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**Focus of the Review:**
- Determine whether information entered into FSFN is correct to ensure data is accurately captured for the FSFN Parent Contact Report.
- Examine practice as it relates to quality of contact/in-person contact with parents on cases with reunification as a goal.
- Identify strengths, challenges, and barriers in regards to face to face contacts with parents in reunification cases.

**Sample**

The random sample of cases chosen were selected from the report sent by Community Partnership for Children which captured children in cases with no court established permanency goal or goals of reunification or maintain and strengthen family dated April 2012. For the purposes of selecting the case review sample the sample was further filtered to capture only those cases with an active removal and no court approved goal/or a goal of reunification. There were at total of 466 (285 cases) children represented in the valid sample.

**Summary of Data from Community Partnership for Children April 2012 Parent Contact Report (note: specific to the children with an active removal and no court established goal/or a goal of reunification)**

According to the data obtained from the the report, 30 of the 466 children (6.4%) were identified as having a face to face contact with the mother. Of the 230 children that had an identified father, 15 (6.5%) were identified as having a face to face contact with the father in the month of March 2012.

After further review of the 15 children with identified father contacts, two of the cases identified the father as unknown with the identified contact on the FSFN report.
- **Case [redacted]:** E [redacted] father is CF; it appears that his relationship just needs to be updated in FSFN, the f/f contact occurred at court (court-judicial).
- **Case [redacted]:** L [redacted] father is RR, the relationship tab is correct, the f/f contact occurred at the child’s current residence.

*There appears to be a glitch in the system that if the marital status of the parents are identified as unknown then the father on the report also shows as unknown. It is our understanding that this can be avoided by leaving the marital status blank until the information is known.*

**Additional Case Information Obtained from Report**
- **Case [redacted]:** the case note was entered as home visit other parent case type, however the visit occurred at the library
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- **Case #100256763**: the case note for one was home visit other parent and for the other father, court-judicial
- **Case #100136349**: the case note for the f/f contact with the fathers (2) was court-judicial
- **Case #61431**: the case note for the f/f contact with the father was office-visit
- **Case #100521708**: the case note for the f/f contact with the father was home visit child’s current residence
- **Case #100490003**: the father of both children was seen in a home visit at the child’s current residence
- **Case #100025066**: the father of the child was seen in a h/v at the child’s current residence
- **Case #100308154**: the father of the child, William is identified on the relationship tab as Zachery (correct), the participant tab identifies Zachery as significant other and the child is placed with his mgm, Christina. The note entered states father contacted but what happened was the mgm brought the child to a visit, and the father had called the visitation center and cancelled the visit, the father was not seen.

**Quality Review Case Selection**

From the filtered report described above, a total of 29 cases, representing 46 children were selected for further review, with a weighted sample per case management unit to ensure that all case management units were represented in the review. The desk review involved a review of FSFN chronological notes for the previous three months (March 1, 2012- May 31, 2012), Family Assessments, permanency staffing forms and FSFN Legal Tab and Relationship Tab as entered in FSFN. If historical information was needed, additional information in FSFN was reviewed.

**Findings from Review**

Within the last year, the mother resided in the home at the time of shelter in 78% of the applicable cases (23 kids). At least one father (there were several cases where there were multiple fathers) resided in the home at the time of shelter in 61% of the applicable cases (15 kids).

79% of the children have fathers which have been identified and their location is known. 5 known fathers reside out of the state of Florida. The chart below (based on 1 child to 1 father count) depicts the percentage of face to face contacts made with fathers whose whereabouts are known to be in the state of Florida.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Face to Face Contacts of Fathers within last 3 months</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Face to Face Contacts</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Face to Face Contact</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Face to Face Contacts</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Face to Face Contacts</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more Face to Face Contacts</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
93% of the children have mothers whose location is known to be in the state of Florida as there has been some form of contact (even though exact address may not be known). 2 mothers reside out of the state of Florida. The chart below (based on child count) depicts the percentage of face to face contacts made with mothers whose whereabouts are known to be in the state of Florida.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Face to Face Contacts of Mothers within last 3 months</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Face to Face Contacts</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Face to Face Contact</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Face to Face Contacts</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Face to Face Contacts</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more Face to Face Contacts</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the information reviewed, it appears as though mothers tend to have more face to face contact with case managers than fathers. This may be due to mothers being the primary caretaker/guardian of the children at the time of shelter or it may be the father’s were not involved consistently with the children prior to their being sheltered. There was one case in which the case manager made great efforts to assist the father as she called the jail and discussed the various classes the father could take while he was incarcerated.

