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Chapter:	Planning with Children and Families	
Subject:	Family Time (Parent/Child Contact)	Page 1 of 19
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Purpose

To establish division policy on family time (parent/child contact) for children in DCF custody.

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Related Policies

Family Services [Policy 75](#): Normalcy and the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS)

Family Services [Policy 77](#): Medical Care for Children and Youth in DCF Custody

Family Services [Policy 91](#): Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives

Family Services [Policy 94](#): Foster Care Placements & Collaboration with Caregivers

Family Services [Policy 98](#): Reunification of Abused or Neglected Children and Youth

Family Services [Policy 125](#): Permanency Planning for Children and Youth in DCF Custody

[The Vermont Family Time Guidelines](#)

Introduction

Maintaining family contact and regular time together is critical in supporting children and youth’s attachments to their parents, siblings, and other family members. Frequent, supported family contact can lessen both the child’s and the parents’ anxiety about the

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child being in foster care, reduce a child’s sense of abandonment and loss, and contribute to safe and successful reunification. Family time supports parental engagement, provides motivation for change, provides an opportunity for assessing and teaching parenting skills, and helps to maintain a realistic perspective on case plan progress.

Definitions

See Appendix II.


Policy

Both federal and state laws place strong emphasis on maintaining continuity of family relationships and connections. Children and their parents have a right to maintain a relationship and contact after a child enters foster care.

Required Family Time Activities & Meetings			
ACTIVITY/MEETING	TIMEFRAME	REQUIRED FOR	RESPONSIBILITY OF
Initial Parent/Child Contact	No later than three working days of the child entering DCF custody	All children in DCF custody	The assigned FSW (who may coordinate with others to ensure contact occurs ASAP)
Initial Caregiver Meeting	Within five working days of the child entering DCF custody <u>or</u> a change in placement	All children in DCF custody placed in kinship or foster homes regardless of CFS referral status	The assigned FSW – either by bringing people together themselves or by making a CFS referral
Family Time Coordination Referral	At the point the child enters DCF custody (takes 60 days to complete)	All children in DCF custody ages six (6) and under (encouraged for all other children as CFS capacity allows)	The assigned FSW to make the referral; CFS staff complete the family time plan
Shared Parenting Meetings	Every 90 days throughout the life of the case; may be convened more frequently if needed	All children in DCF custody placed in kinship or foster homes regardless of CFS referral status	The assigned FSW – either by bringing people together themselves or by making a CFS referral

It is critical for division staff and contracted partners to ensure family time is safe, well-planned, and occurs as soon as possible following a young person entering DCF custody. Children should have the opportunity to be with their parents in person **no later than three working days** of the child/youth entering DCF custody (assuming individual planning for special circumstances have been addressed if necessary).

The assigned family services worker may coordinate with others (CFS partners,

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community partners, family members, etc.) to ensure that family time can occur as soon as possible. If family time cannot occur in person within the recommended timeframe, communication should be arranged by phone, video, or other means.

An initial caregiver meeting is required regardless of whether any CFS referrals will occur. The initial caregiver meeting will occur within **five working days** of the child’s initial placement or a change in placement. A preliminary family time plan should result from this meeting. The initial caregiver meeting also provides an opportunity to ensure all information needed from the [Child Information & Placement Checklist](#) is obtained and provided to the caregivers.

In addition to the preliminary family time plan (developed at the initial caregiver meeting or agreed to in some other way), division staff may make a referral for *Family Time Coordination* which will provide a more comprehensive family time plan within 60 days.

Family time occurs concurrent to team meetings, individual counseling/therapy appointments, assessments, case plan reviews, or court hearings. Family time can be supplemented with other types of contact such as phone calls, video calls, texts or messaging, letters, email, pictures, and gifts. This contact should be allowed and encouraged unless the child’s or other individuals’ safety, health, or well-being may be compromised.

It is important for parents to continue to be invited to and involved in their child’s medical appointments, dental appointments, school meetings, events, and extracurricular activities when this can be reasonably coordinated and done safely.


Contact with parents, family members, or other people important to the child/youth will never be used as a reward or punishment.

Court-Ordered Family Time

Parent/Child Contact

33 V.S.A. § 5308(e)(2) allows the court order issued at the temporary care hearing to include provisions about the best interests of the child, including parent/child contact and terms and conditions for that contact. At the temporary care hearing, it is the assigned family services worker’s responsibility to articulate the role of the division in assessing and recommending an appropriate plan for parent/child contact based on the danger and risk items present in the case. Division staff should be prepared to explain to court partners:

- The immediate plan for parent/child contact, which may be the preliminary plan

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developed at the initial caregiver meeting;

- Information about the *Family Time Coordination* process;
- How family time can occur in the least restrictive setting and most normal way that is safely possible; and
- When applicable, the safety reasons for why contact needs to be supported, monitored, or supervised.

