



Department of

Children's Services

Quality Contacts: Caseworker/Parents

A Webinar Series

Quality Contacts with Caregivers

Quality worker-parent visits set a foundation for achieving child welfare outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being.



Policy on Parent/Caregiver Engagement and Support



State of Tennessee
Department of Children's Services

Administrative Policies and Procedures: 31.8

Subject:	Parent /Caregiver Engagement and Support	
Procedure Change Notice:	♦ Section D, 1-2: Clarification made on documenting concerted efforts.	Revised: 11/30/17
Authority:	TCA 37-2-403, 37-2-416, 37-3-603	
Standards:	DCS Practice Model Standards: 5-201, 5-202, 5-203, 5-204, 5-400, 5-500, 5-600, 5-602, 5-603, 6-100, 6-101, 6-102, 6-300, 6-302, 6-404, 7-105A, 8-201, 8-304, 10-100, 10-101, 10-200, 10-204, 10-207, 10-208, 12-202, 12-300, 12-301, 12-401, 12-601, 12-603 COA Standards: PA-CFS 3; PA-CFS 10; PA-CFS 15; PA-CFS 21; CFSR 12; CFSR 15	
Application:	To All Department of Children's Services Employees	
Policy Statement:		
Contact, engagement, support and collaboration are essential to custodial and non-custodial parent(s)/caregiver(s) receipt of individualized services and supports that address their needs, increase their capacities for effective parenting and assist them in stabilizing their families.		
Purpose:		
Building relationships with parent(s)/caregiver(s) based on empathy, respect and genuineness to gain an understanding of the parent(s)/caregiver(s) perception of the presenting issues and to provide opportunities for the parent(s)/caregiver(s) to express their feelings and concerns throughout the case- planning process; engaging in a collaborative decision making process regarding outcomes, goals, and tasks with parent(s)/caregiver(s), their identified supports, and providers. Concerted efforts should be made to accommodate the parent(s) schedule and decision making. Ensuring that parents are informed of and involved in safety, permanency, well-being, and case progress discussions to promote achievement of case goals.		



Tennessee Department of Children's Services

Parent Engagement and Support Work Aid

Supplemental to DCS Policy: 31.8, Parent/Caregiver Engagement and Support

All connections made and concerted efforts attempted with and for parent(s)/caregiver(s) are to be documented. Suggestions below are examples of how concerted efforts can be achieved while engaging parent(s)/caregiver(s).

Worker Contacts

- The worker must make repeated efforts to locate and engage parent(s)/caregiver(s) after failed contacts, increasing attempts and changing strategies until successful. Suggestions for tasks to meet these efforts can be found in [Diligent Search Quick Tips](#) and DCS Policy [14.5, Locating the Child and Family](#).
- Accommodate the parent(s)/caregiver(s) schedule and specific needs and engage them in decision making. When accommodation cannot be made all concerted efforts are to be documented.
- Contact with the parent(s)/caregiver(s) must occur frequently enough to monitor their progress occurring at a minimum once monthly unless there is a court order releasing the Department of reasonable efforts to make such contact or if the child is in full guardianship.
- The worker should plan and prepare prior to the visit ensuring a clear purpose and agenda, addressing current and new issues/concerns and accounting for worker safety considerations
- Contact must include discussions about the progress the parent(s)/caregiver(s) has made on goals and any needs the parent(s)/caregiver(s) may have.
- Contact must include a discussion about the effectiveness of services and any barriers to the services the parent is receiving.
- Contact must be of a length and location to promote open, confidential, and thorough conversations.
- Each visit should build from the prior visit, following up on what was discussed at the last visit and helping to identifying barriers and working through them with the parent(s).

Trauma Informed Practice with Parents



Birth Parent Trauma

A history of traumatic experiences may present challenges in the parents ability to:

- Make appropriate judgments about safety and risk
- Form and maintain secure and trusting relationships, leading to:
 - Disruptions in relationships with infants, children, and adolescents,
 - Negative feelings about parenting,
 - Personalize their children's negative behavior,
 - Ineffective or inappropriate discipline.
- Have trusting relationships with caseworkers, foster parents, and service providers.
- Supporting their child's therapy.
- Regulate their emotions.
- Maintain healthy coping strategies.
- Make sound decisions.

