



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT
OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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Visitation Between the Child and His or Her Family

5-10-2010

All children in out-of-home placement will have visits with their family -- In accordance with N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.1, the Division shall ensure that each child placed in a resource family home approved by the Division shall have the opportunity to visit with his or her parent(s), siblings and interested relatives. Visits with parent(s), siblings and other relatives may serve to:

- Reinforce the child's identity
- Promote the child's need for stability, consistency, and permanency
- Maintain or establish family relationships
- Assess the parent's and other relative's motivation and ability to care for the child in placement
- Provide an opportunity to model appropriate parenting behavior and skills

Weekly visits are required -- For most children in out-of-home placement, the goal is to facilitate the first contact and visit immediately upon placement, to reduce the initial trauma at the time of placement. Thereafter, hold a visit every week for a period as long in duration as possible, unless otherwise limited by conditions set forth in N.J.A.C. 3A:14-1.4, Service limitations, 3A:15-1.15, Reasons to limit visits, and Reasons to Limit Visits, below.

The frequency and duration of visits is dependent on the purpose of the visits, the case goal and case plan and practical considerations of all parties. Visits which are frequent and of long duration are strongly recommended because they are beneficial for most children in placement, and facilitate movement toward achieving the case goal of return home. Gradual reunification is promoted through flexible scheduling that allows for

visitation on evenings and weekends. This will give families time to adjust to living back together.

The visitation plan is developed in cooperation with all affected parties -- The frequency and duration specified in each child's visitation schedule is a professional social work decision which shall be made by the Division with full input from all those affected by the visitation plan. A Family Team Meeting is an ideal place to develop the visitation schedule.

When domestic violence is suspected or present, see the [CP&P-VIII-B-1-100, Domestic Violence](#), "Visitation," in Section C, regarding additional policy and procedures to follow when developing the visitation plan.

When the case goal is adoption -- the visitation plan is negotiated with appropriate parties in conjunction with the long-term plan for the child. For example, when an open adoption with contact between the child and the birth family is planned, on-going visits while the child is in placement are scheduled. When the plan is to discontinue contact between the child and the birth family upon adoption, visits are continued unless there is reason to limit the visits as outlined below. The purpose of maintaining these visits may include the need to complete identity work or to help the child understand the reason the parent(s) cannot care for him.

The purpose of the visits is discussed with all participants and is summarized in the CP&P Form [26-81](#), Family Summary/Case Plan.

Developing the Visitation Plan

5-10-2010

N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.4(a) states – "A written visitation plan shall be developed (by the Division) to identify the type and frequency of visits to be instituted for every child in out-of-home placement, unless otherwise directed by the court. When the court limits or prohibits visits, the plan reflects the court order."

The plan is developed in cooperation with all affected parties -- CP&P Form [26-83](#), the Visitation Plan, shall be developed through negotiation and agreement by the Worker, the parent(s), the child in placement, the resource parent(s), and other parties involved, such as interested relatives, involved community members, a former resource family interested in visiting the child, siblings, and/or their representatives. See N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.5(d). The plan should be developed at a Family Team Meeting whenever possible. This plan is then attached to section 8 of the CP&P Form [26-81](#), Family Summary/Case Plan. The Worker shall encourage the resource parent(s) to participate in developing the visitation plan. The resource parent(s) "...shall be consulted for information pertinent to visitation." See N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.5(g).

Sibling visitation must be included in the plan – "The visitation plan shall include visits with siblings, if any. Sibling visits may take place with parental visits or separately." See N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.4(d).

“Sections of the visitation plan shall be negotiated separately with the siblings or their representatives and other interested relatives.” See N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.5(e).
When an individual is specifically excluded from visiting the child, the reason is stated in the visitation plan.

Time Frames for Developing and Renegotiating the Visitation Plan 12-27-2004

In accordance with N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.5:

- The visitation plan for the first visit shall be developed, preferably at a Family Team Meeting, and written prior to the date of placement or as soon as possible after the placement, using CP&P Form [26-83](#), the Visitation Plan.
- The visitation plan for ongoing visits shall be completed within five working days of the initial date of placement. The visitation plan shall be evaluated and adjusted as needed and submitted in time for the first 45 day Child Placement Review.

In accordance with N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.7(b), the Worker shall renegotiate the visitation plan with all parties involved no less often than every six months, in conjunction with the CP&P Form [26-81](#), Case Plan Assessment, and the CP&P Form [22-27](#), SDM™ Family Reunification Assessment. The visitation plan shall also be renegotiated when any of the following conditions exists:

- The case goal changes
- Circumstances change or
- Any party to the plan requests renegotiation. See The Visitation Plan.

