



Visitation

Visitation Promotes Permanency

Visitation is a service to children and parents. It promotes permanency, and is a service that DHS monitors when reviewing a parent's progress and compliance. Each child placed in the legal custody of DHS has the following rights: "[...] to visit and communicate with a parent or legal guardian, siblings, members of his or her family, and other significant people in the child's life." OAR 413-010-0180 (11).

Applicable Findings

Finding 3. Has DHS ensured that appropriate services are in place to safeguard the child's safety, health and wellbeing?

For Finding 3, the board ensures the child is visiting with family and that the visitation plan is in the best interest of the child. Visits preserve a child's attachments to his or her parents, siblings, and other family members; and can lessen both the child's and the parents' anxiety about the child being placed in substitute care. The younger the child, the more frequent the contact must be in order to maintain relationships. Especially for young children, frequency is more important than length.

Finding 4. Has DHS made reasonable/active efforts to provide services for the child to safely return home?

For Finding 4, the board ensures DHS has offered visitation to promote family reunification. If the plan is to start working toward a trial reunification, the board will want to know if DHS has provided unsupervised visits of gradually increasing length in the family's home to assess child safety.

Visitation should occur in settings that encourage the most natural interaction between family members while minimizing any existing risk to the child. For example, visitation may take place at school conferences, medical appointments, church programs, and athletic activities.

Finding 6. Have the parents made sufficient progress to make it possible for the child to safely return home?

For Finding 6, the board reviews parents' participation in visits. Visitation will likely be supervised at the beginning of a case and can be changed to unsupervised once safety

and well-being are assured. Visitation plans should change over time depending on parent progress toward reunification, with visits increasing in length and requiring more responsibility on the part of parents.

Changes in visitation arrangements should reflect assessment of risk to the child and progress toward achieving the permanency goal, not attempts to reward or punish either the child's or the parents' behavior.

Possible Questions to Ask About Visitation

To the Parent(s)

- Do you have anything you would like to share about visits with your child(ren)?
- How are visits going from your perspective?
- How often do you have visits?
- Is there someone you know who would be willing to be a safety service provider that would possibly allow for increased supervised visits?

To the Caseworker

- Does the child have visits with sibling(s)?
- Did the court or a trained therapist recommend limited or no contact?
- Have options for additional visits or contacts been explored?
- Are there any services in place designed to support or enhance the quality of visits?
- Has the Visit and Contact Plan been reviewed with each parent within the last 90 days?

To Everyone

- Is there anyone who thinks the frequency and quality of the visits have not been sufficient to develop and enhance attachment?

OAR 413-010-0170 thru 0180
DHS Procedure Manual, Chapter 3, Section 7