

Parent-Child-Caseworker Visitations

(FY 2021 Appropriation Act - Public Act 166 of 2020)

March 1, 2021

Sec. 564. (1) *The department shall develop a clear policy for parent-child visitations. The local county offices, caseworkers, and supervisors shall meet an 85% success rate, after accounting for factors outside of the caseworkers' control.*

(2) *Per the court-ordered number of required meetings between caseworkers and a parent, the caseworkers shall achieve a success rate of 85%, after accounting for factors outside of the caseworkers' control.*

(3) ***By March 1 of the current fiscal year, the department shall provide to the senate and house appropriations subcommittees on the department budget, the senate and house fiscal agencies, the senate and house policy offices, and the state budget office a report on the following:***

(a) ***The percentage of success rate for parent-child visitations and court-ordered required meetings between caseworkers referenced in subsections (1) and (2) for the previous year.***

(b) ***The barriers to achieve the success rates in subsections (1) and (2) and how this information is tracked.***



Parent-Child-Caseworker Visitations Section 564(3) PA 166 of 2020

The Modified Implementation, Sustainability and Exit Plan review of cases in reporting period 18 (January-June 2020) revealed:

- Sixty-one (61.29) percent of children had visits of sufficient frequency with their parents to promote parent-child relationships. Beginning March 2020, this included face-to-face contact as well as video contact in compliance with federal exceptions.
- Seventy-one (70.98) percent of caseworkers completed at least one face-to-face contact with parents each month. Beginning March 2020, this included face-to-face contact as well as video contact in compliance with federal exceptions.

Barriers to Compliance

- Health and safety concerns related to COVID-19 leading to statewide Stay Home orders impacted face to face contacts for workers, parents, and children.
- Time involved in transportation and supervision of visits is difficult for workers.
- Lack of standardized assessment tools for development of family-specific visitation plans.
- Need for continued education of community partners regarding the role and importance of parent-child visitation in child welfare cases.

Efforts to Mitigate Barriers

- The department undertook extensive efforts to ensure that parent child visits and worker parent visits could occur using various forms of video technology when face to face contact was not allowed per Executive Order or when it was not safe due to COVID-19 illness or exposure for any of the parties.
 - Continuous guidance has been issued to the field, beginning March 2020, to ensure clear direction was provided on contact expectations, mitigation strategies required to reduce possible exposure for all parties, and alternative methods of contact when face to face was not allowed or posed a risk.
 - Parents and caregivers in need were provided with phones or other devices, and data plans, to support video communication.
 - When weather permitted outdoor contacts were encouraged.
 - Alternate supervision was used when appropriate; relatives, caregivers, field team workers; to encourage parent child visitation face to face.
- The Safety and Facilitation Experts Face Team Meeting pilot was expanded to place focus on two crucial times in a child welfare case, removal and return home. Specially trained facilitators place focus on a number of case elements, including continuing the connection between parents and children when removal must occur and ensuring appropriate supports are in place as visitation increases prior to return home.
- Opportunities are provided to educate relative caregivers about the importance of parent-child-visits and the relative caregivers' role in visitation.

Parent-Child-Caseworker Visitations Section 564(3) PA 166 of 2020

- The Foster Care Supportive Visitation contract program provides intensive and individualized parent-child visit services to families whose children are in foster care and where reunification is the case goal. General activities include providing in-home parenting education, observing parent-child interactions, and giving helpful feedback to the parent before and after each session. Contract amounts were increased to increase the number of families the program can service.
- Development of contracts for the delivery of evidence-based/best practice services to address needs related to parenting skills.
- The Enhanced MiTEAM Practice Model includes guidance on development of parenting time plans and assessment aspects of the case service plan.
- Training is provided, as needed, to ensure a clear understanding of visitation policy, proper documentation of visitation in Michigan Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System, and the use of data in identification of trends and gaps locally and statewide.
- Continued collaboration in a workgroup in Kent County that includes partners across the continuum of care coming together to identify and address issues of overrepresentation of minorities coming into care. The workgroup includes representatives from K-12 and higher education, law enforcement, faith-based leaders, former foster care youth, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services staff, attorneys, local judges, and private agency staff.

Tracking

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services developed standard reports, a book of business, and performs quality assurance compliance reviews to track compliance with caseworker-parent visits, parent-child visits and to monitor compliance with policy.