The Visitation Plan

6-17-2013

Components of the visitation plan -- In accordance with N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.8, the CP&P Form [26-83](#), the Visitation Plan, shall include all of the following:

- The goal of the visits
- The location of visits
- The frequency and regularity of visits
- Who will participate in the visits
- The roles of participants other than the child in placement

- Who will provide needed transportation
- The date and time of visits
- The length of visits
- Arrangements for overnight/weekend/holiday visits
- Whether the visit will be supervised, and, if so, by whom. See Supervised Visitations, below.
- What each party shall be expected to do in order to confirm, change or cancel a visit

Standards for the visitation plan -- In accordance with N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.14:

- The first visit between the child in placement, the parent(s) and siblings shall be scheduled to occur as soon as possible, within five working days of the date of initial placement.
- The frequency and duration of the visits shall be consistent with the purpose of visits as set forth in N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.1. The frequency and length of each visit shall be based upon the needs of the child, the parent(s), siblings and other involved parties. For most children in out-of-home placement, the goal is to hold a visit every week for a period as long in duration as possible. See N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.1(b). Special consideration shall be given to the need for pre-school children to have more frequent visits since their sense of time is different than that for older children or adults.
- When the plan is to return the child to the family, evening, overnight and weekend visits with the family shall be scheduled to occur frequently when the family can assume the increased child care responsibility. Community connections can assist with these visits to provide supervision and model positive parenting behavior, where appropriate.
- Holiday visits shall be negotiated and addressed separately in the plan.
- When a scheduled visit is missed due to the inability of the person providing supervision or the Division representative not being able to participate in the visit, the visit shall be rescheduled whenever and as soon as possible.

Weekly visits between the child and his or her parent(s) and siblings are required by policy.

Location of the visits -- In accordance with N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.9, visits shall take place in the least restrictive, most comfortable setting possible. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- In the home of the parent(s), relatives or friends or in other suitable locations
- In the resource family home, with the resource parent's permission
- In a community setting
- In a Division office when one or more of the following conditions apply:
 - Necessary to protect the child in placement
 - For the convenience of those participating in the visit
 - Other suitable locations are not available

When visitations will be held in the Local Office, document the reason(s) for this determination in the visitation plan.

When domestic violence is suspected or present, see the [CP&P-VIII-B-1-100, Domestic Violence](#), for additional considerations.

The Worker gives a copy of the visitation plan to the parent(s); the resource parent(s); the child in placement, when of an appropriate age; and other parties, including siblings, who are involved in developing the visitation plan and their representatives. See N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.6.

Supervised Visitations

12-27-2004

Most visits will be unsupervised -- In accordance with N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.10, the parent(s) or other visitors and the Division Worker shall discuss the need for supervised visits at the time the visitation plan is negotiated or renegotiated. Unless the Division or the Family Court finds a need for supervision, visits shall be unsupervised.

If visits must be supervised -- the plan shall contain a statement of the reason supervision is required. Reasons for the supervision of visits may include:

- Facilitating interactions between the parent(s) and the child
- Modeling positive parenting behavior
- Mediating conflict between the parent(s) and the child

- Providing protection for the child (N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.10(c))

Who can provide supervision -- Family, friends, community members, helping professionals, therapists, counselors or others with whom the visitor and child in placement feel comfortable may provide supervision with the agreement of all parties. Providers with whom the Division has contracts to supervise visitation may also be utilized. See N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.11(a) and (b).

A Division representative may supervise visitation only if one or more of the following circumstances applies:

- The Worker and Supervisor find that supervision is necessary to protect the child.
- Supervision is needed and there is no other person appropriate to provide it.
- One or both parent(s) or the child in placement wants supervision by the Division.
- The Division does not have enough information to determine that supervision is not needed.
- The Division does not have enough information to determine that the individual suggested by the parent(s) or others to provide supervision is acceptable. (N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.11(c))

The Division participation in visits -- In accordance with N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.12, where the visit is not supervised by a Division representative, the Worker shall participate in visits as necessary to formally assess the progress of visits and family relationships for the purpose of case planning. Whenever possible, the Worker shall inform the participants in the visit in advance when he or she will participate.

Visitation assessment involves:

- Direct observation of the interaction between the child and parent(s), including physical contact, facial expression, body language and ease of relating.
- The child's and parent(s)' reactions following the visits are assessed and discussed with the parent(s).
- Record the assessment in the child's case record. Written observations are made using concrete and behavior-oriented terminology.

