



Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS)
Office of Families and Children

Policy and Practice Guidance Document #019
Family Case Plan – Alternative Form of Contact Guidance Documents
January 31, 2022

Background

This Policy and Practice Guidance Document provides a summary of the changes to the monthly contact requirements for adult parties to the family case plan in relation to Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) rules 5101:2-38-01 (Requirements for PCSA family case plan for in-home supportive services without a court order) and 5101:2-38-05 (PCSA family case plan for children in custody or under protective supervision). The revisions promote the ability to report on the ongoing contacts and attempts to engage family case plan participants and discourage the removal of parties from the family case plan. Attached are two guidance documents to assist in the decision-making process surrounding the use and approval of alternative forms of contact. These rules are effective February 1st, 2022.

Summary of Changes

Revisions to the above listed rules allow for PCSAs to utilize alternative forms of contact for adult parties to the family case plan when certain circumstances are present. If initial face-to-face contact attempts are unsuccessful, alternative forms of contact may be approved for the following month if these four items are documented within Ohio SACWIS:

1. The case circumstance, identifying the barrier to completing face-to face contact.
2. The alternative forms of contact, if possible, to be completed with the individual in lieu of face-to-face contact (telephone, video conference, electronic communication, etc.).
3. The plan of diligent efforts to successfully resume monthly face-to-face contact with the individual.
4. Supervisory approval.

Attachments

Attachment #019 A entitled “Ongoing Contact Requirements for Adults” outlines face-to-face contact requirements based on case category. Additionally, this document notes how to document alternative forms of contact within Ohio SACWIS.

Attachment #019 B entitled “Supplemental Supervisor Guide – Alternative Forms of Contact” was developed for supervisory use and outlines requirements for approving, documenting, and reviewing the use of alternative forms of contact.

Contact

If you have any questions related to the above guidance, please contact your Technical Assistance Specialist, or the OFC Help Desk at 1-866-886-3537 or HELP-DESK-OCF@jfs.ohio.gov.

Ongoing Contact Requirements for Adults

Face-to-Face Contact Requirements

This tool details best practice in applying recent changes to rule around contact requirements for adults. These changes address barriers to completing face-to-face contacts. Therefore, intended case plan participants should not be removed from the family case plan.

The purpose of monthly face-to-face contact with adult family case plan participants is the ongoing assessment of safety and risk. Face-to-face contact, as opposed to alternative forms of contact, is best practice as it offers advantages in engagement and relationship building and the ability to observe the home environment, observe interactions between the adult and others, and to have individual and one-on-one conversations with parties to the family case plan or prevention services plan.

	Prevention Services	Voluntary (Alternative Response and Traditional Response)	Court Ordered Protective Supervision, Temporary Custody, and Planned Permanent Living Arrangement
Which adults have a face-to-face contact requirement?	Each custodial parent, non-custodial parent, guardian, or custodian involved in the prevention services plan	Each custodial parent, non-custodial parent, guardian, or custodian participating in and being provided services through the family case plan	Each custodial parent, non-custodial parent, guardian, custodian or if applicable pre-finalized adoptive parent participating in and being provided services listed in the family case plan
How often am I required to meet with them?	Every other month	No less than monthly	No less than monthly
		If the initial attempt to complete a face-to-face contact with the adult is unsuccessful, the PCSA will make at least two additional face-to-face contact attempts within the month.	
Where must the contact take place?	In the child's home	At least one contact every other month must be in the child's home	At least one contact every other month must be in the child's parent, guardian, or custodian's home, or if applicable the pre-finalized adoptive parent's home*
Are alternative forms of contact permitted?	No	Yes	Yes

*See OAC 5101:2-38-05 for additional information regarding suspending home visits when the adult presents a threat to the safety of the caseworker.

Using Alternative Forms of Contact

Alternative forms of contact are only permitted for adult parties to the family case plan. The following guidance does not apply to contact mandates for adults on prevention services plans, contact mandates for children, contact mandates associated with voluntary in-home and voluntary out-of-home safety plans, or to contact mandates with placement providers.

