



## INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL

**Chapter 8:** Out-of-Home Services      **Effective Date:** March 1, 2011

**Section 12:** Developing the Visitation Plan      **Version:** 4

### POLICY

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will develop a [Visitation Plan](#) for every child in out-of-home care within five (5) days of removal with input from the child and the child's parent, guardian, or custodian: unless, no visitation has been ordered by the court and/or parental rights have been terminated. The [Visitation Plan](#) will be reviewed and adjusted at the initial Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting or Case Plan Conference. See separate policy, [5.7 Child and Family Team Meetings](#).

DCS will determine if there is a preexisting visitation order for the noncustodial parent and obtain a copy if one exists for presentation to the court.

DCS will provide the court with a recommendation for visitation of the noncustodial parent if there is no preexisting order or if the preexisting order is not in the best interest of the child.

DCS will:

1. Assure that the initial face-to-face contact is made between the child and his or her parent, guardian, or custodian within 48 hours of removal; and

**Exception:** Phone contact may be made with Supervisor approval if extenuating circumstances exist (i.e. parent, guardian, or custodian is hospitalized).

2. Assure face-to-face contact is made between the child and his or her siblings within five (5) days of removal.

**Note:** Sibling visitation should be promoted for every child who receives foster care, including visitation when all siblings are not in foster care. The child, resource parent, Guardian ad Litem (GAL), Court Appointed Special Advocate, (CASA), or agency responsible for care, treatment, or supervision of the child may request sibling visitation.

The [Visitation Plan](#) provides parameters for visitation between the child and his or her parent(s), guardian, or custodian, sibling(s), family members, and other individuals with whom the child has formed significant relationships. All [Visitation Plans](#) will have the following:

1. Goal of reestablishing, maintaining, and/or strengthening the bond that exists between the child and his or her family;
2. 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) or toddler (age 1-2); unless the court has ordered otherwise;
3. Face-to-face contact with the child's siblings at least once per week; and
4. Face-to-face contact with other adults with whom the child has a positive, significant relationship as long as deemed appropriate, and does not negatively affect the child.

This should not interfere with or disrupt the regular visitation of the parent, guardian, or custodian.

**Note:** All [Visitation Plans](#) must include alternative forms of contact (e.g., phone calls, cards, letters, photographs, recordings, etc.) to supplement face-to-face visits. If the court has ordered no face-to-face contact between the child and his or her parent, guardian, or custodian, alternative forms of contact may be requested, if appropriate to maintain and develop the parent-child bond. See separate policies, [8.11 Parental Interaction and Involvement](#) and [8.13 Implementing the Visitation Plan](#).

#### Code References

N/A

#### **PROCEDURE**

**[REVISED]** The Family Case Manager (FCM) will:

1. Approve or deny all verbal or written requests for visitation with the child and document in the Indiana Child Welfare Information System (ICWIS) contacts within 3 (three) business days;
2. Convene the CFT Meeting to assist in the development of the [Visitation Plan](#);
3. Ensure that the written [Visitation Plan](#) includes the following components:
  - a. A visitation goal,
  - b. Parameters of contact (who, what, how often),
  - c. Supervision (i.e. the degree of supervision necessary for each person who will visit and who may provide supervision). See [Tool 8.C - Supervision of Visits](#),
  - d. Visit logistics (e.g., location, time and length of visits, transportation, etc.),
  - e. Appropriate activities during visitation, in particular, developmental activities, parenting activities, and any special considerations and/or accommodations regarding visitation,
  - f. Alternative forms of contact (e.g. phone calls, cards, letters, photographs, or recordings to supplement face-to-face visits),
  - g. Provisions for contact with the noncustodial parent, if appropriate, and
  - h. Provisions for face-to-face contact and/or other forms of contact with persons whom the child has a positive, significant relationship, if appropriate and does not interfere or have a negative impact.
4. Engage the CFT in problem-solving regarding any barriers to visitation (i.e., transportation). See separate policy, [8.13 Implementing the Visitation Plan](#);
5. Utilize alternative forms of contact when circumstances prevent face-to-face visitation or make it an extreme hardship, (e.g., phone contact, email exchanges, audio and video recordings, drawings, cards, letters, etc.). Circumstances that may necessitate occasional or consistent use of alternative forms of contact include:
  - a. Parental incarceration,
  - b. Parents who reside in another state,
  - c. Parents who refuse face-to-face contact, and
  - d. Parents or siblings who are placed in residential treatment centers with restricted or no visitation.