33 V.S.A. § 5319 states that the court shall order parent/child contact unless the court finds it is necessary to deny contact for the protection of the physical safety or emotional well-being of the child. With input from the division and other parties, the court may determine the reasonable frequency and duration of parent/child contact and may set conditions for contact based on the child's best interests – including whether contact should be unsupervised or supervised. Also, the court may allocate the costs of supervised visitation.

Court-ordered parent/child contact may be modified by stipulation, upon motion of a party, or upon the court's own motion. The court may terminate a parent/child contact order upon a finding that:


- A parent has without good cause failed to maintain a regular schedule of contact with the child and that the parent's failure to exercise regular contact has had a detrimental impact on the emotional well-being of the child; or
- Continued parent-child contact in accordance with the terms of the prior order will have a detrimental impact on the physical or emotional well-being of the child.

If family time is court-ordered, the division is required to follow the order – including situations where parent/child contact is ordered outside of business hours during evenings or on weekends. While the division may seek support from its partners or the family's natural supports in following the order, the bottom-line responsibility of fulfilling court-ordered contact is held by the division. If it is the district office's assessment that a court order cannot safely be followed, division staff should motion the matter back to court.

Failure to provide parent/child contact due to the child's illness or other good cause does not constitute grounds for a contempt or enforcement proceeding against the department (33 V.S.A. § 5319(f)).

Contact with Siblings and Relatives

Upon motion of the child's attorney, the court may also order contact between the child and the child's siblings, an adult relative with whom the child has a significant

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relationship, or an adult friend with whom the child has a significant relationship.

Regardless of whether contact between siblings is ordered by the court, division staff will make efforts to support contact between siblings. When siblings are not placed together, federal law requires reasonable efforts to provide for frequent visitation or other ongoing interaction between siblings. Siblings may maintain contact through a variety of means such as visits, phone calls, video calls, emails, and social media. These ties can provide some stability and permanency for children.

There may be some rare circumstances where it is not safe or in a child’s best interests to have contact with their sibling(s). These situations should be assessed on a case-by-case basis and efforts should be made to support those siblings in healing and developing a safe, healthy relationship when possible.

Family Time Coordination & Developing/Revising the Family Time Plan

See Appendix I for information about the division’s contracted *Family Time Coordination* service. When a child enters DCF custody, the family services worker may make a referral for this service through their CFS partner agency. *Family Time Coordination* referrals are required for all children ages six (6) and under who enter DCF custody, and referrals are encouraged for all other children and youth as CFS capacity allows. If a referral is not made for *Family Time Coordination*, the assigned family services worker is responsible for immediately supporting parent/child contact, developing the family time plan, and completing the family finding work.

The CFS coordinator will assess natural supports and community resources, coordinate the appropriate support needed for family time, and make a recommendation for a family time plan within 60 days. The family time plan is responsive to the danger and risk items present in the case, such as: substance use disorder, domestic violence/intimate partner violence, serious physical injury, sexual abuse, neglect, and risk of harm. The CFS coordinator will also complete family finding and a facilitated family-centered meeting within 45 days of the DCF custody episode.

Establishing parentage promptly is critical for supporting family time and making reasonable efforts to achieve timely permanency. A family time plan should exist for **all** parents. Questions about [The Vermont Parentage Act](#) or complicated or unclear parentage should be brought to the attention of the assigned assistant attorney general (AAG) and policy and operations manager. Additionally, special care must be given to ensuring that fathers and the paternal side of the family are included in the development of family time plans.

The family time plan should be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis – at least

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every 90 days. A shared parenting meeting is the preferred forum to conduct this review and continue the development of the relationship between the parents and foster/kinship parents. Adjustments may be recommended to family time plans based on progress, concerns, or other factors. Several factors should be considered when developing and updating family time plans:

- The ongoing safety plan and any identified concerns for the child or youth’s physical or emotional safety;
- The best interests of the child or youth;
- The permanency goal;
- The developmental and attachment needs of the child or youth;
- The family’s culture, traditions, language, and norms;
- Normalcy and the child or youth’s school and extracurricular schedule; and
- Any court orders regarding visitation.

Notes and updates from shared parenting meetings should be shared with attorneys, GALs, or others involved in the care of the child/youth.

Changes in the family time plan that are likely to be upsetting to any participant should be reviewed by the assigned family services worker and/or CFS staff in advance of shared parenting meetings to determine what can be productively worked through in the shared parenting meeting and what may be better addressed in an individual meeting or private conversation.