The PCSA must complete diligent efforts before using alternative forms of contact. If a client misses a scheduled appointment but is willing to reschedule, best practice is to reschedule the face-to-face visit for that month. Locating family members who are identified on the family case plan but not engaging with the PCSA is critical to establishing safe, permanent connections for children. When determining if alternative forms are appropriate, consideration should be given to the adult's role in mitigating safety/risk concerns. PCSAs should ensure that they have completed at least one month of three face-to-face contact attempts before using these contact alternatives. **The chart below represents information that should be documented in SACWIS when using alternative forms of contact. See SACWIS screenshots displayed below for additional guidance in recording the additional information in SACWIS.**

Barrier to in person face-to-face	Case Circumstance	Diligent Efforts Completed?	Alternative Contact Type	Plan to return to face-to-face contact	Plan for Supervisory Approval/ Ongoing Assessment
Unable to Locate	Caseworker attempts to locate a client, location unknown.	Yes, Caseworker has completed diligent searches and documented these searches in SACWIS. No new addresses located.	Caseworker uses all known contact types (ex. virtual visit, phone call, text, and/or email, etc.) to attempt to arrange a virtual visit with the client.	Caseworker completes in person visits once client has been located.	Supervisor to discuss, evaluate, and document case circumstances during monthly conferences to ensure that interventions for face-to-face contact are appropriate.
Incarcerated	Client is incarcerated.	Yes, Caseworker has verified through incarceration facility or website that client is incarcerated.	Caseworker calls the prison to discuss visits. If Caseworker is unable to have a face-to-face visit due to rules/guidelines a virtual visit is arranged.	Prior to release Caseworker schedules a face-to-face visit with the client to be completed upon release.	
Treatment Facility	Client reports residing in a residential treatment center.	Confirm with treatment center staff that client is residing in treatment. Discuss availability of in person visits.	If in person is not available, virtual visit is arranged.	Discuss with treatment center staff when face-to-face visits can be scheduled. If they cannot, plan the first face-to-face visit with client upon scheduled release.	

Out of County or State	Client resides out of the county or state.	Confirm that client resides out of county or state and ask for a courtesy visit from PCSA or CSA in client's jurisdiction.	If a face-to-face visit is not available, virtual visit is arranged.	Discuss in person visits with client and if they can occur.	
Out of Country	Client resides out of the country.	Confirm the client resides out of country. Request assistance from the consulate or other resources in the client's current country of residence.	If a face-to-face visit is not available, virtual visit is arranged.	Discuss if the client will be available for an in person visit in the foreseeable future.	

Determining the Form(s) of Alternative Contact

The service team should determine the temporary alternative form of contact based on the unique case circumstances discussed above, agency resource capacity, and family access to resources. The tier system below prioritizes types of contact recommended in lieu of face-to-face visits. Multiple forms of alternative forms can be used in any given month to engage and/or locate the family.

Tier 1: Virtual visit (Microsoft Teams, FaceTime, Zoom, Google Meets, etc.)
Tier 2: Phone call, JPay Video Connect
Tier 3: <i>These forms should only be used in lieu of face-to-face contact when Tier 1 and Tier 2 attempts have been exhausted.</i> Email, text messages, social media, etc.

Recording Diligent Efforts and Alternative Forms of Contact in SACWIS

Alternative forms of contact are only permitted for adult parties to the family case plan.

When determining if alternative forms are appropriate, consideration should be given to the adult's role in mitigating safety/risk concerns. PCSAs should ensure that they have completed at least one month of three face-to-face contact attempts before using contact alternatives.

Information is to be documented in SACWIS when using alternative forms of contact. See the following SACWIS screenshots for recording the additional information in SACWIS.

Recording an Activity Log for Alternative Forms of Contact

When selecting an “Available Contact Type” you must select “Alternative Form of Contact” for the Comprehensive Visitation Report to include the alternative form of contact towards successful face-to-face visitation. Selection of additional contact types may be made in conjunction with the “Alternative Form of Contact” to identify the type of alternative form of contact. Continue to select the “Sub Categories” as “Ongoing monthly visit.”