Reasons to Limit Visits

11-12-2013

Circumstances may exist or develop which require that the frequency of visits be limited or reduced -- Although the Division's goal is to arrange for weekly visitations between the child and the parent(s), siblings and relatives and other interested parties, as part of the visitation plan, a reduction to the (negotiated) visitation schedule may be made for any of the following reasons, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.15:

- The visit will be physically or psychologically harmful to the child in placement even with supervision. This determination shall be based on:
 - A Division representative's direct observation of harm or potential harm
 - A report of harm to the Division in which the harm has been verified by a Division representative
 - A mental health therapist's recommendations
 - A pending or ongoing Division investigation of allegations that the child in placement has been harmed by the visitor
 - The child in placement has reported a harmful or potentially harmful situation
 - When domestic violence is suspected or present, see the [CP&P-VIII-B-1-100, Domestic Violence](#), for additional considerations in assessing risk of harm to the child.
- The child in placement requests limited visits (with the parent(s), siblings, relatives, other parties) when the case goal is not return home, whether or not the visits are seen as harmful.
- The parent(s) request limited or no visits (see Reduction of Visits Between the Parent or Guardian and Child, below) despite the Division's efforts to explain the importance of visiting and the Division's offer to assist in arranging the visits.
 - Since regular and frequent visits between the child and the parent(s) are desirable to maintain or (re)establish the parent-child relationship, the Division encourages visits, even when the parent(s) request limited or no visits. When the parent(s) request limited visits, the Division negotiates a reduction in the frequency with the parent(s) and this is documented in the visitation plan. The Division further identifies actions to be taken to change conditions to increase the frequency, when possible.

- When parent(s) request no visits with the child, the Division may negotiate with the parent(s) a revised visitation plan for no visits for up to a one month period. If the parent(s) request no visits for a longer period, the Division consults with the Deputy Attorney General (DAG) to determine whether court action is necessary to suspend visits.
 - The parent(s) chronically (regularly) misses scheduled visits despite the Division's efforts to advise of the importance of attending visits for the parent(s) and the child in placement.
 - the reduction in the frequency of scheduled visitations is negotiated with the parent(s), based upon the parent's ability to maintain the schedule
 - the DAG is consulted to determine a course of action when the parent(s) continue to miss scheduled visits, even when the schedule has been reduced.
- A court order prohibits visits or specifies a different schedule of visits.
 - The visitor appears to be under the influence of a substance(s).

When domestic violence is suspected or present, see the [CP&P-VIII-B-1-100, Domestic Violence](#) regarding the need for compliance with domestic violence court orders.

Responsibility	Action Required
Supervisor	Review and approve or disapprove any reduction in the frequency or duration of visits -- When the reduction pertains to parent-child visits and the case is in litigation, the DAG must be consulted to determine whether court action is necessary to permit the reduction, whether or not the parties agree with the reduction.
Worker	Inform the parent(s) and other affected parties of the change within one week in a face-to-face interview, when possible. Revise the visitation plan -- Reflect the reduction, including the reasons, on the CP&P Form 26-81 , Family Summary/Case Plan. Forward a copy of the revised visitation plan to all parties involved in visitations.

	<p>Assist the family or other parties to eliminate the causes for the limitation of visits when the conditions can be changed in order to increase the visits. The actions necessary to improve the conditions are identified on the CP&P Form 26-81, Family Summary/Case Plan.</p>
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Reduction of Visits Between the Parent or Guardian and Child 6-17-2013

In accordance with N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.15(a)3-6, a reduction to the visitation schedule may be made for any of the following reasons:

- The parent requests limited or no visits despite the Division’s efforts to explain the importance of visiting and the Division’s offer to assist in arranging the visits;
- The parent chronically misses scheduled visits despite the Division’s efforts to advise of the importance of attending visits for the parent and the child;
- A court order, including one that terminated parental rights, prohibits visits or specifies a different schedule of visits; or
- The visitor appears to be under the influence of a substance(s).

CP&P adheres to any court order limiting visitation, including a “no contact” order.

