

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

CHILDREN'S DIVISION

P. O. BOX 88

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

1/29/2019

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: CHILDREN'S DIVISION AND CONTRACTED STAFF
FROM: DAVID B. KURT, DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: INVOLVING NON-CUSTODIAL OR NON-RESIDENT PARENTS

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide clarification to staff about the importance of working with non-custodial or non-resident parents in case planning and services as part of an open Family-Centered Services (FCS) case.

Engagement of and relationship building with non-custodial or non-resident parents are of central importance in gathering meaningful information from families, children, and youth regarding their needs and strengths and is essential for achieving safety, permanence and well-being for children.

The non-custodial or non-resident parents should be contacted about their children as part of an open FCS case, unless prohibited by law, even if the primary parent does not want such contact to occur. In some cases, the primary parent will not want the non-custodial or non-resident parent to be included in decision making for their child, while in others the primary parent may simply be embarrassed that they are involved in an abuse or neglect proceeding and not want the non-custodial or non-resident parent to find out. Some primary parents may also shield their children from the non-custodial or non-resident parent because of a history of past child maltreatment, or violent or criminal behavior. In all of these situations staff are to encourage primary parents to be cooperative with engaging the non-resident or non-custodial parent as appropriate in preserving the best interest and safety of their child(ren).

Involving a non-custodial or non-resident parent may be beneficial as:

- A child’s identity is strongly influenced by his or her family. Encouraging the engagement of a non-custodial or non-resident parent may introduce a child to members of his or her family previously unknown or uninvolved.
- A non-custodial or non-resident parent may provide valuable family history or health information.
- Essential family information will be gathered should the need for future alternative care placement arise.
- The non-custodial or non-resident parent may have relatives who are willing to be involved in a supportive role to the family as part of the FCS case.

Confidentiality

In FCS cases, services are provided to prevent or remedy child abuse or neglect. Children’s Division staff have the responsibility to preserve confidentiality; however, for successful treatment services, staff should engage the non-custodial or non-resident parent as appropriate in preserving the best interest and safety of their child(ren). Non-custodial and non-resident parents should be contacted about their child(ren) without permission from the primary parent as part of an open FCS case unless there is a legal reason not to do so. The legal reason not to contact the non-custodial or non-resident parent should be documented in the case contact notes under the primary parent’s open FCS case. The primary parent should be reminded that any biological parent of child(ren) involved in the FCS treatment case has the right to access the case information, provided they only receive information regarding the child.

Policy will reflect this change when the revised policy manual is posted. Until that time, staff may use this memo as a policy reference.

NECESSARY ACTION

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

Crystal Wilson
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MANAGER CONTACT

Tasha Toebben
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CHILD WELFARE MANUAL REVISIONS Involving Non-Custodial or Non-Resident Parents Section 3 Chapter 4.6
FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS N/A
REFERENCE DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES N/A
RELATED STATUTE N/A