

DSS Policy and Procedure Guide

Division 03: Child Welfare

Chapter 04: Ongoing Case Management/Practice

Item 029: Visitation Progression

Suggested changes send to: [DSS PSOA](#)

Issued: **March 14, 2014**

References: EA Manuel 45.302.23, 45.302.5, 45-01-002, [PPG 15-07-029](#), [PPG 03-04-016](#), [PPG 03-06-028](#), [PPG 03-04-024](#).

Revisions in Red

Replaces Issues: September 16, 2011, PPG 03-06-009 (Issued September 19, 2006)

Preamble

Child Welfare Policy and Procedure Guides are meant to be used as tools to relay best practice and staff expectations. It is understood that specific case scenarios may not always align themselves with the stated practices and that at all times what is of paramount importance is the Safety and Well-being of the children we are charged to protect.

Policy

Parents and children shall visit as often as possible and/or as ordered by the Court throughout the Juvenile Dependency process. The only exceptions are situations when; the Court has ordered visits to not take place for any reason, the Department of Social Services (DSS) has assessed the current visitation arrangement is no longer safe or in the children's best interest, or when the visits are unforced by order of the Court and the child has requested the visits not take place.

Visits between a parent and a child shall progress and transition to the least restrictive as quickly as possible, while maintaining the safety, well being, and overall best interest of the children. Safety Organized Practice (SOP) and/or California Partners for Permanency (CAPP) tools shall be utilized to assist in making decisions to increase or decrease the level of visitation.

In the interest of child safety and well being, visitation may be temporarily suspended. If the assessment is that the visits cannot resume as previously ordered by the Court, the Social Worker (SW) shall file a JV180 Request to Change Court Order with the Court within 3 business days. Please see [PPG 03-06-028](#) for additional information regarding JV180 filing procedures.

All visits supervised or observed by DSS staff shall be narrated in CWS/CMS contact narratives within 7 working days.

Purpose

To define the different types of visits between parents and children, to advise Child Welfare Social Work staff of their responsibilities regarding visitation progression, to provide guidance regarding modification of visitation orders, and to clarify when foster care payments should end.

Court Orders

Juvenile Dependency Court orders shall be reviewed by the assigned Social Work Supervisor (SWS) and SW upon case assignment and following each Court hearing to ensure DSS and family

compliance regarding visitation. When the most recent Court orders state, “All prior orders not modified remain in full, force and effect,” the SWS and SW must refer to previous Court orders to determine the appropriate visitation.

The Court often gives DSS discretion to move to a less restrictive level of visitation, e.g. supervised to unsupervised or liberal to extended; however, prior to exercising discretion, the SW must ensure that any discretionary guidelines set forth by Court have been met, e.g. 10 days notice to all parties, updated discovery, etc.

Definitions

Supervised Visit – A visit between the parent(s) and their child that is supervised by a DSS employee, an approved agency or other third party. Supervised visits generally are one hour long per week, however, can be extended to several hours and on multiple days.

DSS Supervised Visit – DSS provides supervised visitation services for children and their families at the Visitation Center located in the Brix building. A Social Worker Aide (SWA) or SW provides supervision for families visiting at the DSS.

Approved Agency Supervised Visit – An approved agency is considered to be any provider with an existing contract with Fresno County DSS to provide supervised visitation services, or a Foster Family Agency (FFA) which has entered into an agreement with Fresno County DSS through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Supervised Visitation vendors shall adhere to all of the guidelines set forth in the contract. FFA SW’s and staff are considered contracted providers of supervised visitation services under the FFA MOU. (This does not include FFA foster parents.)

Third Party Supervised Visit – A Third Party Visit is supervised by someone approved by the DSS. A third party supervisor is considered to be any individual other than DSS staff, FFA SW, or other Contracted Provider. A Third Party Supervisor is generally someone who has a relationship with the parent or child and may include, but is not limited to relatives, care providers, non-related extended family members, friends, church members, etc. Please see [PPG 03-04-024](#), *Third Party Visitation*, for further information on Third Party Visitation guidelines.

Unsupervised Visit – A visit between the parent(s) and their child that is not supervised by anyone. Visits can be for one hour to all day, but can not be overnight. The parent(s) may have unsupervised visits somewhere in the community, their home, or somewhere agreed upon by the SW and parent(s).