Frequency and Quality of Family Time

One of the best predictors of successful reunification is the frequency and quality of family time between a child and their parents. The evaluation of family time quality should be based on the worker’s direct observation whenever possible, supplemented by observation of the child and reports by other division staff, the family time coach, foster/kinship parents, or natural supports. Descriptors of strong/adequate family time compared to limited/harmful family time include, but are not limited to:

Quality of Family Time	
Strong / Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently demonstrates acts of protection and supportive behaviors toward the child that are consistent with case plan objectives. • Often reinforces appropriate roles and boundaries for child (e.g., caregiver preserves parent-child relationship or takes on adult roles and responsibilities). • Demonstrates an ability to recognize child’s behaviors and cues; generally responds appropriately to behaviors and cues. • Identifies the child’s physical and emotional needs; responds adequately

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	<p>to these needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates effective limit-setting and discipline strategies. • Demonstrates interest in school, other child activities, medical appointments, etc.
Limited / Harmful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not demonstrate acts of protection and supportive behaviors toward the child that are consistent with case plan objectives. • May struggle or have severely limited ability to reinforce appropriate roles and boundaries for child (e.g., preserve parent-child relationship, take on adult roles and responsibilities), and requires prompting to do so. • Demonstrates an ability to recognize child’s cues and behaviors, but needs guidance in establishing an appropriate response to these cues and behaviors, or is unable to respond appropriately. • May demonstrate an ability to identify child’s physical and/or emotional needs, but may need assistance in consistently responding to the child in an appropriate manner. • Recognizes a need to set limits with child, but enforces limits or behavior management in an inconsistent or detrimental manner, OR may not recognize a need to set limits. • May have ignored redirection by the individual supporting or monitoring family time. • May not be focused on child during parenting time and/or conducts self inappropriately during time (e.g., arriving for parenting time while substance-impaired, reinforcing “parentification” of child, knowingly making false promises to child, cursing at/violently arguing with worker in presence of child). • Has not been successful in progressing family time toward unmonitored and/or extended family time, or has had significant family time setbacks that have required increasing monitoring and support due to worries for the child’s safety.


The Role of Foster/Kinship Parents in Supporting Family Time

See Appendix III for family time tips and practice guidance for foster and kinship parents supporting parent/child contact.

Situations that Require Special Considerations

There are many family time circumstances that require individualized planning. The [Vermont Family Time Guidelines](#) outline special considerations in situations where families and workers are confronted with the following:

- Involving absent parents and/or extended family;
- Intimate partner violence (IPV)/domestic violence (DV);

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- Sexual abuse;
- Incarcerated parents;
- Parents residing in a treatment facility;
- Threatening behaviors and other safety concerns; or
- Termination of parental rights and goodbye contact.

Family services workers shall address the above circumstances during the family time planning process.

Special Considerations for Families Separated by Distance or Circumstances

In situations where parents cannot be present for in-person family time (parents who live a far distance away, incarcerated parents, parents temporarily residing in a treatment facility, etc.), it is almost always in the child’s best interests to have contact with their parent. Consideration should be given to how a parent can remain involved and informed despite the distance or separation. Virtual platforms create new opportunities for children to remain connected to their parents without significant travel obligations or other barriers.

Out-of-State Parent/Child Contact


Federal regulations apply to ICPC cases and the length of visits with parents across state lines. Consultation should occur with the ICPC deputy compact administrator regarding out-of-state visitation with a child’s parents. A visit must have an end date and cannot exceed 30 days.

Special Considerations Related to Safety

There should be a contact plan developed for every parent unless the court orders no contact, or someone believes contact to be unsafe and motions the matter to the court. Even in situations where a parent is unknown, absent, or out of touch with the division, there must be an action plan within the case plan for these parents indicating what they need to do – beginning with getting in touch with the assigned family services worker. If there is a no contact order or recommendation for no contact based on the child’s or another person’s safety, the rationale and any findings or orders must be documented in the case plan.

Outside of CHINS proceedings, 15 V.S.A. § 665 speaks to child custody and support between parents, and makes allowances for the court to deny parent/child contact with a parent if the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that:

- A parent was convicted of sexually assaulting the other parent and the child was conceived as a result of the sexual assault; or

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- A parent was convicted of human trafficking and the other parent was the trafficked victim; or
- The child was conceived as a result of a parent sexually assaulting or sexually exploiting the other parent, or that a parent was trafficked by the other parent and the court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that such an order is in the best interests of the child.

In situations of extreme trauma resulting from abuse or violence, therapeutic contact between a child and an offending parent may be necessary. See Appendix A in the [Vermont Family Time Guidelines](#) for guidance.

Supervised Visitation Programs

Supervised visitation programs should be considered when ongoing safety or danger situations exist, including:

- When there has been intimate partner violence and the perpetrator continues to pose a danger and/or risk to the caretaker and/or children;
- In sexual abuse cases where danger cannot be mitigated in other ways; or
- When there are concerns regarding threats to division staff or others.

