


Policy Subject:	Access to Children to Conduct CPS Response or Provide Family Preservation Services
Effective Date:	March 1, 2022
Approved By:	Michelle L. Farr, LCSW-C, LICSW  Executive Director Social Services Administration
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Originating Office:	Child Protective Services/Family Preservation Services
Supersedes:	SSA# 12-22 Access to children to conduct Child Protective Services Investigations or to provide In-Home Family Services
Programs Affected:	Child Protective Services Family Preservation Services

Legal Information & Purpose

The purpose of this policy directive is to provide clarification on efforts that shall be discussed between the caseworker and the supervisor when the caseworker is unable to locate a child or family. This policy will assist staff with meeting mandated face-to-face contact with the alleged victim and attempted contact with all other children in the home and in the care of the alleged maltreater. Contact shall occur within 24 hours for abuse, 48 hours for Substance Exposed Newborns (SEN), and 5 days for neglect and Risk of Harm (ROH). This policy is supported by COMAR 07.02.07.08 (CPS), COMAR 07.02.01.09 (Family Preservation Services), COMAR 07.02.01.04 (Services to Families with Children-Intake), COMAR 07.02.08.04 (Substance Exposed Newborns), and Maryland Code Ann. Family Law § 5-704.1 (Substantial Risk of Sexual Abuse by a Registered Sexual Offender).

Policy

In alignment with requirements of Family Law § 5-706, the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS) will ensure that all children are seen within the required timeframes. When the caseworker is unable to locate the child(ren), the caseworker will refer to this policy and consult with the supervisor for guidance to determine appropriate next steps. Beyond the initial face-to-face contact, caseworkers shall take the appropriate next steps to ensure the ongoing assessment of safety and risk and strengths and needs of all children in their caseload.

Procedural Guidance and Timeframes

The LDSS is responsible for providing CPS Response, ROH, or Family Preservation Services when the referral information is screened-in for services. This responsibility includes meeting mandated timeframes for conducting an initial face-to-face response to assess for safety and risk. When the child(ren) cannot be located at school, home, or in the community within the required timeframe, or the parent/caregiver is unwilling to allow access to the child(ren), provide information on where to locate the child(ren), or the parent/caregiver cannot be located, the caseworker shall consult with their supervisor to consider the following strategies:

- Work with law enforcement to conduct a home visit in addition to the LDSS conducting a home visit, more than once if appropriate
- Review all LDSS historical records for information as to the whereabouts of the child/family
- Contact the referral source (by phone or in person)
- Contact known relatives (by phone or in person)
- Contact known family/friends (by phone or in person)
- Contact neighbors to determine whether the family resides in the home and whether the child/children have been seen (by phone or in person)
- Contact known formal or informal childcare providers
- Conduct unannounced home visits at different times of the day
- If available, request assistance from after-hours staff to complete after-hours visits
- Search social networks including Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat,

TikTok, etc. *(At no time shall a caseworker use their personal account to search social networks.)*

- Contact school staff for information including the child's emergency card; request that the school notify the caseworker when the child returns
- If active with the Family Investment Administration (FIA), request a redetermination of the family's case that may include the parent/guardian coming into the LDSS to meet with the caseworker
- Contact the local Social Security Administration if child is known to receive benefits
- Contact other service providers who were identified in any historical information whom the family may have had prior contact
- Send a certified letter to the parent/guardian noting contact efforts and request to know the child's whereabouts
- Follow-up on all leads and document efforts

The caseworker and supervisor shall meet regularly to discuss all efforts to contact the child/family and any barriers to seeing the child(ren).

Case Closure

The caseworker shall inform the supervisor of all documented efforts to access the child(ren) if the family is either unwilling to work with the agency or the caseworker is unable to access or locate a child. The caseworker and supervisor will discuss the next steps such as whether legal intervention may be warranted or any other appropriate action to be taken prior to case closure. The caseworker and supervisor shall ensure all attempts, contacts, and follow-up information is documented in a timely manner in CJAMS.

Alignment with Practice Model and Desired Outcomes

This policy supports the goals of the Integrated Practice Model to engage with families in a comprehensive assessment process that is trauma-responsive and strengths-based while fulfilling the LDSS mission of ensuring the safety and well-being of children.

Documentation

All efforts to locate the child/family shall be documented in CJAMS including supervisory consultations.