

The Florida Safe Families Network and Remote Data Capture

Policy and Practice Guidance

Visits between a child and his or her caseworker have been shown to have significant correlations to improving positive outcomes for children under the supervision of state child protection agencies.

(Source: Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Findings from the Initial Child and Family Services Reviews, 2001–2004*, available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/results/index.htm>.)

Contacts between a child and his or her caseworker should be consistent, frequent and substantive in nature with a focus on child safety and wellbeing, overall permanency case planning, and the effectiveness of services being provided to the child and family. In short, visits must have both quantity and quality. Quantity and quality of child and caseworker visitation are key elements in the federal Child and Family Services Reviews of child welfare services being provided by the states. Effective child and caseworker visitation is the cornerstone for positive outcomes in safety, permanency and wellbeing for children.

The Remote Data Capture (RDC) tool will enable child protective investigation and case management staff in Florida to more effectively document critical information and key data that supports safety, permanency and wellbeing for children under the protection, supervision and care of the Department. The RDC tool provides a platform for gathering information on-site during contacts with children and their families, caregivers or others and for uploading that information directly into the *Florida Safe Families Network* (FSFN) database. The efficiency and ease of documentation will permit increased time for interaction with families and will enhance the timeliness of data entry.

The initial phase of implementation of the Remote Data Capture tool creates an electronic format that interfaces with the existing FSFN format for documenting the data and content required in Florida Statute, Florida Administrative Code and best practice standards for child and caseworker visitation. The RDC provides functionality for documenting the location of the contact via GPS locators and provides digital imaging for photographing the child. This data is directly uploaded into FSFN.

Children under the supervision of the Department in Florida are required by Florida Administrative Code to be visited, at a minimum, every 30 days (section 65C-

30.007 (1) (a), F.A.C.). Florida Administrative Code defines the specific content of visits in section 65C-30.007 (8) – (10). It is important to note that the Remote Data Capture process does not alter or modify existing FSFN functionality for capturing visitation data. The RDC tool is a mobile, electronic extension of FSFN that facilitates documentation of the content, substance and details of events, observations and information gathered during a child visit. The RDC tool provides a platform for uploading visitation data directly into the FSFN system and has been designed to integrate with and complement existing FSFN functionality in order to create a seamless flow of information from onsite locations in the field directly into FSFN.

The Remote Data Capture process does not alter existing policy and practice requirements for visitation currently found in Florida Statute, Florida Administrative Code and in accepted best practice. FSFN is designed to comply with existing federal and state statute, policy and best practice standards in Florida. The RDC tool is an extension of that design. Child welfare staff in Florida should review and become familiar with existing Florida Statute and Florida Administrative Code regarding requirements for child-caseworker visitation. Staff must be familiar with existing visitation requirements in order to correctly apply them to the new RDC tool and to FSFN.

PRACTICE TIPS for RDC Users:

TYPES OF SERVICE DROPDOWN VALUES:

Adoption - a caseworker-child visit made to a child in a pre-adoptive placement (i.e., adoption not yet finalized)

Courtesy - a caseworker-child visit made to a child for whom the agency is providing courtesy supervision for another jurisdiction

Independent Living - a caseworker-child visit made to a child in an Independent Living setting, e.g., an apartment, dorm or other "independent" setting for Independent Living youth

In-Home Supervision - a caseworker-child visit to a child **not** in Out-of-Home Care (or in a Removal Episode), but under Department supervision in the home of his/her own family whether court ordered or non court ordered.

Licensed - a caseworker-child visit made to a child placed in Out-of-Home Care in a licensed substitute care setting, including Voluntary Licensed Placement

Relative/Non-Relative Supervision - a caseworker-child visit made to a child placed in an Out-of-Home Care Placement with a relative or a non-relative

Post Placement Supervision - a caseworker-child visit made to a child who has been reunified, or is in the process of reunification, with the removal parents/caregivers following a Removal Episode and is still under post placement

(post reunification) supervision (required for 6 months). This type contact is essentially the same as In-home supervision but it is different because it is required subsequent to a reunification.

Shelter - a caseworker-child visit made to a child legally in shelter care status

Begin and end times for a caseworker-child visit are defined as the actual start and end times during which the caseworker is interacting with the child, caregiver, or others relevant to the purpose and goal of an on-site visit. The begin and end times do not include travel time to and from the on-site visit unless the child is present with the caseworker. Travel time added to caseworker-child visits can falsely inflate the actual time spent completing the specific tasks associated with a visit and interacting with the child, particularly in areas where travel to and from a visit may be several hours or more.

Caseworkers completing caseworker-child visits on behalf of other caseworkers must follow the policies and procedures currently required in Florida Statutes, Florida Administrative Code, established best practice, by FSFN security and by federal review standards. The RDC does not alter these requirements or the established processes.

Caseworkers should remember that a primary goal of caseworker-child visits is to build rapport and a positive relationship between a caseworker and a child under his or her supervision. Feedback from children exiting care has included a reported lack consistency and meaningful visitation and minimal opportunity to build a relationship with any one caseworker. Quality visits require consistency in the contacts between a child and the caseworker who is entrusted with his or her future.

In the event of emergencies or other unique circumstances, caseworkers may “hand-off” visitation to another caseworker. Such a circumstance, however, should be an exception to general practice standards.

Retaining hard copies and requiring signatures on the Child Visit template are not statutory or Florida Administrative Code requirements and is the decision of local agencies based upon individual internal policies and practices. The caregivers may wish to have a copy of the visitation document and the agency may wish to retain a hard copy in the file. The data is, however, electronically documented in the FSFN database following upload.

Additional information for FSFN and RDC users may be found at the Department’s Remote Data Capture website found at: <http://eww.dcf.state.fl.us/rdc/>

Please contact Linda D. Johns, MSW, Family Safety Program Office by telephone at (850) 414-9982 or by email at Linda_D_Johns@dcf.state.fl.us, regarding questions concerning this guidance document.