6. Ensure that all parties understand the [Visitation Plan](#) fully, and obtain signatures of all parties involved in implementing the [Visitation Plan](#);
7. Review with all parties how the [Visitation Plan](#) will be implemented, monitored, and adjusted throughout the life of the case. See separate policy, [8.13 Implementing the Visitation Plan](#);
8. Facilitate the convening of the Child and Family Team (CFT) Meeting, within 30 calendar days of removal or decision to create a Concurrent Plan, to develop an alternative permanency plan in the event that reunification efforts are not successful. See separate policy, [5.15 Concurrent Planning](#);
9. Submit the completed [Visitation Plan](#) to the court for approval; if there is a preexisting order that conflicts with the [Visitation Plan](#); and
10. Ensure that the approved [Visitation Plan](#) is documented in the ICWIS Visitation Log.

### **Noncustodial Parent Visitation**

The FCM will:

1. Determine if there is an preexisting visitation order for the noncustodial parent and obtain a copy, if one exists, for presentation to the court;
2. Provide the court with a recommendation for visitation of the noncustodial parent if there is no preexisting order or if the preexisting order is not in the best interest of the child; and
3. Document approved [Visitation Plan](#) in ICWIS.

### **Visitation For Families Where Domestic Violence Has Been Identified**

The FCM will:

1. Work with the CFT to develop a [Visitation Plan](#) for the family;
2. Offer separate visitation time for the non-offending parent and the alleged domestic violence offender;
3. Consider recommending supervised visitation if the children are afraid of the alleged domestic violence offender or either parent has physically abused the child(ren);
4. Not inform the alleged domestic violence offender of the non offending parent's visitation time; and
5. Ensure there is no overlap of parental visitation time.

**[REVISED] Note:** Ample time should be included for the non-offending parent to pick up or drop off the children or to arrive or leave the premises without being forced to interact with the alleged domestic violence offender. The non-offending parent should not be expected to transport the children to or from their visits with the alleged domestic violence offender.

### **PRACTICE GUIDANCE**

#### **[NEW] Documenting Visits in the Visitation Log**

After monitoring a parent-child visit, it is essential to document whether the visit was “acceptable” or “unacceptable” in the ‘Visit Detail’ screen in ICWIS. “Acceptable” visits are those visits where the parent has complied with the terms established in the [Visitation Plan](#). “Unacceptable” visits are those visits where the parent has not complied with the terms established in the [Visitation Plan](#). For example, if the visitation plan requires the parent to bring snacks to the visit and the parent does not, then the visitation log may reflect that the visit was “unacceptable.”

## **FORMS AND TOOLS**

1. [Visitation Plan](#) - Available in ICWIS
2. [Tool 8.C – Supervision of Visits](#)
3. [Case Plan \(SF 2956\)](#) – Available in ICWIS

## **RELATED INFORMATION**

### **Importance of Maintaining Parent, Guardian, or Custodian Contact**

Children have the fundamental right to visit with their parents. Ideally, the relationship developed between a parent and child is one 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 will help the child not to feel abandoned by his or her parent, guardian, or custodian.

### **Importance of Maintaining Sibling Contact**

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

### **Visitation Goal**

The visitation goal should be consistent with the permanency goal outlined in the child's Case Plan.

### **Visitation Rights**

Parent(s), guardian, or custodian(s) and children retain the right of reasonable contact with each other, regardless of the permanency goal, unless parental rights have been terminated or the court has restricted contact. In addition, the juvenile court may appoint a GAL or CASA if a child receiving foster care requests sibling visitation.