

Conducting a quality caseworker visit with children, youth, parents, or resource parents requires a variety of caseworker activities before, during, and after the visit. Caseworkers can use this worksheet as a general guidance to help in planning and assessing quality contacts.

Before the visit

Schedule

- Align visit frequency with national and state requirements and case circumstances.
- Consider the schedules of parents, resource parents, and youth/young adults in identifying the visit time.
- Consider the length and location of visits to support open and honest conversations.

Gather information and review

- Gather and review case documents, service plans, and related data and information.
- Review documentation of the last contact to ensure follow-up was completed.
- Make any collateral contacts with key individuals in the case (e.g., therapist, treatment provider, doctor, school personnel) to assess progress and concerns.

Plan and prepare

- Set a clear purpose and agenda for the visit.
- Identify issues and concerns to explore (with room for adaptation during the visit).
- Consider and plan for worker safety.

During the visit

Engage and collaborate

- Review the objectives and agenda for the visit and incorporate input from the child, youth, parent, and/or resource parent into the agenda.
- Demonstrate genuineness, empathy, and respect for each family member.
- Suspend biases and avoid judgments.
- Make sure children, youth, parents, and resource parents feel comfortable discussing challenges and needs.
- Talk with adults and children or youth separately to allow for privacy in sharing concerns.
- Communicate support and partnership.
- Listen!

Focus on the case plan, explore progress, and make adjustments

- Assess child safety and risk (including identification of safety threats, vulnerabilities, and protective capacities).
- Explore well-being of the child or youth and family.
- Ask developmentally appropriate questions.
- Discuss case goals, progress toward goals since the last visit, and actions needed—in language that all participants can understand.
- Identify strengths and opportunities for the child or youth and family.

Focus on the case plan, explore progress, and make adjustments (continued)

- Identify concerns, changing circumstances, and challenges.
- Observe what is happening in the home.
- Discuss what the agency will do to support the family to meet identified needs and expectations for the child or youth and family.
- Make needed changes to the case plan.

Wrap up

- Conclude visit with a summary, next steps, and actions needed.
- Make arrangements for the next visit.

After the visit

Document

- Document key information, observations, and decisions in a concrete, concise, and nonjudgmental manner.
- Record information, as appropriate and in accordance with agency policies:
 - Participants
 - Date and location
 - Assessment of child safety and risk
 - Child or youth well-being (related to health, mental health, development, behavior, education, social activities, and relationships)
 - Progress toward case goals and any changes to case plan or tasks
 - Concerns expressed by the child, youth, parent, or resource parent
 - Observations on the home environment and interactions
 - Additional service needs
 - Cultural considerations
 - Follow-up activities and priorities
- Highlight actions needed, the person responsible, and target dates for easy reference.

Debrief

- Discuss visit and key directions with supervisor.
- Reflect on successful approaches during visits, challenges experienced, and areas for development in conducting quality contacts.

Follow up

- Follow up on commitments made and next steps.

To learn more about quality contacts and related Center for States publications and learning tools, visit the "Quality Matters" homepage at <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/foster-care-permanency/quality-matters/>