

TOPIC:

Supervising Family Contact Time

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Micro Training Course Developed

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOSTER PARENT TRAINING CREDIT:

**Read through this self-study.*

**Fill out the "CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING" Questionnaire*

**Return to ACRF for 1.0 hour of training credit.*

Family Contact is essential for youth and parents to remain connected and to build and support healthy family relationships. It's also been shown that family contact is the most predictive factor for reunification when the contact is frequent, consistent, and in the least intrusive and restrictive environment.

If you're asked to provide supervision of family contact time, let's break down what you need to know before you can agree.

- Are there any safety concerns you need to be aware of? Has the parent stated they would take the child if they had the chance? Or have they had struggles with sobriety?
- Who are the participants going to be? Will mom and dad visit together or separately, how about siblings? Are there any folks that are not allowed to participate?
- How often will the family contact occur? What day of the week and what time?
- Where is the family contact going to happen? In the community? At the birth parent's home? At the foster parent's home?
- What type of supervision does OCS expect? Do you need to see and hear the family at all times? Are they able to play away from you if you can still see them? Is the parent able to take the child for short periods of time?
- What is the goal for the family contact? What new skills do mom and dad need to be working on while they are engaging in the visit?
- How does the caseworker want you to document the family contact and keep OCS informed of how things are going?
- Are there any special instructions guiding the contact? Some examples that might be indicated in the contact plan include:
 - Mom and Dad don't have a diaper bag right now. Can you provide one in the short term while they get theirs together?
 - If Dad arrives with his new partner, the visit cannot go forward. Please call OCS if this occurs.
 - If Mom arrives and appears under the influence, she may visit if the children are comfortable. But if the children voice they do not want to see her, you can terminate the visit.

When is it ok to say “No” to supervising Family Contact time?

You are never obligated to provide supervision of family contact time for youth in your home. If you just are not comfortable with it, it’s ok to tell the case worker “No.”

If you are considering providing supervision, the times you should say “No” are:

- When there is a safety concern that you cannot or do not feel comfortable taking responsibility for.
- When there is a conflict in your ability to maintain a consistent and routine schedule for the family contact time.
- If you do not have a working and positive relationship with the child’s birth family.
- If you’ve been providing supervision and there are problems that continue to occur and you no longer feel comfortable providing supervision.

Even if you are unable or unwilling to supervise family contact, resource families are expected to support contact designated as part of the case plan. So think of other ways to support a connection between a child and his family members. Other ways to support family contact time include:

- Build a working relationship with the birth parents. Assure them you’re caring for their child until the child can return home to them.
- Ask for the case worker to meet with you and the birth parent prior to family contact time starting to review the rules. Let the birth parent know you intend to follow the rules OCS lays out.
- Talk with the birth parent about how you can work together to support the child at the end of the visit, so that it’s a positive ending rather than a sad goodbye.
- Ask the birth parent before the visit “Is there anything you need to be prepared for the family contact today?” Let the birth parent know that you’ll be sending their child to the visit with a snack, a drink, and perhaps an activity or their homework for the parent to help with.
- Ask the birth parent if they want to share how the visit went? See if they need any support working through any behavior concerns.
- When making important appointments, like medical, dental, school, etc. include the birth parent (when approved by OCS).
- Help the child remember important dates, like Father’s Day and Mother’s Day, birthdays and anniversaries.
- Encourage the birth parent to send mail and pictures to their child or bring them to the visits. Provide the parent copies of their child’s artwork and photos of them too.

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