress.
  - Parents utilizing enhanced or newly acquired skills.
  - The conditions in the home and a determination of how it impacts the safety of the children.
  - Other individuals visiting or residing in the home in relation to:
    - How frequent are these individuals in the home?
    - Are they living there?
    - Do they change or impact the risk levels or safety threats within the family?
    - Are these individuals a support or resources for the family?
  
- A review of case plan services should include:
  - Identification of any barriers in case plan services, such as transportation, availability of providers, costs, hours of service, not meeting the specific physical, social or emotional need of the child.
  - Determining the level of child involvement in the case plan services.
    - Is the child able to relate to the service providers?
    - Does the child identify newly learned skills such as ways to manage, fear, and frustration?
    - Does the child have a clear understanding of what the services are and how they are beneficial?
  - Consideration of the need for additional services.
  
- Ongoing assessment of Safety and Risk should include:
  - Reassess whether there are new or continued safety threats or concerns.
  - Reassess whether there are new or continued risk factors.
  - Assess parental strengths and needs and determine if the current case plan services are meeting the family's needs.
  - Examine if changes within the family dynamic have occurred that impact the safety of the children.
  - Examine if a safety plan is needed.
  - Examine if an effective safety plan is being implemented as planned and whether it is effective in controlling the safety threat
  - Assess if the parents' protective capacities have been enhanced or diminished.
  - Assess if the child's vulnerability has increased or decreased.

## **Things to Consider**

### **Frequency of visits with the child**

A caseworker is required to have face-to-face contact with a child monthly; however, several factors should be considered when determining if the frequency of visitation should increase. These factors include:

- Safety of the child.
  - o Has a safety plan been implemented?
  - o Is the safety plan having the desired outcome?

Presenting issues.

- o Is the child comfortable in the setting?
  - o Is the child expressing fear or displaying anxiety?
  - o Change in family dynamics or functioning.
- Level of risk has increased.
  - Need of the child (vulnerability).
    - o Social, emotional, physical, behavioral.
    - o Recent crisis or traumatic event.
    - o Recent or change in placement.

### **Separate visits**

Another factor a caseworker may need to consider when scheduling or having contact with a family is whether a separate visit is needed with the child. Establishing a working relationship and environment in which a child feels comfortable sharing information with a caseworker is an essential element of a caseworker's visit with a child. Observation of the child's body language may provide insight to a caseworker in determining if the issues or discussions are making a child feel uncomfortable or are creating a dangerous situation which may influence the type or extent of information shared. A caseworker should examine whether the child appears:

- o Withdrawn, intimidated, or afraid.
- o Avoids or attempts to avoid a family member or topic.
- o Tense, hostile, or distrustful.

### **Planning for visits with a child**

- Factors that influence the quality of a visit with a child may include:
- Reflections of past visits to improve the quality of future visits.
- The location of the visit within the home (in the family room, outside, in the child's bedroom).

- The time of the day.
- Whether other individuals are present.
- The issues to be discussed (agenda setting).
- The developmental level of the child may necessitate the need for a caseworker to remind the child of the discussion with him/her at the last visit in order to receive additional assessment information in the current visit.
  - A caseworker may simply state, “Do you remember when you told me \_\_\_\_? I would like to talk about \_\_\_\_ today.”
  - This could serve as a reflection of what you discussed previously or as an approach to re-engage in a discussion.
  - Re-engaging in a previous discussion may present a caseworker with the opportunity to seek clarification or additional details, to solicit an update, or serve as a reminder of important topics or events.

### **Safety Plan**

A Safety Plan is a specific and concrete control strategy implemented immediately when a family’s protective capacities are not sufficient to manage the immediate threats of serious harm to a child. Ensuring child safety is an ongoing process that begins in intake and continues through case closure. Regular and frequent visitation with a child who is being protected through the implementation of a safety plan is required. It is the method by which a caseworker determines if the safety plan is effectively protecting the child. During visits with a child, the caseworker should examine whether:

- There are active safety threats (new or already identified).
- The persons responsible for an action step within the safety plan committed and implementing the plan as designed.
- The actions within the plan are sufficient to protect the child?
- The child has access to service providers, parents and siblings as determined in the plan?
- The child is experiencing any difficulties with the changes that resulted in their daily routine due to the implementation of the safety plan. Such as changes in routine regarding school, sports, contact with friends and family.
- Modifications are necessary within the plan to address any identified issues.

## Documentation

The information that is documented within the case record is equally as important as the contact with the parents. Documentation should be completed timely and include:

- Date and time
- Location of the visit
- Duration
- Who is present
- Observations
- Information provided to the family
- Information learned from the family
- Reassessment of safety and risk
- Progress or barriers in meeting case plan goals
- Changes in family dynamic
- Reassessment of child safety and vulnerability

A training to consider if you want to examine the issue of case documentation a little closer is *"The Documentation Dilemma"*. It is a specialized workshop offered by the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program.

## Resources

### Ohio Administrative Code Rule:

5101:2-38-01 Requirements for PCSA Case Plan for In-Home Supportive Services Without Court Order

5101:2-38-05 PCSA Case Plan for Children in Custody or Under Protective Supervision

5101:2-37-02 PCSA Requirements for Completing the Safety Plan

5101:2-38-09 PCSA Requirements for Completing the Case Review

5101:2-38-10 Requirements for Completing the Semiannual Administrative Review  
5101:2-40-02 Supportive Services for Prevention of Placement, Reunification and Life Skills

5101:2-39-01 Removal of a Child From His or Her Own Home 5101:2-42-65 Caseworker Visits and Contacts with Children in Substitute Care.

### Ohio Revised Code:

2151.412 Case plans.

2151.419 Court's determination as to whether agency made reasonable efforts to prevent removal or to return child safely home.

5153.16 Duties of agency.

Ohio Child Welfare Training Program @ [www.ocwtp.net/CAPMIS/capmishome.html](http://www.ocwtp.net/CAPMIS/capmishome.html)

David Mandel & Associates LLC, Safe and Together Model @ [www.endingviolence.com/our-programs/safe-together/the-model](http://www.endingviolence.com/our-programs/safe-together/the-model).

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections @  
[http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info\\_services/caseworkervisiting.html](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/caseworkervisiting.html)  
Child Welfare Caseworker Visits with Children and Parents, National  
Conference of State Legislatures,  
<http://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/documents/cyf/caseworkervisits.pdf>  
National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families, Zero To Three  
<http://www.zerotothree.org/>  
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five/allied-for-better-outcomes-child-welfare-andearlychildhood-august-2010.pdf](http://www.cssp.org/publications/neighborhood-investment/strengtheningfamilies/top-five/allied-for-better-outcomes-child-welfare-andearlychildhood-august-2010.pdf).  
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Caseworkers. U.S. Department of Human Services. 2003.

## **Effective Visitation Between Caseworker and Parents**

### **Requirements**

The PCSA is required to make face-to-face contact with each parent participating in and being provided services through the case plan no less than monthly to monitor progress on the case plan objectives.

At least one contact every two months must be made in the parents' home.