<p>Worker and Supervisor</p>	<p>Discuss the recommendation to reduce visits and the reason -- with the parent(s) in a face-to-face interview, when possible, preferably at a Family Team Meeting.</p> <p>When the parent(s) agree -- document the reasons for the recommendation, the time frame for the reduced visits, and the parent(s)’ agreement in a revised CP&P Form 26-83, Visitation Plan, which is signed by the parties.</p> <p>When the parent(s) disagree with the Division’s recommendation to reduce visits for any length of time, the Division consults with the Deputy Attorney General (DAG) to determine whether to petition the</p>
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	<p>court for an order to suspend or reduce the visits.</p> <p>Consult the DAG to determine whether a court order is necessary -- when the Division or the parent(s) recommend that no visits be held between the parent(s) and the child for a period greater than one month, consult the DAG to determine whether a court order is necessary to permit parent-child visits to be reduced.</p> <p>Assist the family or other parties to eliminate the causes for the limitation of visits when the conditions can be changed in order to increase the visits. The actions necessary to improve the conditions are identified on the CP&P Form 26-81, Family Summary/Case Plan.</p>
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Transportation for Visits

12-27-2004

<p>Worker</p>	<p>Provides or arranges for transportation of the child in placement to the visit.</p> <p>Provide, arrange or pay for transportation of the parent(s) or other relatives who live in New Jersey and verify that he or she cannot obtain or pay for his or her own transportation.</p> <p>Use the Local Office Bank Account for payment to the parent(s) or relatives. See CP&P-IX-F-1-300.</p> <p>The Local Office Bank Account Fund may also be used to assist with visitation transportation. See CP&P-IX-F-1-300, LOBA.</p>
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Unplanned Visits

1-5-96

Any visits between the child and the parent(s) or between the resource parent(s) and the child's parent(s) which are not contained in the visitation plan or which occur accidentally are considered to be unplanned.

The resource parent(s) inform CP&P of any unplanned visits.

The Worker discusses the situation with the child's parent(s) when appropriate, and encourage only the planned visits negotiated in the visitation plan.

Role of the Resource Parent Regarding Family/Child Contacts 5-10-2010

CP&P and the resource parent(s) are partners on behalf of the child in placement. CP&P involves the resource parents and consider their viewpoint regarding issues and decisions which affect the child's adjustment to out-of-home placement and general well-being. The resource parent(s) are a vital resource in helping the child maintain and improve his relationship with his parent(s).

The resource parent(s) are expected to accept and encourage contacts between the child and his or her parent(s) and siblings, and provide the child with emotional support even when the contacts with his parent(s) and siblings are disrupting or confusing to the child. The resource parent(s) can help the Worker to assess case progress by documenting the child's behavior after a visit. A therapist may be used to help manage the emotional reactions that may emerge.

The resource parent(s) are consulted during the planning of contacts in terms of the appropriateness of the plan based on his or her schedule and the child's schedule. When a plan is established, a copy of the written Visitation Plan, CP&P Form [26-83](#), is shared with the resource parent(s) and they are expected to cooperate by:

- Participate in Family Team Meetings whenever possible
- Supporting the child's contact with his or her parent(s) and siblings
- Having the child ready for each contact
- Having clothing packed for overnight visits
- Providing transportation or a place to visit when agreed to in the visitation plan
- Helping the child accept each separation from his or her parent(s) following contact
- Reporting the child's reactions after contacts with his family to the Worker
- Notifying CP&P of any unplanned contacts between the child and the parent, or between the resource parent(s) and the parent(s).

Background information is provided to the resource family -- The resource family needs accurate information about the child's family's behavior in order to make a decision about having contact. Information affecting the security of the resource family and child, such as a history of violence, larceny, substance use disorder, is shared with the resource family when they are asked to have contact with the child's family.

Visits in the resource family home may afford the child a sense of consistency and are arranged whenever it is in accordance with the case plan, will not jeopardize the child's placement, and is agreed upon by all parties.

Direct contact between the resource parent(s) and the child's parent(s) is appropriate when it is agreed upon by all parties, is consistent with the permanent plan, and will not jeopardize the child's placement. The resource parent(s) are not required to permit visits in his home, but are encouraged to do so when it will benefit the child.

Telephone Contacts

12-2-2013

CP&P encourages telephone calls between the child and his parent(s) and siblings and other relatives. The Worker is responsible for coordinating plans for telephone contact. The telephone contact plan is documented in the Case Plan. If the parent(s) and siblings and other relatives want to call the child in the resource family home, the resource parent(s) are asked for permission to give their telephone number to these individuals.

The child may make calls to his parent(s) and siblings and other relatives with the resource parent's consent when that is part of the plan.

For approval to reimburse the resource parent(s) for toll calls -- The Worker submits a Special Approval Request, CP&P Form [16-76](#), to the Local Manager for reimbursement of calls from the child to his parent(s), siblings, and other relatives. If the Local Manager approves, the telephone calls are part of the family contact and payment is made through a Client Service Invoice, [CP&P Form K-100](#).

