Organizational Self Study on Parent-Child and Sibling Visits

This self study assessment tool can be used to review the core principles of parent-child and sibling visiting. The tool is designed to review overall agency readiness, assess administrative policies, and identify strengths and challenges in your parent-child and sibling visiting practice. This assessment tool can aid you in shaping your technical assistance needs.

**Administrative**

1. Does your agency have a practice model that articulates the importance of visits and connection-building activities between children and youth in foster care and:
   - Their parents or primary caregivers? ___ Yes ___ No
   - Their siblings? ___ Yes ___ No
   - Extended family? ___ Yes ___ No
   - In post permanency situations? ___ Yes ___ No
   - Other significant people in the child’s/youth’s life? ___ Yes ___ No

   If yes, to all or any of the above, please elaborate on how the practice model articulates the importance of visits and connection building activities with these individuals.

   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

2. Does your agency have a policy of placing children and youth close to the child’s community to support visits and family connections? ___ Yes ___ No

3. Does your agency define parent-child/youth visits as a required part of “reasonable efforts” to safely reunify children/youth and their parents? ___ Yes ___ No

4. Does your agency have policies that address the federal mandate in the Fostering Connections Act regarding visits among siblings when they are not placed together? ___ Yes ___ No

   If yes, what is the policy? ______________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

5. Does the policy provide for siblings to visit without parents being present? ___ Yes ___ No
6. Does your agency embrace a progressive visit model (the process of moving visits from the first highly-supervised and -structured contact to coached visits to unsupervised, overnight visits)? ___ Yes ___ No

7. Does your state/agency have laws, written policies and/or standards regarding the following?
   - The purpose of visits ___ Yes ___ No
     If yes, what is the defined purpose of visits?
     ____________________________________________________
     ____________________________________________________
   - The right of parents to visit their children/youth unless the court has ordered otherwise ___ Yes ___ No
   - Developing written visiting plans ___ Yes ___ No
     If yes, do you have laws/policies/standards on:
     o Who develops the visiting plan ___ Yes ___ No
     o Involving the family in developing the visiting plan ___ Yes ___ No
     o Involving older youth in developing visiting plans for themselves ___ Yes ___ No
     o Developing the initial visiting plan at time of placement ___ Yes ___ No
     o Providing parents/siblings with a copy of the visiting plan ___ Yes ___ No
     o Documenting visiting plans in the case record ___ Yes ___ No
     o Incorporating the visiting plan as part of the service plan ___ Yes ___ No
     o Process for modifying the visiting plan based on case circumstances and developments ___ Yes ___ No
     o Timing of first visit or contact ___ Yes ___ No
If yes:

- What is the time frame for the first visit or contact?

- Are the time frames different for different ages of children?  
  ___ Yes  ___ No

- Frequency of visits  ___ Yes  ___ No

  If yes:
  
  - What is the required frequency of visits?

  - Is the frequency of visits different for different ages of children?  
    ___ Yes  ___ No

  - Length of visits  ___ Yes  ___ No

    If yes:
    
    - What is stated as the desirable time length for visits?

    - Is the recommended length for visits different for different ages of children?  
      ___ Yes  ___ No

  - Location of visits  ___ Yes  ___ No

    If yes, what is stated as the preferred location for visits?

  - Transportation for visits  ___ Yes  ___ No

  - Supervision of visits  ___ Yes  ___ No

  - Coached visiting  ___ Yes  ___ No

  - Circumstances warranting, and procedures for, ending a visit early  
    ___ Yes  ___ No

  - Circumstances under which visits should or could be limited or 
    terminated  ___ Yes  ___ No

  - Circumstances under which visits should or could be increased in 
    frequency/length or have a lower level of supervision  
    ___ Yes  ___ No
Involvement of foster parents in arranging/supervising visits  
___ Yes   ___ No

Involvement of others (coaches, religious and community leaders, extended family members) in arranging/supervising visits  
___ Yes   ___ No

Post-visit work with children, siblings, birth parents, and foster parents  
___ Yes   ___ No

