



Chapter 5

Section 26: Family Time

Family Time and Contact

NOTE: The term, *child*, also refers to young adult up to age 21 years unless otherwise stated.

Maintaining family contact and regular time together is the single most important factor in supporting a child's attachments to their parents, siblings and other family members and can lessen both the child's and the parents' anxiety about the child being placed in substitute care. Frequent high-quality family time supports parental engagement and motivation for change.

A family time and contact plan (Visitation and Contact Plan [CF 831](#)) must be created for every child in substitute care, meet the child's developmental and attachment needs and allows for frequent contact between the child, siblings and members of their family. At times, the plan may also include an individual without a legal or biological relationship but with whom the child has an emotional connection.

The family time and contact plan must be in the best interest of the child and must develop or enhance attachment with the child's family, including siblings ([Sibling Bill of Rights](#)). The plan is created to reduce the trauma to the child associated with being removed from the home. The family time and contact plan is part of the case plan and is developed through an assessment of the needs of and risks to the child.

One of the best predictors of successful reunification is the frequency and quality of family time between a child and their parents. When reunification is the goal, the family time includes progressively increased parental responsibility for the daily care of the child. When reunification no longer is the goal, family time can help family members understand and accept the alternate permanency plan. Whatever the goal, family time strengthens and maintains family relationships, enhances a child's well-being, and affirms the importance of parents in the child's life.

Family time is an interactive face-to-face contact between a child and their parents, siblings or other family members. It is separate from therapy, assessments, case reviews, family meetings or court hearings, but may include cultural and school events, extracurricular activities, community functions and extended family gatherings. Family time may be supplemented with other types and means of contact such as phone and video calls, letters, emails and photo exchanges. This contact should be allowed and encouraged unless the child's or others' safety or well-being is jeopardized.

Procedure

Parents and children at a developmentally appropriate age/capability must be involved in the family time planning. It is also important to invite the child's substitute caregivers, the Tribal Nation worker, if ICWA applies, safety service providers and other relevant people (e.g., the child's attorney, CASA, treatment providers or relatives) to participate in planning for family time. This planning process begins when a child is first removed from their family home or when a parent is separated from their child. For example, if the child remains in home with one parents by the other parents has been directed to move elsewhere we still need to provide family time.

- I. Prepare a family time and contact plan when a child first enters substitute care or by the time of the first court hearing, whichever occurs first.
 - When working with a family on developing a family time and contact plan, explain their rights regarding family time, what they can expect prior to, during and after family time, and explain the importance of having contact with the child.

- Use the Supervision Levels form ([DHS 4050](#)) to determine the appropriate level of supervision and document what is necessary to change the level of supervision.
 - Family time and contact plan must explain the reason(s) for supervision if supervision is required, the safety considerations, and any specific needs related to family time. This can be documented in the section of form 0831 titled, “Using the Supervision Levels form ([DHS 4050](#)).”
 - Provide clear narrative that includes which supervision level is appropriate and what is needed to get to the next least restrictive level.
 - Document the safety considerations and the specific needs, including reasons and behaviors that might cause family time to end early.
 - The plan includes the names of the persons with whom a child may have contact during family time and the description of the contact with each person that includes:
 - Type, time, frequency, length, location, the required level of supervision, and safety considerations.
 - Do not list addresses or telephone numbers on the form 831 if doing so may put others at risk of harm (e.g., domestic violence or restraining orders) or would violate confidentiality.
- II. Schedule the first family time to occur within a week of the child’s placement in substitute care, preferably within the first 48 hours of the child entering care. If this does not occur, document the reasons why in a case note in the Department’s electronic information system.
- Form 831 may be filled out by the caseworker or other child welfare staff, but must be approved by the caseworker. The caseworker will partner with the Tribe to develop the family time and contact plan to ensure partnership and collaboration when working with a Tribal family. There are several factors to be considered in the development of the family time and contact plan:
 - The ongoing safety plan: What are the safety issues, both physically and emotionally for the child in interacting with the parent?
 - The family’s culture, traditions, language, and norms and how to support and incorporate those considerations into family time. The child’s permanency plan: Has Child Welfare moved to a permanency plan other than reunification?
 - The unique developmental and attachment needs of the child, e.g., frequent contact is critical to maintaining attachment to the parents.
 - A child’s school schedule. To the extent practicable, schedule family time at a time and place that does not require the child to miss part or all, of a school day.
 - The best interests of the child.
 - Any orders of the court regarding family time with a child’s parents or siblings.
 - Family time that prohibits contact with family members (including parents) must clearly state in form 831 the reasons for the prohibition and the circumstances, if any, under which the Department would begin or resume contact.
 - Some examples of reasons to possibly prohibit family time may include:
 - When there is reason to believe the acts or omissions of a parent or guardian would result in

