 Department of Children & Family Services <i>Building a Stronger Louisiana</i>	Division/Section	Child Welfare
	Chapter No./Name	6 – Foster Care (FC)
	Part No./Name	7 – Services Prior to and Immediately After Placement
	Section No./Name	Services Prior to and Immediately After Placement
	Document No./Name	6-735 Initial Visits
	Effective Date	June 1, 2024

I. STATEMENT OF POLICY


It is the policy of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) that the case worker assigned to the Foster Care (FC) case shall visit with the foster children and their caregivers after placement into Department custody. Upon placement, an initial call shall be held between the child's birth parent and the caregiver. If the placing worker is unable to complete the initial call, the FC worker should conduct the initial call when they complete the initial visit. During the initial visit with the child and caregiver, the FC worker should also schedule the Icebreaker Meeting. It is also necessary for the assigned case worker to visit with the parents of a child that has been placed into foster care and to arrange visitation with the child in foster care and their family. * It is department's responsibility to complete a financial assessment on all children in the care/custody of DCFS. The IV-E Analyst is responsible for determining IV-E eligibility, Medicaid eligibility, Parental Contribution eligibility assessment, application for Federal Benefits, notification to Child Support Enforcement, notification to Economic Stability and TANF eligibility. **

II. PROCEDURES

A. ASSIGNED FOSTER CARE CASE WORKER VISITS WITH THE FOSTER CAREGIVERS AND WITH THE CHILD IMMEDIATELY AFTER PLACEMENT ***

Any child entering foster care must be visited, at a minimum, twice within the first 30 days following placement. If the placing worker was not the assigned FC case worker, the assigned case worker shall visit the next working day after placement. During the initial visit with all youth ages 12 and older entering foster care, the FC case worker shall provide them with the [CW 402](#) Foster Care Handbook Know the Facts. The handbook must also be reviewed with them. It informs the youth about the foster care system, the case planning process and how the youth may participate in developing the case plan. The provision of the handbook (CW 402) and the review is documented * in the Family Assessment Tracking System (FATS) ** online in the case notes. *** A child in foster care shall be visited face-to-face by the child's assigned case worker in the child's place of residence a minimum of one time per month.

Visits are defined as face-to-face contact between the case worker and child which affords the opportunity for free and private communication. The foster caregivers shall be visited, at a minimum, twice in the first 30 days of placement. One of the visits shall be in the first week of placement. At the initial visit, the case worker shall provide the foster caregivers with information about the child and biological parents needed to properly care for the child. Refer to * [6-400 H](#). Preparing the Placement and [6-400 I](#). ** Discussion at Placement. If the placing worker was unable to complete the Initial Call between the caregiver and person whom the child was removed from, the FC worker shall make all efforts to ensure the initial call is completed during the first home visit with the child and caregiver. The initial call is critical, as it allows the previous caregiver to convey any immediate needs for the child, share critical

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information, and introduce the caregivers. For additional guidance on initial calls, see [QPI – InCall Initial Calls Practice Guide](#).

*** A visit with the foster caregiver can be held in conjunction with a visit with the child, as long as the case worker visits separately with a child who is verbal or otherwise capable of communicating and the foster caregiver. Same day visits shall be documented to reflect individual private contacts. When the foster child is an infant, pre-verbal child, or child who is unable to communicate, the case worker should observe the foster caregivers and the child together to determine the adequacy of the care and the adjustment of the child to the foster home. The case worker should also hold and examine the infant during the visits to ensure the child's well-being and development. The FC case worker shall assess the safety of the * child in his placement during the initial visit and every subsequent visit to the home. The needs of the caregiver in providing for the safety and well-being of the child shall also be assessed during each visit. A foster child who is a substance exposed infant or other infant requiring special care should be observed for a sufficient time to assure the foster caregiver is able to care for and comfort the infant; administer any medications; operate any medical equipment; and, work with providers such as home health, as needed. When needed, the foster caregivers should receive training regarding the child's special needs and care.

During initial visits with children who are verbal or otherwise capable of communicating, the case worker is to discuss with the child and document all collected information regarding relative/kin, previous caregivers and family friends who are considered by the family to have the same degree of relationship with the child as a relative/kin. ** *** The assigned FC case worker contacts all adult * relative/kin ** within the first 30 days of the child's entry into foster care to notify of opportunities for supporting the child's care, unless there is evidence to support an individual's involvement as a perpetrator of domestic violence. During the contact, the FC case worker also explains any options that may be lost by failing to respond to the notice. The FC case worker shall also discuss with older children and youth if there are any previous caregivers or *** kin in order to assess the individual/family as a potential person for maintaining contact/connections with the child (Refer to [6-803](#), Connections for Permanency).

