

	<b>INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY</b>	
	<b>Chapter 8:</b> Out-of-Home Services	<b>Effective Date:</b> July 1, 2021
	<b>Section 12:</b> Developing the Visitation Plan	<b>Version:</b> 10

<b>POLICY OVERVIEW</b>
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When children require out-of-home placements, maintaining essential connections through frequent and meaningful contact with significant persons in their lives is vital. The relationship between a parent and child ideally consists of bonding, healthy dependency, and nurturing. Each of these elements of the parent-child relationship is important for the emotional well-being of the child. Regular visits and contact assist in minimizing trauma the child experiences during removal from their home; helping the child feel connected to their parent, guardian, or custodian; preventing feelings of abandonment; and promoting reunification. In addition, a child has the fundamental right to visit with each parent, guardian, or custodian, and parents have the right to maintain a bond with their children while they are taking steps toward having their children returned home.

The longest lasting relationship a child shares is often with their siblings. This bond helps a child develop their own unique identity. When siblings cannot be placed together, the ability to maintain contact with each other may help alleviate the emotional impact of removal for each child.

<b>PROCEDURE</b>
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The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will ensure face-to-face contact occurs between the child and the child's parents, guardians, or custodians within 48 hours (unless there is a documented circumstance that would impede the ability for a visit within 48 hours) and with all siblings from the household in which the removal occurred within five (5) days of removal (unless there are documented safety concerns). Visitation should occur regularly while the child remains in out-of-home care. A Visitation Plan must be developed for every child in out-of-home care within five (5) days of removal unless an order for no visitation has been issued by the court and/or parental rights have been terminated. DCS will provide reasonable accommodations for a child, parent, guardian, or custodian who has a disability. All Visitation Plans must include alternative forms of contact (e.g., phone calls, cards, letters, photographs, or recordings) if face-to-face visits are not possible.

The FCM will:

1. Make diligent efforts to schedule initial face-to-face contact with the parent, guardian, or custodian within 48 hours of removal and with siblings within five (5) days of removal;
2. Document all requests for visitation in the case management system contacts within three (3) business days;
3. Ask each individual who will be participating in visitation if a reasonable accommodation is needed due to a disability;

4. Develop a Visitation Plan within five (5) calendar days of removal, with input from Child and Family Team (CFT). See policy 5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings and 5.08 Developing the Case Plan for additional procedural information;
5. Ensure the Visitation Plan includes the following components:
  - a. A goal of reestablishing, maintaining, and/or strengthening the bond that exists between the child and the child's family, which should align with the child's permanency goal in the Case Plan/Prevention Plan,
  - b. Parameters of contact (i.e., who, what, and how often),
  - c. Face-to-face contact with the parent, guardian, or custodian at least once per week and at least twice per week if the child is an infant (age 0-1 year) or toddler (age 1-2 years); unless the court has ordered otherwise,
  - d. Face-to-face contact with the child's siblings at least once per week,
  - e. Face-to-face contact with other individuals with whom the child has a positive, significant relationship as long as it is deemed appropriate, does not negatively affect the child, and does not interfere with or disrupt the regular visitation of the parent, guardian, or custodian,
  - f. Supervision (i.e., the degree of supervision necessary for each person who will visit and who may provide supervision). See 8.C Tool - Supervision of Visits for additional information,
  - g. Visit logistics (e.g., location, time and length of visits, transportation and any reasonable accommodations for any participant who has a disability),
  - h. Appropriate activities during visitation, in particular, developmental activities, parenting activities, and any special considerations and/or accommodations regarding visitation,
  - i. Alternative forms of contact (e.g., phone calls, cards, letters, photographs, or recordings) to supplement face-to-face visits,
  - j. Provisions for contact with the noncustodial parent and incarcerated parent, if appropriate, and
  - k. Provisions for face-to-face contact and/or other alternate forms of contact with persons whom the child has a positive, significant relationship, if appropriate and does not interfere with case plan goals or have a negative impact on the child.
6. Discuss case specifics and plans to address any concerns (e.g., safety concerns and consideration of conducting background checks) regarding the Visitation Plan with the FCM Supervisor;
7. Engage the CFT in problem-solving regarding any barriers to visitation (e.g., incarceration, domestic violence, refusals, and transportation). See policy 8.13 Implementing the Visitation Plan for additional procedural information;
8. Ensure all parties fully understand the Visitation Plan;
9. Review with all parties how the Visitation Plan will be implemented, monitored, and adjusted throughout the life of the case. See policy 8.13 Implementing the Visitation Plan for additional procedural information;
8. Submit any preexisting court ordered visitation plans along with the proposed Visitation Plan to the court for approval; and
9. Ensure the approved Visitation Plan is documented in the case management system, included in the Case Plan/Prevention Plan, and updated as needed.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Provide guidance to the FCM to ensure all duties are completed timely and appropriately;

2. Discuss case specifics and concerns regarding the Visitation Plan with the FCM, plan for safety, and make a determination regarding whether background checks need to be completed. Discuss the results of any background checks completed and any impact on the Visitation Plan;
3. Ensure the Visitation Plan is documented in the case management system, included in the Case Plan/Prevention Plan, and updated as needed; and
4. Ensure any deviations from best practice are documented in the case management system.

## LEGAL REFERENCES

- [IC 31-10-2-3](#)
- [IC 31-17-2-8.1](#)
- [IC 31-34-15-4: Form: content](#)
- [42 USC 12102: Definition of disability](#)

## RELEVANT INFORMATION

### Definitions

- N/A

### Forms and Tools

- [8.C Tool – Supervision of Visits](#)
- Case Plan/Prevention Plan (SF 2956) – Available in the case management system
- Visitation Plan – Available in the case management system

### Related Policies

- [5.07 Child and Family Team Meetings](#)
- [5.08 Developing the Case Plan](#)
- [5.15 Concurrent Planning](#)
- [8.13 Implementing the Visitation Plan](#)