



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

DCYF Standard Operating Procedure

1501.3 ENGAGING PARENTS/GUARDIANS-CPS CASE

Policy Directive: **22-29**

Approved:

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Implements Policy: **1501**

Joseph E. Ribsam, Jr., DCYF Director

This SOP defines the procedures for engaging parents/guardians in an open Child Protective Services (CPS) case.

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 will meet with custodial parents/guardians at least once a calendar month, or more often when indicated by the prevention/case plan or case needs as determined through the formal Standard Decision Making (SDM) tool or informal assessment.
 - A. Face-to-face contact will occur in the home when:
 1. There are children in the home, regardless of the Division's legal relationship with all children; or
 2. There are no children in the home, but reunification is expected to occur within the next 2 months.
 - B. Face-to-face contact will occur in the home at least quarterly, but can occur outside the home during the other months when there are no children in the home and reunification is not likely to occur within the next 2 months.
 1. When reunification occurs, the CPSW will visit the home prior to the child's return and will resume monthly face-to-face contact in the home.
- II. CPSWs will engage non-custodial parents at least once a calendar month, or more often when indicated by the prevention/case plan or case needs.
 - A. In person face-to-face contact is preferred, but teleconferencing or meaningful telephone contact/written correspondence may be acceptable (with Supervisor approval) if the child does not frequent the other home and there is no plan to reunify to that home.
 - B. If the child frequents the home or is in placement and may be reunified to that parent, the CPSW must meet with that parent in their home monthly whenever possible.

- III. 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 parent/guardian.
 - 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, as well as of needs, discussion of the prevention/case plan, and written action plans. This may consist of:
 - 1. Meeting in an alternative setting, such as the District Office or Police Station;
 - 2. Teleconferencing/speaking over the phone until the safety issue is resolved; or
 - 3. Written correspondence.
 - B. If a parent (custodial or non-custodial) chooses not to make themselves available to meet, the CPSW will continue to make efforts to engage them until it is determined that efforts are no longer necessary.
 - 1. For court-involved cases, the Court must make the determination as to when to cease efforts.
- IV. Any decision to meet outside the home to accommodate the family or to suspend visits will be documented in the DCYF electronic information system, and should include all information supporting the decision.
 - A. The CPSW and their Supervisor will conduct ongoing evaluation of the appropriateness of face-to-face contact and document these discussions and the reason for the action taken/not taken in the DCYF electronic information system.
- V. The CPSW will ensure that notification of any meetings relative to the safety, permanency, and well-being of their child are sent to the last known address of the missing/non-custodial parent (excluding putative fathers) so long as it has been determined to be safe and in the best interest of the child. This will also include notice of treatment meetings or other meetings held on behalf of the child.
- VI. All parents will be identified as parents under the correct relationship tab in the DCYF electronic information system. This includes biological, adoptive, and step parents, as well as legal guardians.
- VII. All efforts to engage with parents/guardians, including written correspondence, 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 and prevention/case plan;
- B. Efforts to gather information about any non-custodial/missing parent(s);
- C. Efforts to identify needs and supports, resources, or services to help meet those needs;
- D. Any discussion around potential alternative caregivers (when placement has occurred or is considered likely to occur) and important connections for their child;
- E. Any discussion around children previously reported or known to have lived in the home who are reportedly no longer in the home, including the child's current whereabouts and caregiver's contact information;
- F. Any direct intervention by the CPSW; and
- G. Any action or safety plans put in place.

Frequently Asked Questions

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

- A Communicate in a clear and direct manner around DCYF's legal obligation to at least identify both parents and gather demographic information about them; and
- A Assure custodial parents that consideration will be given to ensuring the family remains safe when safety concerns exist.

Q2. What if a stepparent refuses to meet with me and asks not to be contacted or threatens legal action if I continue to try to meet with them?

- A Explain to them that DCYF is obligated to continue monthly efforts to engage all parents until such time as the case closes or the Court orders otherwise (as applicable);
- A Talk to them about their role and advise them of their rights and responsibilities to and for the child(ren);
- A Encourage them to be an active participant in ensuring the safety and well-being of the child(ren) and explore with them ways in which they can do this; and
- A Consult with your Supervisor.

Q3. What if the custodial parent does not want the stepparent involved because of factors such as domestic violence, or coercive behavior?

- A Document any reported safety concerns and further engage them around the importance of the stepparent's involvement and ways to safely involve the stepparent;
- A Consult with the Family Violence Program Specialist (FVPS) to discuss how best to mitigate danger and explore if safety planning can be made that will allow for contact while ensuring the family's safety (when there are concerns for domestic violence); and
- A Discuss the situation with your Supervisor to determine the best course of action.

Q4. If there are multiple children/youth in a home, the children/youth do not have the same father, and only one child/youth is the target of the case, should the non-

custodial parent of the child(ren)/youth who is not identified in the case be contacted?

- A** It is not necessary to notify the non-custodial parent of any child(ren) in the home who is/are not the target of the case. 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. These parents must still be noted on the Child/Youth Information Sheet (Form 1552) in the event of placement of any child(ren)/youth in the home.
- 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, unless the custodial parent has signed a release.

Q5. What makes a visit with a parent a “quality visit?”

- A** Schedule visits for when it is convenient for the family (whenever possible) and timely to case events;
- A** Plan for sufficient time to engage with the family and be present (not rushed, not on the phone, etc.);
- A** Provide a heads-up if bringing in others (including law enforcement);
- A** Engage all parents and show each that they are valued and respected;
- A** Build a rapport/convey a sense of partnership;
- A** Normalize the experience;
- A** Be honest and transparent, and tell parents what they need to know;
- A** Ask each family member about their concerns and what they need (don’t just assume);
- A** Talk about plans that can be made to meet their needs (prevention/case plans, safety plans, action plans), and co-develop tasks or changes with them;
- A** Be consistent; and
- A** Celebrate progress in a sincere and genuine way.

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

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