

Contacts - SW and Parents

(Revised 02/26/21)

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Definitions

Contact: Face to face unless otherwise indicated

Parent/Guardian: means each parent/guardian named in the case plan as a participant

Month: Calendar month

Days: Calendar days

NOTE: “Mentioning” parents in the case plan is not the same as “naming” them. “Named” means the parent has planned services (more than visitation) identified and assigned to the parent in the case plan.

Policy

California Department of Social Services (CDSS) regulations ([31-325](#)) guide the requirements for SW contacts with parents. SWs are to conduct:

- Unannounced visits on all investigations.
- Both unannounced and scheduled home visits for all other contacts
- At minimum, have in person contact with the parents once per month on open cases.
- If the level of risk increases, then the percent of unannounced home visits should also increase.

NOTE: Voluntary Services cases have a minimum of two in person contact with the parents per month. See Voluntary Services Protocol for more information.

All face-to-face contacts between the SW and the parents will include the following:

- At minimum, address all relevant issues on the Contacts Elements Guide (04-85)
 - Be entered in CMS/CWS within 10 business days of the visit, 7 days for a referral
 - Ensure the parent(s) have a copy of the case plan
 - Review the case plan together during the visit to exchange feedback on progress, address any barriers, and identify any needs of the child, youth, and/or parent(s).
 - Verify the location of the parent(s)
 - Continue to actively engage the family (child **and** parent[s]) in family engagement efforts such as case-planning and service-provision (ER, FM,VS, FR, and PP cases)
 - Assess functioning as it pertains to meeting the child’s basic and special care needs, and the safety of the child in the home
 - Investigate allegations of abuse or neglect
 - Provide services and referrals for services
 - Mutually give and receive information to assess effectiveness of services provided to meet needs of the parent, monitor parent's progress and meet identified goals
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Policy (cont.)

- Establish and maintain a helping relationship between the SW and child, youth, parent(s), and safety network.
- Counsel the parents as to current placement and progress with their Case Plan/Update

NOTE: SWs may use the Contact Elements Guide Family Maintenance, Contact Elements Guide Family Reunification Cases, and the Contact Elements Guide Permanent Placement resources to organize contact information.

Frequency of contacts

Minimum contacts requirements with each parent named in the case plan are:

| Type of Service | Contact Frequency | Exception Criteria |
|---|---|---|
| Emergency Response (When closing a referral without services) | 1X if completing an in-person investigation and determining that CWS are not necessary AND if referral is closed within 30 days. NOTE: Best practice would be to have a follow up conversation (in person or phone) with the parent(s) informing them of the allegation conclusion prior to closing the referral. | Parent’s whereabouts are unknown, the SW must make reasonable, documented efforts to locate the parent. See ER-Closing Referrals for reasonable attempts. |
| ER (When promoting a referral into a case for services) | 3X in first 30 days (including initial in-person response). OR 2X in first 21 days if the Case Plans Case Plan is approved in the first 21 calendar days after the initial removal of the child or in-person response, whichever is earlier. | After the Case Plan has been approved, then monthly contacts are required. |
| In-Home Services/Approved Case Plan (FM) | 1X each month. | None. Per CWS policy, there are no exceptions to the 1X each month face-to-face contact requirement when the parent is named in the case plan. |

Frequency of Contacts (cont.)

| Type of Service | Contact Frequency | Exception Criteria |
|---|---------------------|--|
| Out-of-Home Services/Approved Case Plan (FR, or PP if a parent is named in the case plan) | 1X monthly minimum. | See exceptions. |
| Voluntary Services/Approved Case Plan (in home or out of home) | 2x monthly minimum. | None. See Voluntary Services Protocol. |

NOTE: If a contact is due in the calendar month in which a case will be closing, then the SW must make that contact before closing the case. See Contacts - General for specific information on case closing contacts

Exception criteria for out of home services

The table below provides exceptions to in-person monthly contacts between SWs and parents:

| If the parent(s)... | Then... |
|-------------------------|---|
| Whereabouts are unknown | A Declaration of Due Diligence must be completed and filed with the Court AND the SW must continue to make monthly attempts to locate the parent(s). |
| Lives out of county | There is justification in the Case Plan/Case Plan Update for less frequent visits, parent not available because they live out-of-county and supervisory approval has been received. AND Parent is visited once each month by one or more of the following service providers pursuant to the case plan, and there is documented verbal or written agreement with that service provider to provide contact reports to the SW: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other social services staff of the County • Staff of another services agency • Physician/other health professional. <p>NOTE: SWs should telephone and/or provide a written contact with the parent if face-face contact is not feasible. The SW shall ensure that the verbal or written reports are received and shall document them in the CWS/CMS Contact Notebook.</p> |

Exception criteria for out of home services (cont.)

| If the parent(s)... | Then... |
|--|--|
| Has a court case and there is court approval of a specific alternate visitation plan | The CWS Manager must sign the court report below the PSS's signature before it is submitted to court. Court "approval" will be assumed as long as the court does not state any objection to the proposed visitation schedule (i.e. parent incarcerated and monthly written contact and conversations with inmate counselor). |

Attempted contacts

SWs will make reasonable efforts to locate **both** parents (including alleged fathers) during an investigation and dependency case.

In FR and PP (if appropriate) cases, the SW will make ongoing monthly documented attempts to contact a missing parent. A Declaration of Due Diligence must be completed that documents all reasonable search efforts include the following:

- Parent searches (follow up with information gathered)
- Use of search engines to obtain addresses and phone numbers (Google, Connect Well, etc.) and follow up with information.
- Written contact: Send letter to last known address and to any new addresses identified
- Phone calls
- Asking relatives/friends for information regarding whereabouts
- Verifying parent(s) next visit with child and making unannounced visit to it
- Checking inmate locator website and Sheriff's website "Who's in Jail"

NOTE: For information on ER reasonable attempts, see ER-Closing Referrals.

Alignment with SET

This policy aligns with SET [Value 1: Relationships with Children, Youth and Families Are the Foundation](#) by enhancing safety for children and youth in the home and building shared understanding and agreement through family engagement.