Guideline
Home Visiting Guidelines for Family Services Coordinators

This document is currently under review. Please direct any queries regarding this document to the policy officer listed in Table 1.

DECD 13/4628

Summary

These guidelines outline the responsibilities that apply when a Family Services Coordinator undertakes a home visit to a family. These guidelines apply to all Family Services Coordinators working within the DECD Family Services Program.

Table 1 - Document details

<table>
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<th>Publication date</th>
<th>9 October 2013</th>
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<tr>
<td>Review date</td>
<td>9 October 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Related legislation/applicable section of legislation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related policies, procedures, guidelines, standards, frameworks</td>
<td>DECD Home Visiting Protocol</td>
</tr>
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<td>Replaces</td>
<td>Version 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy officer (position)</td>
<td>Manager Family Support Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy officer (phone)</td>
<td>8226 1750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy sponsor (position)</td>
<td>Director, Early Childhood Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive director responsible (position and office)</td>
<td>Executive Director, Office for Children and Young People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Family Services Coordinators</td>
</tr>
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<td>Approved by</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval date</td>
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<td>Version</td>
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Table 2 - Revision record

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
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Home Visiting Guidelines for Family Services Coordinators

This guideline is applicable to: all Family Services Coordinators employed by DECD
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REVISI ON RECORD

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</table>
1. TITLE

Home visiting guidelines for Family Services Coordinators.

2. PURPOSE

To outline the guidelines and responsibilities that apply when a Family Services Coordinator undertakes a home visit to a family.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the DECD Home Visit Protocols (2010), to help determine if a home visit to a family is necessary, and how to undertake a home visit safely and effectively.

3. SCOPE

These guidelines apply to all Family Services Coordinators working within the DECD Family Services Program.

4. OBJECTIVES

To provide Family Services Coordinators with relevant information and guidance to undertake home visits to families, safely and effectively.

5. GUIDELINE DETAILS

Children’s Centres bring together care, education, health, developmental and family services for families and their young children. The Family Services Program is a targeted service within Children’s Centres, designed to support vulnerable families and strengthen and enhance family and community capacity in responding to children.

Family Services Coordinators;

- are part of the Children’s Centre leadership team and are involved in strategic planning, development and implementation of policy and in identifying the local centre strategic directions
- work alongside long day care, early childhood education and school staff, health workers and other services to help families develop and maintain safe, caring, connected and resilient relationships
- support parents to access the assistance they need, when they need it, within their own community.

5.1 Reasons for undertaking a home visit

Children’s Centres actively support and encourage children and families to participate in a range of programs and services offered in their sites. Some families may experience difficulties in accessing Children’s Centres and therefore it may be necessary for Family Services Coordinators to undertake home visits to support and encourage families to connect with the Children’s Centre.

Reasons for undertaking a home visit may include:

- engaging vulnerable families who are not accessing the Children’s Centre
- meeting with isolated families to advise them about transport options to the Children’s Centre
• being introduced to the family by staff from a referring agency
• visiting a child or family member who has a disability and cannot easily access the Children’s Centre
• assessing the situation in a family home as this would add context to the Family Services Coordinator’s future intervention with the family within the Children’s Centre.

5.2 Consider other options

It is important that Family Services Coordinators consider all options to engage a child and/or family. These may include:

• arranging a taxi to transport the family to the Children’s Centre (The Family Services Coordinator budget may be used for this purpose)
• giving the family information about local public transport options that they may utilise to access the Children’s Centre
• posting/sending information to the family about Children’s Centre programs
• arranging to meet the family in a public place such as a shopping centre, park, coffee shop etc.

If all other options have been considered Family Services Coordinators may deem that a home visit to the child/family is the most appropriate option.

The Family Services Coordinator should undertake the first home visit with a colleague (from another agency or the Children’s Centre) whenever possible.

5.3 Prior to the home visit

Prior to undertaking a home visit, Family Services Coordinators should undertake a risk assessment of the situation they are about to visit. (see risk assessment tool pg.9). This would initially include information from any referring source, plus information gathered when the home visit is set up. Any potential risks that have been identified should be discussed with the Director, or if not available, the Principal Family Services Coordinator, prior to determining whether the visit should proceed or extra control measures are necessary.

Prior to the home visit, Family Services Coordinators should:

• contact the family and advise them of the visit and its purpose
• include the date and time of the visit and detail who will be attending
• establish who from the family may be home during the visit
• conduct visits during daylight hours only
• establish whether there are any pets in the home that need to be restrained during the visit
• gain as much information about the family as possible prior to undertaking the visit
• recontact the family on the day of the visit to confirm arrangements
• ensure that the vehicle used is adequately maintained eg petrol, good tyres
• ensure they have a mobile phone with them that is charged.

What the coordinators wear should be a consideration also, ie long dangling earrings, necklaces/scarves/ties that could be used as a choking hazard if violence escalates, flimsy footwear, open toed shoes or high heels that could become a trip hazard.

Family Services Coordinators must not conduct a home visit if they assess the level of risk as being high.
5.4. Recording of staff movements

Prior to leaving for the home visit, Family Services Coordinators must advise a designated responsible person within the Children’s Centre where they are going, which family they are visiting and what time they are due back. If there is no-one available at the Children’s Centre, the Family Services Coordinator is to contact the Principal Family Services Coordinator or the Manager Family Services Program and advise them of the visit.