Appendix I: Family Time Coordination & Options for Family Time Practice Guidance

Family Time Coordination

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for *Family Time Coordination*. When a child enters DCF custody, the FSW will likely make a referral for this service through their CFS partner agency. Referrals are required for children ages six (6) and under, and referrals are encouraged for all other children and youth as CFS capacity allows. The CFS coordinator will coordinate the appropriate support needed for family time and develop a family time plan which is responsive to the danger and risk items present in the case within 60 days.

Family Time Coordination should begin with robust family finding to identify all relatives and fictive kin who are available and willing to support family time and/or provide support and connection in other ways. This information should be filtered to the assigned FSW and RC as the information becomes available so they can help determine if this is a safe and feasible option. If the identified kin are determined to be safe and can support family time, this should be implemented as soon as possible.

When developing a family time plan, there could be multiple parents in the household. The family time plan for each parent should be different if the level of danger and risk is different (i.e., the non-abusive parent or a parent who represents a level of safety/protection may choose unsupported time individually, restrictive time with their partner who poses risk, or a combination of both options). A family time plan should exist for all parents.

Additionally, there may be multiple options for family time utilized at the same time. Specifically, the CFS coordinator and FSW will:

- Use information available, including results of family finding, and consider options for family time;
- Address financial challenges including transportation that may be a barrier;
- Identify community-based options to support family time and help connect families to these resources; and
- Conduct both a 45-day family centered meeting to conclude the family finding portion of the service and a 60-day final meeting, which will be a shared parenting meeting.
 - The family centered meeting at the 45-day mark will bring together all family resources to identify what support each family member is willing to provide to the child(ren) and family; and
 - The final meeting/shared parenting meeting is only for the individuals who will be providing family time or family time coaching for the family. This shared parenting meeting is meant to formalize a plan for the most appropriate option for family time and coordinate details.

This family time plan should include benchmarks for the family to move from one form of support to another. These are developed by the FSW based on the danger and risk present in the family and the behavioral changes needed (and then used in the action plan of the case plan) to move to a lower level of support for family time. The CFS staff offer suggestions for this based on their family time coordination work. The goals of family time coordination are to:

- Use the results of family finding efforts to identify natural supports which may directly support the plan for safe and the most appropriate form of contact;
- Determine the most natural, safe setting in which contact may occur (this process shall include the consideration of alternatives to family time coaching); and
- Formulate a family time plan that outlines the most appropriate form of contact, and how the form of contact may change over time.

Options for Family Time

Natural Supports – These are people who have a caring connection with the child and parent, are willing to meet with DCF Family Services staff and contracted providers, understand the harm/danger concerns that exist, and are willing to take action that supports the family and helps keep the child

safe. It is important to meet with natural supports and parents to be clear about boundaries, expectations, and detailed logistics about family time. Family and friends can support a parent to participate in community activities. It is important that they have information about any specific needs or other work the parent is doing in family time. Family finding may be an important activity to identify natural supports.

Foster Parent/Kin Caregiver Support – Family time with the foster parent should only occur after a thoughtful process of has occurred. There must be a belief that it can occur safely based on the caregiver having a clear understanding of what is being asked of them and positive regard between the parent and foster parent/kin caregiver. There should be a meeting with the caregiver and family services worker and/or CFS staff to discuss specific danger and risk factors, abilities, availability, expectations, and boundaries. Following this, there should be a shared parenting meeting with the parent, caregiver, family services worker, and others as needed to discuss expectations and logistics for family time. There needs to be confidence that supporting family time will not destabilize the child’s placement. Ongoing shared parenting meetings are a useful tool to facilitate the development of relationships between caregivers and parents and can be used to prepare a caregiver to support family time in some way. This option should not be put in place with a new caregiver until a meeting with the caregiver occurs to establish role clarity, clear boundaries, and appropriate supports.

Community Activities – The CFS contractor that is helping coordinate and plan family time should have knowledge of community activities that are available and appropriate to support parent child contact. They may include playgroups, library activities, community events such as fairs or holiday celebrations, and/or activities specific to the child – sporting events, extracurricular activities, school events, or appointments. The parent may or may not need support to attend these activities or events with their child. These may present opportunities for unsupported yet structured time.

Monitored – When safety cannot be assured in any other way, a family time monitor that is a paid staff person of either the division or a contractor is present for family time. This staff member is there to make sure that the time is safe for the child. Monitoring is also used when natural supports, the foster parent, or kin caregiver are not available to support family time. Efforts should still be made for the environment to be natural and least restrictive. The parent may have been the subject of an FS-110 and consultation with Staff Safety Manager. This information must be shared with any contracted partner being asked to assist with family time.

Supported – The word “supported” is used in a broad manner throughout this document to mean the many ways that an individual such as a coach, foster parent, natural support, case aide, worker or others might deliver parent child contact.