In case the documentation does not reflect any efforts to engage the father. After reading the file, the reviewer was able to determine the father has been incarcerated since 2/24/12 and was on probation for 5 years prior to going to jail. It is recommended that case managers utilize state Department of Corrections Websites when the location of a parent is unknown. This is especially the case when it is known the parent is on probation. Contact with probations officers is another beneficial means to locate absent parents as well.

Each case in which substance abuse was identified as an issue had an FSW who documented telephone calls and text messages to parents requesting UA’s. There were a few cases in which the FSW called the parent either the same day the parent saw the case manager in the office or the day after. There is a lot of time and energy on the FSW’s behalf making phone calls and sending text messages to parents who have either moved out of state or are incarcerated. To efficiently utilize the limited resources available, it is recommended the case managers and FSW’s maintain communication.

**Location of Parent Contacts**

If reunification is the goal, it is advantageous for announced and unannounced home visits be made to the parent’s residence to ensure it is an environment which will be safe for the children. With the exception of 2 cases; the most recent face to face contact made with a parent (father or mother) was either made in the office, at court, at visitation with the child, or another location outside of the parent’s home. Despite there being 3 fathers and a mother who is not the most
cooperative, the DCM did a good job documenting attempts to maintain contact with the parents in Case #100486594.

In case #100256763 it was clear the case manager is working diligently towards reunifying the children with their mother. There have been 9 face to face contacts with the mother within the last 3 months and 6 face to face contacts with the father. The mother has 4 hours of unsupervised visits with the children a week as well. Per court order, the mother is to call case manager daily for instructions in regards to taking a UA.

**Overall Impressions:**

With the exception of a few cases, efforts to have a quality and meaningful interaction with the parent(s) were minimal. When face to face contact occurred, it was generally focused on something specific (case plan compliance related to a specific task). Though there should always be discussion in regards to the case plan, meaningful discussion did not occur in the majority of the cases (discussion about changes implemented, if the services they are receiving have been helpful, child(ren)’s well-being, safety, transitions, appointments, etc.). Most of the cases involved prescription drug abuse, and had a requirement for weekly or potentially daily random UA’s as part of their case plan. When this was the case, it was generally an FSW making the call. The FSW rarely entered the subject contact information in FSFN (except in the narrative chrono section).

It is recommended a full quality assurance review be conducted on Case #100502013 as documentation in the file is minimal and of poor quality. There has been no contact (or attempts to contact) with either parent in quite some time.

During the child’s 30 day visit, there was very limited interaction with the caregivers documented. Though the template appears to be a thorough guide in regards to information to be gathered during visits, they were seldom completed in their entirety. **There was one case in which the template was entered, however, no other information was completed.** Upon further review of the case files, it appears as though the templates are not completed in their entirety. If the template is the means in which case managers are to collect information on visits to the home, it is recommended the templates are completed in their entirety with only the applicable sections included in the copy over template.

The majority of the cases reviewed had substance abuse issues by one or both parents in the home as the primary reason for involvement. There were generally statements about calling the parents or attempting to get a hold of them for the “monthly parent contact”, however it appeared to be the focus of the task, and the quality of efforts/engagement appeared to be lacking. This could be due to the types of cases (prescription drug abuse) and the lack of consistent phone service, housing, or the willingness of the parent to answer the phone or present themselves.

