Organizational Self Study on Parent-Child and Sibling Visits

This survey is intended to help determine the core principles as well as current practice and policy of parent-child and sibling visiting. The tool is designed to review overall agency readiness, assess administrative policies, and identify strengths and challenges in your parent-child and sibling visiting practice.

Administrative

1. Does CPS have a practice model or a policy that directs caseworkers in articulating the purpose and importance of visits between children and youth in foster care and:
   - Their parents or primary caregivers? ___ x ___ Yes ___ No
   - Their siblings? ___ x ___ Yes ___ No
   - Extended family? ___ x ___ Yes ___ No
   - In post permanency situations? ___ x ___ Yes ___ No
   - Other significant people in the child’s/youth’s life? ___ x ___ Yes ___ No

   If yes, to all or any of the above, please provide an example or cite to the policy that guides caseworkers in this regard.

   CPS Handbook Policy: 6315, 6315.2, 6415.1, 6415.2, 6123.1, Rights of Children in foster care; Basic Skills Development Training for workers includes a ½ day training on visitation

2. Does CPS have a practice or a written policy regarding the following?
   - Placing children and youth close to the child’s community to support visits and family connections? ___ x ___ Yes ___ No (4120, 4121)
   - Defining family visitation as a required part of “reasonable efforts” to safely reunify children/youth and their parents? ____ Yes ___ x ___ No
   - Visits among siblings when they are not placed together? ___ x ___ Yes ___ No (6315.2)
   - Visits between siblings without parents being present? ___ x ___ Yes ___ No (6315.2)
   - A visitation model that moves from highly-supervised and structured to less supervised, unsupervised, and finally to overnight visits? ___ x ___ Yes ___ No (practice)
   - Recognition of a right of parents to visit their children/youth unless the court has ordered otherwise __ x ___ Yes ___ No (6415.1)

   If yes, to all or any of the above, please provide an example or cite to the policy.

3. Are visitation plans written? ___x_ Yes ___ No

4. If visitation plans are written, please answer the following questions:
   - Is the family involved in developing the visiting plan?
     ___x_ Yes ___ No
   - Are older youth involved in developing visiting plans for themselves?
     ___x_ Yes ___ No
   - Is the initial visiting plan written at time of placement?
     ___x_ Yes ___ No
   - Are parents and siblings provided with a copy of the visiting plan?
     ___x_ Yes ___ No
   - Is the plan documented in the case record or filed with the court?
     ___x_ Yes ___ No
   - Is the visiting plan incorporated into the service plan?
     ___x_ Yes ___ No
   - Is there a process for modifying the visiting plan?
     ___x_ Yes ___ No
   - Is the timing of the first visit or contact documented?
     ___x_ Yes ___ No

   If visitation plans are not written, is there a practice model that incorporates these elements?

5. Although the following may vary by jurisdiction, does CPS have a policy regarding:
• When the first visit should occur? (2552)
  __x__ Yes  ___ No
• Frequency (6415.2)
  __x__ Yes  ___ No
• Length of visit
  ___ Yes  _x__ No
• Do these vary according to age of child/children?
  ___ Yes  ___ No  __x__NA
• Optimal length of time for the visits?
  ___ Yes  _x__ No
• Preferred location? (6315.2)
  __x__ Yes  ___ No
• Transportation (Residential Contract Chapter 17)
  __x__ Yes  ___ No
• Supervision (6315.2)
  __x__ Yes  ___ No
• Visit Coaching
  __x__ Yes  ___ No (children under 2) 6252.3
• Ending visits early
  ___ Yes  _x__ No
• Limiting visits (6415.1)
  __x__ Yes  ___ No
• Terminating visits (6415.1)
  __x__ Yes  ___ No
• Increasing visits
  ___ Yes  _x__ No
• Lowering supervision

Survey adapted from Organization Survey developed by the NRC for Permanence and Family Connections at the Hunter College of Social Work
Do you provide the following individuals with copies of the agency’s visiting policy?

