Chapter 10

ESTABLISH FAMILY TIME/VISITATION PLAN

10-1. Purpose. Children who must be seperated from parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and siblings should be provided with family time unless there is a court order restricting or preventing visitation. Family time includes visitation and other forms of contact between children and parents, siblings who are separated, and grandparents. “Family time” is meaningful and regular contact which is intended to allow the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) 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 parent(s)/legal guardian(s) 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).

c. Participate in monitored telephone calls, face-time, skyping, e-mails, letters, exchange of photographs, etc.

10-2. Safety During Visitation.

a. The visitation plan is developed and documented as one or more actions in a safety plan. In cases involving domestic violence, visitation involving a parent/legal guardian who is a survivor should be part of the Confidential Child Safety Plan.

b. The visitation plan should provide for child safety. The visitation plan will be based on the assessment of danger threat(s) and how they might manifest during caregiver visits with the child.

c. Any family member who is selected to supervise visits must be approved as an informal safety plan provider. The child welfare professional responsible for the safety plan must explain the danger threats that resulted in the need for a safety plan to any person responsible for supervision of visits.

d. When the case involves the dynamics of domestic violence, the survivor must be involved in providing feedback about the visitation plan as to:

(1) How the transfer of the children to the perpetrator should occur.

(2) Concerns as to dynamics that may occur during visitation.

(3) Input as to who should supervise the child(ren)’s visits (family members, a neutral person, others).

10-3. Court Orders.

a. Visitation between the child and the child’s parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and siblings will occur in accordance with court orders.

b. If at any time during visiation the safety of the child is compromised, visitation will be immediately suspended for up to 72 hours and the department or case manager will contact CLS to request a staffing to determine next steps.

c. Minimally, monthly visitation between the child and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will 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. If monthly visitation between the child and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) is not recommended to the court, the court will be advised of the reasons for the recommendation.

(1) When there is a recommendation of no visitation or less than monthly visitation because it is not in the best interest of the child, the court will be provided documentation of the reason. This documentation will also be recorded in the case record.

(2) If the court does not order particular locations, times, or conditions for visits, the child welfare professional will make concerted efforts to arrange all visits between children and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) in a setting that is not traumatizing to the child. To the extent possible, visitation will occur in a home-like setting and not in an institutional setting or office. However, the safety of the children being visited will always be the primary consideration.

(3) Visitation between a child in out-of-home care and the child's parent(s)/legal guardian(s) may be arranged and supervised by the caregiver if 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 parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be arranged and supervised by a safety services provider, formal or informal, approved in accordance with Chapter 7 of this operating procedure.

10-4. Observations of Visits.

a. Visits will be supervised and observed when necessary for child safety as supported by the Safety Analysis.

b. Supervision of court-supervised cases must be in accordance with the court order.

c. If the child welfare professional is not directly responsible for supervising visits, he/she must communicate with any person supervising visits so that they are familiar with both the strengths and challenges associated with the parent/legal guardian's diminished protective capacities. In addition, the child welfare professional will:

(1) Discuss with the person(s) responsible for supervision what should be observed during visits for purposes of evaluating progress with diminished protective capacities.

(2) Gather direct feedback from the person supervising visits to inform the ongoing evaluation of protective capacities, in particular any protective capacities associated with Conditions for Return.

10-5. FSFN Documentation. The visit occurrence, activities and interractions observed between the child and parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and/or sibling(s) during the visit will be documented in the FSFN Case Plan worksheet within two business days of the visit.