Trauma histories may also:

- Result in trauma reminders—or “triggers”—
- Make the parent more vulnerable to other life stressors

Using a trauma-informed approach with Birth Parents

- Anger, fear, or avoidance may be a reaction to their own past traumatic experiences.
- Past traumatic experiences may inform current functioning and parenting.
- Approaching parents in a punitive way will likely worsen the situation rather than motivate a parent.
- Build on parents' desires to keep their children safe and on reducing their children's challenging behaviors.
- Help parents understand the impact of past trauma on current functioning while still holding them accountable.
- Trauma can play out during case conferences, home visits, visits to children in foster care, court hearings, and so on.
- Help parents anticipate their possible reactions and develop different ways to respond to stressors and trauma triggers
- Refer parents to trauma-informed services whenever possible.
- Become knowledgeable about evidence-supported trauma interventions to include in service planning.

Before the Visit



Core Considerations

Start with the End in
Mind

Desired
Outcomes &
Case Closure
Criteria

Clear Focus

Safety

Questions to Ask Yourself Before the Visit

- What is the purpose of this visit? How do the purpose and agenda fit with the family's case goals?
- What documents and information have you reviewed, and what collateral contacts have you made? What do they tell you about child safety? About the family's progress toward goals?
- What services or supports does the family need and which ones may no longer be necessary?
- Does the current assessment have any "gray areas" for which you need more information to determine appropriate services or supports? If so, how do you plan to gather more information?

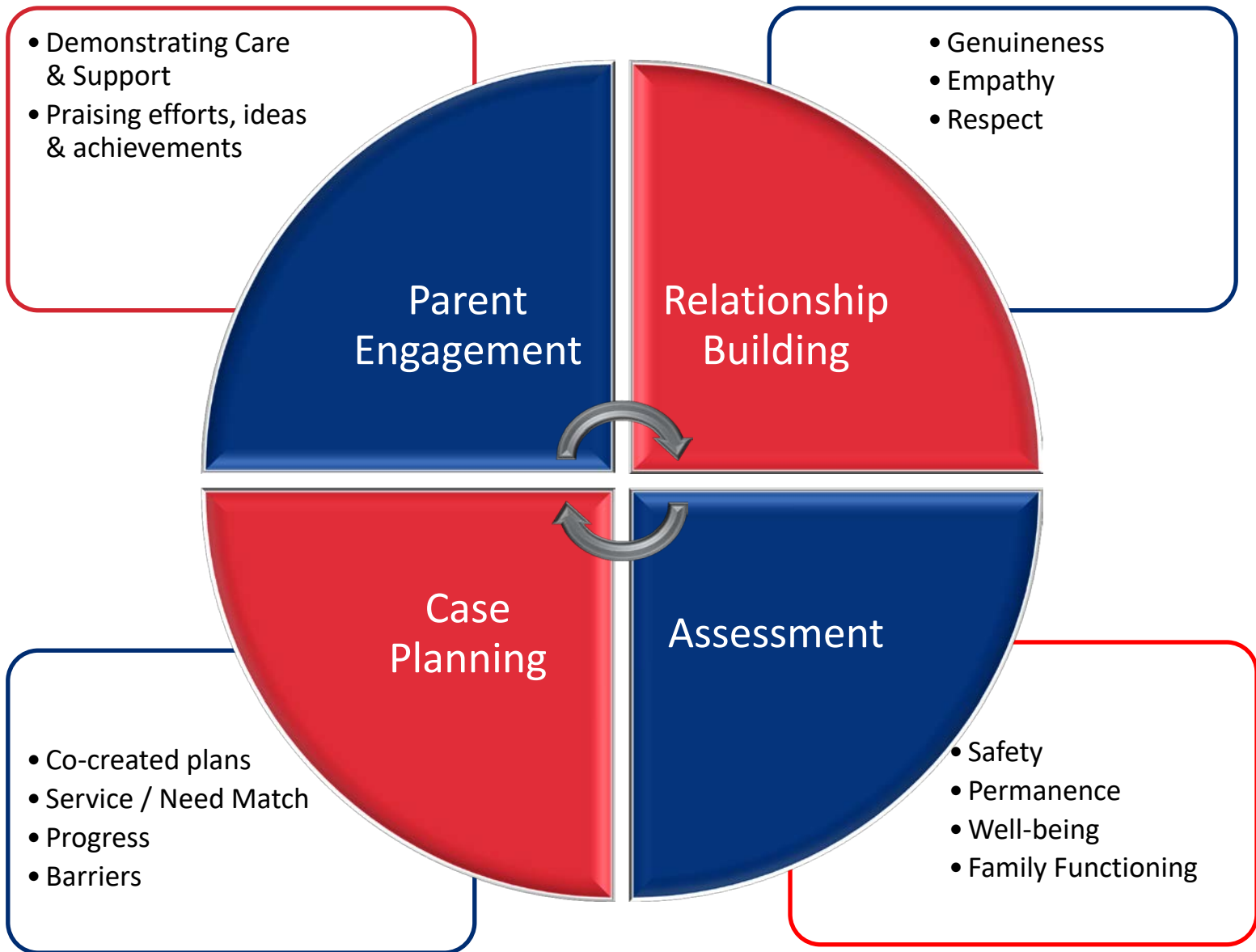
Questions to Ask Yourself Before the Visit