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- child abuse during family time;
 - The safety of a child cannot be managed by supervision;
 - The family time does not meet the best interests of the child; or
 - A court order prohibits family time.
- Family time cannot be canceled solely due to the act or omission of a parent that is unrelated to the safety or well-being of a child during family time.
 - If family time between a child and a parent does not occur for any reason, family time between siblings not placed together should continue to regularly take place unless the child's safety or well-being would be compromised during family time.
 - Child Welfare will support resource parents in prioritizing family time between siblings placed separately when doing so is safe and in the best interest of a child.
 - Discuss with the resource parent the potential reactions a child may have to family time (feeling happy, confused, sad and angry) and that the child may express feelings with words and/or behaviors (regression, depression, bad dreams, aggression, irritability or other dysregulated behaviors). Explain that this is normal and not a reason, in and of itself to terminate or limit family time.
 - Explain to the resource parent the benefits of frequent family time: it promotes healthy attachment, establishes and strengthens parent-child relationships, eases pain of separation and loss for the child and parent, helps motivate parents to make changes, allows parents to learn and practice new skills.
 - Ensure the family time and contact plan is written in a language the family can understand.
 - Address any specific needs of the family during family time, such as cultural or language-specific needs.
 - Explain to the parents what might happen if they do not attend family time and explain the known or anticipated reasons for ending family time, such as for safety reasons.
 - Plan for additional family time such as phone or email contact, letters, pictures and contact during other family activities including but not limited to cultural events, school or church events, family gatherings, or medical or dental appointments. For example, family time can be woven into the daily schedule by having a parent read a book to the child over facetime each night.
 - Address any barriers to family time such as transportation, health conditions, or arranging childcare for a child's siblings.
 - Consider the parents' schedule for work, treatment, etc. in the development of the family time and contact plan.
 - Consider safety concerns for the child and others. When necessary, take special measures for a child and survivor parent when domestic violence has occurred such as when there is an active restraining order or there are limited contact requirements through a divorce decree. There also may not be an active order or court action, but there has been domestic violence or other safety issues between the parents. These measures may include separate family time schedules, safe drop-off and pick-up locations, or special safety plans for unplanned contact. Confer with the survivor parent on what the most appropriate and safest structure for family time would be as mandating separate family time, meetings, etc. could unintentionally make a survivor more unsafe.

- Address in the family time and contact plan reasons for canceling or rescheduling family time (e.g., safety issues) and what may happen if a parent does not attend scheduled family time.
- There are special considerations for family time when a parent is incarcerated. Appendix 5.31 provides guidance to the caseworker when arranging family time with a parent who is incarcerated or in custody.
- Arrange for a child to have family time with extended family members or other important people in their life (e.g., a sibling, teacher, coach, pastor, rabbi, or neighbor) to maintain a child's connection to family, culture and community. Maintaining a child's connections with significant people in their life is important to the child's well-being.
- Federal regulations apply to Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) cases and the length of family time. Consult with the central office ICPC coordinator regarding parameters of interstate family time for a placement governed by ICPC.
- Include a timeframe for regular review and revision of the family time and contact plan. This review must be part of the 90-day case plan review.