Supervised Visitation Center – This is a community agency (sometimes the domestic and sexual violence agency or other local providers) that adheres to specific guidelines to promote safe family time or exchange of a child when there is a history of violence perpetrated on one parent, usually the mother, by the other. In some parts of the state, the division has contracts with these centers and family time occurs there when this level of safety and security is necessary.

Court/DCF-FSD Office – There are times when family time needs to be held in these locations due to safety concerns. The parent may have been the subject of an FS-110 and consultation with Staff Safety Manager. This information must be shared with any contracted partner being asked to assist with family time. These are the least desirable locations for family time.

Family Time Coaching (FTC) – This is a highly skilled, primary intervention service designed to help the parent learn to identify and meet their children’s needs. Family time coaches develop, through training and practice, a set of parenting coaching skills. There is clinical oversight of the coaches that supports the identification of a child’s needs and intervention with the parent aimed at helping them learn how to meet their child’s needs. A parent must be ready to engage and benefit from this intervention. This is a time limited service. If a parent is demonstrating new skills, they move beyond this primary intervention. If they are not demonstrating new skills, the service is not having the desired outcome and is discontinued. FTC is not necessary or appropriate for all family time – for instance, if family time is happening 5 days per week, it is not appropriate for all of that time to be coached. Natural supports and foster parent/kin caregiver support may augment the parent-child contact plan, and the family time plan should encompass all aspects of contact. Please refer to the [Family Time Guidelines](#) for more in-depth guidance regarding the Family Time Coaching Model.

	GREEN – UNSUPPORTED	YELLOW – NATURAL SUPPORTS & COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES	ORANGE – SUPPORTED THROUGH COACHING	RED – MOST RESTRICTIVE
LEVEL OF COLLABORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent demonstrates willingness and ability to consistently follow the safety plan, work with DCF-FSD, foster parents, and natural supports to ensure child safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural supports have been identified and are willing to support parent/child contact; the parent is willing to work with natural supports and, if applicable, challenging dynamics have been addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent openly refuses or has demonstrated refusal in the past, or has struggled to see the benefits of coaching Relationship dynamics between parents and natural supports may impact reunification efforts Parent demonstrates willingness to engage with coach and develop capacity to safely parent their child(ren) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> No contact (typically court ordered); or Monitored via visitation center, court, therapeutic setting, or DCF-FSD office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent openly refuses or has demonstrated refusal in the past, and is unable to work safely with the Family Time Coach, natural supports, DCF-FSD, or court partners demonstrated by a staff safety incident with the parent requiring an FS-110 and district consultation with the Staff Safety Manager Parent demonstrates behaviors that are volatile, verbally or physically aggressive, or out of touch with reality; and therefore, presents a danger to the child or others who support family time
DANGER CATEGORY				
Substance Use Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent is committed to recovery as demonstrated by sustained sobriety and successful treatment (including MAT), development of a support system in recovery, distance from those engaged in substance misuse, and success in parent/child contact with coaching or natural supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent is not engaged in treatment or there is denial of substance use Parent is new to treatment and sobriety Natural supports have been (or are willing to be) an active part of supporting safe family time and the FSW has met with the support and the parent to establish clear expectations for safe contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent substance use is a primary factor in the child’s custody status and the parent is actively engaged in treatment and open to working with a coach Parent is not engaged in treatment or there is denial of substance use Parent is new to treatment and sobriety Parent is actively using, has attended family time under 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent is actively using, has attended family time under the influence or impaired, which has had a negative impact on the child(ren) Other supportive interventions have not been successful in mitigating the risk or negative impact on the child(ren)

