


POLICY TITLE:		Engaging Incarcerated Parents	
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Approved By:	Date Approved:	Original Effective Date:	Last Revision:
Brenda Donald	September 17, 2019	December 1, 2009	September 17, 2019

I. AUTHORITY	The Director of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA or Agency) adopts this policy to be consistent with the Agency's mission, and applicable federal and District of Columbia laws and regulations, including, but not limited to, provisions in Title 4 of the DC Official Code, Chapter 60 of Title 29 of the DC Municipal Regulations, and the <i>LaShawn A. v. Bowser</i> Implementation and Exit Plan.
II. APPLICABILITY	CFSA employees and contractors.
III. RATIONALE	Maintaining family bonds is essential for a child's well-being, resilience, and positive permanency outcomes. Parental engagement is inherent to CFSA's mission. Like all parents of children in foster care, those who are incarcerated deserve the respect and support of the child's case management team, and decisions involving their children require coordination of efforts and appropriate resources. Therefore, the Agency provides guidance to social workers for engaging incarcerated parents through strengths-based case management that is aimed at securing well-being and positive permanency outcomes for children and their families.
IV. POLICY	<p>Parents who are incarcerated or are under another form of correctional supervision maintain their parental rights, including the right to visitation and to maintain contact by mail, telephone or other authorized means, such as email or video conferencing, unless such rights have been limited or terminated by the court. They shall also be permitted and encouraged to fully participate in case planning for their children, as appropriate.</p> <p>CFSA shall provide children in foster care with regular opportunities for contact with a parent who is incarcerated. Social workers are responsible for substantive engagement of these parents to ensure they are involved in the lives of their children and to strengthen family relationships. Refer to the online Engaging Incarcerated Parents business process for detailed procedures associated with this policy.</p> <p>Within this policy, the term "contact" includes telephone calls, in-person visits, videoconferencing and other forms of communication between the child and parent, and social worker and parent.</p> <p><i>Note: Parents who are under correctional supervision may be living in the community in their own housing or at a halfway house, recovery house or other transitional living arrangement. Within this policy, they are included in references to "incarcerated parents".</i></p>

V. CONTENTS	<p>A. Locating Incarcerated Parents</p> <p>B. Contact with Correctional Authorities</p> <p>C. Engagement with Incarcerated Parents</p> <p>D. Assessment</p> <p>E. Case Planning with Incarcerated Parents</p>
VI. SECTIONS	<p>Section A. Locating Incarcerated Parents</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Within 48 hours of learning of (or receiving credible information about) a parent's incarceration, CFSA shall initiate efforts to determine and confirm the parent's location. 2. At a minimum, CFSA shall attempt to locate the parent every 30 days until the parent's location has been determined. 3. When a parent is transferred between correctional environments or released, CFSA shall make efforts to maintain contact with the parent, through collateral contact with appropriate corrections staff or through direct engagement with the parent.
	<p>Section B: Contact with Correctional Authorities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CFSA shall initiate contact with the appropriate personnel at the correctional facility to arrange contact between the parent and child as frequently as is required by the Visitation Policy or the Family Court. 2. CFSA shall coordinate with the assigned facility case worker every 60 days to discuss all types of communication and contact that have occurred between the parent and child, whether tasks have been accomplished and whether goals need to be reevaluated.
	<p>Section C: Engagement with Incarcerated Parents</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CFSA shall make initial contact immediately after the incarcerated parent is identified and located, and contact between CFSA staff and the parent should continue on a monthly basis. 2. If the parent has multiple children in the care of CFSA, CFSA shall make efforts to arrange opportunities for each child in care to have contact with the parent. 3. CFSA shall align the level and extent of contact between child and parent with program requirements as well as the developmental needs of the child and family court orders. 4. In addition to in-person visits, CFSA shall encourage communication between the parent and the child by any feasible means of communication, such as phone, mail, email, and video visitation. 5. CFSA shall inform the parent's facility case manager and/or the parent's attorney when the child is unable to have contact.

	<p>Section D: Assessment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CFSA shall assess the parent and child relationship to determine whether engagement or contact between them is appropriate. 2. If the assessment determines that contact with the parent is not in the best interest of the child, contact will be limited or denied, consistent with applicable law and court orders. CFSA shall maintain contact with the incarcerated parent regardless of parent-child visitation arrangements.
	<p>Section E: Case Planning With Incarcerated Parents</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unless a court order mandates otherwise, CFSA is to engage incarcerated parents in case planning for their children, and to encourage their participation in case planning activities. 2. CFSA, in collaboration with the parent's attorney, shall facilitate the parent's participation in case planning activities. 3. CFSA should collaborate with the parent's assigned case manager or facility staff to assess the parent's needs and identification of appropriate services that may be available in the correctional setting. 4. Case planning shall include assisting in the facilitation of appropriate services upon the parent's re-entry into the community.