Questions to Guide Family Time Planning

For Children:

Significant Relationships:

- Who does the child define as family?
- What relationships are important to maintain or build through family time, including both those that existed before placement and those that might be created as a result of diligent search?

Chronological and Developmental Age:

- How frequently does the child need to have contact with parents and siblings in order to sustain relationships?
- How able is the child to care for themselves?
- How vulnerable is the child to potentially harmful situations?
- How able is the child to structure their own activities?

Requests:

- For an older child, what is the child asking for in terms of family time, and what does this mean?

Reaction to Family Time:

- What reactions—positive and negative—does the child have to family time, and what is the meaning of these reactions?
- If the reaction appears to be negative, is it a normal response to separation or does it suggest problems in the family time situation or the parent-child relationship?

Developmental Tasks:

- How can family time activities enhance the child's developmental progress?

Therapeutic Needs:

- If applicable, how can family time help achieve therapeutic goals?

Schedule:

- How can family time encourage parents to be involved in the child's daily routines and in special events?
- How can family time ease separation reactions by beginning and ending at natural transition points such as before or after school?

For Parents:**Behaviors and Abilities Related to Reason for Placement:**

- How can family time promote and support the changes necessary for the child to be safe in the parents' home?
- How can family time enable assessment of the child's safety in the home?

Ability to Attend Family Time:

- To what extent have parents been able to attend their family time to date?
- If parents have not been able to attend, what is the reason?
- Are there barriers to family time that must be eliminated?

Requests:

- What do the parents want in terms of family time, and what does this mean?

Past Endangering Behaviors:

- Is there a history of attempted abduction; threatened or attempted harm to the child or other family members; leaving the child unsupervised or in harmful situations?

Reactions to Family Time:

- What reactions—positive and negative—do the parents have to family time, and what is the meaning of these reactions?
- Are the parents able to refrain from expressing their reactions inappropriately or in a manner hurtful to their child?

Schedules:

- How can parents' schedules be reasonably accommodated?

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- How important is family time in relation to other expectations imposed by the agency and how can multiple expectations be addressed?

Family Relationships and Interactions:

- How do family members interact during family time? Are the interactions healthy for the child?
- What arrangements can minimize stress or conflict among family members during family time?
- What arrangements will encourage parents to interact with their children rather than with other people during family?
- How can visit arrangements tap into and build upon the family's social support network?

For Resource Parents:**Supporting Involvement in Family Time:**

- Have resource parents received training and information on Ice Breakers during the recruitment and screening process? Appendix 4.1 describes Ice Breakers
- What do resource parents expect regarding their role in family time?
- What help has been provided to resource parents involved in family time such as reimbursement for transportation costs?

Willingness and Ability to Assist with Family Time:

- Are the resource parents willing and able to allow family time to occur in their home; to supervise family time in their home or elsewhere and as requested, to document what occurs; and to teach a parent how to care for the child?
- Are the resource parents willing and able to provide transportation?
- If unwilling or unable to assist with family time, will the resource parents support other agency efforts? If so, in what ways?

Capacity to Support Family Time:

- What are the resource parents' attitudes toward the child's parents?
- Do the resource parents value the child/parent relationship?
- Can the resource parents set safe limits on their relationships with the child's parents?
- Can the resource parents objectively document family time interactions?
- Will the resource parents intervene in a family time session as necessary?
- Will the resource parents maintain confidentiality?
- What are the resource parents' resources in terms of physical and emotional energy and time?

- Can the resource parents be flexible and tolerate stress?
- Can the resource parents recognize their need for assistance, and are they comfortable in asking for help?

Schedule:

- How can family time arrangements minimize disruption of the resource parents' schedule?

Impact of Family Time on Other Children in the Home:

- How distressing is one child's family time to other children in the home?
- Does the resource parent support of one child's family time result in neglect of other children in the home?

Supervision Levels and Documentation

Procedure

All family time should be presumed unsupervised unless there is a specific documented reason that supervision is necessary to ensure child safety. Regularly reassess the family time supervision level using the [form 4050](#) tool to determine if the selected supervision level continues to be appropriate for current case circumstances.