- What strategies do you plan to use to engage, support, and encourage the parent(s)?
- What have you learned about how to partner effectively with the parent(s)?
- What are the strengths of the family and how can they be leveraged to enhance family progress?
- What concerns do you have about this visit?
- What difficult conversations do you anticipate and how do you plan to address them?
- Are there cultural issues to consider?
- Do you have concerns for your safety related to this visit?

During the Visit



Core Considerations



Caseworker activities during the visit reflect:

Engagement & Collaboration

- Input from Parents
- Genuineness, Empathy, Respect
- Check bias & judgement
- Achievements, challenges, needs
- Private conversations with adults & youth

Case Planning

- Updated assessments
- Progress reviewed
- Strengths & opportunities identified
- Concerns, changing circumstances, challenges
- Family interaction observed
- Supports & services identified
- Family expectations communicated
- Case plan updated

Wrap Up

- Summarize key points & next steps
- Agenda for next visit
- Arrangements for next visit

Meaningful Visit Guides

Staff Training

Mandatory Trainings for Staff

Staff Training Calendars

Staff Online Training

NTI

Quality Contacts

Quality Contacts

Video

About

Quality Contacts Webinar Series

Pilot Schedule

Contest

[Click here to view the current webinar schedule.](#)

Overview, Course Descriptions, and Resources

All sessions marked with * are separated by programs including Non-custodial (CPSA, CPSI, FCIP, and FSS), Custodial, and Juvenile Justice.

Caseworker and Child/Youth Quality Contacts Coaching Session*: for all caseload carrying staff and supervisors of caseload carrying staff

In this course, DCS staff will learn the components, characteristics and stages of a quality contact and the casework activities that constitute a quality contact between the worker and children. DCS staff will understand the importance of age appropriate, plan specific conversations as well as ensuring private time with each child to assess for safety and other concerns that may be present. Staff will leave the training with new knowledge and skills to enhance their Quality Contacts Small Test of Change plans.

- [Quality Matters Discussion Guide - Child](#)
- [Child Quality Contact Video](#)
- [Quality Matters Discussion Guide - Youth](#)
- [Youth Quality Contact Video](#)
- [Meaningful Visits with Children of Any Age](#)

Engaging Mothers



Engaging Fathers



After the Visit



Core Considerations

Clear, objective
documentation

Debriefing and
reflection

Caseworker Activities After the Visit Reflect:

Documentation

- Clear, concrete, concise
- Nonjudgmental and avoids “buzzwords.”
- Documentation includes the following elements, as appropriate:
 - Assessment of child safety and risk
 - Child or youth well-being
 - Progress toward case goals and any changes to case plan or tasks
 - Concerns expressed by the child, youth, parent, or resource parent
 - Observations on the home environment and interactions
 - Additional service needs
 - Cultural considerations
 - Follow-up activities and priorities
 - Summary of actions needed

Debriefing

- Meeting with supervisor involved discussion of visit, child safety concerns, and key directions.
- Caseworker reflected on successful approaches during visits, challenges experienced, and areas for development in conducting quality contacts.

