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Authorized Signature: Trenee Parker, DFS Director <i>Trenee Parker</i>	

POLICY 405 – Diligent Efforts for Contacts

A. POLICY

Face to face contacts with family promotes child safety and progress towards planned goals. Missed contacts must meet strict criteria. Diligent efforts are persistent and relevant attempts to contact the child and family. All attempts to meet with the child and family will be documented in FOCUS and approved by the supervisor.

Ongoing efforts will be made to make contact with the child and family until the contact is made.

B. PROCEDURES

When a Contact is not made on time, the caseworker shall document the reasons why in a FOCUS Progress Note. For family contacts the caseworker will mark the contact as “missed”.

Diligent efforts to comply with the contact timeframe will be approved by the Supervisor when the caseworker made two attempted face-to-face contacts to comply with the Contact Policy, but was unable to interview/observe the child or family due to circumstances beyond the worker’s control. Diligent efforts include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Visits to the child’s home address at different times of the day and on different days.
- Attempts to contact by telephone or text.
- Mailed or certified letter
- Visits to child’s school or daycare
- Contact with family supports
- Contact with the clients’ attorney and Deputy Attorney General (DAG)
- Steps to locate the family (Refer to Policy 402, Locating Parents)
- Steps to compel cooperation (Refer to Policy 603, Compelling Cooperation)

If the caseworker did not make efforts to make contact then the Supervisor will document that criteria was not met for the diligent effort.

Supervisors will indicate whether or not the caseworker met the criteria for a diligent effort within 48 hours of receipt of the diligent effort record in FOCUS.

The following circumstances meet the criteria for diligent efforts (Criteria Met):

1. Family and/or children are out of state or on vacation: The worker must attempt to contact the parent, if whereabouts information is known. Document the attempts.
2. Death in family/illness/hospitalization: This does not include the death of the alleged child victim or child illness related to abuse or neglect. Document the reason.
3. Client Refuses to meet on advice of attorney: This should be verified by the worker requesting the client’s attorney’s name and by having the DFS DAG call the client’s attorney. Document attempts to coordinate contact.
4. Client required accommodations: Document attempts to acquire assistance to meet the client’s special needs. For example, translation services, sign language interpreter, etc.

5. Inaccurate or insufficient address: Check and document all locator options. Refer to Policy 402, Locating Parents.
6. Lack of cooperation: Client refuses to establish contact with caseworker or client repeatedly misses or reschedules appointment. Document steps indicated in Policy 603 – Compelling Cooperation. This does not include the client not being able to meet within the contact timeframe.
7. Client special conditions: Client was unable to meet within the contact timeframe due to circumstances out of their control. This should be clearly documented and include attempts to meet the client's needs.
8. Timely contact not yet in FOCUS: Document the actual date of the contact.
9. Weather related difficulties: State offices are closed due to weather conditions or weather conditions are dangerous and the contact could not be rescheduled within the contact timeframe. Document the reason.
10. Whereabouts of caretakers or victims unknown: Document attempts to locate the family. Document attempts to locate the family. Refer to Policy 402 Locating Parents.

The following circumstances meet the criteria for diligent efforts with an exception (Criteria Met with Exception):

1. Case transferred to a different worker: The contact was due within 2 weeks of transfer.
2. Family resides in a different county. The other county is not able to assist or accommodate a courtesy contact within the contact timeframe. Document attempts.
3. Delay due to law enforcement/Children's Advocacy Center/Department of Justice: Document discussions and reason for delay.
4. Extension approved by supervisor: Document what the extension is based on. For example, case priorities, cancelled by agency for unforeseen emergency (worker accident), etc.

Diligent Efforts did not meet the criteria when no efforts have been made to comply with the contact timeframe (Criteria Not Met).

C. FOCUS

Investigation:

- A diligent effort record will worklist to the supervisor when the caseworker enters an Initial Contact Date that is after the due date.
- The supervisor will indicate whether the diligent effort is met, met with exception, or not met.
- The supervisor will document the reason if criteria was met or met with exception.

Treatment:

- A diligent effort record will worklist to the supervisor when the caseworker indicates that a Family Contact was missed (did not occur by the due date).
- The supervisor will indicate whether the diligent effort is met, met with exception, or not met.
- The supervisor will document the reason if criteria was met or met with exception.

D. FORMS

None