

	<b>INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES</b> <b>CHILD WELFARE POLICY</b>	
	<b>Chapter 8:</b> Out-of-Home Services <b>Section 43:</b> Meaningful Contacts	
	<b>Effective Date:</b> May 1, 2023	<b>Version:</b> 7

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## POLICY OVERVIEW

Sufficient time should be given to observe and evaluate the parent-child relationship to assess safety, risk, stability, permanency, and well-being during face-to-face contacts with the parent, guardian, custodian; resource parent, and child placed in out-of-home care. This type of ongoing evaluation is an essential step for the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS).

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## PROCEDURE

The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Assess and address safety, risk, stability, permanency, and well-being during all visits with the parent, guardian, or custodian; resource parent; and the child;
2. Assess for the presence of domestic violence (DV) during each face-to-face contact with the parent, guardian, or custodian. See policy 2.30 Domestic Violence for additional information;
3. Ensure sufficient time is given to observe and evaluate the parent-child relationship during all visits;
4. Identify the parent, guardian, or custodian’s functional strengths and underlying needs;

**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, or custodian to utilize their functional strengths to address underlying needs and identify formal and informal supports who may support them as participants in the Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting process (see policy 5.07 Child and Family Team Meeting);

**Note:** Over time, the parent, guardian, or custodian’s functional strengths should increase with the inclusion of identified services and supports, and 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. Report all safety concerns to the FCM Supervisor immediately;

**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.

8. Develop safety provisions in collaboration with the parent, guardian, or custodian; resource parent; child (if age and developmentally appropriate); and the Child and Family Team (CFT);
9. Develop and update the 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 4.42 Plan of Safe Care and 5.21 Safety Planning for more information);
10. Clearly and accurately document in the case management system within three (3) business days the following:
  - a. Observations, evaluations, and outcomes of face-to face contacts with the parent, guardian, or custodian; resource parent; and/or the child in an easily identified area within “Contacts” (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, or custodian; resource parent; and child were actively involved during the face-to-face contact, and
- f. Any barriers identified by the parent, guardian, or custodian; resource parent; child; and/or FCM that would 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 the case specifics and contacts with the child and parent, guardian, custodian, or resource parent during regular case staffing with the FCM.

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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.

### Protective Factors

Protective factors are characteristics in families that, when present, increase the safety, stability, permanency, and well-being of children and families. Protective factors are directly connected to the strengths of the family and may be used as a resource to learn new skills and solve problems. See Protective Factors to Promote Well-Being document for additional information.

### Underlying Needs

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

### **Forms and Tools**

- [5.C Face-to-Face Contact Guide](#)
- DCS Hotline email: [DCSHotlineReports@dcs.in.gov](mailto:DCSHotlineReports@dcs.in.gov)
- DCS Hotline fax number: 317-234-7595
- DCS Hotline phone number: 1-800-800-5556
- [Face-to-Face Contact \(SF 53557\)](#)
- Family Functional Assessment (FFA) Field Guide- Available on the [Indiana Practice Model SharePoint](#)
- Preliminary Report of Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect (310) (SF114)- Available in the case management system
- [Plan of Safe Care \(SF 56565\)](#)
- [Protective Factors to Promote Well-Being](#)
- [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 Meeting](#)
- [5.21 Safety Planning](#)
- [11.06 Transition Plan for Successful Adulthood](#)

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## **LEGAL REFERENCES**

N/A

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## PRACTICE GUIDANCE- DCS POLICY 8.43

*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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