5.5. During the home visit

Prior to entering the home Family Services Coordinators should consider taking the following actions:

- Park the vehicle so that the exit is not easily blocked by another vehicle eg, do not park in the driveway or in front of the house.
- If the property is located in a no-through road or cul-de-sac, park the vehicle facing the direction of the safest exit route.
- If two employees are conducting the visit, consider that one carry the car keys and the other hold the mobile phone.
- Check the signal strength of the mobile phone at the location.
- Observe the premises briefly (eg are people or dogs present?)
- Place the car keys in a jacket pocket or keep them in the hand. Do not place car keys in the bottom of a large bag or leave them accessible to other people.
- After knocking, close the security/wire door and stand to one side away from the danger of an abruptly opened door.
- Pause and listen for conversation, this may give clues on what to expect.
- Reconsider entering properties that have high levels of security devices such as electronic or self-locking doors/gates that may prevent a quick escape. Many residences now have these installed.
- Trust any instincts or body functions that may predict impending danger eg rapid heartbeat, cold sweat or dry mouth.

While attending at the home – keep the following in mind:

- Are there likely to be others present?
- Would it be difficult to retreat to a safe haven?
- Have the DECD identification card accessible, either pinned to clothing or held on a snap lock lanyard.

Family Services Coordinators should introduce themselves to the family and explain the reason for the home visit. Family Services Coordinators should not enter the home unless invited.

Once inside the home observation skills are useful for further analysis.

- Observe the layout of the house, exit points and the location of possible weapons eg pokers, knives, scissors etc.
- Try to ensure there is a clear path to the exit.
- Avoid sitting in low chairs that are hard to get out of and also pose a risk of concealed needle stick sharps.
Whilst within the home, Family Services Coordinators should be aware of the potential for conflict and/or risk and any signs of stress and/or anger. If faced with a situation where anyone becomes aggressive or agitated, or the Family Services Coordinator feels unsafe, the Family Services Coordinator should leave the home immediately.

Alternative strategies to engage the family will be considered at a later date if this is the case.

5.6 Upon returning from the home visit

The Family Services Coordinator should immediately notify the contact person to inform them of their return.

If the Family Services Coordinator needs to debrief about the home visit and/or needs additional advice or support, they should speak to the Children’s Centre Director or contact one of the Principal Family Services Coordinators or the Manager of the Family Services Program.

5.7 Insurance

It is the responsibility of the Family Services Coordinator to have adequate insurance on their vehicle to cover them for undertaking home visits.

If there are any questions about this Family Services Coordinators are to contact either their insurance company and/or the Manager Family Services Program.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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<tr>
<th>Party / Parties</th>
<th>Roles and responsibilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Director, Office for Children and Young People</td>
<td>Approval of Home Visiting Guidelines for Family Services Coordinators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director, Early Childhood Services</td>
<td>Endorsement of Home Visiting Guidelines for Family Services Coordinators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager, Children’s Centres Program Early Childhood Services</td>
<td>Overall responsibility for the quality, relevance and effectiveness of Children’s Centres, including a safe and healthy environment for Family Services Coordinators to work within.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager, Family Services Program Early Childhood Services</td>
<td>Overall responsibility for the quality, relevance and effectiveness of the Family Services Program, including a safe and healthy environment for Family Services Coordinators to work within.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director Children’s Centre and Head of Early Years</td>
<td>Implementation of Home Visiting Guidelines within Children’s Centres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Services Coordinators</td>
<td>Comply with and implement these guidelines.</td>
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7. DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>Departmental site</td>
<td>Department for Education and Child Development site.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home visit</td>
<td>A visit by a Family Services Coordinator to the home of a family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Referring agency</td>
<td>Staff from another government or non-government agency, who refers a child/family to a Family Services Coordinator for support.</td>
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8. REFERENCES

8.1 DECD Home Visit Protocols
Home Visiting Policy for Family Services Coordinators

Is Home Visit Required

Consider alternative ways to engage family

Is there someone who can attend with you?

Are there strategies to mitigate risks?

Is it safe to do the home visit?

Consult Principal FSC or Manager – Family Services Program ASAP.

Write up case notes etc.

Do you need to debrief?

Notify centre of details

Notify centre of your return

Attend Home Visit

Yes

No

Yes

No

Yes

No
Family Services Coordinator Risk Assessment for Home Visit

Prior to beginning visits to a family a risk assessment must be undertaken. This would initially include information from the referring source, and then some discrete questions could be asked in a subtle way to obtain the information required from the family when the first appointment is set up.

<table>
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<th>Date Completed:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Family Name</th>
<th>Child’s Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Referral Source</td>
<td>Contact Name</td>
<td>Contact Number</td>
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<tr>
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<th>Details/Action of risk</th>
<th>Risk Low</th>
<th>Risk Med</th>
<th>Risk High</th>
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<td>Does the child or family members have a history of violent/aggressive behaviour?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there any visitors likely to be present during the home visit? If so do any of these people pose a threat?</td>
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<td>Is there any known substance abuse?</td>
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<td>Is there any difficulty with mobile phone reception?</td>
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<td>Are there any animals in/around the property that could present risk?</td>
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<td>Are there any other risk factors or hazards?</td>
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<td>Is there accessible parking and easy access and exit from the home?</td>
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If you have Med/High risk concerns to any of the statements above please talk to your Director or Principal Family Services Coordinator. They can provide information, support, guidance and advice about your safety.

Two staff should go to the first visit whenever possible.

If you have any concerns about your safety either at the first visit or on subsequent visits then alternate arrangements must be made, such as meeting elsewhere or not offering a home visit.