In the event that the initial attempt to complete a face-to-face contact with the parents is unsuccessful, the PCSA shall attempt to make a minimum of two additional attempts to complete the face-to-face contact within the calendar month.

When a safety plan has been implemented, the PCSA is required to monitor the effectiveness of the safety plan through visits to the family. An in-home safety plan requires a weekly home visit that includes face-to-face contact with the parent, guardian, or custodian. An out-of-home safety plan requires a weekly contact with the persons responsible for an action step (which may include a parent) either by telephone or face-to-face.

### **Purpose**

A home visit with parents is face-to-face contact within their residence and provides an ongoing opportunity to assess the family. A successful home visit incorporates effective communication, partnership building with families, and an opportunity for the ongoing assessment of:

- Safety
- Risk
- Services
- Parents' strengths and needs
- Observation of interaction with children/family

### **Strategies for Accomplishing**

#### **Techniques for Building Rapport**

- Approach each individual involved with an open mind.
  - It is important to review and be aware of the history an individual has with the agency; however, the history should not frame what a caseworker expects of parents.
  - Ask the parents open ended questions to garner the parents' expectations and input without non-leading questions.
  - Engage the parents in discussion so that they may identify the strengths for their family.
- Find out what is important to each parent.

- Utilize family centered practice. View the family as a system of interrelated people that requires an individualized array of informal and formal services.
- Ask the parents what changes they feel are important for their family. Parents who are engaged in identifying what changes are needed and identifying the approach or method to facilitate change are more likely to engage in the steps to achieve the desired outcome.
- Ask the parents what they believe they have accomplished.
  
- Use mirroring. Take note of words used by the parents and try to incorporate them into the conversations.
  - Notice if parents use a nick name for a child.
  - If discussing a sensitive topic such as sexual abuse or sexual behaviors, determine what language is used by the family and incorporate their language into the conversation, not your own.
  
- Listen to the parents' explanation without correcting or arguing.
  - Allow each parent to fully respond and provide his/her input or view point.
  - Dialogue should be conversational. The conversation should not bombard parents with question after question.
  - Use reframing of the parents' experience in the discussion in order to assess the underlying conditions and concerns.
  - Engage in solution focused dialogue:
    1. Resolution of barriers with a solution focused approach. For example, parents did not attend the last two counseling appointments because they did not have transportation. The caseworker should focus dialogue on how to resolve the transportation issue instead of criticizing the parents for not attending the session.
    2. Empowering the family to resolve barriers and identify the resources readily available to the parents; even if they are not acknowledged by the parents. For example, parents have a strained relationship with grandma; However, grandma has offered to provide transportation for the family to medical appointments or to purchase diapers.
  
- Clarify expectations and purposes. Clearly explain the helping process and the caseworker's role in working together toward solutions.
  - If a safety plan is active, discuss the purpose of the plan and each action steps to reinforce the importance of the safety plan and determine its effectiveness.
  - A resource to assist a caseworker with specific strategies in working with families and to explain the assessment process is "Why Are You Asking Me That? Conversations to Engage the Family in the Assessment Process" developed by the Institute for Human Services. This resource is designed to address specific areas outlined within the CAPMIS toolset. It is applicable to conducting effective monthly visits with the parents given the need for the ongoing assessment of the parents' strengths and needs, protective

capacities, and service provision. Information regarding this training and handouts can be accessed at:

<http://www.ocwtp.net/CAPMIS/familystrengths.html>

- Help the parents retain a sense of control.
  - When there are no presenting safety issues, ask the parents if this is a good time to meet if it is an unannounced visit.
  - Ask the parents if you can come into their home.
  - Ask the parents how they would like you to address them. Some parents are more comfortable with using first names; however, some families and cultures may prefer a formal reference such as Mr. or Mrs. Smith.
  - Set aside time during each visit so that each parent has time to voice his/her concerns and to share what is important to him/her.
  - Consider the parents' schedule and activities when scheduling a visit.
  
- Clarify commitment and obligations to the working relationship.
  - Identify the caseworker's role with the family.
  - Provide assistance to meet the parents' needs in order to provide for the safety of the child.
  - Identify it is not the caseworker's responsibility to keep the child safe in the parents' home.
  - Inform the family why the agency is involved with them.
  - Clearly communicate what needs to occur in order to reduce the agency's concerns for the family.
  - Identify the role of the caseworker/agency and that of the service providers to the family. Explain the different roles of the employees within the agency that will be assisting the family (e.g. case aide involved in assisting with transportation).
  
- Acknowledge difficult feelings and encourage open and honest discussion of feelings.
  - Use strength based language.
  - Do not assign blame to the parents; acknowledge their challenges and barriers that impacts deficits.
  
- Be consistent, persistent, and follow through.
  - If you make a commitment, keep it. This demonstrates to the parents that you have the same expectation of yourself that you do of them.
  - Avoid canceling appointments if at all possible.
  - If there are activities that you can assist a family with volunteer to do so, such as providing a list of local counseling centers, provide phone numbers and addresses for resources.

- Promote participatory decision-making for meeting needs and solving problems.
  - At the end of each visit, a caseworker should take time to plan with parents for the next visit.
    - What do both the caseworker and the parents want to accomplish at the next visit?
    - Who should be present (parents, child(ren), or both?)
    - Review the activities both the caseworker and the parents will accomplish before the next visit.
  - Consider developing a task list with parents to highlight and focus the activities that are anticipated to occur by the next visit. This should identify activities for both parents and caseworker.
  - Jointly identify the agenda items to be covered at the next meeting with the parents. Stick with the agenda items and be consistent; provided there are no safety threats present.
- Ongoing assessment of Safety and Risk should include:
  - Reassess whether there are new or continued safety threats or concerns.
  - Reassess whether there are new or continued risk factors.
  - Assess parental strengths and needs and determine if the current case plan services are meeting the family's needs.
  - Examine if changes within the family dynamic have occurred that impact the safety of the children.
  - Examine if a safety plan is needed.
  - Examine if an effective safety plan is being implemented as planned and whether it is effective in controlling the safety threat.
  - Assess if the parents' protective capacities have been enhanced or diminished.
  - Assess if the child's vulnerability has increased or decreased.
- Observation during a home visit should include:
  - The parental interaction with the children.
  - The interaction with the family in their home setting to identify strengths, areas of difficulty or stress.
  - Parents utilizing enhanced or newly acquired skills.
  - The conditions in the home and a determination of how it impacts the safety of the children.
  - Other individuals visiting or residing in the home in relation to:
    - How frequent are these individuals in the home?
    - Are they living there?
    - Do they change or impact the risk levels or safety threats within the family?
    - Are these individuals a support or resource for the family?

- A review of case plan services should include:
  - Identification of any barriers in case plan services, such as transportation, availability of providers, costs, hours of service, child care.
  - Determination of the level of parental involvement in the case plan services.
  - Consideration of the need for additional services.

