

Family Services Home Visits

Policy/Approach:

Family Advocates conduct home visits in order to build rapport and establish trusting relationships with families. Every effort must be made to explain the advantages of home visits to the parents. Southern Oregon Head Start does not require that parents permit home visits as a condition of the child's participation in center-based program options.

SOHS staff will schedule home visits at times that are mutually convenient for the parents or primary caregivers and staff. If parents in center-based programs ask that the home visits be conducted outside the home, or in cases where a visit to the home presents significant safety hazards for staff, the home visit may take place at the center or at another safe location that affords privacy.

Staff will behave as guests in the family's home and treat parents and children with courtesy and respect. The principles of Motivational Interviewing, strengths-based case management, and parent-driven change will inform the interaction.

Head Start Performance Standards:

1302.50 (b)(5) Family Engagement

1302.52(a) and (b)(1,5) Family Partnership services

Procedure:

Family Advocate Home Visits

Home Based Home Visitors must refer to and follow the [EHS Home Based Procedure for home visiting](#).

Family Advocates are required to complete a minimum of one home visit per family during the program year. The due date for completing home visits will be set by the Family Services department. Meeting with families offers essential opportunities to establish and strengthen partnerships. The Family Advocate (FA) will explain their role and the benefits of family services support to families whenever appropriate-such as during initial calls, while scheduling home visits, and during the home visits. Some key benefits include:

- Discussing the child and family strengths and progress.
- Making the child feel safer by meeting school staff at home.

- Supporting all family members, including dual households.
- Offering needed items, resources, and education.
- Educating parents as lifelong teachers strengthens parent-school relationships and boosts the child's success.

An FA home visit is defined by the Family Services department as a **significant amount of time** spent with a family member/caregiver in which information is exchanged. This interaction does not have to be in the home and may occur in a variety of locations and methods. It is best practice to meet families in person, if attempts are unsuccessful, you may utilize other methods.

- Family Advocates may consider Initial Home Visits (IHV's) and/or Family Conferences with the teacher as a completed home visit if:
 - The FA has substantial time to explore family strengths and needs and offer any appropriate support.
 - Substantial time and information exchange is demonstrated within documentation.
 - IHVs and Family Conferences that do not meet the criteria for a completed home visit should not be documented as a completed home visit. Refer to the documentation guide for instructions on appropriate documentation.
- Family Advocates home visits: Visits scheduled separately outside of initial home visits or conferences.
 - This method is **preferred** for higher need families.

Although families may decline this service, all attempts to schedule a home visit must be documented appropriately in the child file database to ensure the services have been offered. A minimum of three documented attempts are required.

- Documented attempts should demonstrate ongoing efforts to partner with the family to schedule and complete the home visit, including conversations about availability, scheduling barriers, cancellations, rescheduling, or agreed upon plans for a future visit.
- Documented attempts should not include "to do's". For example, "FA will call to schedule home visit" is not an appropriate planning note.

This guidance outlines the minimal expectations for Family Advocate home visit services. Additional home visits and meetings may be offered to families who need extra support, such as families in crisis or supporting a child/family on a guidance plan.

A. Family Services Home Visit Protocol

Staff should respect the family's culture, values, and diversity, using a strength-based approach.

To the best of your ability, make intentional efforts to engage fathers or male figures in services and conversations.

For safety concerns, FAs and teachers may visit together or find another location. FAs can consult with Family Services and the Site Manager if needed.

If parents prefer not to conduct visits at home, the visit can take place at the center or another private location.

Visits should focus on:

- Asking open-ended questions to understand needs and track changes using the Family Strengths Self-Assessment (FSA).
- Sharing information about services and resources.
- Completing accurate documentation, including case notes, goals, health follow-up, and FSA updates.

DUAL HOUSEHOLDS AND CUSTODY ARRANGEMENTS

It is the FA's responsibility to attempt to engage both parent/caregivers of dual households and shared custody. Home visits may be conducted for both households.

- Family services documentation should be maintained separately for each household to accurately reflect individual family engagement, services provided, and planning efforts.
- Each household may identify their own family goals, strengths, and needs. Goals and progress should be documented separately as applicable.
- **Maintain confidentiality and professional boundaries** when supporting families in split or dual households. Ensure that information shared by one parent or guardian is not disclosed to the other without explicit consent. Approach each household with respect, neutrality, and a focus on the child's well-being, while honoring the privacy of each parent or caregiver.

If a child is in foster care, and a ward of the court, home visits may be conducted with the resource parents. A home visit may be done with bio parents, only if permission is given by the ODHS Child Welfare case worker.

DOCUMENTATION

Family Advocates must refer to and follow the Family Services Home Visit Documentation Guide

Planning Notes

- Family Advocates will document ongoing planning efforts related to home visits.
- Documentation should include:
 - Attempts to schedule a home visit, including efforts made to partner with the family.
 - Scheduled date, time, and location.
 - Changes, cancellations, no-shows, and rescheduling efforts.

Completed Visits

- Family Advocates will document a comprehensive summary of each completed home visit within 24 hours of the visit.
- Documentation should include relevant information such as:
 - Family updates, strengths, and needs identified.
 - Services provided and follow-up needed.
 - Progress toward family goals or ongoing support.
- Documentation should reflect a strengths-based approach and positive working relationship with the family.
- Family Advocates will complete required assessments, goal updates, and follow-up documentation according to program timelines.