Levels of Supervision Include:

Unsupervised Family Time:

(This is the supervision level if "Yes" is the answer to all the following questions):

- Is the family condition understood by Child Welfare (Is it clear what happened that resulted in an unsafe child)?
- Can the family time occur at a time when it is unlikely the safety threats are active? For example, in a family where there is Domestic Violence (DV), the caseworker may be pretty sure they know the perpetrators work schedule but may not be able to confirm it. If the work schedule cannot be confirmed, and there is the possibility the DV perpetrator will show up at the family time, what is the safety risk to the children during family time?
- Can the parents talk about and demonstrate how they will keep their children safe during their time together? Can they ensure their strengths will be utilized for the entire duration of the family time? For example, they can state they will go to a 12-step meeting prior to their family time, as that is how they stay strong in their recovery.
- Can the family time occur when a parent can utilize their strengths? What are the parents' strengths? Are there times of the day or days of the week that the parents can more easily use their strengths? (Consider work, treatment, when a parent is using/not using, etc.)
- Do the children feel comfortable spending time with the parents unsupervised?
- Do the parents know how to care for their children and meet the children's needs during the family time?
- Has the caseworker had a conversation with the parents about questions or concerns they have about the

family time?

Unsupervised family time should occur in the community or at a Child Welfare approved family home. It can occur in the tribal or Child Welfare office, if necessary, but only as a last option.

Document:

In the safety plan (initial or ongoing) and [form 831](#) with whom, when and where unsupervised family time is occurring

In the Department's electronic information system:

- The resource parents' weekly update on the dates/times/duration that family time occurred, and what the children had to say about their time. Include any observations about behavior changes before and after the family time.
- The biological parents' weekly update on the dates/times/duration that family time occurred, and what the parents thought about their time. Include activities they did together, questions the children asked and how the parents felt about being able to answer them, and successes they had and any barriers they need assistance with.

Semi-Supervised Family Time

(This is the supervision level if "Yes" is the answer to all of the following questions):

- Is the family condition understood by Child Welfare (Do we know what happened that resulted in an unsafe child)?
- Can the family time occur at a time when it is unlikely the safety threats are active? For example, we may be pretty sure the family time is occurring at a time when everyone is safe, but maybe there are variables that the parents cannot control? If so, what is the safety risk to the children if those variables occur during family time?
- Do the parents feel stable in the use of their strengths? While they may not be able to articulate a specific plan, are they able to talk about using their strengths, and when they may be likely to struggle? For example, if the child brings up a sensitive topic, do they know what to say? Or if someone who has not been approved joins them during their family time, do they know how to ask that person to leave?
- Can the family time occur when a parents can utilize their strengths? What are the parent's strengths, and can the parent identify them? Are there times of the day or days of the week that the parents can more easily use their strengths? (Consider work schedule, treatment schedule, when a parent is more likely to be under the influence of a substance or not, etc.)
- Does the child feel comfortable spending time with the parents partially supervised?
- Do the parents know how to care for their children and meet the children's needs during family time?
- Do the parents have a plan in place that is agreed upon with the safety service provider for what to do if things are not going well?
- Do the parents understand that asking to take a break is a positive thing and will not have negative

consequences in their Child Welfare case? A break is any short period of time the parents may need away from their child to take care of themselves.

- Has the caseworker had a conversation with the parents regarding how to answer questions their children may ask about?

Location:

Semi-supervised family time will occur in the community, a Child Welfare approved family or safety service provider home, Tribal office, or at the Child Welfare office.

Document:

In the safety plan (initial or ongoing) and [form 831](#) :

- With whom, when and where semi-supervised family time is occurring.
- Who will be checking with the parents and/or children at the agreed upon intervals to ensure everyone feels comfortable and safe.
- What are the agreed upon intervals for check ins.
- How the safety service provider should communicate with the caseworker.
- What interventions are allowed/recommended and when they should be used.