- Parents  _x_ Yes  ___ No
- Kin  _x_ Yes  ___ No
- Caseworkers  _x_ Yes  ___ No
- Foster parents  _x_ Yes  ___ No
- Youth  _x_ Yes  ___ No

Policy is made publically available on the website. Also in the publication “While Your Child is in Our Care” and the document “Rights of Children in Foster Care”

7. Do the courts in your state review visiting plans?  _x_ Yes  ___ No

   If yes, do parents, children and youth have the right to present recommendations or evidence to the court about the visiting plan?  _x_ Yes  ___ No

8. Does the agency use visits as a factor in making the final permanent planning decision?  _x_ Yes  ___ No

   If yes, how?

   Through supervision of the parent-child visit staff assess parent/child attachment, parenting skills, safety threats and protective capacity. Parent-visits are also a way for staff to observe the skills and knowledge that the parent has gained through
services and other interventions. Additionally, staff would consider constructive abandonment as a ground for termination if a parent does not attend visits when they have been made available to them.
### Responsibilities in Parent-Child Visiting

9. Who has each of the following responsibilities? Please check the appropriate box and provide the information requested.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Yes, the case worker has the responsibility</th>
<th>No, the case worker does not; this is the responsibility of:</th>
<th>Responsibility is not clear in our policy and practice</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparing the child for visits</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparing birth parents/siblings for visits</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparing foster parents for visits</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing the visiting plan</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinating the logistics of visits</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation to visit</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Foster Parents are contractually obligated to transport to sibling visits and family visits (Residential Contract-Paragraph 17, 21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting with other professionals regarding ensuring safe visits based on the parent’s or child’s condition or special needs</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Post visit work with the child</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post visit work with the birth parents</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post visit work with sibling(s)</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post visit work with foster parents</td>
<td>x</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Professional Development**

10. What type of professional development activities are used to build staff’s knowledge, skills and abilities about parent-child and sibling visiting practice? Check all that apply.

___x_Classroom training
___Online training
___Teleconferences
___Webcasts
_x___Supervision
_x___Clinical consultation
_x___Technical assistance
_x___Coaching
_x___Mentoring
_x___Other (please specify): ongoing basic skills development

11. On which of the following are case workers trained? Check all that apply.

___x___Preparing children, birth parents, and foster parents for visits (Core BSD)
___Encouraging parents to visit and using non-office locations for visits
___Developing visiting plans
___x___Supervision of visits (Core BSD and Supervision and Mentoring)
___Progressive visit planning
___x___Using visiting in permanency planning decision making (Core BSD and supervision)

12. Are supervisors trained in visiting policy and practice?  

___x___ Yes   ___ No

If yes, how are they trained?  see above professional development activities

13. Do foster parents receive training on parent-child and sibling visiting?

___x___ Yes   ___ No

If yes, what is covered in the training? Check all that apply.(PRIDE training)

___x___ Importance of parent-child and sibling visits
_x___ Helping a child prepare for a visit
_x___ Roles and responsibilities in visits
___x___ Helping a child after a visit
___Other (please specify):  ___________________________________
**Agency Strengths**

14. Based on the above self-assessment, what do you see as your agency’s strengths in visiting practice? Check all that apply.

- x Practice and policy commitment to visits between children/youth and their parents, siblings, extended family and other significant people in the child’s life
- Development of visiting plans
- x Implementation of visiting plans
- x Supervised visiting
- Use of a progressive visiting model
- x Casework/clinical skills in preparing children/youth, parents, siblings, foster parents and others for successful visits *(Core Basic Skills Development)*
- x Casework/clinical skills in post-visit work with parents, children/youth, siblings, foster parents and others
- x Use of visiting in permanency decision making
- Use of innovative visiting practices (examples: visit coaching, icebreaker meetings)

**Agency Challenges**

15. Which of the following challenge your agency in developing and implementing strong visiting policies and practices? Check all that apply.

- x Organizational culture
- x Inconsistent or incomplete visiting policies
- x Lack of a clearly defined visiting practice
- x Caseload size/workload demand
- x Transportation
- Staff turnover
- Lack of professional development opportunities
- Limited supervisory skills in providing staff with on-the-job training in visiting practice
- Lack of coordination with the courts on visiting plans
- Cultural competence issues
- x Other (please specify): lack of resources to aid in assisting with increased visitation, court and other legal stakeholder input and attitudes around visitation planning.

16. What do you need to overcome these challenges? Clearer policy, subsequent and enhanced staff training on visitation, stakeholder buy-in and commitment, assistance with transportation, supervision.

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