


STATE OF WISCONSIN  
Department of Health and Family Services  
Division of Children and Family Services

To: Area Administrators/ Human Services Area Coordinators  
Bureau Directors  
Child Placing Agency Directors  
Child Welfare Agency Directors  
County Departments of Community Programs Directors  
County Departments of Developmental Disabilities Services Directors  
County Departments of Human Services Directors  
County Departments of Social Services Directors  
Indian Child Welfare Directors  
Section Chiefs/Licensing Chiefs  
Tribal Chairpersons/Human Services Facilitators

From: Reggie Bicha   
Administrator

Re: New Federal Requirements for Caseworker Visits with Children in Out-of-Home Care

The purpose of this memo is to notify agencies of the federal requirement in the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 for caseworker visits with children who are placed in out-of-home care and who are under the placement and care responsibility of the State (which includes counties). The bill reauthorizes the Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) program for 5 years from 2007 through 2011. The Act provides additional money to support the implementation of the new requirement for caseworker visits.

The Division recognizes that Wisconsin did well in the area of caseworker contacts with children and families in the Child and Family Services Review. However, this is a national standard and Wisconsin must comply.

The Child and Family Services Improvement Act:

- Mandates that states, in order to continue to receive PSSF funding, implement a policy requiring monthly visits with children who are in out-of-home care.
- Requires that at least 51% of the visits must occur within the residence where the child is placed.
- Requires states to collect data demonstrating that the visits occurred and to provide the data to the Administration for Children and Families. For the purposes of data collection, caseworker visits will be counted for only those months in which a child has been in out-of-home care for the entire month.
- Requires that all states, by October 1, 2011, demonstrate that at least 90% of their children in out-of-home care will have been visited by their caseworkers each and every month that they were in care.
- Provides limited funding for workforce initiatives designed to help states reach the goal of monthly caseworker visits. The federal emphasis on the use of these funds includes worker retention, recruitment, and training and the ability to access the benefits of technology.

The Act establishes the following deadlines:

- By June 30, 2007, states were to describe the standards for the content and frequency of caseworker visits with children in out-of-home care and the procedures developed to track and report monthly caseworker visits data.

- By October 31 2007, states must provide baseline data showing the percentage of children in out-of-home care under the responsibility of the State who were visited on a monthly basis by the caseworker responsible for the case and the percentage of visits that occurred in the residence of the child. Preliminary data run on October 4, 2007, for the baseline period of October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2007, indicated that 24% of children in out-of-home care were visited each and every month, and within that group, 67% of the visits occurred in the child's residence. Final baseline data will be pulled at the end of October and sent to ACF on October 31, 2007.
- By June 30, 2008, the Department must provide to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services an outline of steps it will take to reach the goal of 90 percent of the children in out-of-home care being visited by their caseworker each month, and yearly improvement target percentages (benchmarks) that it will meet to ensure that the State meets the 90 percent goal by October 1, 2011.
- If a state fails to meet its targets, there will be a reduction in federal PSSF match.

The federal Administration for Children and Families has issued further guidance regarding the caseworker visits.

- This requirement applies to all children who are in out-of-home care, including children in foster homes, treatment foster homes, group homes, residential care centers, non-secure detention, and the home from which the child was removed if the child is on a trial reunification, and who are under a CHIPS, JIPS, or juvenile delinquency order.
- Visits with the child may occur with other people involved (e.g., a caseworker may visit a child at the same time the caseworker is visiting with parents).
- A State may define who is a caseworker for purposes of this activity with the caveat that the person must in some way be assigned responsibility for either the case or visitation with the child. Therefore, in addition to county and state agency caseworkers, caseworkers in facilities or private agencies that license treatment foster homes may conduct the visits.
- Children must be visited once each calendar month, but not necessarily within 30 days of the prior visit. As an example, the caseworker could visit a child on June 1<sup>st</sup> and on July 30<sup>th</sup> and meet the requirements.
- The agency will not be penalized for failing to document a visit during a month when a child or youth has run away. The child's status must be documented in eWiSACWIS.

As a result of these new reporting requirements related to caseworker visits with children in out-of-home care, the Division will need to collect and report data through eWiSACWIS. The Division will be developing procedures for all agencies to use in recording the data for reporting to the federal Administration for Children and Families. A workgroup will be convened to identify and address policy implications. Prior to convening this workgroup, DCFS staff will begin meeting internally to discuss the impact on counties, including juvenile justice cases and state reporting needs. The group will also establish performance goals and recommend ways to use the funds set aside by the federal government to improve caseworker retention, recruitment, and training, and access to technology. Please see Numbered Memo, 2007-12, e-WiSACWIS Fiscal Issues, for further information on funding.

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