

# DCF Ongoing Services Standards

## June 2017

### Frequency and Location

#### Frequency of Family Interaction

The agency shall make reasonable/Active Efforts to facilitate face-to-face family interaction based upon the child's developmental needs; however, it must occur no less than weekly.

Additionally, children shall have other family interaction (e.g., telephone calls, letters, etc.) with their parents at least weekly.

Weekly interaction should be viewed as the minimum standard. However, best practice standards indicate the following:

If an attachment bond is to be maintained between parents and their children in out-of-home care, family interaction needs to be frequent. Children between the ages of 0-5, for example, should have contact with their parents 3-5 times a week, if the plan is reunification. As a best practice guideline, the frequency of family interaction between parents and their children in out-of-home care should correspond with the child's wishes, age, developmental level, and should be consistent with the child's case plan and permanence goals.

#### Location of Face-to-Face Family Interaction

Primary consideration must be given to face-to-face family interaction occurring in settings that encourage the most natural interaction between family members while minimizing any threats to safety that may exist to the children or other participants.

Guidelines to assist with making the determination about location of family interaction include:

- Suitability for developmentally related activities; (e.g., does the location allow for positive interaction relative to the child's development?)
- Parents' attitudes and feelings about the care providers (foster and relative placements) and their ability to have contact with the care providers.
- Foster parents' or care providers' interest, willingness, and ability to be involved in the family interaction process and their perceptions and feelings related to the legal parents.
- Factors that might determine whether family interaction takes place in the out-of-home care providers' home.
- Consideration for the child's physical safety and emotional stability.

The optimum environment for face-to-face family interaction is in the home of the child's parent, if it is a safe environment for all participants. When this cannot occur, interaction should occur in the most natural setting as possible such as the home of the out-of-home care provider.