Based on the files reviewed, the FSW’s call the parents to schedule UA’s. There seems to be a lack of communication between the FSW’s and CM’s as there were several cases (one example) where the parents were in jail, their whereabouts were unknown, they were out of
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state, etc. where phone calls were being made for UA’s. If the FSW learned information in regards to a parent’s whereabouts it does appear that is being communicated. In one case the FSW called to schedule a UA for a parent and the FSW was advised the parent was incarcerated, however, based on documentation, it does not appear the CM was aware of the incarceration.

There was one case in which a new abuse investigation was called in. The CPI documented calling the father and seeing the mother at the grandmother’s home, however, the case manager’s notes indicate the mother’s whereabouts are unknown. There was not any communication between the CPI and the case manager. This information would have been beneficial. It is recommended case managers review CPI notes on cases in which new abuse referrals are investigated.

There were a few cases which were chosen to be reviewed, however, were removed from the case review sample. Case indicates the goal is reunification on the FSFN report provided, however, the children were reunified with their mother in April 2012. Case shows a goal of reunification on the FSFN report, however, TPR has occurred and the adoption goal was established 12/14/11. Case was not reviewed as it was a restricted case.

Case has a case type of In-home court ordered; however was reviewed as the children are in foster care. It appears as though this was a previous in home case where the children were subsequently sheltered and case type needs to be updated.

Recommendations:

The permanency forms used to staff cases contain thorough and relevant information which should be discussed. There is a question on the form which asks “what efforts have been made to engage the parent?” It is recommended this section contain more details like other sections on the staffing form which are very thorough.

It is recommended a FSFN and data entry training be offered to staff. If staff have a clear understanding of the importance of accurately completing all fields when documenting in FSFN, the accuracy of the data will improve. The accurate information can then be used as a guide for Supervisors when meeting with their staff. It is recommend the training address the following topics (at minimum): completion of the subjects contacted section (including date and time of contact), coding visits correctly, ensuring relationships are correct, all case participants are included in the relationships tab, and tips for documenting case activities when there are multiple fathers in a case. (See the following case numbers for some examples of information missing or not correctly entered in FSFN: , , , , , , ). When there were multiple fathers in a case, it was difficult to determine which father was being referenced in the documentation.

Though there will always be parents who do not wish to be contacted, every attempt should be made to engage them. It is recommended more frequent and qualitative supervision reviews occur. In addition to having permanency focused discussions (as opposed to task focused),
supervisors should discuss any barriers in making contacts with parents and assist with developing solutions. There were case goals in several cases where the legal tab was not updated. This could be reviewed during supervision to ensure the most recent information is reflected in the legal tab.

Though the parent contact report in FSFN records a specific date within the month, it is not always the most recent date. It is recommended a report be developed which focuses on the most recent contact date in any given month; as well as the last date of f:f contact which should help with automating and further identifying efforts at engagement.

Review of Child and Family Service Reviews and other literature indicate family engagement activities have contributed to the success of family reunification efforts (Child Welfare Gateway, June 2011). In order to promote family engagement, case managers must be able to have meaningful and purposeful conversations with parents on a regular basis. Though this can be difficult with parents who have substance abuse issues, taking advantage of every opportunity (before/after court, after visitation with children and permanency staffings) to engage the parent when they are seen is important. Family engagement is perhaps the most fundamental piece of the child welfare puzzle when it comes to reunification. Research has shown family reunification appears to be facilitated by more frequent caseworker contact (Farmer, 1996; Littell & Schuerman, 1995; Children’s Bureau, 2004a). Visits to the parent’s home rarely occurred in the cases which were reviewed. It is recommended the practice of having parents come to the office for monthly contacts be evaluated to determine whether it is the parents preference or if it is out of convenience of the worker. If reunification is going to occur, frequent announced and unannounced visits to the parent’s home should be occurring. With the guidance of supervisors, case managers have the opportunity to promote reunification efforts from the onset of the case. This can occur by having frequent and meaningful conversations with parents in a multitude of settings, but should not always be occurring at the office/court/or permanency staffing. The majority of the parent in-person contacts should be on dates between court hearings/staffing instead of coinciding with them.