

# Setting the Stage for Quality Caseworker Visits

## Course Description

Since the federal passing of the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006, and California's enactment of SB 342, federal and state legislation has established increasingly higher performance standards for probation and social worker visits with youth in out-of-home care. Federal and state guidelines have been implemented in relation to the frequency, location and quality of caseworker visits, which have been noted to have a strong correlation to positive outcomes for foster care youth.

This class is designed to provide a framework for understanding caseworker visits with foster youth and the required mandates. The class has a primary focus on best practice guidelines for quality visitation with children and youth, alternate care providers and parents or guardians.

Upon completion participants will be able to:

- Recognize federal and state regulations for caseworker visits with youth in placement
- Identify the link between the frequency and quality of visits to safety, placement stability, and permanency
- Demonstrate strategies to address three areas of assessment: safety, permanency, and well-being
- Demonstrate key elements of a quality visit
- Identify how and where to document visitation requirements

## Instructors

*Dorothy Byron-Arrington* has expertise in the areas of Child Welfare; Child and Family Teaming (CFT); Team Decision Making (TDM); Resource Family Approval (RFA); Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

*Rob Edmisten* has worked for the Sacramento County Probation Department for more than 20 years. Over the past decade, he has served as a supervisory probation officer for the Sacramento County Boys Ranch, Internal Affairs, and currently Title IV-E Waiver Unit (Juvenile Field). In addition, since 2010, Edmisten designed curricula for and trained law enforcement, probation, and corrections in partnership with a number of institutes, including the University of Cincinnati and the UC Davis Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice. He also serves on the International Community Corrections Association Region 8 Board of Directors, the Sacramento City Gang Prevention and Intervention Task Force, and as a trainer and facilitator for a host of local organizations. He holds a master's degree in criminal justice, corrections, and offender rehabilitation.

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## Learning Objectives

- ▶ Identify the link between the frequency and quality of visits to safety, placement stability and permanency
- ▶ Discuss three strategies to address three areas of assessment: safety, permanency and well-being
- ▶ Name three key elements of a quality visit
- ▶ Identify two important areas when documenting visitation requirements

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## Group Agreements



What do you need to focus and learn today?

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## Let's Get Started

- ▶ Share your name and current role
- ▶ How long have you been a caseworker?
- ▶ Share a strength you bring when completing caseworker visits
- ▶ Share a challenge you face



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## Federal & State Regulations

•Federal Child and Family Services Act of 2006 (PL 109-288) federal mandate regarding caseworker visits (also SB703, statutes of 2007).

•August 2 2011, H.R. 2790 Child and Family Services Extension and Enhancement Act was introduced to reauthorize mandates through 2016.

•California Manual of Policies and Procedures Division 31 Regulations revised to reflect these new laws (July 2, 2011).

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## Federal & State Regulations

•September 30 2011 PL 112-34, Child and Family Services Improvement Innovation Act of 2011 revised mandates for visitation and standards for compliance

California SB 342, Statutes of 2013 enacted to amend WIC 16516.5 and 16516.6 to comply with federal requirements of USC Title 42 section 624(f)(2)(A), effective January 1, 2014 (ACL 14-50)

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## What do we know about caseworker visits?

There is a strong correlation between quality home visits and:

- Improved assessments for safety and risk of harm
- Increased assessments for alternative permanency options
- Better identification and monitoring for intervention services
- Increased engagement with children/youth, parents and caregivers



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## Children & Family Services Review (C-CFSR) Outcome Measures

### Safety Outcomes:

- S-1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect
- S-2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate

### Permanency Outcomes:

- P-1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations
- P-2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children

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## Children & Family Services Review (C-CFSR) Outcome Measures

### Well-Being Outcomes:

- WB-1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs
- WB-2: Children/Youth receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs
- WB-3: Children/Youth receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs

California Child Welfare Indicators Project  
[http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare/](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/)

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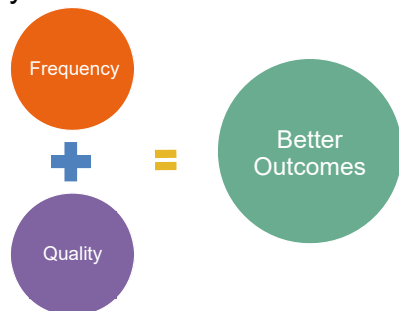
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## Simply Stated



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## You see the challenges everyday

- ▶ Examples of youth who have intentions or goals but fail to achieve them
- ▶ How could a healthy relationship have helped?



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## Elements of a Quality Visit

### Federal guidelines are clear:

- ▶ Visits must be planned in advance
- ▶ Focus is on monitoring the **safety, well being and permanence of youth** in out-of-home care

### Visits must be:

- ▶ Between a caseworker and legal parent
- ▶ Between a caseworker and a child/youth/non-minor dependent
- ▶ Between a caseworker and substitute care provider

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## Division 31 Requirements

- ▶ Represent minimum topic areas
- ▶ Guideline to keep visits focused
- ▶ Support agenda building
- ▶ Structure for documentation

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## What has Changed Since 2011?



- ▶ **Who** can visit
- ▶ **Where** to visit
- ▶ **When** to visit:  
Frequency

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## Essentials of **Who** Can Visit

- Must have a defined responsibility for case management or visitation for the child/youth
- The visit must be documented in CWS/CMS on a monthly basis (minimum) and entered by the end of the month

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## What Isn't a Quality Visit

- ▶ Being present with a child/youth when the primary reason for the contact is for a visitation or other event
- ▶ Being present during a court hearing
- ▶ A Child Family Team meeting
- ▶ Unexpected meeting with child/youth (e.g., running into them in the community or office)



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## Where to Visit-SB 342



- ▶ Majority of visits (over 50%) must be in the child/youth's residence
- ▶ If visit takes place outside residence, it must be documented in the case file, CWS/CMS and court report describing the location and the reason the visit did not take place in the residence
- ▶ No more than two consecutive monthly visits may take place outside the child/youth's residence
- ▶ Best practice is to schedule for a time convenient for both the caregiver and child/youth

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## Private Discussion SB-342

- ▶ The child/youth must be seen alone **every time**
  - ▶ Facilitates a safety assessment
  - ▶ Provides the opportunity to discuss sensitive and personal issues
  - ▶ Advise the child/youth that they have the right to request that the private discussion, currently required by state law, occur outside the foster or group home
  - ▶ Provides opportunity to build rapport with the child/youth



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## When to Visit

- ▶ Each visit should have a specific purpose
- ▶ Monthly visitation is a minimum standard
- ▶ Timeliness of visits should be based on the child/youth's needs



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## Missing Youth



- ▶ The youth's whereabouts are unknown and the Court has been informed
- ▶ Monthly attempts must be made to locate the youth
- ▶ Documented attempts are recorded in CWS/CMS and court reports

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## Trauma-Informed Practice



- ▶ Trauma is the emotional response to exposure to an actual or threatened death, serious injury or violence
- ▶ There is a lasting impact of early stress and trauma
- ▶ Response to trauma-intrusive thoughts: avoidance, hyper arousal, mood, dissociation, outbursts of anger or rage, etc.
- ▶ This doesn't excuse the behavior, but it can explain it
- ▶ Caseworkers should be mindful to avoid re-traumatizing

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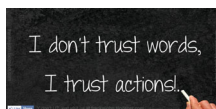
## Engagement

Encourage and foster a strengths-based relationship:

- ▶ Take time to build rapport-meet them where they are at
- ▶ Follow through
- ▶ Listen and do not judge
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Be honest about expectations and next steps
- ▶ Use Motivational Interviewing
- ▶ Take time, consistency and reliability to build a relationship

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## Building Rapport

- Ask them what they want and how you can support them
- Ask about their culture
- Be open and transparent
- Be cautious of any cultural norms
- Keep your implicit or explicit bias in check
- People remember HOW you talk to them
- Beware of stereotypes
- Use appropriate language
- Be genuine
- Use empathy
- Check body language

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## Legal and Practice Foundations for Caseworker Visits with Legal Parents

- Reasonable efforts to reunify
- Participatory case planning and services delivery
- Family Time (Visitation) focused on skill development and attachment
  - The primary goal is to support the child's needs and promote a healthy, age-appropriate relationship between the parent and child.

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## Meeting with Legal Parents

- Our first goal is family reunification
- Meeting with the parent monthly is required
- Approach parent as experts on their child



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## What does a quality contact look like from a parent's view?



- Planning with the parent to develop agenda
- Develop collaborative and respectful relationship
- Respect for cultural/family norms and parental role
- Active listening
- Focus on behavioral changes to mitigate safety threats and progress in meeting case plan objectives
- Coaching and developing goals for quality parent/child family time.

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## The TEACH Project

Excellence in Interprofessional Education

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How NOT to do Motivational Interviewing: A conversation with "Sal" about managing his asthma

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Motivational Interviewing: A conversation with "Sal" about managing his asthma

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## Goals when Working with Parents/Child/Youth

- Prepare individual to make a change
- Reduce resistance to change
- Increase motivation for change
- Increase behavioral actions toward change



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## Motivational Interviewing Principles

- Does not assume that the individual is motivated
- Does not require the individual to comply, be aware or agree
- Employs specific strategies to build problem awareness and change motivation
- Supports individual's self-reliance
- Focus is on motivating change instead of on solutions
- Communicates respect
- Accepts of individual's feelings and thoughts
- Encourages a non-judgmental collaborative relationship



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## Remember.....

- Individual's goals and the current behaviors
- Focus on how current behaviors can not achieve the individual's goals
- Separate the behavior from the person
- Connect what changes might enable individual to achieve the goals
- Use the "on the one hand...on the other hand" statement to describe discrepancy

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## Also.....

- Arguments and confrontation do not enhance motivation
- View defensiveness and resistance as reluctance or fear
- Feedback regarding patterns and problems are given without judgment
- Suggestions, advice or shared knowledge are geared towards promoting change
- Increase belief in individual's capacity to change

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## Change Talk

Listen for & Remark on individual's:

- Recognition of the problem
- Concern about the current situation
- Statements of desire for change
- Expressions of optimism about change
- Recognition or elaboration of ambivalence
- Degree of willingness to change
- Confidence level towards making change
- Willingness to envision or experiment with change outcome
- Diminishment of fear towards change process
- Resolution of ambivalence or discrepancies

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## Questions that Promote Change Talk

- Do you remember a time things were going well?  
What was it like? What changed?
- What's the worst thing that could happen if you stay this way?
- If you could make things turn out the way you'd like, what would be different?
- In what ways does this concern you?
- What would be the advantage of making a change?  
Staying the way things are now?
- If you decided to make a change, what would it look like in the future?
- I sense you're feeling stuck. What needs to change?

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### Ruler of Readiness Scale

- Use a rating scale of 0 to 10 to determine the "importance" of the change or the parent's "confidence" level for change.
  - How important is this change to you?
  - How confident are you about changing?
- Importance/Confidence Continuum

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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Useful Questions if parent places self on scale at 0 to 3:

- What would need to happen for you to think about change?
- How can I help you look at the different options for change?
- What might need to be different in your life for you to consider making this change in the future?

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Useful Questions-If individual places self on scale at 4 to 6:

- What are some reasons you would want things to stay the same?
- What are some reasons for making the change at this time? Or sooner rather than later?
- What do you like about \_\_\_\_\_?
- What do you not like about \_\_\_\_\_?
- What could help you move to the next step for this change?

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## Useful Questions if a individual places self on scale: 7 to 10

- How might your life be different if you made this change?
- What is your strongest reason for the change?
- What would be your first step in the change process?
- What barriers might you encounter when making the change?
- How might you work around the barriers?

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## Elements of a Visit with Caregivers

Resource families/caregivers are a valued part of the child and family's team and support network. We must ensure adequate communication occurs to support the resource family/caregiver in meeting the needs of the child/youth.



- Monitor and assess the quality of care
- Follow-up on areas from last visit
- Changes in household and relationships within family
- Support/respite needs
- Explanation of court process
- Child/youth's behaviors and adjustment
- Child/youth's well-being (health, education, mental health and development)
- Concurrent planning and permanency

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## Caregivers

Information sharing with caregivers is not only permitted under law, it is required-ACIN 1-05-14.

- A well-informed caregiver is better equipped to meet the needs of the child/youth
- Caregivers are a valued member of the child/youth's team and support network
- Caregivers are entitled to most of the child/youth's information
- The following information should NOT be shared with the caregiver (absent a court order): Substance abuse treatment records of the youth, HIV antibody test results, prevention or treatment of pregnancy or other sexual and reproductive health issues. Also, The legal parents' information which includes the family reunification plan is confidential and should not be shared with the caregiver unless the parent gives permission

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## Quality Visits with Children/Youth

- ▶ Quality and frequency of caseworker visits with children/youth
- ▶ Caseworkers must inform foster youth of their reproductive and sexual health care rights every 6 months and document in CWS/CMS
- ▶ Must talk with the child/youth about foster youth rights at least once every 6 months and document the conversation in CWS/CMS
- ▶ Foster youth credit reporting requirement and CWS/CMS documentation



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## Activity-How do you connect with youth?

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## The Four Step Planning Process

1. PREPARE
2. EXPLORE
3. DIRECT
4. WRAP UP

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## Preparation



- ▶ Schedule in advance
- ▶ Review case and service plan
- ▶ Identify barriers/concerns
- ▶ Prepare an agenda; when scheduling the meeting, ask the child/youth if there is anything they want to discuss

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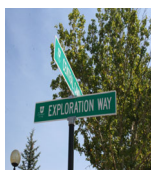
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## Exploration/Assessment During Visit



- ▶ Assess safety, well-being and permanency
- ▶ Immediate needs and concerns
- ▶ Review the agenda and timeframe for the meeting and adjust, if needed
- ▶ Review progress and challenges and follow up on areas from last visit
- ▶ Develop and/or review the TILP for youth ages 14 and older (a new TILP should be developed every 6 months)

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## Directing Interventions

- ▶ Ask questions to assess well-being and safety (health, education, mental health, and development)
- ▶ Strengths and needs
- ▶ Explanation of court process, child/youth's plan for reunification/permanency
- ▶ Current circumstances of family
- ▶ Progress and barriers in achieving case plan objectives
- ▶ Cultural, religious and ethnic considerations
- ▶ Identify supports to help the child/youth
- ▶ Develop agreements on priority areas for next visit



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## Safety is a Primary Concern for Children/Youth in Care



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## Safety in Foster Care

When meeting with the youth alone, questions regarding their safety should be asked. Some examples are:

- What happens when you do not follow the rules or you get into trouble?
- How do adults in the home settle arguments?
- Is there an adult you can talk to if you are worried or scared?

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## SOP to Assess Safety

**THREE HOUSES** (done every 6 months):

House of Worries:

House of Good Things:

House of Dreams:

**SAFETY HOUSE:**

Who lives in the house:

Rules of the house:

What people do in the house:

What needs to be in the house to keep children safe:

Who visits the house:

Who cannot visit and why:

**SAFETY AND PHYSICAL CONDITION OF CHILD:**

**HOME ENVIRONMENT:**

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## Safety

Protecting Children/  
Youth AND  
Community

- ▶ Physical
- ▶ Sexual (including CSEC)
- ▶ Emotional
- ▶ Neglect



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## Permanency

**EVERYONE  
DESERVES A  
FOREVER FAMILY**

- ▶ Stability and permanency in their living situation
- ▶ Family relationships are known and preserved-is there ongoing and consistent time with siblings and other family members?
- ▶ Connection with a forever person
- ▶ Ongoing Family Finding efforts

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## Well-Being

- ▶ Physical health
- ▶ Emotional health (coping skills)
- ▶ Development needs
- ▶ Educational needs
- ▶ Cultural identity
- ▶ Sexuality/orientation



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## Review Meeting



- ▶ Review/summarize the information and key decisions
- ▶ Make a point to identify strengths and challenges in the service plan and new strategies
- ▶ Schedule the next visit
- ▶ Provide a written copy of agreements and future visit information to the child/youth

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## Child and Family Team Meetings

### THE CONTINUUM OF CARE REFORM



- ▶ A child or youth is required to have a CFT within the first 60 days of entering into the child welfare or probation foster care placement
- ▶ A CFT meeting held no less than once every 6 months
- ▶ For youth in placement who are receiving Intensive Care Coordination (ICC), Intensive Home-Based Services (IHBS), or Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC), a CFT meeting must occur at least every 90 days
- ▶ CFT meetings are another way to support the youth and family topics discussed at a visit may be brought to the CFT to process and develop next steps
- ▶ CFT meetings need to be documented in CWS/CMS

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## Envisioning Improved Outcomes

- ▶ Improved assessments of homes and placements
- ▶ Develop relationships
- ▶ Demonstrate problem solving skills
- ▶ Opportunity to integrate initiatives into daily practice (family finding, extended foster care, family and community engagement)
- ▶ Provide a community link to maintain the safety of the child/youth



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## Documentation

- ▶ Contact with the parent, caregivers and the child/youth must be documented in CWS/CMS because it is a critical part of creating a written record of your work with a child/youth and family, ensuring compliance with Division 31 and other State and Federal requirements, and documenting reasonable services or active efforts.
- ▶ Remember, the whole story should be documented (calls, texts, and other collateral visits with the youth).
- ▶ As they say, "If it isn't documented, it didn't happen."
- ▶ Monthly face-to-face case contacts with youth must be entered into CWS/CMS by the last day of the month.

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We are all responsible for improving the lives of our kids.

- What worked well during this visit and how can I apply these lessons to other visits?
- What challenges did I experience during the visit and how might I address these challenges more effectively
- What did I learn during the visits that needs to be addressed or followed up on?
- How do you improve your practice?

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This curriculum was  
developed in collaboration  
with CDSS.

Thanks for joining us!

Questions?

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