

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P. O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

January 29, 2010

MEMORANDUM

<p><u>What's Inside:</u> Quality Worker Visits with Children</p>
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TO: REGIONAL EXECUTIVE STAFF, CIRCUIT MANAGERS, AND
CHILDREN'S DIVISION STAFF

FROM: PAULA NEESE, DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: QUALITY WORKER VISITS WITH CHILDREN

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce changes to policy regarding worker visits with children in alternative care. The changes come as a result of requests through the Continuous Quality Improvement process and a workgroup composed of contracted workers and staff from each of the regions with a goal to improve the quality of worker visits with children. The workgroup reviewed research from other states on best practices and made recommendations for policy. While some of the recommendations from the work group could not be accommodated, many of the changes being made to focus on quality were based on recommendations from the workgroup.

Worker Visits with Children in Alternative Care

For purposes of compliance review, the Children's Division will be adopting the federal and Council on Accreditation standard for monthly visitation, which is one visit per calendar month, as the *minimum* number of visits required. Staff will likely visit with children more than once a month; however, the worker visit report will calculate compliance per calendar month based on the federal standard. Regardless of the number of visits and contacts a worker has with the child or youth within any given calendar month, at least one visit **must** occur within the placement setting.

For quality reviews, the goal for visiting with children and youth each month should be to have more contact and interaction than the minimum allowable. Planning a schedule for visitation should always take into consideration the specific needs and current situation of each child or youth, which could mean more visits with some children and youth than others. It may also mean more face-to-face contact with a child or youth one month compared to another. Visitation with children and youth, biological parents and resource providers should be topics of discussion when workers and supervisors review case progress or challenges during individual conferences to ensure that worker visitation meets the individual needs of each child and family.

A Core Outcome of Visits- Relationship

Visiting with children and youth that are in the care and custody of the Children's Division is important for many reasons. The primary purpose of the visit is to assess child safety and well-being. Staff should observe how the child is interacting and functioning in their placement environment. Staff should also discuss how the children are doing in all environments including school, visits with parents and/or siblings, social settings, etc.

A core positive outcome of spending time together through visits, whether it be worker/child, child/parent, worker/parent resource provider or sibling visits, is having the opportunity to gain understanding, trust, cooperation, and problem-solve, as individuals continue to build a relationship with one another. A relationship that establishes mutual respect and dignity, two-way communication and understanding is the foundation for best practice as staff seek to work with children, families and all others. Spending quality time with others, including children, increases the child's sense that they are valued and what they have to say is important.

Engagement with the child was identified by the workgroup as an area needing improvement. In the reference documents and resources section of this memorandum, there are [sample questions](#) and [developmental milestones](#) which may be beneficial for staff when visiting with children and resource providers. Supervisors should assist workers in identifying activities which can be done during a visit to engage and strengthen the relationship between the worker and the child. In addition, the [OJT guide](#) contains worker competencies relevant for worker visits with children and should be utilized by staff and supervisors to support professional development of staff.

Defining Quality

Understanding what quality means can help improve the quality of worker visits with children. A few important elements to ensure quality visits are occurring include:

- The visit is meaningful for the child
- The child is able to discuss their concerns with the worker
- Spending time with the child
- Being supportive
- Relationship building
- Observing the child's interactions, sleeping arrangements, bedroom
- The visit is scheduled based on the needs of the children and families
- The visit is planned and the worker knows which areas need to be discussed
- Discussing changes in the child or family's circumstances
- Engaging and connecting with the child
- Covering the discussion points on the Checklist for Worker/Child Visits, CD-82

Older Youth

Foster care for older youth, when compared to younger children, is a very different experience. For adolescents, emphasis needs to be placed on relationships. The past experiences of older youth are often filled with unmet needs and rejection. How a youth feels about their past and current situation can influence their

decisions. Thus, staff should visit and communicate regularly with older youth to help them in their time of need.

It is just as important to visit older youth as it is to visit young children, especially as older youth learn important life skills and prepare for adulthood. At this time in their lives, adolescents are trying to determine their own identities, their own values, and make their own decisions. Results from the State Worker Report shows that older youth are visited much less than younger children. Many older youth may lack the consistency that younger children have and as a result, consistent worker visits are important. Members of the State Youth Advisory Board report that they want and need to see their workers each month whether they live independently, or are placed in a residential facility.