Contact Through Mail

6-16-93

CP&P encourages written communication between the child and his parent(s) as a means of supplementing direct contact. Mail may be sent directly between the child and his parent(s) and siblings or other relatives when it will not be detrimental to the child and when the resource parent(s) agree to share their address. If necessary to ensure the anonymity of the resource parent(s), mail from the child's parent(s) or others to the child may be sent to the Local Office. The material is promptly mailed or delivered to the child.

CP&P policy prohibits the opening of mail by anyone except the addressee, a parent or legal guardian unless there is a court order to the contrary. The Worker and resource parent(s) must not screen mail for a child in placement. The child's parent(s) and anyone else who writes to the child are encouraged to correspond in a manner which is beneficial to both parties.

When the contents of the mail may be detrimental to the child, the Worker or the resource parent(s) make themselves available to discuss the child's reactions. The child is never forced to open his mail in anyone else's presence.

**Procedures Related to Contacts Between the Child and His or Her Family
12-27-2004**

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION REQUIRED
<p>Worker/Parent(s)/Child/ Resource Parent(s)/ Siblings/Other Relatives</p>	<p>1. Develop a plan through the use of the visitation plan for visits between the child, the parent(s), siblings and other interested relatives, considering the schedule and preferences of all parties. A Family Team Meeting is an ideal place to develop the visitation plan.</p>
<p>Worker</p>	<p>2. Review and modify the plan as needed and appropriate in accordance with procedures for the Visitation Plan, CP&P Form 26-83.</p> <p>3. Retain in the case record the visitation plan for contacts and give a copy of the visitation plan to the parent(s), child, resource parent(s), siblings and relatives.</p> <p>4. Provide or arrange transportation and other services to facilitate the planned visits.</p> <p>5. Supervise visits between the child and the parent(s), when specified in the visitation plan.</p> <p>6. Assess contacts in terms of: The relationship between the child and the parent(s), the child and his siblings and other relatives Reactions prior to, during, and following family contacts Progress toward case goals</p> <p>7. Document in the case record the assessment of all contacts.</p>
<p>Resource Parent(s)</p>	<p>8. Encourage the child's relationship to his family and support the plan for contacts between them.</p> <p>9. Advise CP&P of the child's reaction following contacts.</p> <p>10. Coordinate plans for telephone and mail</p>

<p>Worker</p> <p>Resource Parent(s)</p>	<p>contacts between the child and his or her family.</p> <p>11. Complete Special Approval Request, CP&P Form 16-76, when a resource parent requires reimbursement for planned toll calls between the child and his family.</p> <p>12. Notify the Worker of any unplanned contacts with the child's family.</p>
<p>Worker Supervisor</p> <p>Casework Supervisor</p>	<p>13. Discuss with the family member the appropriateness of planned contacts only.</p> <p>14. Attempt to resolve any problems with the child's parent(s) or other family members whenever contacts are disruptive or detrimental to the child.</p> <p>15. Encourage and facilitate planned contacts between the child and other family members.</p> <p>16. Inform the parent(s) of any change in placement.</p>

Procedures for Suspension of Visits Between the Parent(s) or Guardian and Child
12-27-2004

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION REQUIRED
<p>Worker Supervisor</p>	<p>1. Discuss with the parent(s) in a face-to-face interview, when possible, the recommendation to suspend visits for up to a one month period and the reason.</p> <p>2. When the parent(s) agree that visits should be suspended for up to a one month period, document the reasons for the recommendation, the time frame for the suspended visits, and the parent(s)'</p>

	<p>agreement in a revised Visitation Plan, CP&P 26-83, which is signed by the parties.</p> <p>3. When the parent(s) disagree with the Division's recommendation to suspend visits for any length of time, consult with the Deputy Attorney General (DAG) to determine whether to petition the court for an order to suspend the visits.</p> <p>4. Consult with the DAG -- When the Division or the parent(s) recommend that no parent-child visits be held for a period greater than one month, consult with the DAG to determine whether a court order is necessary to permit parent-child visits to be suspended.</p>
<p>Worker</p>	<p>5. Assist the parent(s) to eliminate the causes for the limitation (suspension) of visits when the conditions can be changed in order to increase (reinstitute) the visits. Hold a Family Team Meeting, if appropriate.</p> <p>6. Record on the child's CP&P Form 26-81, Family Summary/Case Plan, the actions necessary to ameliorate the conditions which justified the suspended visits.</p>