In the Department's electronic information system within 7 days of the family time:

- The safety service provider and the parents weekly update on the family time that includes how family time is going, including successes and if any interventions were needed, what interventions were successful.
- If interventions were not successful, document the situation and the outcome.

Questions to help determine what 'semi supervised' looks like for each family:

At what interval does a safety service provider need to check in on the family? This could be:

- At the beginning of the family time.
- At the beginning and end of the family time.
- At periodic times throughout the family time (10, 15, 30, 60-minute intervals).
- If needed, this level of supervision can include sight (safety service provider will be within the sight of the family) supervision.

The parents and safety service provider will discuss the plan for the family time, explicitly sharing:

- Where the family time will occur and what the transportation plan is;
- Who will be included in the family time and who will explicitly not be included in the family time; and
- What activities they have planned.

During the check in's, the safety service provider will:

- Check in with the children(ren) to ensure they are feeling comfortable and safe.
- Check in with each parent to see if there is anything they need.
- If end of family time check-ins are scheduled, the safety service provider will check with all adults and children to see how their time together went, address any issues that came up, and celebrate successes that occurred.

Supervised Family Time:

(This is the supervision level if the answer is Yes to all the following questions):

- Is the family condition (situation) resulting in the children being unsafe unclear?
- Is there not a time in which there is assurance that the parents can utilize strengths to ensure children safety during family time?
- Has the caseworker had a conversation with the parents regarding how to answer questions their children may ask?

Location:

This supervision level requires that the family time be supervised:

- In a Child Welfare office, Tribal office, or in the community.
- By Child Welfare staff, Tribal worker, or approved safety service provider.
- Within sight and/or sound or always have a safety service provider physically present with the children.

Document:

In the safety plan (initial or ongoing) and [form 831](#):

- With whom, when and where supervised family time is occurring.
- How the safety service provider should communicate with the caseworker regarding how family time is going.
- What interventions are recommended.

In the Department's electronic information system within 7 days of the family time:

- How the family time went, including successes and barriers.
- If any interventions were needed, what interventions were successful.
- If interventions were not successful, document the situation and the outcome.

Intensive Supervision:

This highest level of supervision is only utilized appropriate when there are significant child safety issues.

(This is the supervision level if “Yes” is the answer to any of the following questions):

- Is there a threat that the child will be abducted?
- Is there a threat of coercion of testimony?
- Is the family time being scheduled with a high-risk offender?
- Is the child fearful?

The caseworker will need to have a conversation with the parents/guardian regarding how to talk with their children about the case.

Location:

Intensive supervision requires that the family time be:

- Supervised by Child Welfare staff or another approved professional.
- Supervised in Child Welfare office or another secure environment.

Document:

On the safety plan (initial or ongoing) and [form 831](#):

- With whom, when and where supervised family time is occurring.
- How the safety service provider should communicate with the caseworker regarding how family time is going.
- What interventions are recommended.

In the Department's electronic system within 7 days of the family time:

- How the family time went, including successes and barriers
- If any interventions were needed, what interventions were successful.
- If interventions were not successful, document the situation and the outcome.

Therapeutic Family Time:

This is the supervision level if the answer is "Yes" to all the following questions:

- Do the parents and children need therapeutic interventions to facilitate attachment, child safety, transitions, or other relationship dynamics?
- Has the professional confirmed they are comfortable managing child safety during the family time?
- Does Child Welfare have a level of confidence that safety can be managed in a therapeutic setting?

If the parent/guardian is comfortable and is able to keep the child safe, consider if additional unsupervised or semi-supervised family time is appropriate to further develop the relationship and expand their time together.

This level of family time is clinical and requires a higher skill level of intervention by a professional.

Document:

On the safety plan (initial or ongoing) and [form 831](#):

- With whom, when and where supervised family time is occurring.
- How the therapist should communicate with the caseworker regarding how family time is going.
- What interventions are recommended.

In the Department's electronic system within 7 days of the family time:

- How the family time went, including successes and barriers.
- If any interventions were needed, what interventions were successful.
- If interventions were not successful, document the situation and the outcome.