Liberal Visit – A visit between a child and parent that is unsupervised and overnight. A liberal visit may be one or more nights, and last up to a maximum of fourteen (14) calendar days/13 nights in a calendar month.

NOTE: In order to avoid a disruption in the child’s Title IV-E Foster Care funding, the liberal visit shall not exceed a total of 14 days in a calendar month, whether the visit days occur on separate dates or consecutively.

Extended Visit – A visit between the parent(s) and their child that lasts beyond 14 consecutive days. Extended visits become placements when the Court orders Family Maintenance services for the child and parent(s).

Procedure

Supervised Visits

Following the **Detention hearing**, the parent(s) meet with the **Services Coordinator**, who will schedule **the initial** supervised visits for the parent(s) and their child. **Thereafter, supervised visits by DSS or an approved agency are scheduled by the DSS Visitation Coordinator. Third party supervised visits are scheduled by the assigned SW and/or the parent(s) and the approved third party.**

Supervised visits can be from one hour to several hours long. Generally a supervised visit does not go past four hours.

Best practice to support case plan goals and outcomes is for the assigned **SW** to supervise family visits on a regular basis. The **SW** shall supervise a minimum of one visit per month per family. The **SW** will observe the relationship between the parent(s) and the child and narrate the visit in CWS/CMS.

If supervised visits continue past three months, a case consultation **or teaming meeting shall be held to review the case progress and clearly identify what is going well, any safety concerns, and any complicating factors. If it is determined that it is safe to progress to a less restrictive level of visitation, the SW shall first check the minute orders to determine if DSS has discretion to move to less restrictive visitation. If DSS does not have discretion, a JV180 petition shall be filed requesting the change in the visitation order. If it is determined that it is not safe to progress to less restrictive visits, the SW will document what safety concerns still exist and outline specific Safety Goals related to visitation progression. This information will be documented on form [CWS 0029](#), *Permanency Teaming Summary Report*, which shall be signed by all participants.**

The case consultation or teaming meeting may include, but is not limited to, the following participants; the SW, SWS, Parent(s), Care Provider(s), the child, service providers, Child Focus Team (CFT), Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).

There is no change in the foster care payment when the child is on supervised visits.

Unsupervised Visits

Once the **assigned SW** has received **Court authorization** allowing unsupervised visits, the **assigned SW** will contact the parent(s) and **care provider** to schedule the visits. The **SW** will consider the **following when scheduling unsupervised visits:**

- **The child's** school schedule.
- **The parent(s)'** work schedule.
- **The parent(s)' Family Reunification services** schedule.
- **The care provider's** schedule.

If the parent(s) will be taking their child to their home during an unsupervised visit, the **SW** must have first visited the parent(s)' home to assess for safety and risk factors. **If the home is found to be unsafe or possibly place the child at risk, the SW and parent(s) will need to agree upon an alternative location for the unsupervised visits to occur.**

Although relatives and friends can be included at unsupervised visits, the parent(s) should be encouraged to spend as much individual time with their child as possible.

The **SW** shall **make a face to face contact with the child and the parent during at least one** unsupervised visit per month per family **in order to** observe the relationship between the parent(s) and the child.

If unsupervised visits continue past three months, a case consultation **or teaming meeting shall be held to review the case progress and clearly identify what is going well, any safety concerns, and any complicating factors.** **If it is determined that it is safe to progress to a less restrictive level of visitation, the SW shall first check the minute orders to determine if DSS has discretion to move to less restrictive visitation. If DSS does not have discretion, a JV180 petition shall be filed requesting the change in the visitation order.** **If it is determined that it is not safe to progress to less restrictive visits, the SW will document what safety concerns still exist and outline specific Safety Goals related to visitation progression. This information will be documented on form [CWS 0029](#), *Permanency Teaming Summary Report*, which shall be signed by all participants.**

The case consultation or teaming meeting may include, but is not limited to, the following participants; the SW, SWS, Parent(s), Care Provider(s), the child, service providers, CFT, CASA.

There is no change in the foster care payment when the child is on unsupervised visits.

Liberal Visits

The **SW** must have visited the parent(s)' home or the location for the liberal visits **to assess the location for safety and risk factors prior to authorizing liberal visits to begin.** **If the location is found to be unsafe or possibly place the child at risk, the SW and parent(s) will need to agree upon an alternative location for the liberal visits to occur.**

The **SW** will **ask the parent(s) to** identify other individuals who will have regular contact with the child(ren) during the liberal visit. **The SW shall** assess the appropriateness of each individual identified. The assessment shall include, but is not limited to, **CWS/CMS**, CLETS and Fresno County Sheriff Clearances.

