



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY

Chapter 7: In-Home Services

Section 05: Meaningful Contacts

Effective Date: September 1, 2023

Version: 9

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POLICY OVERVIEW

Meaningful contact with the child and parent, guardian, or custodian is essential when evaluating whether a child is at imminent risk of placement. During all face-to-face contacts with the child and parent, guardian, and/or custodian, the child's safety, stability, well-being, and permanency are assessed.

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PROCEDURE

DCS will ensure sufficient time and opportunity is given to observe and evaluate the parent-child relationship. Child safety must always be addressed at each face-to-face contact. The observation and evaluation of the parent-child relationship must be documented in the case management system. All identified safety concerns must be discussed with the parent, guardian, and/or custodian.

The FCM will:

1. Assess and address the child's safety, risks, stability, well-being, and permanency during all visits with the parent, guardian, and/or custodian and the child who is identified as at imminent risk of placement;
2. Assess for the presence of domestic violence (DV) during each face-to-face contact with the parent, guardian, and/or custodian. See policy 2.30 Domestic Violence for additional information;
3. Ensure there is sufficient time to observe and evaluate the parent-child relationship during all face-to-face contacts;

Note: Appointments for face-to-face contacts should be made with consideration of nap times for younger children. If a child is sleeping, the FCM should schedule another appointment within the next three (3) to five (5) business days to accurately document the parent-child relationship.

4. Identify the parent, guardian, and/or custodian's functional strengths and underlying needs and document them in the case management system within three (3) business days;

Note: The FCM should utilize the Family Functional Assessment (FFA) Field Guide for suggested questions to assist in gathering the child and family's functional strengths and

underlying needs and assess the child's safety, well-being, and permanency. Each family should be evaluated independently based upon its own unique conditions. See policy 5.02 Gathering Case Information for additional guidance.

5. Partner with the parent, guardian, and/or custodian to utilize their functional strengths and underlying needs to identify formal and informal supports that may support them as participants in the Child and Family Team (CFT) process. See policy 5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings);

Note: Over time, the parent, guardian, and/or custodian's functional strengths should increase with the inclusion of identified services and supports, and their underlying needs should decrease.

6. Monitor and reassess the current Case Plan/Prevention Plan goals or activities in the case to ensure the underlying needs of the family are met, and discuss any concerns with the family and the CFT;
7. Collaborate with the parent, guardian, and/or custodian, child (if age appropriate), and members of the CFT to develop a plan to identify and address any safety concerns;
8. Develop and update a Safety Plan and/or Plan of Safe Care as needed and follow up with the CFT members regarding adherence to the documented safety provisions. See policies 5.21 Safety Planning and 4.42 Plan of Safe Care for more information;
9. Report all safety concerns to the FCM Supervisor immediately; and

Note: Any new allegations of Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) must be reported to the Indiana DCS Child Abuse Hotline (Hotline), per state reporting statutes, and may not be handled as part of the case. Seek supervisory approval to initiate emergency removal if the child is in immediate danger. See policy 4.38 Assessment Initiation for more further guidance.

10. Clearly and accurately document in the case management system within three (3) business days the following information:
 - a. Observations, evaluations, and outcomes of face-to-face contacts with the parent, guardian, and/or custodian, and/or the child must be included in the documentation and easily identified by area (i.e., safety, risk, stability, well-being, and permanency).

Note: Each of the areas above must be included and easily identified within the FCM's documentation of the face-to-face contact in the case management system. The 5.C Tool: Face-to-Face Contact Guide and/or the Face-to-Face Contact form may be used as a guide for discussion during the face-to-face contact.

- b. Educational status and progress toward successful adulthood transition, if applicable (see policy 11.06 Transition Plan for Successful Adulthood),
- c. Assessment of safety, risk, stability, permanency, and well-being of each child,
- d. All safety provisions implemented,
- e. Whether the parent, guardian, and/or custodian; and child were actively involved during the face-to-face contact, and
- f. Any barriers identified by the parent, guardian, and/custodian, and child, or FCM to prohibit the completion of activities or objectives agreed upon by the CFT.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Review any safety concerns with the FCM and provide guidance as necessary; and
2. Discuss with the FCM the case specifics and contacts with the child and parent, guardian, and/or custodian during regular case staffing.

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RELEVANT INFORMATION

Definitions

Case Staffing

Case staffing is a systematic and frequent review of all case information with safety, stability, permanency, and well-being as driving forces for case activities.

Functional Strengths

Functional strengths are “the buildable” strengths of our families, they help us build toward goal achievement.

Underlying Needs

Underlying needs are the root source of an individual’s and/or family’s challenges. An underlying need determines the appropriate use of services or interventions.

Forms and Tools

- [5.C Tool: Face-to-Face Contact Guide](#)
- [Face-to-Face Contact \(SF 53557\)](#)
- Family Functional Assessment (FFA) Field Guide- available on the [Indiana Practice Model SharePoint](#)
- Indiana DCS Child Abuse Hotline email: DCSHotlineReports@dcs.in.gov or call 1.800.800.5556 or fax to 317.234.7595
- [Plan of Safe Care \(SF 56565\)](#)
- [Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect \(SF 114\) \(310\)](#)
- [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#)

Related Policies

- [2.30 Domestic Violence](#)
- [4.38 Assessment Initiation](#)
- [4.42 Plan of Safe Care](#)
- [5.02 Gathering Case Information](#)
- [5.07 Child and Family Team \(CFT\) Meeting](#)
- [5.21 Safety Planning](#)
- [11.06 Transition Plan for Successful Adulthood](#)

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LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-9-2-14.5 “Child at imminent risk of placement”](#)

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PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 7.05

Practice Guidance is designed to assist DCS staff with thoughtful and practical direction on how to effectively integrate tools and social work practice into daily case management in an effort to achieve positive family and child outcomes. Practice Guidance is separate from Policy.

N/A

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