B. FIRST VISIT BETWEEN THE CHILD AND HIS FAMILY IMMEDIATELY AFTER PLACEMENT

A child placed in foster care usually needs to see his family immediately after placement, due to his feelings of abandonment and loss. The child needs reassurance his parents have not disappeared. An Icebreaker Meeting shall be held as soon as possible, but no later than five days of a child entering foster care. The Icebreaker meeting is a scheduled meeting between the birth parent(s) and the child's foster caregiver(s) to meet and discuss ways to support the child, share information, reinforce expectations of quality parenting, partnering together to focus on best care for the child. FC Workers should encourage and support the initiation of building a relationship between caregivers to focus on the child. The Icebreaker Meeting can be held on the same day as the initial family visit but should not take the place of the initial family visit. Staff should review the [QPI-IceBrk Ice Breaker Meetings Practice Guide](#) on how to

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prepare for a successful meeting and ensure all participants are prepared and know what to expect during the meeting. The initial family visit shall be held within five days of placement, except in special circumstances as given in examples that follow. If arrangements for the visit are known at the time of removal, the parents and foster *** caregivers** can be notified by the Child Protective Services (CPS) Worker when it will be held. Otherwise, the FC case worker arranges the visit and notifies the foster caregiver of the date, time, and place of the visit. If the visit will not be held in the foster **caregivers' **** home, the FC case worker and foster caregiver shall make arrangements for transportation.

In most cases of suspected sexual abuse or serious physical abuse or severe emotional maltreatment, children should not visit with the alleged perpetrator immediately after entering Department custody. Visits may become appropriate at a later time depending upon the perpetrator's acknowledgment of the abuse/neglect and progress in treatment. Court approval to withhold visits should be discussed on a case by case basis at the pre-removal or post-removal staffing and requested by the CPS worker at the Continued Custody Hearing, if timely, or by the FC case worker.

The FC case worker is responsible for arranging and supervising the first family visit after placement. The case worker should observe and assess the family interaction and behavioral and communication patterns. The first family visit between the child and his parents can be denied only with court approval. Factors which should be considered in the planning of visits are location, family members' acceptance of the alleged abuse/neglect and their attitudes toward the victim, any possible danger posed by the family members, and the severity of trauma to the child. Any child who enters foster care due to abuse or neglect should not be forced to visit with his parents if he refuses to do so. The case worker should assess and discuss with the child the concerns or reasons for not wanting to visit and possible solutions that would validate the child's feelings and enable the child to feel safe, emotionally and physically during a visit. If the child's refusal continues, this shall be reported to the court.

A foster child shall not be prohibited from visiting with his siblings by the Department. Prior to arranging a visit, an assessment is made by the FC case worker to determine the type or location of visits that are in the best interest of the child. For minor siblings not in foster care, contact is made with the caregiver of the siblings to discuss and arrange visits. For adult siblings, contact the sibling directly to discuss and arrange visits. Visits should also be held with siblings who are in the custody of other agencies such as the Office of Citizen's with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) or Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ). Sibling visits and other contacts should be arranged as soon as possible after a child's entry into foster care. Sibling visits should be arranged bi-weekly, but no less than monthly.

The FC case worker, along with the CPS worker, determines whether it is safe to have the visit in the parents' home. Supervisory conferences should address concerns regarding the safety of having the visit in the parents' home.

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C. INITIAL VISIT WITH THE PARENTS

* During the initial visit with parents, the FC case worker shall provide with the [CW 400](#) DCFS Foster Care Handbook. The handbook must also be reviewed with them. It informs the parents about the foster care system, the case planning process and their rights and responsibilities. The provision of the handbook (CW 400) and the review is documented in FATS case notes.

