



# State of South Carolina Department of Social Services

Attachment 6

## DRAFT: Administrative Policies and Procedures: Foster Care Visitation, Chapter 5

<b>Subject:</b>	Foster Care Visitation Policy
<b>Authority:</b>	S.C. Code Ann 63-7-1660, S.C. Code Ann 63-7-1680, S.C. Code Ann 63-7-2310
<b>Standards:</b>	<a href="#">Click here to enter the state/federal standard that needs to be met.</a>
<b>Application:</b>	All Foster care Caseworkers, Supervisors, Program Coordinators, Performance Coaches, County Directors, Regional Directors and State Office Staff
<b>Policy Statement:</b>	
The Department of Social Services will through regular, quality visitation ensure the safety and well-being of all children in foster care, as well ensure their continued relationships with parents, sibling and other significant persons in their life.	
<b>Purpose:</b>	
Visitation is designed to ensure the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.) All children in foster care in South Carolina are safe and their well-being needs are met.</li> <li>2.) Children maintain their relationships with their parents, siblings, extended family and other significant persons in their lives.</li> <li>3.) Children do not linger in foster care and reach permanency as quickly as is safely possible.</li> <li>4.) Children maintain or develop healthy attachments and the negative effects of separation are reduced.</li> <li>5.) Families receive the support they need to reunite with their children and achieve safety and well-being for their children in their own homes.</li> </ol>	
<b>Definitions:</b>	
<p><b>Monitored Visitation:</b> The monitor is in the same location, facility, or home during the visit, but may allow the parent some time alone with their children.</p> <p><b>Siblings:</b> Children who have one or more parent in common either biologically, through adoption, or through the marriage of their parents, and/or with whom the child lived before his or her foster care placement</p> <p><b>Supervised Visitation:</b> The monitor is present and observing at all times, within sight and sound of the family.</p> <p><b>Therapeutic Visitation:</b> A visit facilitated by a licensed clinician.</p> <p><b>Unsupervised Visitation:</b> No monitor is present for the visit</p> <p><b>Worker:</b> Child Welfare certified staff: classification of Human Service Specialist II or above</p>	
<b>Procedures:</b>	

Original Effective Date:  
 Current Effective Date:  
 Supersedes:

<p>A. Caseworker Visitation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The agency shall monitor a child through in-person contacts on at least a monthly basis. The agency shall require any DSS employee who has knowledge of a failure to do so to report such a failure to the County Director/Program Director, Regional Director or Child Welfare Service Director. Such contacts shall take place at the child's residence unless it is in the child's best interests for a particular contact to be made elsewhere, and, in all cases, contacts shall be made in the child's residence at least every other month. If the foster care case is open for only part of a month, the child needs to be seen during the portion of the month it is open.</li><li>2. The worker will carefully assess for safety concerns, the child's well-being, and progress toward the goals of the child at each visit. The worker will engage both the child and the caregiver in a dialogue that values the voice of the youth and the caregiver and addresses strengths, needs and concerns of both. This includes the worker meeting with the child alone, so the child will have the opportunity for private time with the worker. The worker will follow up on any tasks or concerns discussed previously.</li><li>3. The Worker will visit parents monthly separately from their family visitation to review case progress, visitation, and concerns regarding the children. The majority of visits should be in the family home.</li><li>4. The worker shall maintain contact with the foster care provider as follows:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Monthly interview in person or by telephone</li><li>b. Face-to-face interview at least once every two months (every other month) in the foster home and face-to-face interviews with all adult members of the foster home at least once per quarter.</li><li>c. Face-to-face interview with any new adult within one month of the adult moving into the home.</li></ol></li><li>5. The worker will provide the visitation plan to the foster parent or group home staff and provide a new visitation plan each time it is updated. The Worker shall be responsive to all communications from the child's foster parent or group home staff</li><li>6. At a minimum, the Family Support Coordinator from Foster Home Licensing shall make monthly in-person or telephone contacts with the foster placement. At least quarterly, in-person contacts will be made by the Family Support Coordinator with other adults in home. Further, a foster placement must notify the licensing agency and the child's worker if another adult moves into the home, and the worker must interview the adult face-to-face within one month after receiving notice</li></ol>
---------------------------------	---

Original Effective Date:  
Current Effective Date:  
Supersedes:

