

# Family Services Worker/Client Contact

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

**Policy: 700.0165**

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Social caseworkers in Family Services Units (FSU) are responsible to maintain regular contact, in person and by telephone, with the children and families served by the Department. In person contact with the child, the child's family and, if the child is in placement, the child's caretaker is essential in developing and maintaining effective working relationships. Through ongoing contact, the worker should assess and document whether or not:

- The child is receiving adequate care and supervision in his or her home or in out of home placement;
- The parents and child, if of appropriate age, are actively participating in case planning;
- There are effective services in place to address areas of need outlined in the Case Plan Agreement (DCYF 032);
- Progress is being made towards achieving individual tasks and objectives outlined in the Case Plan Agreement; or, if there is a lack of progress, identification of specific barriers that are impeding progress.

Additionally, when a child is in placement, the worker should address whether or not visitation and other forms of contact are occurring between the child and family, including siblings, and if the level of contact is appropriate. The worker is responsible to keep parents informed of changes made in a child's placement as well as to provide parents with current information regarding the child's education, health and development. Efforts must also be made to encourage a positive relationship between the child and parents and to preserve connections for a child with his or her extended family, community and culture. Frequent and consistent communication with the child and his or her caretaker is important in assessing the child's progress in placement and any ongoing issues of concern. All contacts with the child, family and caretaker must be documented in RICHIST.

The frequency of contact between the worker and child and the worker and the child's family is established in the Case Plan Agreement. Generally, a FSU worker should have face to face contact with the child and the child's family, at a minimum, one time each month. Certain circumstances may require more frequent or less frequent contact. In the event that the worker is unable to establish regular contact with the child or children in a family, despite repeated efforts to do so, the worker should consult with legal counsel to determine if legal action is indicated. For a child placed out of state, whether in a treatment facility or foster home, the Adoption and Safe Families Act (PL 105-89) requires a minimum of one visit per year by a worker from the agency responsible for placing the child or a worker from the agency in the state responsible for providing supervision of the child. During this visit the worker should ensure that the placement continues to be appropriate for the child based on the child's need for a safe placement that is the least restrictive to meet the child's needs.

## **Related Procedure**

[Family Services Worker/Client Contact](#)

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### Procedure From Policy 700.0165: Family Services Worker/Client Contact

- A. Contact with Child
  - 1. The FSU social caseworker should have in person contact at least one time per month with each child assigned to the worker's caseload, preferably in the child's home, foster home or placement. Generally, the worker should try to speak with the child alone.
  - 2. There may be circumstances which require more frequent contact, such as a child/family in crisis or a recently reunified child/family, or less frequent contact, such as a child residing in an out-of-state residential treatment facility or an in-state or out-of-state institution. Additionally, a child in an Independent Living Program may need more or less frequent contact with his/her FSU worker. In these situations, the following procedures apply.
    - a. Worker and supervisor discuss the need for more or less frequent contact. Supervisor must approve all situations involving frequency of contact between the worker and child that is less than one time per month.
    - b. Frequency is established in the case plan (unless worker is visiting child more frequently on a temporary basis).
    - c. Any child residing in an out of state placement must be seen by a worker from the Department or a worker from the state in which the child is residing at least one time per year.
    - d. Decisions must be documented in case activity notes in RICHIST.
  - 3. In the event that a parent will not allow worker to have face to face contact with a child living in the home, the worker should arrange a legal consult to determine if legal action is necessary.
- B. Contact with Child's Parent(s)
  - 1. The FSU worker should see the child's parent(s) at least one time per month.
  - 2. If the situation requires more or less frequent contact, worker follows procedures outlined above in Section A, 2, a - d.
  - 3. Parent(s) must be kept informed of changes in a child's placement and should be provided with current information regarding the child's education, health and development.
- C. Contact with Child's Caretaker (Child in Placement)
  - 1. The FSU worker should see the child's caretaker, at least for a short period of time, each time the worker sees the child.
  - 2. Worker should keep the child's caretaker informed of the child's visitation schedule, upcoming court hearings and other information necessary to safely and appropriately care for the child in placement. The DCYF #187, Guide to Sharing Information outlines the types of information that can be shared with caretakers. The worker is encouraged to use this guide and provide it to the caretaker.
- D. Telephone Contact:
  - 1. Worker provides the child, if of appropriate age, with the worker's office address and telephone number and the name, office address and telephone number of the supervisor and administrator.
  - 2. Worker provides parents, and, if appropriate, members of the extended family with the worker's office address and telephone number and the name, office address and telephone number of the supervisor and administrator. Parents and

appropriate extended family members should be encouraged to have frequent telephone contact with the worker.

3. Worker provides caretaker with the office address and telephone number of the worker and the name, office address and telephone number of the supervisor and administrator. Caretaker should be encouraged to maintain frequent contact with the worker regarding the child's progress in placement.
- E. Each contact with the child, the child's family and, if the child is in placement, the child's caretaker must be documented in a Case Activity Note in RICHIST.
1. Documentation should include a description of subjects discussed.
  2. Documentation for an in person contact should include the names of individuals present during the visit.