

CONNECTIONS

NYS Office of Children and Family Services

Dated: June 22, 2006

Please note: The following information provides further description of the purposes of Permanency Consultation and 24 Hour Contact.

Permanency Consultation

It should be noted that a new purpose titled: “**Permanency Consultation**” has been added to the list of *purposes* available in Progress Notes in the CONNECTIONS application. This new purpose will be used to track permanency consultation meetings.

A “**Permanency Consultation**” is defined as a face-to-face meeting on behalf of a child or children who have been removed and placed in foster care under Article 10 of the Family Court Act; or placed in the direct custody of a relative or other suitable person under Article 10 of the Family Court Act; or voluntarily placed in foster care; or are completely legally freed for adoption.

The purpose of the Permanency Consultation is to assist with the development of the Permanency Hearing Report. Decisions and outcomes identified at the consultation must be incorporated into the Permanency Hearing Report. Details about the consultation must be documented in Progress Notes. The following information reflects text in the regulations regarding Permanency Consultation:

- A Permanency Consultation must be conducted no earlier than 60 days prior to the date certain for the Permanency Hearing and must be completed with sufficient time to finalize and submit the Permanency Hearing Report, at least 14 days before the date certain for the Permanency Hearing;
- Wherever practicable, Permanency Consultation participants must meet together, however, at a minimum a meeting must be held separately with the required participants.

Required participants include:

- the case planner and/or the child's caseworker;
- the child's parent(s), unless the parent has had his or her parental rights to the child terminated, or unless it can be documented that one or both of them are unwilling or unable to attend;
- each child age ten or over, unless it can be documented that the child is unwilling to attend, or it can be demonstrated that attendance would not be in the child's best interest; and
- the child's foster parent, if the child is in placement in a foster boarding home,
- the child's pre-adoptive parent, if the child is in such placement,
- the relative or other suitable person with whom the child has been placed directly by the court

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Efforts also must be made to consult with the following:

- the case manager;
- any permanency discharge resource;
- key service providers;
- school personnel;
- any other person(s) identified by the parent(s); and
- in the case of an Indian child, the child's tribe must be consulted

Efforts to involve these persons must not delay the consultation or preparation of the Permanency Hearing Report.

“24 Hour Contact”

Social Services Law 424.6 mandates that an investigation of each report of suspected child abuse or maltreatment commence within 24 hours of receiving the report. The 24 hour initiation of the investigation represents the first step(s) taken to gather important information in order to make an immediate safety assessment, evaluate the environment of the child(ren) named in the report and of any other children in the same home, and to take any immediate steps necessary to protect the child(ren).

The purpose of 24 Hour (contact) is added to the INV stage Progress Notes. The narrative must include documentation of the 24 Hour Contact, defined as:

- face-to-face contact with the child and/or family
- significant telephone contact with the child and/or family
- significant face-to-face or telephone contact with the source of the report if (s)he is in a position to provide information about whether the child may be in immediate danger of serious harm and that the person is a reliable source of information who has specific and current knowledge of the safety of the child at the time of the report
- significant face-to-face or telephone contact with another person in a position to provide information about whether the child may be in immediate danger of serious harm and the person is a reliable source of information who has specific and current knowledge of the safety of the child at the time of the report

The narrative should also include an assessment of any impending danger or safety issues that may place the child in immediate danger of serious harm in the near future.

The content of the report must be evaluated to establish the immediacy with which the child/family should be seen. The steps taken during the first twenty-four hours may differ

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depending upon the allegations contained in the report and any other significant information obtained.

Documentation of the step(s) taken in the first twenty-four hours to initiate the investigation must be provided in progress notes and investigative actions in CONNECTIONS.

In addition, districts must review all cross-referenced prior reports, including legally sealed unfounded reports where the current report involves the same subject, child or child's sibling, and other relevant agency records, as an additional source of information. This alone does not, however, constitute initiation of the investigation. Furthermore, CONNECTIONS case and person search and WMS/CCRS inquiry may provide information on pre-existing services or non-services cases, including the identification of the district worker(s) involved. This process can reveal whether the family has been connected with social services before and what kind of contact the family may have had with the district.