



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

## DCYF Standard Operating Procedure

### 1503.1 MAINTAINING PARENT/CHILD CONNECTIONS-CPS

Policy Directive: **20-32**

Effective Date: **August 2020**

Implements Policy: **1503**

Approved:

Joseph E. Ribsam, Jr., DCYF Director

This SOP defines Child Protective Services (CPS) procedures for maintaining a child's connections through parent/child contact when a child is in placement.

#### 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. Child Protective Service Workers (CPSWs) should work with the family to help strengthen the parent/child relationship, regardless of placement status.
  - A. This may include, but is not limited to, engaging community resources or paid services as appropriate.
- II. When placement is necessary to ensure safety, CPSWs are expected to:
  - A. Assist children in placement maintaining/strengthening their connection to their parents/guardians; and
  - B. Provide parents/guardians with realistic opportunities to demonstrate changed behavior and parenting skills.
- III. Efforts to maintain/strengthen the parent/child relationship may include, but are not limited to:
  - A. Placing children in their community, or as close to their community as possible (less than an hour drive);
  - B. Placing children with appropriate relative caregivers when possible;
  - C. Providing children an opportunity to talk with their parents/guardians the night they are placed (as appropriate);
  - D. Providing parents/guardians with contact information for where their child is placed (if approved by the placement provider) within one business day of the child's removal from the home (unless there are mitigating circumstances);

- E. Developing a plan and providing realistic opportunities for contact/parenting time, with a focus on opportunities to demonstrate parenting skills, as soon as possible, regardless of proximity between the child and their parents/guardians;
  - F. Assessing needs/barriers and utilizing caregivers, family, community supports, and if necessary, paid services, to facilitate parenting time or other contact; and
  - G. Setting the expectation with caregivers that children will have regular parenting time (visitation) with their parents/guardians (as appropriate) and that they will celebrate holidays, birthdays, and other special occasions together (to the extent that safety can be assured), and supporting them in understanding the importance of these connections to the child's well-being.
- IV. The plan for parent/child contact (parenting time) should take into account:
- A. The age and needs of the child;
  - B. Severity and regularity of the abuse/neglect;
  - C. The potential for harm or abduction of the child;
  - D. Emotional reactions of the child;
  - E. Progress of parents/guardians who are learning new skills;
  - F. The type of supervision, if any, necessary to ensure the child's safety, based on input from:
    - 1. The parents/guardians;
    - 2. The child (as age/developmentally appropriate);
    - 3. Extended family (as appropriate);
    - 4. The placement provider;
    - 5. Mental health and other providers; and
    - 6. CASA/GAL; and
  - G. What supports are needed to facilitate contact and appropriate parenting time.
- V. Parenting time must be supervised if it has been determined that the child may be unsafe without it.
- VI. When it is determined that parenting time needs to be supervised, expectations need to be clearly identified and discussed with the family and with the individual supervising

before the first parenting time session. This is documented in the DCYF electronic information system.

- VII. The individual who will supervise the parenting time must be able to ensure safety, and:
  - A. Have an understanding of the child and family's safety and developmental needs;
  - B. Be able to model safe and appropriate parenting skills;
  - C. Agree to report observations of the parenting time to the CPSW; and
  - D. Agree to maintain confidentiality.
  
- VIII. The following guidelines apply to supervised parenting time:
  - A. In cases of intra-familial sexual abuse, Munchausen by Proxy, or severe physical abuse, in which mental health providers are in agreement that a supervised visit or parenting time may take place between the child and the perpetrator, the visit/parenting time must initially be supervised by a CPSW or a mental health provider involved in the case;
  - B. In other cases, the CPSW must review and consider relatives or friends who are determined appropriate within the family system. The individuals must be willing to work with the family and DCYF on the issues that require the parenting time to be supervised;
  - C. Foster parents, DCYF interns, clergy, child health support aides, and other service providers may also be considered in supervising parenting time; and
  - D. If someone other than the CPSW will be supervising the parenting time, the CPSW must make reasonable efforts to be present during the first parenting time session/visit to:
    - 1. Evaluate the interactions between the parent(s)/guardian(s) and child; and
    - 2. Discuss the expectations for the parenting time with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and person supervising the contact.
  
- IX. Circumstances or conditions that may temporarily suspend parenting time include:
  - A. Safety cannot be assured with available resources;
  - B. Pre-existing court orders that prohibit visitation;
  - C. The child either refuses to attend or expresses fear/anxiety around the visit, and suspending parenting time is deemed in the best interest of the child based on the child's age, developmental level, and history of abuse/neglect;

- D. A mental health provider involved advocates that parenting time is not in the best interest of their client (parent/guardian or child); or
- E. CASA/GAL or a service provider makes a compelling argument that parenting time is not in the best interest of the child due to:
  - 1. Safety factors not presently mitigated; or
  - 2. The child's well-being needs.
- X. If parenting time is temporarily suspended, the CPSW is expected to use alternative means of maintaining the parent/child connection. This may include:
  - A. Telephone contact/video conferencing;
  - B. Email or other forms of written correspondence; or
  - C. Utilizing social media (as age and developmentally appropriate).
- XI. Efforts to maintain parent/child contact and provide opportunities for parenting time are documented in the case record.

**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