

Office of Child Welfare (OCW) Policy and Practice Documentation of Virtual Contact

Overview

On July 23, 2020, OCW issued guidance on transitioning to safe, physical in-home face-to-face visits. In this guidance the Community-Based Care Lead Agencies (CBC) were to conduct an assessment for each child served through in-home, out-of-home, preadoption, Family Support Services and Extension of Foster Care to determine which children had not received a physical in-home face-to-face visit in the last 90 days. The assessment would also be utilized to determine if it was safe for the child welfare professional to complete a physical face-to-face home visit.

Subsequent assessments were to be completed every 30 days to determine if a physical in-home face-to-face visit should occur or if an alternate method of virtual contact was needed to satisfy the 30-day visit requirement. When virtual visits are conducted every 30 days as a result of the safety assessment contained in the CBC COVID Guidance Plans, the child welfare professional would be responsible for ensuring at minimum a physical in-home face-to-face visit is conducted within the 90-day period, if safe to do so.

Additionally, the CBCs were informed that at any time concerns are noted or an intake for abuse/neglect is received during an active services case, the child must be seen physically in a face-to-face home visit until the risk is remedied, and virtual contact is deemed appropriate.



IMPORTANT

While a virtual contact may be assessed as an appropriate method based on the guidance provided, it does not supplement the federal requirement of a physical in-home face-to-face visit in the child's current residence.

The CBC are encouraged to determine if it is appropriate for one child welfare professional to complete a physical face to face home visit for all children placed in a single foster home or group home instead of sending multiple staff each month.

Documentation

Virtual Visits

When entering a virtual contact into Florida's Safe Family Network (FSFN), the child welfare professional should select the 'Virtual Contact' note type and document the completed face-to-face contact. Any virtual contact that is attempted and not completed should be documented in the case note narrative. The below guidance will assist in understanding the steps to document virtual contacts in FSFN.

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1. From the **Case Note** page, enter the contact begin and end date/time
2. From the **Category** drop down, select applicable value, i.e. "Case".
3. From the **Type** group box, select the appropriate note type of virtual contact
4. From the **Participants** section, select all appropriate persons the note applies to, then select the hyperlink for **Add Face-to-Face Contacts** to document the completion of the contact.
5. In the **Narrative** field, describe the reason or circumstance that limits the physical face-to-face contact and include the technology method used to conduct the face to face visit.



NOTE: 'Virtual Contact' should not be selected along with a 'Home Visit in child's current residence'.

30-day Home Visit in Child's Current Residence

No changes have been made to documenting federally required physical in-home face to face visits in FSFN. Please refer to the "<http://centerforchildwelfare.org/kb/FSFN/NotesHDIG.pdf>" for steps to complete a 30 day physical face to face home visit.

Reporting

Although the Children's Bureau amended section 7.3, QA#8 of the Child Welfare Practice Manual permitting agencies to use videoconferencing to meet the Title IV-B monthly caseworker face-to-face requirement, the utilization of videoconferencing is not counted as an in-home visit or factored into the 50% requirement for visits that need to occur in a child's residence for federal claiming under the Stephanie Tubbs Jones Program.

CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have any questions or need clarification regarding this guidance, please contact Vanessa Snoddy, Case Management & Well Being Manager at Vanessa.Snoddy@myflfamilies.com or 850-717-4769.