## **Things to Consider**

### **Purposeful Visits with Parents**

Parents experiencing a crisis who need the immediate assistance of a caseworker is a common occurrence in child welfare. It is important for a caseworker to be responsive to the parents' needs during a crisis. However, parental crisis should not account for all or the majority of a caseworker's contact with the family. While it is recognized that a caseworker is balancing the needs of multiple families, it is important to have regular contact with the parents to observe and interact with the parents during times of typical functioning. If the focus of a caseworker's contact with the parents is only crisis intervention a caseworker is not seeing a full or accurate picture of the parents' strengths and needs or family functioning. This crisis view has the potential to drive caseworker decision making. A caseworker being reactive to frequent crises of the parents has the potential to negatively impact decisions such as initiating court involvement or the placement of a child.

Scheduling a visit is one way in which a caseworker can combat the issue of parental or family crisis dominating the type or focus of the contact with parents. This will enable both the caseworker and the family to have input in determining the time and location for a visit. It also provides an opportunity to plan for the focus or purpose of the visit. Caseworkers interested in further examining resources to assist in planning purposeful visits can utilize the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections materials @ [www.nrcpfc.org/](http://www.nrcpfc.org/) for additional research, handouts, and practice tips. Several resources are available within Information Services within the caseworker/child caseworker/family visiting section.

### **Separate Visits with Each Parent**

Another factor a caseworker may need to consider when scheduling or having contact with parents is whether a time to meet or talk with each parent separately is needed on occasion. The relationship between the parents and the type and level of information that is anticipated to be shared during the visit may influence how the visit is arranged. Disclosure of personal information such as one parent struggling with parenting, drugs and alcohol, extended family or in-laws may impact the willingness of the one of the parents to have an open discussion. A parent having concerns regarding the actions or behavior of another parent may also influence when and how information is shared.

Intimate Personal Violence is another factor a caseworker should consider in making a decision regarding how or where to have contact with parents. It is important for a caseworker to consider whether each parent has the opportunity to safely communicate with the caseworker or whether intimidation or fear influences the type or extent to which information is shared. “In the child protection context, women who are abused by their partners may fear retaliation by the abuser or removal of their children if they reveal the full extent of the physical abuse. They may also have had bad experiences with helping systems that have endangered them. Thus, victims of violence may have to work through much coercion and fear of the abuser as well as previous negative experiences with other helping professionals in order to speak out truthfully.”<sup>1</sup> Caseworkers wanting to explore further resources to assist them in working with families who are experiencing intimate personal violence may want to consider reviewing David Mandel & Associates LLC material regarding the Safe and Together Model at <http://www.endingviolence.com/our-programs/safe-together/the-model>.

### **Safety Plan**

A Safety Plan is a specific and concrete control strategy implemented immediately when a family’s protective capacities are not sufficient to manage the immediate threats of serious harm to a child. Ensuring child safety is an ongoing process that begins in intake and continues through case closure. Regular and frequent visitation with parents is required when a safety plan is active. It is the method by which a caseworker determines if the safety plan is effectively protecting the child. During visits with a child, the caseworker should examine whether:

- There are active safety threats (new or already identified).
- There are changes in the protective capacities of the parents.
- The persons responsible for an action step within the safety plan committed and implementing the plan as designed.
- The actions within the plan are sufficient to protect the child.
- The parents have access to service providers, supports and the children as determined in the plan.
- The parents are experiencing any difficulties with the implementation of the safety plan that may indicate the parent is no longer in agreement with the need for a safety plan or specific activities within the plan.
- Modifications are necessary within the plan to address any identified issues.

<sup>1</sup> **Accountability and Connection with Abusive Men: A New Child Protection Response to Increasing Family Safety**, Massachusetts Department of Social Services Domestic Violence Unit, Fernando Mederos Assistant Commissioner: Pamela L. Whitney Domestic Violence Unit Manager: Isa M. Woldegiorgis Copyright © 2004 Family Violence Prevention Fund

## **Documentation**

The information that is documented within the case record is equally as important as the contact with the parents. Documentation should be completed timely and include:

- Date and time
- Location of the visit
- Duration
- Who is present
- Observations
- Information provided to the family
- Information learned from the family
- Assessment of parents' strengths, resources and needs
- Reassessment of safety and risk
- Progress or barriers in meeting case plan goals
- Changes in family dynamics

A training to consider if you want to examine the issue of case documentation a little closer is "*The Documentation Dilemma*". It is a specialized workshop offered by the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program.

## **Resources**

### **Ohio Administrative Code Rule:**

5101:2-38-01 Requirements for PCSA Case Plan for In-Home Supportive Services Without Court Order

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5101:2-39-01 Removal of a Child From His or Her Own Home

### **Ohio Revised Code:**

2151.412 Case plans.

2151.419 Court's determination as to whether agency made reasonable efforts to prevent removal or to return child safely home.

5153.16 Duties of agency.

## **Resources**

Ohio Child Welfare Training Program @ [www.ocwtp.net/CAPMIS/capmishome.html](http://www.ocwtp.net/CAPMIS/capmishome.html)

David Mandel & Associates LLC, Safe and Together Model @ [www.endingviolence.com/our-programs/safe-together/the-model](http://www.endingviolence.com/our-programs/safe-together/the-model).

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections  
@ [http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info\\_services/caseworkervisiting.html](http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/info_services/caseworkervisiting.html)

State of Mississippi, Division Of Family And Children Services, Family Centered Strengths and Risk Assessment Guidebook.

Christensen, D., and Antle, B. Engaging Child Welfare Families: A Solution-Based Approach to Child Welfare Practice. Center for Family Resource Development. <http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/telefiles/Family%20Engagement.pdf>

Kate Stepleton, Jean McIntosh, and Beth Corrington, *Allied for Better Outcomes: Child Welfare and Early Childhood.* Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2010,

[www.cssp.org/publications/neighborhood-investment/strengtheningfamilies/top-five/allied-for-better-outcomes-child-welfare-andearlychildhood-august-2010.pdf](http://www.cssp.org/publications/neighborhood-investment/strengtheningfamilies/top-five/allied-for-better-outcomes-child-welfare-andearlychildhood-august-2010.pdf).

Lund, Therese Roe. And Renne, Jennifer, Child Safety: A Guide for Judges and Attorneys. American Bar Association and ACTION for Child Protection, Inc. 2009.

[http://www.actionchildprotection.org/documents/2009/pdf/The\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.actionchildprotection.org/documents/2009/pdf/The_Guide.pdf)

DePanfilis, D. and Salus, M.K. Child Protective Services: A Guide for Caseworkers. U.S. Department of Human Services. 2003.

## **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 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 non-institutional 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 the journalization of the 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 protective supervision.  
5101:2-39-11 Required contents of a 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](http://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](http://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>

## **Locating and Notifying Relatives When a Child is Placed in Substitute Care Requirements**

- Placement of a child in a substitute care setting by a public children services agency (PCSA) requires the PCSA identify, search for, and notify adult relatives/kin of the child's removal.
- The PCSA must exercise due diligence to identify all maternal grandparents, paternal grandparents, adult relatives, and kin to the child or family.
- All maternal grandparents, paternal grandparents, adult relatives, and anyone the parents and/or child names must be notified of the child's removal within 30 days of the child's removal.
- The agency is not required to notify family members/kin who have a history of family or domestic violence.
- Notification to adult relatives or kin identified by the parent or child must:
  1. Specify that the child was removed from the custody of the parent(s).
  2. Explain the options available to the relative if the relative participates in the care and/or placement of the child.
  3. Outline available services and supports
  4. Explain the options that may be lost by failing to respond to the notification.
  5. Describe the requirements to become foster parents
- PCSAs shall continue to proactively search for and provide notice to family members beyond the 30 day requirement when a child is placed in a substitute care setting. The ongoing activities to identify and notify relatives/kin shall be documented in the Semi-Annual Administrative Review.
- Once a child is placed in a relative/kin placement by the PCSA, the PCSA is not required to continue to search for other relatives.
- All efforts to locate relatives must be documented in the case record.

## **Purpose**

Identifying and locating non-custodial parents, relatives, and kin of the child may provide the following opportunities:

- Building, expanding and/or maintaining relationships for the child.
- Timely identification of a permanent home for the child.
- Allowing the agency to move expeditiously toward adoption or another permanent placement if no one is able to provide a home for the child.
- Having family members serve as a temporary relative foster care placement.
- Building or enhancing the family's support network, so that the child can be reunified and safely maintained in his or her own home.
- Encouraging participation in family group conferences, case planning and permanency planning, and developing creative solutions to addressing identified safety and risk concerns.
- Assistance in locating a non-custodial or absent parent.

## **Strategies for Accomplishing Identifying Relatives and Kin:**

Whenever possible and appropriate, the child should be considered a primary source of information in identifying relatives. He or she should have an active role in identifying the significant people in his or her life. Children can identify the people who know them well, particularly those they seek out for comfort and support; confide in; have frequent contact with; are comfortable spending time with; and those with whom they have a mutual, bonded relationship.

Prior to removal, engage the parent in discussion about the child and family. Work with the family to identify possible relatives/kin who may attend and participate in a family team meeting and decision making for the child. The absent or non-custodial parent may be a *putative father* who is a willing and suitable placement option, or whose relatives are appropriate placement options.

For Native American children and families, tribal child welfare agency resources should be consulted to provide culturally appropriate and effective strategies to locating and engaging relatives. A “key informant” may include a person with appropriate cultural skills and knowledge or familiarity of the child’s culture to ensure that the most effective methods of communicating with relatives are used.

Other individuals and agencies may also have information to assist in identification or location of relatives:

- School personnel
- Coaches or mentors
- Health professionals
- Child care providers
- Community service providers
- Faith based services
- Other informal family resources.

Caseworkers have several techniques and tools available to assist in obtaining an overall picture of the family. Working with the family to complete a genogram or ecomap is a technique used to engage parents in a non-threatening dialogue that will elicit significant information about relatives and kin, as well as attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, values, and socio-cultural influences. Once completed, these tools provide invaluable information for understanding the roles and relationships within a family, and may also be used to engage relatives.

When possible and appropriate, a caseworker may hold a Family Team Meeting for Family Group Conference prior to removing a child or immediately following a child's removal. Relatives should be invited to participate in the meeting with the parents' consent. Even if the relatives participating in the meeting are not able to provide a placement for the child, they may assist in identifying other potential placement options. In addition, individual circumstances are subject to change, and relatives who are unable to provide placement at the time of the removal may be able to do so in the future.

It is important to involve extended family as early as possible, continually assess their willingness and ability to provide care if necessary, and assist them in sustaining their relationships with the child through visitation and regular communication when possible and appropriate. Relatives who are unable to take placement of the child may offer emotional and psychological support, respite care, after school care, transportation or other forms of assistance to help maintain placement with another relative.

#### **Notifying Relatives and Kin:**

The language used when providing notifying relatives of a child's removal should be easily understood and respect the sensitive and confidential nature of the family's information. The notice should be provided in writing if possible, even if relatives have been provided with verbal notification.

Accommodations must be made in providing notice to individuals with impairments including, but not limited to, hearing or visual disabilities, and limited English proficiency. Notices to relatives should include the required information as well as suggestions on different ways to help and support the family such as those listed above.

#### **Exception to Providing Notification to Relative/Kin:**

The only time a maternal or paternal grandparent or an identified adult relative is not required to be notified of a child's removal from his or her home is when the relative has a history of family or domestic violence. Documentation in the case record must support the agency's decision to not notify a specific relative. At a minimum, the documentation must include the facts used to demonstrate the individual's history of family or domestic violence and should also address how that history places the child or parent at risk of physical, mental, or emotional harm.

Information which may support a relative not being notified of the child's removal includes, but is not limited to, a history of:

- Convictions for family or domestic violence.
- Multiple reports of family/domestic violence where law enforcement was involved.
- Multiple arrests for family or domestic violence without conviction.
- Civil or criminal protection orders against him or her.
- Reports from family members of ongoing family/domestic violence without law enforcement involvement.

### **Federal Parent Locator Service:**

Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS) is a computerized network of information that was developed in cooperation with the states, employers, federal agencies, and the judiciary. It was designed to assist states in locating non-custodial parents, putative fathers, and custodial parties for matters related to paternity establishment, child support obligations, custody, and visitation.

In 2010, use of the state and federal child support enforcement databases maintained under title IV-D of the Social Security Act was expanded to allow disclosure of FPLS information to the child welfare system. Local child support enforcement agencies are the leads for access to the FPLS, and child welfare agencies must contact them to obtain information.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Office of Child Support developed the JFS 07713, "Child Welfare Agency Locate-Only Request" (5/2008) form for PCSAs to submit a request to locate a parent. While FPLS is used primarily to locate a non-custodial parent, it may also assist in locating other relatives of the child such as paternal grandparents.

FPLS contains sensitive data on individuals in the database, including social security numbers, most recent home addresses, wage and benefit information, and employment data. Information from other federal and state agencies is also accessible through the FPLS, including information from the following:

- Putative Father Registries of some states (not all states allow this search).
- Child Support Enforcement databases.
- Motor vehicle departments.
- State tax and finance agencies.
- State unemployment insurance systems.
- Criminal justice systems including federal, state, and local prisons.
- State and federal Veteran's Affairs.
- The Social Security Administration.
- The U.S. Department of Defense and all branches of the military.
- The Internal Revenue Service.
- National Personnel.

To search the FPLS, the PCSA must complete the JFS 07713 with the name of the relative/kin identified for the child and submit it to the county child support enforcement agency (CSEA). The CSEA will provide the PCSA with the results of the FPLS search. Successful searches will contain the individual's contact information, if available, and the PCSA should exercise due diligence in locating any individual for whom information is provided from the FPLS.

## **Things to Consider**

A child's safety is always paramount. The requirement to notify all relatives of the child's removal does not obligate the agency to consider all relatives as potential placement options. Although there may be other factors (e.g., history of child maltreatment or other criminal offenses), which prevent the agency from considering the relative as a placement option for the child, the only exception to the federal requirement for notifying all identified relatives is the history of family or domestic violence. Agencies should seek advice from their legal counsel if they believe that notification of a relative who does not have a personal history of family or domestic violence will place the child or family in danger.

