




Revision Date: 9/2/20	Primary Author(s): Trinette Redinger Ramsey
Authorized Signature: Trenee Parker, DFS Director 	

POLICY 403 – Family Contacts

A. POLICY

Regular contact between the caseworker, families, and children/youth is critical in promoting safety, permanency, and wellbeing of the children/youth we serve. It provides an opportunity to spend time with families, observe them in their homes, and build relationships that help families respond more effectively to crises, opportunities, and child and family needs. It shows child safety is the priority and holds caregivers accountable for child safety and well-being. (National Conference of State Legislatures, September 2006).

The purpose of this contact is to:

- a) Monitor safety and family service planning
- b) Assess current safety of all children
- c) Ensure the family/child has the services they need
- d) Monitor the changes in the family
- e) Help families respond to crisis, child, and family needs

Caseworkers can better assess safety when visiting families in their own home. It shows safety is a priority.

As long as the family has an open case with DFS, sufficient contact must be maintained in order to:

- a. Assess initial and ongoing child safety
- b. Assess risk
- c. Assess family and child strengths and needs
- d. Monitor progress on case plan goals and outcomes
- e. Observe the interaction of child/family
- f. Assess child wellbeing
- g. Work towards permanency

The frequency and quality of face to face contacts between the caseworker and the child(ren) in the case are sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals.

The frequency and quality of face to face contacts between the caseworker and the mothers, fathers, and identified caretaker(s) of the child(ren) are sufficient to ensure the safety, permanency, and wellbeing of the child(ren) and promote achievement of case goals.

B. PROCEDURES

CASEWORKER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Contact the family within the timeframe indicated for initial contact.
 - The supervisor determines the initial contact date at case assignment based on safety and risk factors.

2. Maintain the contact requirement established by the supervisor.
 - All cases open for more than 30 days should have a contact requirement
 - Contacts should be made through announced and unannounced visits
 - Face to Face Contact allows the caseworker to:
 - Assess safety and risk
 - Assess the family/ child using the Family and Child Strengths and Needs Guide
 - Monitor planning with the family
 - Engage with the family
 - Develop and explore support networks
 - Some of face-to-face contacts should be conducted in the home setting.

SDM® Risk Level	Minimum Number of Visits in the home/month
Low/Moderate Risk	1
High Risk	1
Very High Risk	2

3. Make additional face-to-face contacts that may be recommended in some cases. Some examples include:
 - Increased risk
 - Changes in circumstances
 - Safety concerns and/or safety plan in place
4. Document Face-to Face Contacts in FOCUS
 - Enter a note in FOCUS for each contact using the Contact Template.
 - Enter the date of each contact in the Family Contact Chart in FOCUS
 - If a contact was missed enter a note in FOCUS indicating the reason for the missed contact.

SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Assign the initial contact.
 - a. The initial contact in an Investigation Case is determined by the required priority response determined by the hotline report.
 - **Refer to Policy 203 Tier 2 Investigation Protocol**
 - b. The initial contact in Treatment cases is established when the supervisor assigns the case to a caseworker.
 - The initial contact is assigned within 1-10 working days of the opening of the Treatment Case.
 - When assigning the initial contact, the supervisor should take into consideration the risk level from the Investigation Risk Assessment and safety factors.

SDM® Risk Level	No Safety Plan	Safety Plan	DFS Custody
Low/Moderate Risk	10 working days	5-10 working days	10 working days
High Risk	4-8 working days	1-5 working days	5-10 working days
Very High Risk	1-5 working days	1-2 working days	5-10 working days

2. Assign the Ongoing Contact Schedule

- a. Investigation Cases open for longer than 45 days will need a contact schedule documented in a Note or Case Conference. The Investigation Supervisor should take into consideration the current SDM® Caregiver Safety Assessment.

No Safety Plan	Safety Plan	DFS Custody
Biweekly-Monthly	Weekly-Biweekly	Monthly

- b. When assigning the ongoing contact schedule in Treatment Cases the supervisor will take into consideration the current risk level from the Investigation Risk Assessment and safety concerns. For example:

SDM® Risk Level	No Safety Plan	Safety Plan	DFS Custody
Low/Moderate Risk	Biweekly	Weekly -Biweekly	Biweekly
High Risk	Weekly - Biweekly	Weekly - Biweekly	Biweekly
Very High Risk	Weekly	Weekly	Biweekly

3. Review the contact schedule during case conferences and at critical decision points and adjust the contract schedule as needed.

- Examples of critical decision points:
 - Completion of the Family & Child Strengths and Needs Guide
 - Completion of the Family Service Plan
 - Completion of Risk Reassessment or Reunification Reassessment
 - Case Conferences
 - Changes in the family (circumstance, risk, safety, etc.)
- The ongoing contact schedule will take into consideration the current SDM risk level and safety concerns determined by the most current SDM® Risk Assessment, SDM® Risk Reassessment, or SDM® Reunification Reassessment. For example:

SDM® Risk Level	No Safety Plan	Safety Plan	DFS Custody
Low/Moderate Risk	Monthly	Biweekly - Monthly	Monthly
High Risk	Biweekly - Monthly	Weekly - Biweekly	Monthly
Very High Risk	Weekly -Biweekly	Weekly	Monthly

- Any adjustment to the contact schedule is documented in a Note or Case Conference in FOCUS.

EXCEPTIONS

- Exceptions to contact requirements may be made on a case-by-case basis with input from the Assistant Regional Administrator, Regional Administrator, or Program Manager. Reasons for the exception and appropriate approval must be documented in a Note in FOCUS.

DOCUMENTATION

1. All Face to Face contacts will be documented timely in the Family Contact Schedule in FOCUS
2. Details of the contact will be written in a Case Note using the Family Contact Template.
The Family Contact Template includes the following information (see attachment):
 - a. Type of Contact
 - What type of face-to-face visit is being made (ex. Unannounced home visit, scheduled home visit, office visit)
 - b. Date, Time, and Location
 - Enter the date and time of the contact, as well as, the address (or identifying information)
 - c. Participants
 - Indicate who participated in the contact and their role.
 - d. Purpose of the contact
 - Indicate the reason for the meeting (ex. Safety Planning/Review, response to new hotline report, Family Service Planning/Review, FSNG)
 - e. Issues discussed
 - What was discussed in the meeting (relevant details)
 - Were any Safety Organized Practice (SOP) tools used and the outcome.
 - What is working well
 - What are the worries
 - f. Observations
 - Describe observations during the visit (ex. Condition of the home, parent/child interaction, parent/parent interaction, etc.)
 - g. Whether the child(ren) is/are safe and why/why not
 - Explain why the child is or is not safe.
 - h. Next Steps
 - Indicate what each of the participants is going to do before the next contact.
3. Supervisors should document decisions regarding assignment of contact schedules.
 - Initial Assignment
 - Case Conferences
 - FOCUS Case Note

C. FOCUS

- The Family Contact Schedule is located under Case in FOCUS.
- In Treatment Cases the Family Contact Schedule will be worklisted to the Caseworker upon case assignment.
- The caseworker will enter the following information:
 - The actual date of the family contact
 - This date cannot be after the “Due Date”.
 - Who made the contact
 - Whether the contact was missed (y/n)
- The caseworker will then change the status to “completed”
- If any family contacts are marked “missed” then a diligent effort will be worklisted to the supervisor (see Policy 311 Diligent Efforts).

- D. FORMS** Use the DFS policy website to access any forms:
<https://kids.delaware.gov/policies/dfs-policies>

Face to Face Contact Template
Face to Face Contact Template with Examples