



NH Department of Health & Human Services  
Division for Children, Youth & Families

## DCYF Standard Operating Procedure

### 1173.2 ENGAGING PARENTS/GUARDIANS-ASSESSMENT

Policy Directive: **20-25**

Effective Date: **June 2020**

Implements Policy: **1173**

Approved:

Joseph E. Ribsam, Jr., DCYF Director

This SOP defines the procedures for engaging parents/guardians during an Assessment.

#### Procedure

*The following information is to support the implementation of the above referenced policy. This document shall not preclude staff from using their professional judgement based on individual circumstances, consistent with the requirements of the policy.*

- I. CPSWs are expected to meet with custodial parents/guardians at least once a calendar month, or more often when indicated by risk as determined through formal Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools or informal assessment.
  - A. Monthly face-to-face meetings with custodial parents/guardians should be in the home when possible.
- II. CPSWs should engage non-custodial parents at least once a calendar month, or more often when necessary to ensure safety, mitigate risk, and support the parents/guardians in meeting the needs to their child.
  - A. The type of additional contact may be at the CPSW's discretion, based on Assessment circumstances, and in consultation with their Supervisor.
- III. Efforts to engage parents whose children are in the guardianship of another will mirror efforts with missing/non-custodial parents as applicable.
- IV. Mitigating circumstances that might prevent either meeting in the home or contact altogether may include an identified safety risk that cannot be otherwise addressed or the unavailability of the parents/guardians.
  - A. When there is evidence to support that face-to-face contact in the home or community creates a safety risk that cannot otherwise be addressed, the CPSW, in consultation with their Supervisor, should create a plan for contact that allows for ongoing assessment of safety and risk, needs, and Safety/Action Plans. This may consist of:
    1. Meeting in an alternative setting (the District Office, a Police Station, etc.);
    2. Teleconferencing or speaking over the phone until the safety issue is resolved; or

- 3. Written correspondence.
  - B. If a parent (custodial/non-custodial) or guardian chooses not to make themselves available, the CPSW will continue using other resources to assess safety and risk in order to determine the disposition of the Assessment.
- V. Any decision to meet outside the home to accommodate the family or to not meet face-to-face will be documented in the DCYF electronic information system and include all information supporting the decision.
  - A. The CPSW and Supervisor will conduct ongoing evaluation of the appropriateness of face-to-face contact as appropriate for the remainder of the Assessment.
- VI. Discussions with parents/guardians need to address all safety/well-being concerns, but also explore:
  - A. The needs of the family;
  - B. Family and community supports to assist in meeting those needs; and
  - C. Possible connections for the child, especially the identity and contact information for any non-custodial parents or information to assist in locating missing parents.
- VII. All efforts to engage with parents/guardians must be documented in the DCYF electronic information system by the end of the next business day under the correct drop down selections for type of contact and purpose. All contacts should reflect the details of conversations with the parents/guardians, including:
  - A. Efforts to engage them around the safety and well-being of their children;
  - B. Efforts to gather information about any non-custodial or missing parent(s);
  - C. Efforts to identify needs and supports, resources, or services to help meet those needs;
  - D. Any direct intervention by the CPSW; and
  - E. Any Action or Safety Plans put in place.

<b>Applicable Forms</b>	
<b>Form</b>	<b>Title</b>
T1508	Safety Plan Template
1520	Action Plan

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q1. How do I talk to a custodial parent/guardian about a missing/non-custodial parent?**

- A** Communicate in a clear and direct manner around DCYF's legal and practice requirements to at least identify both parents and gather demographic information about them;
- A** Assure custodial parents/guardians that consideration will be given to ensure the family remains safe when safety concerns exist; and
- A** Be clear that identifying and locating the missing/non-custodial parent does not automatically equate to that parent having contact with the child or receiving information about the child or custodial parent/guardian.

**Q2. What do I do if a custodial parent/guardian declines to allow me to talk to collateral resources about a missing/non-custodial parent?**

- A** If a custodial parent/guardian declines to provide permission for the CPSW to explore identifying and locating a missing/non-custodial parent with the child or collateral resources, the CPSW should engage the parent/guardian around their reasons behind this and seek to build consensus.
- A** The CPSW should also consult with a Supervisor and if it is determined that there is a significant need, such as pending removal, and collateral resources are thought to have information as to the whereabouts of the missing/non-custodial parent, the CPSW will make a plan with their Supervisor as to how to make contact and request information within the confines of what is allowed by law.

**Q3. What if the custodial parent does not want the missing/non-custodial parent involved because of factors such as a history of domestic violence or substance use, and states the family is not safe if the missing/non-custodial parent is involved?**

- A** The CPSW should document the expressed safety concerns and further engage them around the importance of the missing/non-custodial parent's involvement and ways to safely involve the non-custodial parent.
- A** The custodial parent/guardian should be assured that any efforts to locate and engage the non-custodial parent will take risk and safety factors into account and that DCYF will err on the side of safety.
- A** Incarceration of a non-custodial parent by itself is insufficient to determine contact with a non-custodial parent is not in the child's best interest.
- A** The CPSW could consider having a different District Office reach out to the non-custodial parent to protect the location of the custodial parent/guardian and child.
- A** No information identifying the child and custodial parent/guardian should be discussed/included until the non-custodial parent's identity and parental status have been confirmed.

**Q4. If there are multiple children in a home, the children do not have the same father, and only one child is the victim in the Assessment, should the non-custodial parent of the child(ren) who is not identified as a victim be contacted?**

- A It is not necessary to notify the non-custodial parent of any child in the home who is not the victim in the Assessment. However, CPSWs are encouraged to engage custodial parents around how these parents might be of support to the family as a whole and they should be included in any team meetings if requested by the custodial parent.
- A If the non-custodial parent of a sibling in the home is contacted, information from the non-custodial parent may be obtained as a collateral contact, but they may not be provided confidential information regarding the Division's involvement with the family outside of what is directly related to the safety of their child.

**Q5. If a custodial parent/guardian exercises their right to not sign releases for collaterals, how do I continue to make efforts as outlined above?**

- A If a custodial parent/guardian chooses not to sign releases for collaterals, consult with your Supervisor.

**Glossary and Document Specific Definitions**

A - B    C - D    E - F    G - I    J - L    M - N    O - Q    R - S    T - V    W - Z

**Document Change Log**

PD	Modification Made	Approved	Date