Notification of relatives is specific to the fact of the child's removal or pending removal from the custodial parent. The family's confidentiality must be maintained, and details of the case, including the circumstances resulting in the need for removal, should not be provided in the notice.

## **Resources**

### **Applicable Ohio Administrative Code Rules:**

**5101:2-39-01** Removal of a Child from His or Her Own Home.

**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. Family, Children and Adult Services **Procedure Letter No. 151**

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

### **Other Information and Resources:**

Fostering Connections To Success and Increasing Adoptions Act 2008, P.L. 110-351:

[http://www.fosteringconnections.org/tools/assets/files/Public\\_Law\\_110-351.pdf](http://www.fosteringconnections.org/tools/assets/files/Public_Law_110-351.pdf) Child

Welfare Information Gateway: <http://www.childwelfare.gov/> Grandfamilies State Law

and Policy Resource Center: [www.grandfamilies.org](http://www.grandfamilies.org)

### **Resources for information on Genograms and Ecomaps:**

<http://www.genopro.com/genogram/templates/>

<http://www.routledgesw.com//sanchez/assess/genogram>

[m](#)

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_5063840\\_construct-ecomap.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_5063840_construct-ecomap.html)

[http://www.researchgate.net/publication/5670819\\_Interactive\\_use\\_of\\_genograms\\_and\\_ecomaps\\_in\\_family\\_caregiving\\_research](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/5670819_Interactive_use_of_genograms_and_ecomaps_in_family_caregiving_research)

## **Maintaining Sibling Connections When a Child is in Substitute Care**

### **Requirements**

- Upon removal of a child from his or her own home, efforts shall be made to place siblings in the same substitute care setting to maintain connections between siblings.
- If joint placement is not possible, the agency must document the efforts to place the siblings together and why those efforts were not successful.
- If joint placement is contrary to the safety or well being of any child, the agency must document in case record the reasons why joint placement or visitation will compromise the safety or well-being of the child.
- If the children are placed separately, the agency must develop a written visitation plan providing frequent visitation and ongoing interactions between siblings unless it is contrary to the safety or well-being of one of the children.
- Visitation between siblings shall occur no less than monthly and is not dependent upon the foster parent's ability to transport the child.
- If visitation is contrary to the safety or well being of any child, the agency must document in the visitation plan the reasons why visitation will compromise the safety or well-being of the child.

### **Purpose**

Visitation and communication with family is a child's right. It is not a special privilege, and should never be used as a reward or consequence for behavior.

Maintaining family relationships, including sibling bonds, reduces the trauma of removal and enhances overall well being of the child. Frequent and ongoing communication is critical for a child to stay connected to siblings and is necessary for successful and timely reunification. Regular visitation strengthens relationships, and supports and assists the caregiver.

### **Strategies for Accomplishing**

- If siblings cannot be placed together, attempt to place them in close proximity to one another and provide ways for them stay in touch in addition to scheduled face to face visits (e.g., phone calls, e-mail, etc.). Conduct periodic reviews to determine whether there are newly available placement options that would allow siblings to be placed together.
- Confer with the parents and children (if age appropriate) when creating the visitation plan.
- Do not make sibling visits contingent upon parental visits. If the parents cancel a visit, allow the visit between siblings to occur.
- Make special visitation and communication plans for holiday and birthday

- celebrations, or other significant family events (e.g., graduations).
- When possible, arrange for siblings to attend school or participate in other activities together (e.g., boy/girl scouts, community groups, recreational activities, etc.).
  - Ensure that both maternal and paternal family connections are addressed in the visitation and communication plan.
  - Try to use foster parents who are able and willing to take sibling groups exclusively for placement of sibling groups.

### **Things to Consider**

Removing a child from his or her home is a temporary disruption; the family bonds remain. Restrictions on visitation and communication should only occur when there is a safety concern.

In those instances where safety is an issue, supervised visits can be used for sibling visits as well as parental visits.

Visits should be in a comfortable, safe setting that encourages children to participate fully. If two parents or custodians are involved, the case worker should meet with both regularly and avoid engaging and communicating only with one parent or custodian.

### **Resources**

**Applicable Ohio Administrative Code Rules: 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.

**5101:2-39-01** Removal of a Child From His or Her Own Home.

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

### **Other Information and Resources:**

Fostering Connections To Success and Increasing Adoptions Act 2008, P.L. 110-351:

[http://www.fosteringconnections.org/tools/assets/files/Public\\_Law\\_110-351.pdf](http://www.fosteringconnections.org/tools/assets/files/Public_Law_110-351.pdf)

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

[http://www.nrcpfc.org/fostering\\_connections/education.html](http://www.nrcpfc.org/fostering_connections/education.html)

Child Welfare Information Gateway:

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/>

## **Educational Stability and Continuity for Children in Substitute Care**

### **Requirements**

- The agency must assure that each child receiving a title IV-E payment who has attained the age for compulsory school attendance is a full-time elementary or secondary student in a school; in an authorized independent study program; or is being home schooled consistent with the requirements of Ohio Revised Code.
- When a child is being removed from his or her own home *or being moved from one placement to another placement*, the agency is required to develop a written plan for ensuring the educational stability of the child in care.
- The educational stability plan must be developed jointly with the child's parents or guardians in accordance with the time frames for completion of a case plan, and include both of the following:
  1. An assurance that the child's placement takes into account the appropriateness of the current educational setting and the proximity to the school the child was enrolled in at the time of placement.
  2. An assurance that the agency has coordinated with the local education agency or agencies to ensure the child can remain in that school, unless remaining in that school is not in the child's best interest.
- If the agency determines it is not in the child's best interest to remain in the same school, the rationale for that decision must be documented in the child's educational stability plan and the child must be immediately enrolled in a new school with all of his or her educational records.
- The educational stability plan must be part of the child's case plan or amended case plan. The JFS 01443, "Child's Education and Health Information" form, is used to fulfill this requirement. The form, also commonly referred to as the "Med and Ed" form, must be completed at the time of a child's removal and updated at the time of each SAR or case plan amendment.
- If a child is incapable of attending school full-time due to a medical condition, the agency must document this in the child's educational stability plan. The agency must update the child's medical condition, and its continued impact on his or her ability to attend school full-time, whenever the JFS 01443 is updated or amended.

### **Purpose**

Maintaining a child in the same school he or she attended at the time of placement supports continuity and stability of the child's education program and promotes better outcomes for children in care.

Individual outcomes that can be achieved by maintaining a child in his or her school setting include, but not are limited to:

- Elimination potential interruptions in school attendance due to re-enrollment processes and transfer of education records.
- Increased ability for the child to actively participate in school activities.
- Sustained relationships and bonds with teachers, mentors and other students.
- Preservation of relationships with friends and educators who may provide support and encouragement for the child.

Systemic outcomes for children in substitute care that may also be positively impacted by maintaining children in their original school settings include, but are not limited to:

- Reducing the achievement gap between children in foster care and other groups of children.
- Reducing rates of school dropouts, truancy, and disciplinary actions.
- Increasing educational achievements and outcomes for children in care.
- Increasing the number of foster children successfully graduating from secondary schools.
- Instilling a sense of belonging with less disruption in their lives.
- Decreasing the number of children in care who fall behind academically.
- Reducing unnecessary school moves for children in foster care.