Start Activity Date: * 11/01/2021 [calendar icon] Time: 10:00 AM [dropdown]

End Activity Date: 11/01/2021 [calendar icon] Time: 10:30 AM [dropdown]

Responsible Worker: * [dropdown] Originator Of Information: [dropdown]

Contact Duration: [dropdown] High Priority

Contact Types

Available Contact Types:

Q	Add All	Add
Announced Home Visit		
Collateral		
Court		
Critical Safety Issue		
Education		
Email		
Face-to-Face		
Face-to-Face Visit with Provider(s)		

Select Contact Types: *

Remove	Remove All	Q
Alternative Form of Contact		
Virtual Visit/ Video		

Category Information

Case Category: * Ongoing [dropdown] ⓘ

Category: * Ongoing Visits [dropdown]

Available Sub Categories:

Q	Add All	Add
Initial 7 days not including day of placement		
Treatment FC 2x Monthly		

Select Sub Categories: *

Remove	Remove All	Q
Ongoing monthly visit		

Access to relevant administrative code rules can be found at:

- Rule 5101:2-38-01 Requirements for PCSA family case plan for in-home supportive services without court order.
- Rule 5101:2-38-05 PCSA family case plan for children in custody or under protective supervision.
- Rule 5101:2-38-07 PCSA family case plan for children in custody or under court-ordered protective supervision.
- Rule 5101:2-40-05 PCSA requirements for providing family first prevention services.

Supplemental Supervisor Guide- Alternative Forms of Contact

This tool is intended for supervisors to use in conjunction with the “Ongoing Contact Requirements for Adults” guidance document addressing family case plan caseworker visits with adult participants. It provides supplemental guidance on the supervisory responsibilities of approving the use of alternative forms of contact and ensuring that regulatory reviews occur. ***Alternative forms of contact are only permitted for adult parties to the family case plan. The following guidance does not apply to contact mandates for adults on prevention services plans, contact mandates for children, contact mandates associated with voluntary in-home and voluntary out-of-home safety plans, or to contact mandates with placement providers.***

Rule requirements for approving alternative forms of contact

Before being able to use alternative forms of contact, the PCSA must either:

- 1) Complete at least three face-to-face contact attempts with the adult during the previous calendar month OR
- 2) Agree on a plan for alternative forms of contact due to advanced knowledge of the adult being temporarily unavailable to complete face-to-face contacts for that entire month.

See the following examples of family case plan adult participants that would be eligible (pending supervisory approval) or ineligible for alternative forms of contact:



Example 1

CW completed three face-to-face attempts with the adult in January.
The adult is eligible for alternative forms of contact in February because three face-to-face attempts were completed with the adult during the previous month (January).



Example 2

CW completed a successful face-to-face visit with the adult in January.
CW does not have knowledge of the adult being unavailable for a face-to-face visit in February.
This adult is not eligible for alternative forms of contact in February because the CW did not complete three face-to-face attempts during the previous month (January) or agree to a plan for temporary alternative forms of contact with the adult.



Example 3

CW completed a successful face-to-face visit with the adult in January. CW has advanced knowledge of the adult being temporarily unavailable for face-to-face contact so CW and the adult agreed on alternative forms of contact for February.

This adult is eligible for alternative forms of contact in February because the CW and the adult agreed on a plan for alternative forms of contact due to advanced knowledge of the adult being temporarily unable to complete face-to-face contacts.



Example 4

CW completed a successful face-to-face visit with the adult in January and completed three face-to-face contact attempts in February. The adult is eligible for alternative forms of contact in March because the three required face-to-face attempts were completed during the previous month (February).



Example 5

CW completed a successful face-to-face visit with the adult in January, completed three face-to-face contact attempts in February, and completed successful face-to-face visits in March and April. CW does not have knowledge of the adult being unavailable for a face-to-face visit in May.

This adult is not eligible for alternative forms of contact in May because the CW did not complete three face-to-face attempts during the previous month (April) or agree to a plan for temporary alternative forms of contact with the adult.



Example 6

CW completed a successful face-to-face visit with the adult in January, completed three face-to-face contact attempts in February, and completed successful face-to-face visits in March and April. CW has advanced knowledge of the adult being temporarily unavailable for face-to-face contact so CW and the adult agreed on alternative forms of contact for May.

This adult is eligible for alternative forms of contact in May because the CW and the adult agreed on a plan for alternative forms of contact due to advanced knowledge of the adult being temporarily unable to complete face-to-face contacts.

Is the caseworker able to make additional face-to-face attempts?

Alternative forms of contact can only be approved when minimum face-to-face contacts are not able to be completed. Use the following information to help assess whether the caseworker should continue to make face-to-face attempts using new engagement strategies or if a plan for alternative forms of contact should be considered.