			the influence or impaired, but has been able to tend to the safety of their child by meeting their needs, engaging in safety planning with the coach or knowing when they may be unable to participate in family time.	
Domestic Violence (DV) / Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent who is a perpetrator of DV/IPV has successfully completed a certified Domestic Violence Accountability Program (DVAP) or DV specific parenting program (Caring Dads, Parenting with Respect, etc.) and engaged successfully in coaching where they have done reparative work with the child(ren) Parent who is a perpetrator of DV/IPV owns the impact of the behavior and demonstrates respect for non-offending parent and the ability to co-parent in a way that is devoid of coercive or controlling behavior <i>Note: Initial consult with DV Specialist should occur and consultation should continue when revising the family time plan.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent who is a perpetrator of DV/IPV has natural supports that hold them accountable for their coercive or controlling behavior and are willing to be an active part of supporting contact that is safe for both the child and non-offending parent The natural supports have met with FSW and DV Specialist to develop a plan regarding what the above bullet entails The non-offending parent should not be asked to support family time between the child and the parent who is a perpetrator of DV/IPV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent who is a perpetrator of DV/IPV denies harmful impact on the child and family but can integrate safety and take feedback from the coach Parent who is a perpetrator of DV/IPV has successfully completed certified DV Accountability Program and DV Specialist recommends the parent is ready to engage in the coaching model Parent demonstrates a focus on child well-being and restoring a relationship without undermining the non-offending parent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent who is a perpetrator of DV/IPV denies harmful impact on the child and family; and has used family time to intimidate the non-offending parent; or has attempted to involve child in controlling the non-offending parent Child is fearful of the perpetrator parent and the child's therapeutic needs indicate that contact is not warranted Parent has criminal court order conditions, RFAs, or other previous contact restrictions prior to custody that should be considered
Serious Physical Injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the parent is the perpetrator, there has been a successful period in coaching demonstrating safe parenting strategies while parenting under stress/in situations that simulate when the abuse occurred 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is during the CSI phase of the case, the parent is the alleged perpetrator of serious physical injury, and natural supports understand the danger and are a source of safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parent denies the abuse and/or is not willing to disclose who perpetrated the abuse but is able to integrate safety and take feedback from the coach The parent has disclosed who perpetrated the abuse and is able to integrate safety and take feedback from the coach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parent denies the abuse and the parent who perpetrated the abuse continues to pose a physical and/or emotional threat to the child(ren)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The parent has admitted to causing the serious physical injury or the cause of injury is known, and the parent demonstrates willingness to engaging in an educational model 	
Sexual Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent that perpetrated sexual abuse has successfully completed treatment for sexually harmful behaviors, has done therapeutic reparative work with the victim and non-offending parent, and is deemed to be a low risk to reoffend by an expert The non-offending parent and child have a safety plan in place The child is in treatment where disclosures could occur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent that perpetrated sexual abuse is actively engaged in treatment to address offending behavior, natural supports have been trained as family time monitors specific to sexual abuse, the victim wants contact, and reparative work with the victim is ongoing (overseen by treatment provider), and victim has safety plan The child is in treatment where disclosures could occur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child is requesting contact, the treatment provider and/or the psychosexual report supports this, and is working with the parent and child to ensure contact can occur in safe and healthy manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent that perpetrated sexual abuse denies child sexual abuse Parent that perpetrated sexual abuse has tried to get the child to recant or re-victimized the child in some way Child does not want contact Child's therapeutic needs indicate that contact is not warranted
Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent has mitigated the situation that created neglect, understands the risk factors, and has demonstrated an ability to meet child's needs over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent is actively working to address concerns and has demonstrated some new skills in understanding and meeting the child's needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent is not meeting the needs of the child in family time independently but is receptive to cues from coach Parent is ready to engage in parenting skill development, learn about the developmental needs of their child, and engage in the coaching model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent is not responding to cues from the coach or other supports to meet the needs of the child in family time Parent is not meeting the needs of the child in family time Parent has demonstrated an inability to develop skills through other interventions
Risk of Harm Physical Injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent clearly understands what caused the risk of harm and has mitigated that situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent has awareness of what created the risk of harm, is working towards resolution, and continues to need support to address the risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent is ready to engage in parenting skill development/ education to understand and remedy the circumstances that created the risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent does not believe that there is a risk Parent has not benefitted from other interventions

Risk of Harm Sexual Abuse

- Parent that perpetrated sexual abuse has successfully completed treatment for sexually harmful behaviors and is deemed to be a low risk to reoffend by an expert OR if the low risk designation is not current, there has not been a significant decline in dynamic risk factors (such as loss of a job, untreated mental health needs, recent break up) nor has there been another offense since completion of treatment;
- Non-offending parent is aware of the risks, danger triggers such as age of victims and abuse circumstances of harmful behaviors, and is knowledgeable about the treatment plan and avoiding future risk situations
- Non-offending parent demonstrates protective capacity and has been proactively involved in safety planning and/or mitigating risk
- Non-offending parent and the child(ren) in the home have safety plans in place

- Parent that perpetrated sexual abuse is actively engaged in treatment to address offending behavior, natural supports have been trained as family time monitors specific to sexual abuse and contact is clinically supported for that child
- Non-offending parent is aware of the risks, danger triggers such as age of victims and abuse circumstances of harmful behaviors, and is knowledgeable about the treatment plan and avoiding future risk situations
- Non-offending parent understands the risks and the child(ren) in the home have safety plans in place

- Non offending parent has low protective skills and is willing to participate in coaching
- Coaching during visits involves recommendations from treatment provider
- Child(ren) in the home and the non-offending parent are requesting contact and the treatment provider for the parent with a history of sexually harmful behaviors has engaged with non-offending parent to provide education and safety planning

- Parent that perpetrated sexual abuse denies child sexual abuse and continues to pose significant risk to the child
- Parent that perpetrated sexual abuse has tried to blame the child victim or minimize the sexually harmful behavior
- Parent that perpetrated sexual abuse has not engaged in specific sexual abuse treatment
- One or more children in the home are at risk of sexual abuse by the parent that perpetrated sexual abuse and/or fit the profile of the previous victims

Appendix II: Family Time Definitions

Community Activities: Activities within the community that are available and appropriate to support parent/child contact. Examples include playgroups, library activities, community events such as fairs or holiday celebrations, and/or activities specific to the child – sporting events, extracurricular activities, school events, or appointments. The parent may or may not need support to attend these activities or events with their child. These may present opportunities for unsupported yet structured time.

Family Finding: The practice of searching for and engaging extended family members and other important connections to establish a safety and support network for children, youth, and families. Family finding discovery tools and activities may include:

- File mining;
- Screening tools such as ecomaps, genograms, circles of support, and family search engines; and
- Reaching out to family members;
- The identification of key partners and their roles, responsibilities, and expectations;
- The facilitation of a family-centered meeting to promote and ensure family members have a profound voice in any decisions that impact their kin.

Family Time: Face-to-face parent/child, kin, sibling, and/or contact with others who are important in the life of the child or youth.

Family Time Coaching (FTC): A service provided through the division's Child and Family Support (CFS) partner agencies which is a highly skilled, primary intervention service designed to help the parent learn to identify and meet their children's needs. Family time coaches develop, through training and practice, a set of parenting coaching skills. There is clinical oversight of the coaches that supports the identification of a child's needs and intervention with the parent aimed at helping them learn how to meet their child's needs. A parent must be ready to engage and benefit from this intervention. This is a time-limited service.

Family Time Coordination: A service provided through the division's Child and Family Support (CFS) partner agencies which involves (1) the coordination of the appropriate supports needed for family time, (2) robust family finding efforts, and (3) the development of a family time plan, which is responsive to the danger and risk items present in the case, within 60 days.

Family Time Plan: The plan developed through a *Family Time Coordination* referral or through shared parenting meetings which outlines the logistics of family time.

Initial Caregiver Meeting: The first time the family services worker, parents, and kin/foster parent (and family time coach if there is one) are able to share information about the child/youth and develop a schedule for family time for the first 60 days. Because it is an opportunity for those caring for the child to begin to develop their relationship, other participants should be limited.

Monitored Family Time: When safety cannot be assured in any other way, a family time monitor that is a paid staff person of either the division or a contractor is present for family time. This staff member is there to make sure that the time is safe for the child. Monitoring is also used when natural supports, the foster parent, or kin caregiver are not available to support family time. Efforts should still be made for the environment to be natural and least restrictive. The parent may have been the subject of an FS-110 and consultation with Staff Safety Manager. This information must be shared with any contracted partner being asked to assist with family time.

Natural Supports: People who have a caring connection with the child and parent, are willing to meet with family services staff and contracted providers, understand the harm/danger concerns that exist, and are willing to take action that supports the family and helps keep the child safe. It is

important to meet with natural supports and parents to be clear about boundaries, expectations, and detailed logistics about family time. Family and friends can support a parent to participate in community activities. It is important that they have information about any specific needs or other work the parent is doing in family time. Family finding may be an important activity to identify natural supports.

Shared Parenting Meeting: Time for the family services worker, parents, kin/foster parent(s), and sometimes the child/youth and other family members as appropriate, to come together, review, and further develop the plan for family time as well as continue to deepen the relationship between those caring for the child. This meeting is convened by the family time coach if there is one. If there is not a family time coach, the meeting may be convened by a family meeting facilitator, supervisor, and/or family services worker. The facilitator of the shared parenting meeting prepares the participants for the meeting. These meetings are focused on the child's needs. It is important for the child/youth's voice to be present at the meeting. If the young person cannot attend in person, other ways to incorporate the child's voice and wishes should be developed (letter, drawing, child participates by phone, etc.) Individuals who participate in shared parenting meetings are responsible for the day-to-day care of the child (past, present, and future).

Supervised Visitation Center: A community agency (sometimes the domestic and sexual violence agency or other local providers) that adheres to specific guidelines to promote safe family time or exchange of a child when there is a history of violence perpetrated on one parent, usually the mother, by the other. In some parts of the state, the division has contracts with these centers and family time occurs there when this level of safety and security is necessary.

Supported Family Time: Family time where the parent and child are assisted by another person, such as a coach, relative, natural support, foster parent, case aide, or family services worker.

Unsupported Family Time: Time the parent spends alone with the child. The parent may be assisted to plan this time and there may be a check-in before and/or after the family time to assess how it went and plan for next time.

Appendix III: Family Time Tips & Practice Guidance for Foster and Kinship Parents Supporting Parent/Child Contact

In all instances where children are in DCF custody and family time is occurring, shared parenting meetings should be happening. If the foster or kinship parent is asked to support or monitor family time, additional steps, conversations, and planning are required.

Prior to agreeing to support family time, the following must occur:

- A meeting or conversation with the FSW about the foster parent's willingness and availability to support family time occurs
- Following the meeting or conversation with the FSW, there is a shared parenting meeting with the parent, foster parent, and FSW to discuss expectations, roles, and logistics for family time
- FSW and/or foster parent should advocate for reasonableness within the court order and family time plan
- If parent/child contact is court ordered, both the foster parents and parents are informed of the exact language of the order (though the court order will not be copied or redistributed per 33 V.S.A. § 5117)

Information to know or gather from the FSW:

- Full name of the child/youth Full name of the child/youth's parents
- Any relevant information from the [Child Information & Placement Checklist](#)
- Contact information for the parents and knowledge of the best way to contact them
- Whether both parents will be attending family time and if anyone else is permitted to be present
- When and where (the address) family time is happening and transportation logistics
- If there is anything flagged to pay extra attention to during family time
- Boundaries and expectations of the foster parent while supporting/monitoring family time
- How much interaction the foster parent should have with the child and parents during family time
- Specific tips on when the FSW would like the foster parent to "step in"
- Whether the foster parent can step out of the room during family time

In most instances, it is okay to step out to use the bathroom, get a drink or snack, etc. Foster parents are encouraged to ask the FSW if there is a reason they need to have "eyes on" at all times or if there is a reason the parents cannot be alone with the child.

- What information the FSW would like the foster parent to document and report back

General considerations for family time:

- The foster parent has the FSW's cell phone number and the district office's main phone number saved in their phone.

Please note that FSWs are not expected to answer their phones after business hours or on weekends, nor will anyone answer the district office's main line.

- The foster parent has Centralized Intake & Emergency Services' phone number (1-800-649-5285) saved in their phone in case anyone needs to be reached after business hours and on weekends.
- Family time occurs in a reasonably safe location that both the parents and foster parents agree to
 - Well-lit Community or public setting Age-appropriate for the child
- Cell phone service or Wi-Fi connection is available at the agreed upon location

Confidentiality considerations:

- When in a public setting with people around (a library, for instance), be sensitive to conversations or questions that could make the parent feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, or be too revealing about the situation.

Think of how you might respond if an inquisitive stranger asks what you are doing or asks questions about the group dynamics.

Prohibited during family time:

- Excessive use of cell phones or tablets are highly discouraged during family time; however, parents will be supported in taking photos of or with their child(ren).
- Adult conversations with children are prohibited. All conversation should remain age-appropriate and safe for the child. Topics to be avoided include: the DCF case, court, substance use, or other adult circumstances.
- Smoking in front of the child and within the building family time is taking place are prohibited. Also, smoke breaks are discouraged during family time to support parents and children making the most of their time together.
- Consumption of alcohol, drugs, or anything used as an intoxicant during family time is prohibited. If a parent appears to be under the influence, the visit will be ended.
- Possession of weapons or anything that could be used as a weapon are prohibited and will result in the need to end the visit.
- Angry outbursts, physical aggression, physical discipline, harassment, threats against people, threats to abscond with the child, or derogatory remarks towards others are not tolerated and the visit will be ended.

Situations where family time will be canceled or rescheduled:

- When it is unsafe or becomes escalated (see above).
- If the parent has not arrived after 15 minutes of the agreed upon time.
If the parent has contacted someone informing them of running late or being delayed and it is not a repeated pattern, flexibility and compassion for the situation should be considered. If the visit begins late and still happens, it will end on time.
- When weather-related driving conditions make it unsafe to travel.
Consideration should be given to weather alerts and advisories, known difficult driving conditions, school delays/cancellations/early closures, the distance each person is required to travel, each person's means of transportation (i.e., if public transportation is utilized and not running because of weather or if a person has a vehicle without winter tires), and the predicted weather conditions after family time ends (i.e., is the weather expected to worsen?). The safety of all parties should be the priority. If a storm or inclement weather are known of in advance, decisions and plans for cancelling/rescheduling should occur early.
- When the child is sick (would be unable to attend school or childcare)
- When the parent is sick
- When the foster parent is sick or another child in the home requiring care is sick, and the district office cannot arrange for coverage
- When the child/youth has an extracurricular or sporting event during the scheduled family time (ideally family time would occur at the event/activity)

Things to observe and report back to the FSW:

- Was everyone on time? *Make note of how late if this happens.*
- Did the parents bring an activity? What kind of snacks/meal did they bring?
- Was there physical contact between the parents and child? *I.e., hugs, kisses, cuddling, sitting on a parent's lap.*
- How did the parents respond to the child's needs, behaviors, and cues?
- The degree to which the foster parent offered support, redirection, or prompting (frequent, minimal, none).
- Was the conversation age-appropriate and safe? Tone of voice? Did they make eye contact?
- What was the child's responses and reactions during family time?
- Overall, did anything stand out?