### **Strategies for Accomplishing**

In addition to the parents and child (if age appropriate), the agency should consider engaging the following individuals, groups or agencies in development of the child's educational stability plan:

- District and on-site school personnel, including teachers and tutors
- District and on-site school special education staffs
- School district transportation staffs
- Foster parents, caregivers, or group home staff providing care for the child
- The local Family and Children First Council
- Juvenile Court staff (e.g., probation officer)
- Attorneys for the child, parent, agency and school district, and the child's Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) or guardian *ad litem*
- Relatives, kin, mentors or other individuals with whom the child has a significant relationship at the invitation of the child's parents

Accommodations must be made when involving individuals with impairments including, but not limited to, hearing or visual disabilities, and limited English proficiency.

## **Things to Consider**

In determining whether remaining in the same educational setting is in the child's best interest, consider:

- Safety issues both in the school setting and with respect to parents' knowledge of the child's location during school
- The child's social and emotional development
- The impact of changing schools in addition to removal
- The child's involvement in school-sponsored programs and extracurricular activities

To the degree that it is possible and appropriate, it may be helpful to develop standard operating procedures or a memorandum of understanding with each of the local school districts outlining expectations, roles and responsibilities for each agency. The procedures should help all parties to clearly understand time frames and expectations for participation in decision making regarding children in agency custody.

Know each school district's contact person and his or her contact information in order to ensure prompt collaboration and coordination of services for children in agency custody.

## **Resources**

### **Applicable Ohio Administrative Code Rules:**

**5101:2-39-01** Removal of a Child from His or Her Own Home.

**5101:2-38-08** Child's Education and Health Information. **5101:2-38-05**  
PCSA Case Plan for Children in Custody or Under Protective Supervision.

**5101:2-47-01** Administration of Title IV-E Foster Care Maintenance Program <http://emanualstest.odjfs.state.oh.us/emanuals/> **Federal Guidance and Legal Resources:** Fostering Connections To Success and Increasing Adoptions Act 2008, P.L. 110-351:

[http://www.fosteringconnections.org/tools/assets/files/Public\\_Law\\_110-351.pdf](http://www.fosteringconnections.org/tools/assets/files/Public_Law_110-351.pdf)  
Implementation of Fostering Connections (HHS):

[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws\\_policies/implementation\\_foster.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/implementation_foster.htm)  
Foster Care and Education Q and A (ABA Center on Children and the Law)  
[http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/child/education/publications/ga\\_fostering\\_connections\\_final.authcheckdam.pdf](http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/child/education/publications/ga_fostering_connections_final.authcheckdam.pdf)

Foster Care and Education Issue Brief (ABA Center on Children and the Law)  
<http://www2.americanbar.org/BlueprintForChange/Documents/school%20stabilitybestInterest.pdf>

**Other Information and Resources:**

Additional articles and state level information on implementation of Fostering Connections: <http://www.fosteringconnections.org>

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

[http://www.nrcpfc.org/fostering\\_connections/education.html](http://www.nrcpfc.org/fostering_connections/education.html) Child Welfare Information Gateway: <http://www.childwelfare.gov/>

## **CASE REVIEW**

The impact of services and activities designed to address the causal and/or contributing factors identified in the Family Assessment, and agreed upon by the caseworker and the family, must be reviewed to determine if services are having the anticipated impact on identified concerns. The Case Review is a re-examination of safety, strengths, needs, risk and a discussion of the impact service provision has on the family system.

The Case Review tool (JFS 01413) allows PCSAs to establish internal policies regarding the parties with whom the Case Review shall be conducted. The Case Review tool, or sections within it, may be reviewed with the family based upon agency practice and/or case situations.

The Case Review is completed no later than every three (3) months based upon whichever of the following activities occur first:

- Original Court Complaint Date
- Date of Placement
- Date of Court Ordered Protective Supervision
- Date of Agency Worker Signature on Case Plan (for no court orders only)

At six (6) month intervals, a Case Review is completed in conjunction with the Semiannual Administrative Review (SAR). The dates that trigger the initial SAR and Case Review are the same. The Case Review must be done at the time of the SAR regardless of when the last Case Review was completed. If a Case Review is not completed within the three (3) months timeframe, the expectation is the Case Review would be completed prior to the SAR and another Case Review would be completed in conjunction with the SAR. The timeframe for completion of the next Case Review would be three (3) months (90 days) from the date of the SAR. The agency may review cases utilizing the Case Review tool more frequently if agency practice or case circumstances warrant it.

If the legal status of the case changes during the review period, the Case Review timeline does not change. For example, if a Protective Supervision case becomes a Substitute Care case, the timeline for completion of the Case Review would not change to three (3) months (90 days) from the date of placement.

The Case Review is completed at the time of case closure unless the case is closed within 30 days post completion of the Case Review (either at the three (3) month interval or SAR) and the intention to close the case is recorded.

### **Safety Re-Assessment**

The Safety Re-Assessment is a structured review to support and document decisions to maintain, create, modify, or discontinue a safety response. The Safety Review section includes a review of safety threats, changes in protective capacities and child vulnerability, and progress toward resolving safety threats.

Based on the information contained in the Safety Review, the PCSA makes the decision as to whether a new safety response is needed and should be created, or whether the existing safety response should be maintained, modified, discontinued, or was previously discontinued.

The Safety Re-Assessment may also be completed in lieu of the safety assessment, if through the ongoing assessment of safety, the safety response from the previous assessment of safety must be changed. An example is if the child was previously considered safe and now, an in-home or out-of-home safety plan is necessary or the child needs to be placed in a legally authorized out-of-home placement. This section must be approved by an agency supervisor and contained in the case record. The completion of this section for the purpose of documenting a change in the safety response does not negate the requirement to complete this section at the time of the Case Review, regardless of when it was completed.

Based on the information contained in the Safety Re-Assessment, the caseworker should specify whether the safety response identified in the last assessment of safety (e.g., Safety Assessment or Safety Re-Assessment) should be maintained, created, modified, discontinued, or was previously discontinued.

If different safety responses were identified per child, the selection will be based upon the most restrictive safety response. For example, if one child has an in-home safety plan and the other child is in a legally authorized out-of-home placement (due to safety reasons) and the in-home safety plan is being discontinued but the other child is remaining in placement, select Maintain and discuss the reasons for the in-home safety plan being discontinued in the narrative.

“Maintain” is, based on this safety review, indicating the safety response(s) has/have not changed since the last assessment of safety.

“Create” is, based on this safety review, indicating there have been changes identified in protective capacities or child vulnerability that place the child(ren) in immediate danger of serious harm and a safety plan (including a legally authorized out-of-home placement) must be created.

“Modify” is, based on this safety review, indicating an existing safety response must be modified. Changes have been made in safety threats, protective capacities, and/or child vulnerability and an existing safety plan (including a legally authorized out-of-home placement) must be modified.