One challenge facing older youth is making a permanent connection with at least one positive adult. Workers can be a positive connection for youth, but can also help the youth consider and identify adults in their lives that are important for them to maintain or strengthen contact with. Youth who have a positive connection with a caring adult are more likely to be successful in their transition into adulthood than youth without a positive connection.

Visits with Youth in Residential Facilities

The policy regarding worker visits with children in residential facilities has also been modified. When a youth is placed in a residential facility out of county, policy previously allowed for staff to contact the youth the following day by phone, but the youth only had to be seen within 14 days from the placement. This memorandum changes the policy and requires a face to face visit with the youth within **five (5)** business days after placement.

Revised Checklist for Worker/Child Visits, CD-82, Worker/Child/Caregiver Guide

This memorandum also introduces the revised Checklist for Worker/Child Visits, CD-82, now titled the Worker/Child/Caregiver Guide. The new form is intended to be used as a guide for staff to improve the quality of the visit. The CD-82 has been modified to ensure that workers discuss all the relevant topics with the child and resource provider at least once a month. Workers should document the visit in FACES including thorough, complete documentation of all the discussion points from the CD-82 form. **In addition, this form can be made optional based on the supervisor's discretion.** Workers who complete this form properly over a period of time and thoroughly document the information in FACES can be given permission to discontinue use of the form. New workers should utilize the form until the supervisor feels they no longer need the form to conduct a quality visit. After the contents of the form are entered into FACES, the worker may destroy the form as it does not need to be kept in the case file.

Elimination of the Placement Provider Home Visit Checklist, CD-84 and Second Face-to-Face Resource Provider Visit

In addition, the changes in this memorandum also include eliminating the Placement Provider Home Visit Checklist, CD-84. Workers should document any discussion with the resource provider(s) along with the other CD-82 discussion points in the case contacts in FACES. This memorandum also changes the requirement for visiting

resource providers face-to-face. Previous policy required resource providers to be seen face-to-face twice a month. The new change requires staff to visit resource providers face-to-face in the placement **once** a month and requires at least **one** phone call to the resource provider each month. Again, contact with resource providers beyond this is encouraged. Contact specific to the individual needs of the provider is our goal. Teamwork and clear communication between the case manager and resource provider is critical. Though email communication can be helpful for short exchanges of information, it cannot substitute for true dialogue and consensus building discussion.

Staff should notify the resource providers of the change in policy. The Child Welfare Manual has been modified to reflect the new policy. For additional information regarding worker visits with children, see Memo [CD08-18](#). The provisions outlined in this memorandum will be effective as of February 1, 2010. The state worker visit report in FACES will be updated to reflect this change in policy. The March 2010 report will capture worker visits with children for February 2010.

NECESSARY ACTION:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review this memorandum with all Children’s Division staff. 2. Review revised Child Welfare Manual chapters as indicated below. 3. All questions should be cleared through normal supervisory channels and directed to: 	
PDS CONTACT: Christy Collins (573) 751-9603 Christy.Collins@dss.mo.gov	PROGRAM MANAGER: Dena Driver (573) 751-3171 Dena.Driver@dss.mo.gov
CHILD WELFARE MANUAL REVISIONS:	
Section 4 Chapter 6 Subsection 1 Out-of-Home Placement Support Activities Section 4 Chapter 7 Subsection 1 Activities in the First 24 to 72 Hours Section 4 Chapter 7 Subsection 3.2 Meeting/Working with the Child Section 4 Chapter 7 Subsection 3.4 Meeting/Working with the Placement Provider Section 4 Chapter 8 Subsection 2 Family/Child Moves from County Section 4 Chapter 14 Subsection 9 Ongoing Procedures to Maintain Placement Section 7 Chapter 4 Developmental Milestone Section 7 Chapter 35 Sample Questions for Worker/Child Visits	
FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS	
CD-82 Checklist for Worker/Child Visits	
REFERENCE DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES	
Worker’s Role: Visits with Children Ensuring Safety, Permanency and Well-Being: Suggestions for Conducting Contacts with Children and Caregivers	
RELATED STATUTE	
N/A	
ADMINISTRATIVE RULE	
N/A	
COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION (COA) STANDARDS	
COA Standard for Worker Contact and Monitoring	

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW (CFSR)
[CFSR, Item 19, Caseworker Visits with Child](#)

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Parental Resilience-N/A

Social Connections-N/A

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development-N/A

Concrete Support in Times of Need-N/A

Social and Emotional Competence of Children-N/A

FACES REQUIREMENTS

N/A