Considerations before approving alternative forms of contact	Diligent efforts to complete before approval
Have the face-to-face attempts been scheduled or unscheduled?	If all attempts were scheduled, try unscheduled face-to-face attempts before approving alternative forms of contact.
Have the attempts been completed at different times of the day? What time of day was the last face-to-face visit completed?	If all attempts were completed at the same time of day, try unscheduled face-to-face attempts during different times of the day. Discuss information known about the adult’s schedule with the caseworker to determine when the client is likely to be home or has been home in the past.
Where did the most recent successful face-to-face visit occur?	Try attempting a face-to-face visit at that location if you have reason to believe that it could be successful.
Did the caseworker contact school(s) and/or service providers to verify contact information for the adult?	Ask them to do so if applicable.
Did the caseworker contact service providers and ask to complete face-to-face visits with them?	Ask them to do so if applicable.
If the case is court-involved, did the caseworker contact court collaterals to assist with client re-engagement?	Examples include the defense lawyer, CASA/GAL, and court social worker or advocate.
If it is a custody case, did the caseworker attempt a face-to-face visit with the adult before or after their visitation with the child? If appropriate, did they ask the child for updated contact information for the adult?	Ask them to do so if applicable.

Has there been a pattern of behavior that led to the adult not being located (i.e., positive drug screens, criminal involvement, sporadic visitation followed by disengagement)?	What has helped to re-engage this adult in the past? What new engagement strategies can you think of? Check to see if the adult is incarcerated.
Is the caseworker asking to complete alternative forms of contact because they need to focus on an emergency or go on vacation?	If so, request that another caseworker make the mandated attempts.
What alternative form(s) of contact does the caseworker think should be used for this adult?	Why are they identifying this form of contact?

Developing and documenting the use of alternative forms of contact

Once you have determined that the minimum face-to-face contacts are not able to be completed it is important to discuss and develop a plan to re-establish monthly face-to-face visits between the caseworker and the adult. The plan should:

- Identify strategies toward completion of successful face-to-face contact and
- Timeframes based on the presenting conditions.

This information must be documented in SACWIS every month that alternative forms of contact are used. Documentation of the use of alternative forms of contact could occur in activity logs, case reviews and/or semi-annual reviews. Reach out to your administrator and/or your county's assigned Technical Assistance Specialist (TAS) for guidance as needed.

Scenario	Example Documentation
Three unsuccessful attempts	Caseworker staffed case with supervisor to discuss using alternative forms of contact for <u>(client name)</u> . Three face-to-face attempts were made on <u>(dates)</u> and caseworker was unsuccessful in contacting client. Caseworker spoke to client via telephone who states that a face-to-face visit is not possible for this month due to working out of town. Supervisor has approved for caseworker to meet with client via Facetime for <u>(month)</u> . This virtual visit will assist Caseworker in getting Family Case Plan updates from client. Caseworker discussed the importance of in person visits with <u>(client name)</u> . The plan to resume face-to-face visits was discussed and the next Face to Face visit was scheduled for the following month for <u>(date)</u>. Supervisor approved alternative forms of contact for <u>(month)</u> contacts only.

Incarcerated parent	Caseworker staffed case with supervisor to discuss using alternative forms of contact for (client name). Currently (client name) is incarcerated several hours away from agency office. Caseworker has verified client's incarceration and spoken to social worker and has set up a virtual visit via zoom for (month). Completing virtual visits with client while incarcerated will allow the Family Case Plan to be discussed and for the client the receive updates on the children. Supervisor has approved alternative forms of contact. Three face-to-face attempts were not made as client is incarcerated and the jail is not scheduling in person visits for client at this time. Caseworker has been informed that the client will be incarcerated for 90 days, prior to client's release caseworker will set up a face-to-face visit with client in the community.
Client refusal for Face-to-Face visit	Caseworker staffed case with supervisor to discuss using alternative forms of contact for (client name). Supervisor has approved alternative forms of contact as client is unwilling to meet with caseworker for a face-to-face visit. Client is a party to the family case plan and is not in a caretaking role of child(ren). Supervisor has approved a Facetime call as alternative forms of contact for (month). During the facetime call caseworker will gather more information as to why client is refusing face to face contact. Supervisor and caseworker will work together with client to eliminate those concerns. Efforts will be made to complete in person visits with client and will be requested each month by service team. Completing virtual visits will assist caseworker in improving the rapport with client and discuss the Family Case Plan progress. Supervisor approved alternative forms of contact for (month) contacts only.

Regulatory Review of Alternative Forms of Contact