Review of visiting plans during supervisory sessions  ___ Yes   ___ No

8. Do you provide the following individuals with copies of the agency’s visiting policy?

- Parents  ___ Yes   ___ No
- Kin  ___ Yes   ___ No
- Caseworkers  ___ Yes   ___ No
- Foster parents  ___ Yes   ___ No
- Youth  ___ Yes   ___ No

9. Do the courts in your state review visiting plans?  ___ Yes   ___ No

   If yes, do parents, children and youth have the right to present recommendations or evidence to the court about the visiting plan?  ___ Yes   ___ No

10. Does the agency use visits as a factor in making the final permanent planning decision?  ___ Yes   ___ No

   If yes, how?

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
**Responsibilities in Parent-Child Visiting**

11. Do the social workers in your agency have the following responsibilities? If not, who has each of the following responsibilities? Please check the appropriate box and provide the information requested.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Yes, the social worker has the responsibility</th>
<th>No, the social worker does not; this is the responsibility of:</th>
<th>Responsibility is not clear in our policy and practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparing the child for visits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing birth parents/siblings for visits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing foster parents for visits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing the visiting plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating the logistics of visits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting with other professionals regarding ensuring safe visits based on the parent’s or child’s condition or special needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post visit work with the child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post visit work with the birth parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post visit work with sibling(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post visit work with foster parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Professional Development

12. What type of professional development activities are used to build staff’s knowledge, skills and abilities about parent-child and sibling visiting practice? Check all that apply.

- Classroom training
- Online training
- Teleconferences
- Webcasts
- Supervision
- Clinical consultation
- Technical assistance
- Coaching
- Mentoring
- Other (please specify): ________________________________

13. On which of the following are social workers trained? Check all that apply.

- Preparing children, birth parents, and foster parents for visits
- Encouraging parents to visit and using non-office locations for visits
- Developing visiting plans
- Supervision of visits
- Progressive visit planning
- Using visiting in permanency planning decision making

14. Are supervisors trained in visiting policy and practice? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, how are they trained? ____________________________________________

15. Do foster parents receive training on parent-child and sibling visiting?

- Yes ___ No

If yes, what is covered in the training? Check all that apply.

- Importance of parent-child and sibling visits
- Helping a child prepare for a visit
- Roles and responsibilities in visits
- Helping a child after a visit
- Other (please specify): ________________________________
**Agency Strengths**

16. Based on the above self-assessment, what do you see as your agency’s strengths in visiting practice? Check all that apply.

- Practice and policy commitment to visits between children/youth and their parents, siblings, extended family and other significant people in the child’s life
- Development of visiting plans
- Implementation of visiting plans
- Supervised visiting
- Use of a progressive visiting model
- Casework/clinical skills in preparing children/youth, parents, siblings, foster parents and others for successful visits
- Casework/clinical skills in post-visit work with parents, children/youth, siblings, foster parents and others
- Use of visiting in permanency decision making
- Use of innovative visiting practices (examples: visit coaching, icebreaker meetings)

**Agency Challenges**

17. Which of the following challenge your agency in developing and implementing strong visiting policies and practices? Check all that apply.

- Organizational culture
- Inconsistent or incomplete visiting policies
- Lack of a clearly defined visiting practice
- Caseload size/workload demand
- Transportation
- Staff turnover
- Lack of professional development opportunities
- Limited supervisory skills in providing staff with on-the-job training in visiting practice
- Lack of coordination with the courts on visiting plans
- Cultural competence issues
- Other (please specify): ____________________________________________

18. What do you need to overcome these challenges? _________________________
Technical Assistance and Training Needs

19. Based on this assessment, how can the National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections be of assistance? Check all that apply.

____Policy Review
____Policy Development
____Visiting Best Practices
____Implementation of policy and practices
____Data Analysis
____Visiting Engagement Strategies
____Curriculum Design Strategies
____Worker Training
____Supervisory Training
____Other (Please specify.)  

__________________________________________________________________