<p>B. Family Visitation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The agency shall immediately arrange for as much contact and visitation between the <b>child and his or her parents, siblings, or other significant persons</b> as is reasonably possible and is consistent with the best interests of the child.</li><li>2. During the first week of placement, and on a regular basis thereafter, the worker shall arrange a visit with the child's parents, siblings, and other significant adults, unless contrary to the welfare of the child, or as ordered by the court.</li><li>3. The worker must create a visitation plan with input from the child, the parents/guardians, other significant persons, foster parent or group home provider, and, if applicable, the child's therapist or mental health provider. This plan shall include details about locations, dates/times, types of activities, length, supervision, necessary supports, <b>any barriers to visitation and plans to address those barriers</b>, and any community connections that can be utilized to assist in cultivating a positive relationship between child and parent. Pursuant to the merits hearing, the visitation plan will be finalized and documented in CAPSS.</li><li>4. The agency shall not recommend parental visitation of less than two times per month unless such a schedule is documented in a signed court order.</li><li>5. These visits shall be presumed to be unsupervised unless the agency documents that supervision is in the child's best interests. - If supervision is required, the visit must be supervised by a DSS certified child welfare professional or licensed therapist. Unsupervised visits may be facilitated by a certified child welfare professional, child welfare paraprofessional, DSS caseworker assistant, counselor, therapist, visitation program staff, foster parent, group home staff, relative, or other significant person as permitted by DSS.</li><li>6. At every appropriate opportunity the worker will ask the child, the child's parents, and any other appropriate person (including other professionals involved with the child) about the names and addresses of any relatives or <b>other significant persons</b> with whom the child might have an emotionally significant connection. The worker will coordinate reasonable and meaningful visitation between the child and any relative or <b>other significant persons identified</b> in accordance with the worker's assessment of the child's best interest.</li><li>7. The agency shall promote a positive and nurturing relationship between children in foster care and <b>any other significant persons</b> unless maintaining the relationship is contrary to the child's safety and/or wellbeing.</li><li>8. The Worker shall be responsive to all communications from the child's Parent/guardian.</li></ol>
-----------------------------	---

Original Effective Date:  
Current Effective Date:  
Supersedes:

<p>C. Sibling Visitation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reasonable efforts shall be made to place siblings removed from their home in the same placement. Exceptions will be considered if a clear and convincing rationale is documented and approved that demonstrates that such a joint placement would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings. This rationale must include reference to and copies of evaluations by professionals and documentation of siblings' preferences, if age appropriate.</li> <li>2. The worker shall promptly arrange for family and sibling visitation with the child within one week, unless such visitation has been barred by court order.</li> <li>3. Should siblings be separated, reasonable efforts shall be made to provide for frequent visitation to occur, no less than once per calendar month. The worker will facilitate or arrange for other ongoing interaction between the siblings, unless a clear and convincing rationale is documented and approved that demonstrates that such contact would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. In addition to visits, other communications such as text messages, phone calls, emails, social media messages, and/or video calls shall be allowed and encouraged.</li> <li>b. Sibling contact cannot be limited or prohibited by a placement's disciplinary methods or household rules. If sibling contact conflicts with other valid limitations or disciplinary practices, the worker shall discuss with the placement an alternative or structured means of maintaining such contact.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. The worker shall continue to explore options for sibling reunification, sibling visitation and additional sibling contact until siblings can be reunited.</li> </ol>
<p>D. Levels of Supervision</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Unsupervised Visitation:</b> No monitor is present for the visit. Parents can be alone with the child. This may include overnight visits when transitioning to reunification. Visitation must adhere to the visitation plan and the court order. If visit is facilitated by a DSS approved individual, the case manager must be notified of each visit.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <b>When to use:</b> When a court order allows; when there are no safety concerns; when a child is transitioning into the home environment; when risk factors are reduced as demonstrated by parental interaction with children and overall increase in protective capacity.</li> <li>b. <b>Who can facilitate:</b> Certified DSS Case Manager, Case Manager Assistants, Foster Parents, Other Significant persons, Providers, Therapists, Counselors</li> <li>c. <b>Location:</b> Non DSS site</li> <li>d. <b>Facilitator's Role:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure family has clear guidelines for expectations of visit</li> </ul> </li> </ol> </li> </ol>

Original Effective Date:

Current Effective Date:

Supersedes:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure communication between all parties on start and end time, location of pick up and drop off, needs of child, and emergency contacts.</li><li>• Debrief with all parties after the visit. Children will be debriefed individually to identify strengths of the visit and any concerns that the child may have about visitation.</li><li>• Provide feedback to parents based on information shared from the debrief to reinforce positive interaction and parenting skill building. Address any concerns that arise.</li><li>• Document the debrief with parent and include any reported interaction between the parent and the child and any coaching or mentoring provided to the parents, especially those behaviors that show progress toward or away from Treatment Plan goals.</li></ul> <p>e. <b>DSS Case Manager Role:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Obtain documentation of the visit and enter documentation into CAPSS</li><li>• If facilitated by another party, debrief the visit with the facilitator and obtain documentation of the visit from the facilitator. -Discuss visits with the parent and child to determine strengths and needs.</li></ul> <p>2. <b>Monitored Visitation:</b> The monitor is in same location, facility, or home during the visit, but may allow the parent some time alone with their children. This amount of time is determined on a case by case basis. The determination will be based on the parents’ demonstration of protective capacity and their ability to positively engage with the children. Location and type of activity will also be factored into the amount of time the parents are alone with the child.</p> <p>a. <b>When to use:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When there are no safety concerns and risk factors are reduced <b>as</b> demonstrated by parental interaction with children and overall increase in protective capacity.</li><li>• When visitation is court order to be supervised but risk factors are considered to be low to moderate.</li></ul> <p>b. <b>Who can monitor:</b> Certified DSS Case Manager, Case Manager Assistant, Foster Parents, Other significant Persons, Providers, Therapists, Counselors</p> <p>c. <b>Location:</b> Parent choses the location but the site must be approved by DSS; home-like setting; group home provider, public locations, or family home</p> <p>d. <b>Monitors Role:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Intermittently observe the interactions between child and parent and provide coaching, modeling and mentoring to parents to reinforce positive interactions, encourage bonding, and build parenting skills.</li><li>• Ensure the child(ren) is not removed from the visit location</li><li>• Ensure safety and emotional wellbeing of child(ren)</li><li>• Intervene if risk arises or develops</li><li>• Ensure visits start and end on time</li></ul>
--	--

Original Effective Date:

Current Effective Date:

Supersedes:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Debrief with all parties after visit. Children will be debriefed individually to identify strengths of the visit and any concerns that the child may have about visitation. Document the the interaction between the parent and the child and any coaching provided to the parents, especially those behaviors that show progress toward or away from Treatment Plan goals</li></ul> <p>e. <b>DSS Case Manager Role:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Obtain documentation of the visit and enter documentation into CAPSS</li><li>• If facilitated by another party, debrief the visit with the facilitator and obtain documentation of the visit from the facilitator. Discuss visits with the parent and child to determine strengths and needs</li></ul> <p>3. <b>Supervised Visitation:</b> The monitor is present and observing at all times within sight and sound of the family.</p> <p>a. <b>Use in cases of:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Concern for the physical or emotional safety or well-being of a child or when risk factors are high</li><li>• Insufficient knowledge of family dynamics and parental capacity</li><li>• Sex abuse or severe physical abuse</li><li>• Suspicion of coaching or coercion of the child by the parent</li><li>• Court ordered supervised visitation</li></ul> <p>b. <b>Who can supervise:</b> Certified DSS Case Manager, or a trained visit facilitator at a Visitation Center</p> <p>c. <b>Location:</b> DSS office, visitation center, or other site determined by the case manager.</p> <p>d. <b>Supervisors Role:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure child is not removed from the visual presence of the visitation monitor</li><li>• Continually monitor the risk, safety, and well-being of the child.</li><li>• Provide coaching, modeling, and mentoring to parents to ensure positive interactions, encourage bonding, and to build parenting skills.</li><li>• Ensure all conversations are audible and appropriate.</li><li>• Intervene when risk arises/develops.</li><li>• Ensure visits start and end on time.</li><li>• Debrief with all parties after visit. Children will be debriefed individually to identify strengths of the visit and any concerns that the child may have about visitation. Document the interaction between the parent and the child and any coaching provided to the parents, especially those behaviors that show progress toward or away from Treatment Plan goals.</li></ul> <p>e. <b>DSS Case Manager Role:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Obtain documentation of the visit and enter documentation into CAPSS</li></ul>
--	---

Original Effective Date:

Current Effective Date:

Supersedes:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If facilitated by another party, debrief the visit with the facilitator and obtain documentation of the visit from the facilitator. Discuss the visit with the parent and child to determine strengths and needs.</li> </ul> <p>4. <b>Therapeutic Visitation:</b> A visit facilitated by a licensed clinician.</p> <p>a. <b>When to use:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family dynamics require therapeutic assistance to facilitate attachment, child well-being, transition, or other relationship issues.</li> <li>• Court ordered</li> </ul> <p>b. <b>Who can arrange:</b> Certified DSS Case Manager</p> <p>c. <b>Location:</b> To be determined by therapist</p> <p>d. <b>Facilitator’s Role:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure family has clear expectation of therapeutic visit</li> <li>• Ensure provider has a clear understanding of family’s therapeutic needs</li> <li>• Ensure clear communication with provider and family</li> <li>• Debrief with all parties after visit Children will be debriefed individually to identify strengths of the visit and any concerns that the child may have about visitation.</li> </ul> <p>Document the interaction between the parent and the child and any coaching or mentoring provided to the parents, especially those behaviors that show progress toward or away from Treatment Plan goals.</p>
<p>E. Special Considerations</p>	<p>1. <b>Family member funerals, weddings, and other significant birth family/other significant persons events</b></p> <p>a. In the event that the Agency becomes aware of a significant event, death, or illness involving the child's birth family or other significant persons, the worker shall consult and coordinate with the foster parents, guardian <i>ad litem</i>, and mental health professionals to confirm that the child is notified and is able to process the event in a trauma-sensitive manner.</p> <p>b. The worker shall staff with the the foster parents, guardian <i>ad litem</i>, and mental health professionals to determine whether attendance at an event or travel by the child is appropriate and, if applicable, to plan for child's attendance or trip. Such planning shall take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The age of the child;</li> <li>* The relationship between the child and the relative or other significant persons;</li> <li>* The expressed wishes of the child;</li> <li>* Any recommendations by the child's mental health provider;</li> <li>* Whether or not a DSS representative needs to accompany the child;</li> </ul>

Original Effective Date:

Current Effective Date:

Supersedes:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Arrangements for our of state travel; and</li> <li>* Whether the attendance or trip is appropriate for the child's safety and wellbeing, given the child's trauma history.</li> </ul> <p>c. Unless clear reasons suggest that the child's involvement is contrary to his or her safety or wellbeing, the Worker will coordinate with the foster placement, the relatives or other significant persons, and relevant DSS support staff to provide the child with an opportunity to take part in the event</p> <p><b>2. Birth Family Connections After Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)</b> In certain circumstances, children may benefit from contact with their birth family, including siblings, after the finalization of the TPR. Unless prohibited by court order, the Worker may facilitate visitation between a child and his or her biological family after the finalization of the TPR, if such visitation is in the child's best interests.</p>
<p>F. Case Supervision and Monitoring</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supervisors are responsible for monitoring visitation weekly and providing support and guidance to case managers to ensure consistent visitation takes place each month in a manner that builds parental capacity and moves children toward permanency.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The worker must request a staffing with a supervisor if there is a risk of missing a caseworker, sibling or parent visit.</li> <li>b. If a caseworker is expectedly or unexpectedly absent, the supervisor is responsible for ensuring visits take place during their absence.</li> <li>c. A missed visits will be documented in CAPSS using the Exception Report dictation code. An Oversight Report must be sent to the County Director/Program Director, Regional Director or Child Welfare Service Director.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Face to face visits must be performed by a certified Human Service Specialist II or higher. (See Section D in the b.line <b>Who Can Facilitate</b> for who can supervise a family visit)</li> <li>3. If a case is transferred out of county or to another unit within the county, the sending unit will complete all visits for the month of transfer (monthly caseworker, parent and sibling visits) prior to the transfer.</li> </ol>
<p>G. Documentation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Visitation and contacts with the child, the child's siblings, the child's parents, and other significant persons in the child's life must be documented.</li> <li>2. All visitation will be captured in CAPSS with details about the interactions and activities and how they relate to the set permanency goal.</li> <li>3. Visitation plans must but entered into CAPSS, including all updates if there is a change in the plan.</li> </ol>

Original Effective Date:  
Current Effective Date:  
Supersedes:



Forms:	DSS Form 30207 - Foster Care Oversight Form
Resources:	<a href="#">Click here to enter resources related to the policy update to manuals and tools.</a>
Related Management Reports:	<b>CAPSS Batch Reports:</b> Foster Care Case Management Report – SF170-R01, Foster Care Attention Report – SF180-R01, Foster Care Messures – SF250-R01 <b>HS Dashboard Report:</b> Performance Messure 14a – Face to face with Foster Children

Original Effective Date:  
Current Effective Date:  
Supersedes: