

Direction from ACF Associate Commissioner Dr. Jerry Milner as of 3/18/20 at 8am:

Caseworker monthly face to face contact with children and care providers:

As you know, section 422(b)(17) of the Social Security Act (the Act) requires that caseworkers visit children in foster care on a monthly basis. The policy, as currently posted, prohibits using videoconferencing for the purpose of meeting that requirement, and requires that such visits must be held face-to-face. See Child Welfare Policy Manual (CWPM), §7.3, #8.

The current public health challenges and guidelines require a reconsideration of that policy. While it is imperative that caseworkers continue to ensure the well-being of children in care, that imperative must be balanced against the health of caseworkers, children in care, and all of the people with whom they come into contact. The monthly caseworker visit requirement remains in place, but we are modifying our policy to permit such visits to be conducted by videoconferencing in these current extraordinary circumstances. The amended CWPM question and answer will be sent out on the Children's Bureau list serves and updated online in the coming days.

Direction from Oregon Department of Human Services, Child Welfare as of 3.18.20 at 12pm:

Monthly face to face contact between case workers and children currently residing in DHS certified foster homes, and other out of home care settings including homes certified by our Oregon tribes and caring for children in DHS custody:

Caseworkers will temporarily be permitted to conduct monthly face to face visits with children currently residing in DHS certified foster homes, and other out of home care settings virtually and by phone. The ideal contact is through video conferencing so that visual communication can occur. If this is not possible, phone contact is acceptable. It is also advised these methods for contact occur more than once a month when possible to ensure the safety and well-being of our children and young adults in care. This includes relative placements.

Monthly face to face contact between case workers and children currently residing in-home:

Monthly in-person face to face contact must still occur for children currently on in-home plans or trial reunifications. Before making in-person contact, please confirm with the parent/caregiver that no one in the home is confirmed to be sick or displaying symptoms of COVID19. If this is the case, please follow the precautionary guidelines on OWL (DHS/OHA shared intranet).

Monthly face to face contact between case workers and care providers:

Caseworkers will temporarily be permitted to conduct face to face visits with certified care providers virtually and via phone. The ideal contact is via video conferencing so that visual communication can occur. If this is not possible, phone contact is acceptable. It is also advised these methods for contact occur more than once a month when possible to ensure foster parents are supported to care for our children, young adults, and themselves during this time of rapid change. An option is having staff that do not do case work call foster parents frequently to check on them and see if anything is needed.

NOTE: These guidelines are not related to parent/family and child visits