“Discontinue” is, based on this safety review, indicating all threats resulting in the safety response have been controlled and/or resolved or there has been adequate change in protective capacities or child vulnerability to protect the child(ren) from serious harm. The safety response is no longer needed.

“Previously Discontinued” is, based on this safety review, indicating a safety threat is not currently active but has been active at any time since the last assessment of safety and the safety response was discontinued.

### **Family Perception**

The caseworker describes how the family views their ability and willingness to protect their children including a description of how the family views their strengths as well as their problem areas.

Other individuals’ perceptions may also be included. Other individuals involved in the case may include relatives providing care to the child(ren) and/or support to the family. These individuals’ perceptions provide a unique perspective of how they view the family’s strengths and problems.

It is important to note that this section deals only with the family’s perception and others involved in the case. It does not include the caseworker’s perception. The worker should not include any opinions to information they may have regarding the legitimacy of the family’s perception.

### **Case Progress Review**

Services Review This section discusses the impact services are having on addressing safety threats, risk, permanency, and child well-being. It also includes an evaluation of the progress the services are having on addressing case plan concerns as well as recommendations as to whether services should be continued, modified, or discontinued. Additionally, barriers to services are identified.

Family members listed on the case plan, including a child (if age appropriate) and substitute caregivers are encouraged to participate in the review of case plan services and provide input into how these services are impacting safety, risk, permanency, and child well-being issues.

Strengths and Needs Assessment Update This section describes the most significant information obtained since the last assessment or case review. It includes new information regarding the strengths and needs elements, underlying conditions, protective capacities, and child vulnerability. Any new life events and key case activities are described. Also, if the child(ren) is placed out of the home, a description of the quality of visitation, including family interaction and the family’s ability to meet the child’s need for safety is completed.

Risk Reassessment Scale of Abuse/Neglect The risk reassessment is designed to primarily inform whether the risk of future maltreatment has been reduced, increased, or remained the same following the provision of services or changing circumstances within the family. Risk reassessment also assists in making decisions regarding child permanency planning and service provision.

### **Actual Risk Level**

The actual risk level is determined by scoring each item and totaling the score. Using the following matrix, the caseworker will determine the family's scored risk level.

### **Policy Overrides**

After completing the risk scale, the caseworker then determines whether or not any of the policy override reasons exist. Policy overrides have been determined to be case situations that warrant the highest level of service from a PCSA agency regardless of the risk scale score at the initial assessment or any reassessments. If any policy override reasons exist, the risk level is increased to intensive. Note that the conditions associated with the policy overrides must have occurred during the reassessment period. That is, just because a policy override was applied at the initial assessment, which does not automatically mean that it will be applied now. A policy override is only used at reassessment if the event occurred since the last assessment.

Definitions of the policy overrides can be found in the Family Assessment section of this manual.

### **Discretionary/Optional Overrides**

The caseworker determines whether or not any discretionary/optional override reasons exist. At risk reassessment, a discretionary/optional override may be applied to **increase or decrease the risk level by one level** in any case where the caseworker believes information obtained supports the risk level set by the scales as being too low or too high. All overrides must be approved in writing by the supervisor. If the override is to increase the risk level, approval from additional managers may be required per agency policy.

## **Final Risk Level**

The final risk level is the risk level with any policy or discretionary/optional overrides applied. If no policy or discretionary/optional overrides were implemented, the scored risk level will be the same as the final risk level.

Case Status The case status is the determination of whether the agency should continue to provide services to the family. It is based upon the information obtained through the review of safety and case plan, the update of strengths and needs assessment, and the reassessment of risk.

If the family continues to be in need of agency services, the caseworker will indicate the type of agency services: in-home supportive services, protective supervision, or out-of-home placement.

If the agency plans to terminate services, the caseworker will indicate the reason why agency services will be terminated. These reasons include: family is no longer in need of agency services; services are terminated against agency recommendations; and family refused agency services and/or court petition denied.

The caseworker will also provide a description to support the case status selected above. The description will include a discussion as to how the risk reassessment, safety review, family perception, case progress review (including strengths and needs summary), and services review informs change readiness in the family, permanency planning, and service provision.

If the case is being closed, the caseworker will provide a summary justifying case closure.

## **SEMIANNUAL ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW**

Rule 5101:2-38-10 of the Administrative Code requires a Semiannual Administrative Review (SAR) to:

- Assess and update, as needed, the permanency plan for the child which can include, but is not limited to, reunification, independent living, a planned permanent living arrangement, or adoption.
- Evaluate whether the overall level of risk to the child has been reduced.
- Assess the appropriateness of supportive services offered and provided to the child, his parent, guardian, custodian, or pre-finalized adoptive parent, and substitute caregiver, as applicable.
- Evaluate whether services provided to the child and his parent, guardian, or custodian will help the child return to a safe environment, when applicable.
- Assess continued safety and appropriateness of the placement setting of the child.
- Determine if a plan to locate a permanent family placement for the child shall be made concurrently with reasonable efforts to safely return the child to his own home, according to procedures set forth in paragraph (Y) of rule 5101:2-38-05 of the Administrative Code.

The SAR meeting shall be conducted by a review panel consisting of at least the caseworker with day-to-day responsibility for, or familiarity with the management of the child's case plan, supervisor or designee, and, for court involved cases (protective supervision or substitute care), a person who is not responsible for the management of the child's case plan, or for the delivery of services to the child or his parent, guardian, or custodian.

The SAR meeting will include the review panel; the child's parent, guardian, or custodian or pre-adoptive parent; the guardian *ad litem* and/or court appointed special advocate, if one has been appointed; the child's substitute caregiver, including the relative providing care for the child; and the child's attorney, if applicable.

It is completed every six (6) months based upon whichever occurs first:

- Original Court Complaint Date
- Date of the Placement
- Date of the Court Ordered Protective Supervision
- Date of Agency Worker Signature on Case Plan (for no court orders only)

The PCSA must prepare a written summary for each SAR. This written summary is the JFS 01412. This tool contains a case progress review, child well-being assessment, review of independent living services, review of substitute care, protective supervision, in-home supportive services issues, review of permanency planning, and a review of permanency goal status.

## **Case Progress Review**

Services Review The Case Review is completed in conjunction with the SAR at six (6) month intervals. Section 3A of the Case Review completed at the three (3) month and the six (6) month intervals will be attached to the SAR and will be discussed with the family and other participants at the time of the meeting.

Safety and Appropriateness of Current Placement Assessing the safety and appropriateness of a child's current placement, even if this placement is within his/her own home, is imperative. This section describes whether there are any safety issues associated with each child's current placement, whether in own home or out-of-home placement (including relative placement, regardless of custody status) and how these safety issues are being addressed. Also included in this description is how the placement is meeting the child's basic and special needs. Out-of-home placement is when a child is placed out of the home regardless of custody status. It includes out-of-home safety plan, relative/kin custody, and substitute care.

This section also indicates whether an annual visit was conducted by the agency for any child who is in out-of-state placement, if applicable.

