



**Series:** 100 Case Management

**Policy Name:** **Family Time**

**Policy Number:** 123

**Origination Date:** 11/1/13

**Revision Date:** 3/21/2023

**Regulation:** 39.402, 39.502 FS, 65C-28.002, CFOP 170-1

**Attachments:**

**Policy:** It is the policy of Communities Connected for Kids to facilitate family time as required in the case plan and by the Court to 1) maintain family connection while a child is in emergency shelter and ongoing if the child is in foster care, 2) strengthen family connections toward reunification or allow a healthy transition to termination of parental rights and adoption. All family visitations will be held in an environment to protect the safety of the child, facilitate parenting skills, and reduce the family stress during visitation. Family engagement and contact continues a child's attachment to the parent and siblings and minimizes the effects of separation and loss. Family time also provides parents an opportunity to maintain and strengthen constructive interaction and affords parents the opportunity to make realistic decisions concerning their parental abilities. Family time also provides staff with a basis to assess capacity for improved parenting.

**Procedure:**

1. Family Engagement and Contacts between the Child and Parent, Legal Custodian, or Other Caregivers

- a) Pursuant to section 39.402(9a), Florida Statutes (F.S.), "At any shelter hearing, the department shall provide to the court a recommendation for scheduled contact between the child and parents, if appropriate. The court shall determine visitation rights absent a clear and convincing showing that visitation is not in the best interest of the child." Any order of visitation or other contact must conform to s.39.0139. If visitation is ordered but will not commence within 72 hours of the shelter hearing, the department shall provide justification to the court.
- b) Visitation between a child in Out-of-Home Care and parents shall occur in accordance with court orders setting such visitation as reflected in the case plan. If at any time, the safety of the child precludes visitation, the visitation shall be suspended (after consultation with Children's Legal Services) and the case manager shall immediately, not to exceed 72 hours, request a court hearing to address the issue. Visitation between a child and parents may only be limited or terminated by order of the court, which shall be reflected in the case plan. There shall be a specific reason provided to the court for recommending no visitation or less than weekly visitation.
- c) Minimally, weekly scheduling of family time between the child and parents shall be recommended to the court consistent with the case goal unless it is deemed not feasible or not in the best interest of one or



more of the children concerned.

- d) If weekly in person contact between the child and parents is not recommended to the court, the court shall be advised of the reasons for the recommendation. When there is a recommendation of no visitation or less than weekly because it is not in the best interest of the child, the court shall be provided documentation of the reason. This documentation shall also be recorded in the case file.
- e) If the court orders particular locations, times, or conditions for visits, such orders shall be followed until modified by the court.
- f) If the court does not order particular locations, times, or conditions for visits, the case manager shall ensure that all visits between children and parents occur in a neutral and protected setting. To the extent possible, visitation shall occur in a home-like setting and, unless unavoidable, not in an institutional setting or office. However, the safety of the children being visited shall always be the primary consideration.
- g) Visitation between a child in out-of-home care and the child's parents may be arranged by the caregiver if the caregiver is willing and able and the court approves. If the caregiver is unwilling or unable to assume this responsibility, visitation between the child in out-of-home care and that child's parents shall be arranged and supervised by the Services Worker, other designated staff, a visitation center or a court approved third party, unless the court has approved unsupervised visitation.
- h) The terms of the family time visitations, who/what/where/when should be outlined in the Out of Home Safety plans and updated upon any change in the terms of the family time visits. Sibling Visitations – It is imperative that siblings placed separately in out of home care continue to be provided with family time visits together regardless of whether or not a parent engages in family time. Sibling visits should occur minimally monthly unless the court has ordered more frequent sibling visits.
- i)

## 2. Family Time/Family Visitation

"Family time" is meaningful and regular contact which is intended to allow the parents the opportunity to see how their children are doing; gain confidence; demonstrate protective capacities; and practice what they are learning. Family time also allows children the opportunity to be with parents and other family members they care about. Family time includes opportunities for the parents to:

- (a) Attend any type of school, sporting, or extracurricular activity;
- (b) Attend (in person or by phone) a doctor's appointment, medication management, therapy sessions (such as family, speech, vocational, or physical), or special needs training (such as nebulizers); and,
- (c) Participate in monitored telephone calls, face-time, skyping, e-mails, letters, exchange of photographs, etc.
- (d) Chapter 39 addresses and encourages family time (also known as "visitation") on three family relationship levels:
  - (1) Family time between the parent and child (s. [39.402\(9\) \(a\)](#), F.S.;
  - (2) Family time among siblings who are separated in various placements (S. [39.402\(9\) \(b\)](#), F.S.); and,
  - (3) Grandparent visitation (s. [39.509](#), F.S.).

It is case managements responsibility to ensure parents are aware of the above opportunities and appointment details in order for them to participate in these activities with their children.



### 3. Family Time/Visitation Ratings

An assessment of the overall “frequency” and “quality” of family time and other visitation opportunities is a required component of Judicial Reviews and Progress Updates. In order to standardize the criteria used for frequency and quality, the following ratings have been developed.

#### (a) Frequency of Visits (“Compliance” with Case Plan)

Visits that are appreciably shortened by unreasonably late arrival/early departure should be considered missed.

Ratings are as follows:

- (1) Consistent. Caregiver regularly attends visits or calls in advance to reschedule (90-100% compliance).
- (2) Routine. Caregiver may miss visits occasionally and rarely requests to reschedule visits (65-89% compliance).
- (3) Sporadic. Caregiver misses or reschedules many scheduled visits (26-64% compliance).
- (4) Rarely or Never. Caregiver does not visit or visits 25% or fewer of the allowed visits (0-25% compliance).

#### (b) Quality of Face-to-Face Visits

Quality of overall visits and other family time opportunities is based on case manager’s direct observation whenever possible, supplemented by observation of child, reports of foster parents, etc. Ratings are as follows:

##### (1) Excellent. Parent/legal guardian/caregiver **consistently**: Demonstrates parental role.

- Demonstrates knowledge of child’s development.
- Responds appropriately to child’s verbal/non-verbal signals.
- Puts child’s needs ahead of his/her own
- Shows empathy toward child.

##### (2) Adequate. Parent/legal guardian/caregiver **occasionally**:

- Demonstrates parental role.
- Demonstrates knowledge of child’s development.
- Responds appropriately to child’s verbal/non-verbal signals.
- Puts child’s needs ahead of his/her own
- Shows empathy toward child.

##### (3) Not Adequate. Parent/legal guardian/caregiver **rarely**:

- Demonstrates parental role.
- Demonstrates knowledge of child’s development.
- Responds appropriately to child’s verbal/non-verbal signals.
- Puts child’s needs ahead of his/her own
- Shows empathy toward child.



(4) Adverse. Parent/legal guardian/caregiver **never**:

- Demonstrates parental role.
- Demonstrates knowledge of child's development.
- Responds appropriately to child's verbal/non-verbal signals.
- Puts child's needs ahead of his/her own
- Shows empathy toward child.

DocuSigned by:  
Approved: Carol DeLoach  
Carol DeLoach, CEO