Follow-up

- Caseworker followed up on commitments made and next steps.

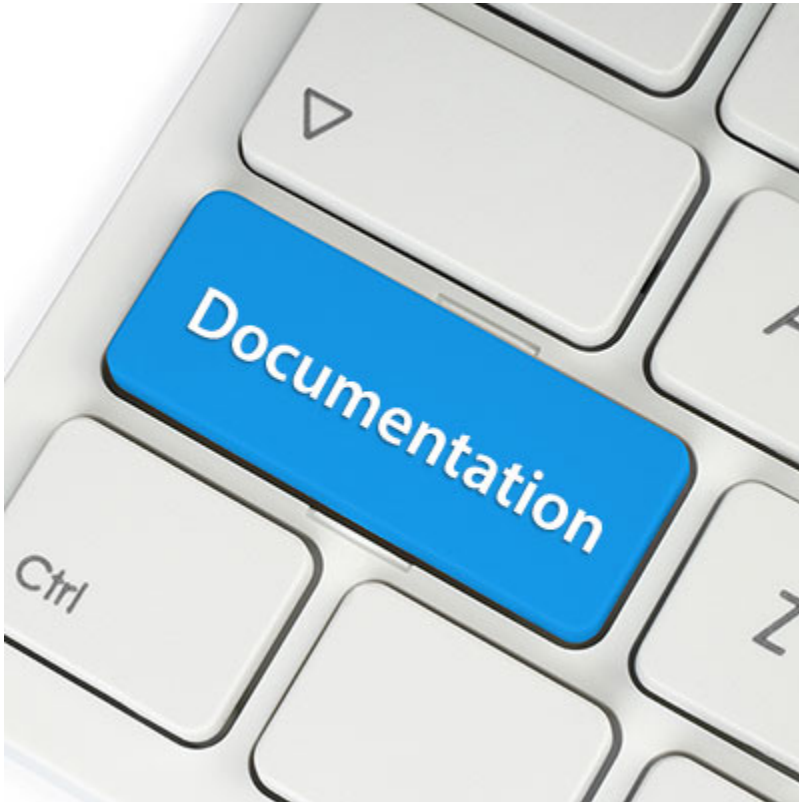
Questions to Ask Yourself

- What was the purpose of your recent visit and did you achieve it?
- What engagement strategies did you use?
- What worked well in engagement, and what would you do differently next time?
- What is the parent doing that indicates progress in providing a safe environment for the child?
- What did you learn about child safety threats, vulnerabilities, and family protective capacities during your assessment? If you identified present or imminent safety threats, what did you do to address them?
- What did you learn about the parent's and child's well-being?

Questions to Ask Yourself

- What observations did you make about the home environment and family interactions?
- What did you learn about the family's progress toward achieving goals identified in the case plan? What barriers exist?
- What services or supports does the family need?
- How did you work together with the parent to find solutions to current issues and needs?
- What changes (if any) are required to case goals and plans?
- What next steps did you discuss with the parent? What follow-up actions have you taken?

Don't forget to Document!!!



Concerted Efforts

MONTHLY

- ✓ Informal assessments made through conversations and observations with children, families, and foster parents.
- ✓ Different things were attempted to continue to engage children and families to complete assessments and services.



Goal: Improve quality
of parent contacts

Plan/Action Steps:

1. Take Trauma
Toolkit or Building
Strong Brains
Training
2. Engage parents in
discussing fears
and concerns.

Update your Small Test of Change

Evaluation

Course Title:

Quality Contacts: Caseworker/Parent Visits

Trainers: Check the Chat box

<https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/training/tpd/atl/dcstrainingevaluation.html>

The logo for the state of Tennessee, featuring the letters "TN" in white, serif font on a red square background. A small "TM" trademark symbol is located at the bottom right of the red square.

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Thank you