## **Placement Moves/Legal Status Changes**

Placement Moves/Legal Status Changes A placement move is the number of times a child has experienced a change in caretaker(s) regardless of custody status (excluding short term changes such as respite, detention, AWOL, extended visitation with parent, hospitalization for medical/psychiatric treatment, or camp). Per OAC rule 5101:2-1-01, the definition of caretaker is a person with whom the child resides or the person responsible for the child's daily care. This includes, but is not limited to, the parent, guardian, custodian, or out-of-home care setting employee.

A child's legal status includes: temporary custody, permanent custody, no custody, court ordered protective supervision, agreement for temporary custody, planned permanent living arrangement, and permanent surrender. A legal status change is the number of times the legal status of the child has changed.

## **Permanency Goal Status**

This section describes the agency's recommendation regarding the child's custody arrangement for the next six months. It also indicates whether each child's current permanency goal needs to be amended; the estimated date each child may be returned home, protective supervision may be terminated, permanent placement may be made, or case may be closed; and whether the case plan will be amended as a result of the SAR. Any permanency goal change will require an amendment to the case plan.

## **Case Review Update**

The Case Review has been completed. The case progress is summarized below. This section indicates that a Case Review (JFS 01413) was completed. The caseworker will summarize the contents of the Case Review, including the safety re

assessment, case progress review, including services review, strengths and needs update and risk reassessment sections which were completed at the three (3) month and six (6) month intervals.

Need for Substitute Care, Protective Supervision or In-Home Supportive Services This section justifies whether substitute care, protective supervision or in-home supportive services needs to be continued or terminated. This section also includes information regarding the need to continue out-of-home placements.

### **Child Well-Being Assessment**

Per OAC rule 5101:2-38-05, the JFS 01443, “Child’s Education and Health Information” form is completed for all children who are in substitute care. This form contains information regarding a child’s medical history and educational background.

The JFS 01443 is to be completed and reviewed at the time of the SAR. A copy of this form shall be provided to the parent, guardian or custodian and the substitute caregiver.

This section of the SAR is not completed for children who are in in-home supportive services or protective supervision. The caseworker will mark this section N/A.

### **Independent Living Services**

OAC rule 5101:2-42-19 requires that children ages 16 years or older who are in substitute care participate in independent living services as part of their case plan. This section of the SAR reviews these services and the child’s independent living readiness status.

This section of the SAR is not completed for children whose legal status is in-home supportive services or protective supervision or if they are under the age of 16 years. The caseworker will mark this section N/A.

### **Permanency Planning**

Permanency planning is the process to ensure that children are in safe and nurturing family relationships to last a lifetime.<sup>2</sup> This section discusses recommendations regarding a child’s custody arrangement for the next six month review period. These recommendations include whether to reunify the family, to implement a supplemental plan, or to petition the court for termination of parental rights. Also, agency progress in meeting the needs of and recommendations for the child who is in a planned permanent living arrangement are discussed.

For those children in protective supervision or in-home supportive services, the

<sup>2</sup> McCarthy, Jan; Marshall, Anita; Collins, Julie; Arganza, Girlyn; Deserly, Kathy; Milon, Juanita. A Family’s Guide to the Child Welfare System. 2003.

caseworker will only complete questions A and C. All other questions will be marked N/A.

### **Participant Signatures**

All participants must sign the SAR form. This includes the required panel members as specified previously. Copies of the SAR form must be provided to all parties and the guardian *ad litem* and/or court appointed special advocate.

## **REUNIFICATION ASSESSMENT**

A Reunification Assessment is a structured review to support and document the reunification decision. It includes a review of child safety, compliance with court orders, family conditions and dynamics, resources, strengths, protective capacities, child vulnerability and interventions needed. The Reunification Assessment entails a review of past and present safety, an assessment of reunification readiness, and the reunification decision.

One question at reunification is: Are there safety threats active within the family system that require external control and, if so, what controls are necessary? At reunification, it is not necessary that the threats have been resolved, but rather that they have been altered or reduced to a level whereby control within the family system is probable. A child may be able to return to a home where threats of serious harm exist if these threats can be controlled within the family.

A Reunification Assessment is completed when reunification with the removal family is being considered and the child has been placed out of the home for 30 days or more. It is completed whether the child has been in a legally authorized out-of-home placement (including custody with relative/kin) or was placed out of the home as a result of an out-of-home safety plan regardless of the custody status. The Reunification Assessment is completed regardless of the reason the child was placed out of the home and/or the custody status. If the child has been placed out of the home for less than 30 days, the information regarding the child's reunification shall be captured in the Safety Re-Assessment section of the Family Assessment or Case Review. However, nothing prohibits the completion of a Reunification Assessment when a child has been placed out of the home for less than 30 days.

Although a Reunification Assessment may be completed any time the PCSA deems appropriate or the case warrants it, regardless of the number of days the child is placed out of the home, there are times at which the Reunification Assessment shall be completed:

- At the Safety Re-Assessment, if the safety response is modify or discontinue and the child has been placed out of the home for 30 days or more.
- Within 30 days prior to any court hearing where the agency is anticipating the child will be returned home.
- At the SAR , if the child has been placed out of the home for 30 days or more.

Completion of the Reunification Assessment is not required when placement is being considered with an individual that was not the removal home. The home evaluation (relative/kin approval process) for the individual being considered as a placement option would be completed to ensure the appropriateness of the placement.

### **Assessing Past and Present Safety**

This section addresses the original safety issues which resulted in the child(ren)'s

placement and whether these issues have been altered or reduced to a sufficient level whereby control within the family is probable. Also included is a consideration if any additional safety threats were identified which necessitated or continued the placement and if these additional safety threats have now been resolved or reduced. There is also a discussion regarding whether the parent/guardian/custodian is compliant with court orders.

If the child was placed out of the home due to unruly/delinquent behaviors, these behaviors and the effects these behaviors had on the child's vulnerability should be discussed. An explanation should also be provided that describes why the protective capacities of the parent(s) could not mitigate the need for the child to be placed out of the home.

### **Assessing Reunification Readiness**

This section assesses whether the child(ren) and/or the parent have demonstrated an acceptance of the reunification plans and whether the parent has the capacity to provide for the child. Also assessed is whether the parent is willing and able to use his/her protective capacities, resources or strengths to provide support to the child(ren) and whether the parent is able to meet the child(ren)'s need for safety as evidenced during visitation.

The caseworker is also asked to describe how the family dynamics will change when the child(ren) return home and if there are any issues or concerns related to other children or adults in the family that may impact reunification.

### **Reunification Decision**

Considering the past and present safety issues, family's reunification readiness, each child's vulnerability, family and community protective capacities, family cooperation and motivation, agency monitoring capacity, past history, accessibility and availability of resources, the caseworker reaches a recommendation whether or not the child(ren) should be reunified.

The Reunification Assessment assists caseworkers in determining services necessary for the child(ren) to return home safely. These services should be aimed at maintaining the child(ren) home safely without the need for the child(ren) to return to an out-of-home placement. The caseworker should indicate any services necessary to support the reunification plan.

A case plan amendment may be completed to reflect the child(ren)'s reunification if the child(ren) was in substitute care. If the interventions stated above are not already identified in the case plan, the amendment must also reflect these additional services.