Documentation of Family Time

If a child misses part or all, of more than four school days during a semester or half school year period due to the family time schedule the caseworker must ensure the number of school days missed during the semester or half school year period is documented in the Child Section of the Family Report (under Education in the box titled, Update on how the child is doing in school”).

Procedure

Safety Service Providers and Family Time

See Chapter 4, Appendix 4.1C: Criteria to Assess the Suitability of SSP's

Arrange supervised family time with a Child Welfare approved safety service provider when required to address safety concerns for the child.

- In these circumstances, a Child Welfare approved third party (safety service provider) is included in the family time to ensure the emotional and physical safety of the child.
- Make the arrangements for the safety service provider, provide the parameters of the family time, and provide the instructions to the safety service provider for family time parameters, special considerations, and any observation and documentation requirements. Ensure that the person supervising the family time receives a copy of the Expectations for Safety Service Provider's Guide ([form 2789B](#)), a copy of [form \(0831\)](#), the safety plan (initial or ongoing) understands the dynamics of the individual family, the purpose of the supervision, and will comply with the safety plan.

Ensure the family and other family time contacts are documented in the case notes in the Department's electronic information system, and include the following information:

- The date, time, length, and location of the family time;
- Who attended;
- Activities that occurred during supervised or structured family time;

- Missed family time and reason(s) the family time sessions were missed; and
- Family times that were interrupted or ended early including reason(s) why they were interrupted or ended.

Support of the Family Time Process

Family time can be stressful and awkward for both the child and their parents. Family time at the Child Welfare office may activate a trauma response in both parents and children. Family members may struggle with what to say and do during family time.

There are many things a caseworker can do to support and enhance the family time process:

- Take time to talk with parents and children about places where they would feel comfortable having a family time. Consider planning family time in a park, library, church, or other public setting outside the Child Welfare office. Consider occasions when family time can occur in the family home.
- Suggest the parents bring books, toys and/or games to the family time. Parents who do not have books can check them out from the library, or ask the worker or resource parent to bring something the child likes. Ask parents if they mind recording themselves or having someone help record them as they read to or interact with their child. This can be played again by the child throughout the week.
- Encourage the family members to share family traditions, cultural rituals, and special celebrations together. Eating together and sharing food often is a highly valued family ritual.
- Use family time to celebrate child and family accomplishments.
- Take and share pictures and videos.
- Ask if the parent would like to provide a favorite blanket or piece of clothing and give it to the child at a family time. The smells of home and familiar items can provide a sense of connection and comfort when the parent is not with the child.

The Supervisor's Role

Review the case plan, including the family time and contact plan.

When applicable, ensure the worker is actively and diligently partnering with the Tribe in the creation of the family time plan.

Consult with the caseworker when issues or concerns arise.

Support creative thinking regarding increasing the number of people who can supervise family time, where family time take place, and how to support family traditions and culture.

Encourage the caseworker to use [form 4050](#) to determine the appropriate level of supervision. Review the supervision level regularly to ensure the level of supervision changes when appropriate.

Explore possible caseworker bias around appropriate behavior and expectations in family time.

Support the caseworker's efforts for frequent contact between the child and their parents and between siblings.

References

Family Report (Case Plan) in OR-Kids

Visitation and Contact Plan ([CF 0831](#))

Supervision Levels Form ([DHS 4050](#))

Legal References

[Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children ICPC Regulation No. 9, Definition of Family Time](#)

Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR)

[OAR 413-040-0250](#), Travel Arrangements and Reimbursement for Transportation Expenses

[OAR 413-010-0170](#), Rights of Children and Young Adults

[OAR 413-010-0170](#), Rights of Relatives

[OAR 413-200-0301](#), Standards for Certification of Resource Parents and Relative Caregivers and Approval of Potential Adoptive Resources

[OAR 413-040-0005](#), Developing and Managing the Case Plan

[OAR 413-070-0860](#), Types of Visitation and Contact Plans