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POLICY 404 – Foster Care (Client) Contacts

A. POLICY

Frequent and quality contacts between caseworkers and foster children lead to better safety, permanency and well-being outcomes.

B. PROCEDURES

1. When the child is in DFS custody, monthly contact must be made by the Division of Family Services (DFS) caseworker for the following placement settings:

- Relative/non-relative
- DFS foster care pre-adoptive homes
- Group care
- Ferris school/detention
- Hospitalization
- Residential treatment centers
- Trial home placement
- Youth on a board extension

The purposes of this contact is to:

- Build relationships with the child
- Help bridge gaps between the child and the parent
- Support the child in their out-of-home placement
- Ensure the child’s safety in their current placement

2. These contacts must be completed confidentially.

3. During a trial reunification, the monthly contacts must continue until the Court relinquishes custody.

4. A minimum of 7 out of the 12 monthly contacts must occur in the child’s current placement.

5. Visits must be completed confidentially to ensure that the child can voice any safety concerns. In addition to discussing safety in their living environment, in the family, or with their own family, the worker (POC and/or DFS) must also discuss the following:

- a. Issues, fears, and concerns the child may have.
- b. Objectives and goals identified in the Family Service Plan and the plan for Child in Care as they relate to the child.
- c. The need for additional services.

This discussion should take place with the foster parents but must be separate from the discussion with the child.

6. The DFS Caseworker is responsible for making sure monthly contacts occur per the contact chart:

Placement Setting	Contact Frequency	Who is Responsible
Initial Placement		
All placements (except listed below)	Within 5 days of placement a Child is visited in their placement. Visit must include one or both of the foster parents/caretakers.	DFS Caseworker
Replacements within the Purchase of Care Agency	Within 5 days of placement a Child is visited in their placement. Visit must include one or both of the foster parents/caretakers.	Purchase of Care (POC) Caseworker
After Hours Placements	Telephone Contact the next working day and visited within 5 working days of that contact. Visits must include one or both of the foster parents/caretakers	DFS Caseworker
Temporary placement either for mental health treatment or for detention due to criminal charges	A 5 day contact is not necessary, but the Caseworker must continue the contact schedule previously in place for that child.	DFS Caseworker
Ongoing Visits After Initial		
DSCYF or DFS Custody - In State Placement Setting		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relative/Non-Relative DFS Foster Care/Pre-Adoptive Homes Group Care Ferris School/Detention Hospitalization/RTC 	Monthly contact. The majority of the monthly contacts must be in the child's current placement and completed confidentially.	DFS Caseworker or, with supervisory approval, another worker in the unit or the unit's Family Service Assistant (FSA). (Supervisor must note that approval in FOCUS)
Purchase of Care Placements		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster Care Homes Pre-Adoptive Homes 	A) Monthly contact in child's residence and completed confidentially. B) Contact every six months in the child's residence and completed confidentially.	A) POC Worker B) DFS Caseworker
Out of State Placement Settings (ICPC)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DFS Pre-Adoptive Involving Other DSCYF Divisions (DYRS/PBHS) 	A) Monthly contact in child's residence and completed confidentially. B) Contact every six months in the child's residence and completed confidentially.	A) POC Worker or Public Child Protective Service (CPS) Agency Worker (monthly contact to be requested in the 100A). B) DFS Caseworker or, with supervisory approval, another worker in the unit or the unit's Family Service Assistant. (Supervisor must note that approval in FOCUS)
Non-DFS Placement within the State		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DDDS placement Residential Facility 	Monthly contact. The majority of the monthly contacts must be in the child's current placement and completed confidentially.	DFS Caseworker or, with supervisory approval, another worker in the unit or the unit's Family Service Assistant. (Supervisor must note that approval in FOCUS)
Youth on a Board Extension		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18 year old remaining in placement via board extension 	Monthly contact. The majority of the monthly contacts must be in the child's current placement and completed confidentially.	DFS Caseworker or, with supervisory approval, another worker in the unit or the unit's Family Service Assistant. (Supervisor must note that approval in FOCUS)
Trial Reunification		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Returned home in DFS custody 	Monthly contact until such time as the Court relinquishes custody. The majority of the monthly contacts must be in the child's residence and completed confidentially.	DFS Caseworker or, with supervisory approval, another worker in the unit or the unit's Family Service Assistant. (Supervisor must note that approval in FOCUS)

7. Visits to children in out-of-state placements will be made in accordance with the Family Service Plan, but no less frequently than every 6 months. Exceptions to this would be children who are in joint funded out-of-state placements where either DYRS or DPBHS is visiting or inter-state compact cases where the receiving state is visiting. Exceptions must be documented on the Family Service Plan.

DOCUMENTATION

8. A summation of each contact between the child and the caseworker must be documented in a treatment note, including an impression of the child's safety. All monthly contacts between the child and the worker must be written in a running treatment note labeled "Monthly Foster Care Contact." In the event an FSA makes the monthly contact, the FSA must create a separate treatment note in the FOCUS record also titled "Monthly Foster Care Contact – FSA". If another worker in the unit will be making the contact, they should create their own note in the FOCUS record and label it "Monthly Foster Care Contact – insert their name".
9. Workers and supervisors may use their own discretion to determine if they want to create a separate "Monthly Foster Care Contact" note for each child in the home or if they want to create one note per family. If the worker chooses to create one note per family, the contact **with each child** must be clearly identified as well as a summary of the contact, including any safety concerns, a discussion regarding applicable issues, objectives and goals in the Family Service Plan and Plan for Child in Care, a discussion of any services that are in place for the youth, and an assessment of the youth's safety.
10. If a monthly contact was missed the caseworker will indicate the reason in note in FOCUS.

C. FOCUS

- The Client Contact will generate in an Investigation or Treatment Case when an Ex- Parte Custody Order is completed in FOCUS.
- The Initial Client Contact will be worklisted with a Due Date of 5 days after custody was granted.
- Ongoing client contacts will be worklisted based on the completion of the month's contact and will reflect a due date of the last day of the month.
- The DFS Caseworker will enter the following information:
 - a. Actual date of the Client Contact
 - b. Person making the contact
 - c. The role of the person who made the contact (Contact Worker Type)
 - d. Whether or not the contact was made in the placement setting (y/n)
 - e. The name of the placement setting
- If there was no contact during the month the DFS Caseworker will mark the Client Contact stats as missed.

- 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