Department of Children's Services

POLICY

16.38 Face-to-Face Visitation with Dependent and Neglected and Unruly Children in DCS Custody	
Application: This policy applies to all DCS Employees/Contract Providers.	
Authority: TCA 37-5-106, 37-5-112; 37-1-130; 37-2-403; TCA 37-4-201-207, P.L. 109-239 Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Children in Foster Care Act 2006.	**Standards : COA:** PA-CFS 14; PA-PRG 4.**02**
Commissioner:	**Date:**
Original Effective Date: 02/01/01 Current Effective Date: 10/31/23	Supersedes: DCS 16.38 06/23/23 Last Review Date: 10/31/23
Glossary: ♦ Contract Provider Worker: o Any employee of an agency that has been contracted by the Department of Children's Services to provide case management services and functions in the role as a DCS Family Service Worker.	

Policy Statement:
All children/youth in the custody of DCS with an adjudication of dependent and neglected or unruly and those with Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) involvement are visited and seen face-to-face on a regular basis to assess and ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child/youth

Purpose:
To establish standards for face-to-face visits between the child/youth, family, and Family Service Worker (FSW) including alternative methods of visitation under special circumstances.

Procedures:

A. General Guidelines for Face-to-Face Visits

1. Frequency and location requirements of face-to-face contact and visitation for children/youth in foster care are outlined in the ***Visitation Guide***.
2. Face-to-face visits with children/youth are made through a mix of home, placement, school, community, daycare, and office visits and are consistent with the child/youth's safety needs. In most cases, visits with children/youth at school are

associated with prescheduled meetings. School is not used as a common visitation environment.

3. Children/youth in foster care should have face-to-face contact as often as needed to meet the child/youth's needs. Assessments and/or recommendation(s) from supervision may indicate the need for additional visits beyond what is required.
4. Face-to-face visits between the FSW and the child/youth includes a private conversation, out of the presence of the foster parent or other caregiver to assess and monitor the child/youth's safety and well-being. The FSW observes their physical and emotional health, their developmental progress, their behaviors, and affect. In cases of non-verbal children/youth, an attempt at a private conversation occurs using other means of communication such as sign language, drawing pictures, or usage of electronic devices. For school-age children/youth, the FSW assesses their educational stability, school progress, and performance. During the face-to-face contact, the FSW gives the child/youth an opportunity to ask questions and to express feelings and concerns about their situation.
5. When visiting the placement of the child/youth, the FSW makes efforts to observe where the child/youth spends time in the home, including, but not limited to where they sleep, eat, and bathe.
6. When more than one party who requires visitation (child/youth, foster parent, birth parent, etc.) is present during a visit with an FSW/Contract Provider, the contact satisfies the visitation requirement for each, provided that individual meetings occur with all parties.
7. An unsuccessful visit (a visit was planned or attempted but contact was not made) does not satisfy the requirement for visitation. All attempts to make contact should be documented to show ongoing efforts to make contact.
8. DCS staff have the responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of children/youth placed in the care of the Department. To meet this responsibility, an unannounced visit to the child/youth's placement may be needed. The purpose of an unannounced visit is not to be intrusive or cause an unnecessary inconvenience to caregivers, and therefore should only be used when necessary.
9. DCS supervisory discretion is permissible in special circumstances to allow visitation alternatives when the child/youth's and family's unique situation warrants it.

B. Documentation of Supervision of Children

1. Face-to-face contacts with children/youth who are dependent and neglected or unruly in DCS custody are documented in case recordings in TFACTS within ten (10) business days.

2. All other case contacts and activities described in this policy are documented in case recordings in compliance with DCS Policy ***31.14, Documentation of TFACTS Case Recordings.***
3. Private meetings between the FSW and the child/youth, outside of the presence of the parent or foster parent/caretaker, is specifically documented.
4. Contract providers must follow the guidelines established in the ***Contract Provider Manual*** regarding documentation and submission of visits.
5. Supervision of children/youth placed in Tennessee under the auspices of Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) will be in accordance with this policy and is documented in TFACTS and on form ***CS-1200, ICPC Progress Report***. (Refer to ***ICPC Practices and Procedures Guide.***

C. Usage of Video-Conferencing

Section 422(b)(17) of the Social Security Act does not recognize videoconferencing or similar forms of technology as meeting the requirements for face-to-face visits between the FSW and child/youth. Video-conferencing is only used to supplement visitation requirements outlined in the ***Visitation Guide***, not to replace any of the requirements.

Forms:

CS-1200 ICPC Progress Report

Collateral Documents:

The Interstate Compact on The Placement Of Children Practices and Procedural Guide

Contract Provider Manual

Visitation Guide