The FC case worker shall begin to work intensively with the child's family as soon as possible, but no more than three days after the child enters custody, to assist the family in reducing the risk of abuse or neglect to the child in order that the child can be returned home, unless a decision has been made for immediate termination of the parents' ** rights or a court has determined reunification efforts are not required pursuant to Louisiana Children's Code Article 672.1. Refer to policy [6-200](#), Worker Visits with Parents. *** * The FC case worker shall ** review *** the safety assessment information received from the CPS or Family Services (FS) Worker at the time of case transfer *** * which includes the develop of the Assessment of Family Functioning (AFF) that CPS started with the family. The FC case worker shall obtain family photos, birth certificates, social security card, immunization record, medical card, and child's belongings; including clothing and any special items not previously obtained from the CPS worker. The FC case worker should also have a discussion with the parents about family members who might be a possible placement resource while completing the Family Connections Form. The initial visit should also include a continued assessment of the risk of neglect and abuse to the child in custody as well as to any child remaining in the parent's home. It is critical for the FC case worker to collect and document as much information possible as early in the case as possible in order to support timely planning for all case goals throughout the life of the case. The FC worker is to obtain the necessary information from the parent of the child and to provide that information to the IV-E Analyst. When the Analyst seeks additional information, the FC worker shall provide, whenever possible, the additional information. This information will not only assist the IV-E Analyst in determining eligibility, but also can assist FC and Adoption workers in better understanding the structure and dynamics of the family.

The FC case worker shall review and complete the following forms with the parents:

- Complete the FAST I and FAST II and update TIPS 110 screen for case event 3000.
- Review the Clients Rights and Expectations and obtain the parents signature.
- Review Form 98-I (Medical consent for Treatment).
- Review Form 99 (Family Medical History.)
- For a parent that is incarcerated, review the TPR-2 form (Send certified mail if unable to meet with the parent).

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Within three days of custody, the child must attend the continued custody (72-Hour) hearing, provide the School 1 form to the school, and at each change in school and/or change in placement. Update TIPS 110 screen, case event 3050 and the 141 screen. **

At each contact, the case worker is to assess the parent's or foster caregiver's ability or inability and willingness or unwillingness to reduce the safety threats and risk of neglect and abuse to the children who are in Department custody. It is the responsibility of the Department to concurrently plan another permanent living option, if it is unlikely the child will be able to safely and timely return home (refer to [6-802](#), Case Plan Goal Establishment and Concurrent Planning). If available, assess the parent from whom the child was removed, all noncustodial parents, all relatives, previous caregivers of the children, and *** kin to determine potential supportive resources in reducing safety threats and caring for or maintaining connections with the child.

If the child has been removed from only one parent, it is critical to also contact the other parent. Refer to *** * [6-205](#) Placement with a Non-offending Parent ** and if paternity is a concern refer to *** [6-410](#) Establishing Paternity and Permanency.


The case worker is to attempt to involve the noncustodial parent in permanency planning for the child as follows:

- Assess the noncustodial parent for immediate release of custody of the child and his/her * relative/kin ** as placement resource or sources of support to the family
- Complete an Assessment of Family Functioning (AFF)
- Obtain information to submit to the Eligibility Unit ([FAST I](#), [FAST II](#), or [FAST III](#)) for possible support payments ***
- Arrange visitation, if appropriate. Discretion should be used in arranging visits if the child expresses concern or fear regarding the noncustodial parent. If the noncustodial parent and any other adult household members do not have a history of child abuse/neglect or domestic violence, the Department may request the court to revoke Department custody and place custody with the non-offending parent. Refer to [6-400](#), Placement of the Child.

The case worker documents efforts to involve the noncustodial parent in case notes filed in the FC case record.

*** D. THE FINANCIAL DETERMINATION**

The FC worker will send the FAST II notification letter to the parent or legal guardian from whom custody was removed as outlined in the Louisiana Children's Code Article 685. The FC

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worker will schedule an interview with the parent or legal guardian to review the financial contribution provisions in-depth. Within 7 days of custody, the FC worker must submit an Initial Determination Wizard in CAFÉ to the IV-E Analyst, along with the FAST II, Instanter Order, Affidavit, social security card and birth certificate. The FC worker should apply for a social security card and birth certificate if those documents are not available. If a child enters custody, and does not have an active Medicaid case and needs emergency medical services, contact the IV-E unit.

III. FORMS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Assessment of Family Functioning (AFF), online in FATS

[CW 400 DCFS Foster Care Handbook](#)

[CW 402 Foster Care Handbook Know the Facts](#)

[FAST I Financial Assessment Transaction Form / Instructions](#)

[FAST II Notification to Client Parent Guardian Form / Instructions](#)

[FAST III Change Redetermination Form / Instructions](#) **

[QPI-IceBrk Form / Instructions](#) Ice Breaker Meetings Practice Guide

[QPI-InCall Form / Instructions](#) Initial Calls Practice Guide

IV. REFERENCES

[LA Children's Code Article 672.1](#)

[LA Children's Code Article 685](#)

Policy [6-905](#) Case Worker Visitation with the Foster Child/Foster Parent/Caregiver