If an individual is determined not to be appropriate to have contact with the child(ren), the **SW** shall document the information in CWS/CMS and also provide notification to the parent in writing **that the individual has not been approved for contact with the children.** This may occur either during a formal case staffing or at an informal in person meeting with the parent(s) and shall be documented on the **Staffing** form [6022](#) and in a contact narrative in CWS/CMS.

Note: DSS staff is not authorized to disclose the details of an individual's DSS and/or criminal background to a parent. The specifics may only be shared with the individual in question.

The **SW** shall **make a face to face contact with the child and the parent during at least** one liberal visit per month per family **in order to** observe the relationship between the parent(s) and the child.

When the child is on a liberal visit, the parent(s) is/**are** not entitled to receive CalWORKs or CalFresh (Food Stamp program) on behalf of the child. The **SW** will make an appropriate plan with the parent(s) and foster parent(s) to ensure the child's needs are met during the liberal visit.

Liberal visits should not go on for an extended period. Generally after 30 to 60 days of liberal visits the parent(s) and the child can begin an extended visit. If liberal visits have continued past 60 days, a case consultation **or teaming meeting shall be held to** review the **case progress and to clearly identify what is going well, any safety concerns, and any complicating factors.** If it is determined **that it is safe to progress to an extended visit, the SW shall first check the minute orders to determine if DSS has discretion to move to less restrictive visitation. If DSS does not have discretion, a JV180 petition shall be filed requesting the change in the visitation order.** If it is determined that it is not safe to progress to **an extended** visit, the SW will document what safety concerns still exist and outline **specific Safety Goals** related to visitation **progression.** **This information will be documented on form [CWS 0029](#), *Permanency Teaming Summary Report*, which shall be signed by all participants.**

The case consultation or teaming meeting may include, but is not limited to, the following participants; the SW, SWS, Parent(s), Care Provider(s), the child, service providers, CFT, CASA.

Foster care payment will continue to be provided to the foster parent during the liberal visit. The foster care payment will end when the child leaves the foster home and is placed with their parent(s).

Extended Visits

Once the **SW** has received the **Court** order allowing an extended visit, the **SW** will contact the parent(s) and foster family to schedule an extended visit.

The **SW** will make a minimum of two face to face visits with the parent(s) and the child in the home during the first 30 days of the extended visit.

Extended visits become placements when the **Court** orders Family Maintenance services for the child and parents.

When the child is placed with their parent(s), either on an extended visit or with **Court** ordered Family Maintenance services, the **SW shall complete the following:**

- **Email the [ETA Foster Care Placement](#) mailbox within 24 hours.**
- **Email an updated SOC 158A to the [ETA Foster Care Placement](#) mailbox within 48 hours.**
- **Submit a CalWORKs Intake Application Request Form [2302](#) and forward the form via email to the [ETA FC-CalWORKs Referrals](#) to initiate the CalWORKs application for the parent(s).**

When the Court has ordered Court ordered Family Maintenance between the child and their parent(s), the SW shall complete the following in CWS/CMS:

- **End the placement episode.**

- Change the service component to Family Maintenance.

Non-Minor Dependent (NMD) Visitation

Any change in visitation for NMD's must continue to be ordered by the Court past the youth's eighteenth birthday. Changes in visitation orders for NMD's can be accomplished in any one of the following ways:

- Submitting a JV180 Request to Change Court Order.
- Requesting the change at the Court hearing just prior to the dependent's eighteenth birthday.
- Requesting the change at the next regularly scheduled Court Hearing.

Restarting Visits or When a Parent Presents Themselves

There are times when parents have not made themselves available for visitation for a significant period of time or when a parent is located after the start of the Dependency case.

In both situations, the SW shall assess/reassess the parent for visitation with their child(ren).

For parents with no prior visitation orders the SW shall file a JV 180 petition requesting the appropriate visits for the parent (refer to [PPG 03-06-028](#), *Requests to Change or Modify Court Orders*).

For parents with prior visitation orders, if the SW determines the level of visitation previously ordered remains appropriate, the SW shall arrange visitation as mentioned in the previous sections of this PPG. If the level of visitation previously ordered is no longer appropriate, the SW shall file a JV 180 Request to Change Court Order.