

Local Services Bulletin No. 2006-02: Visitation Between Children and Parents Engaged In Residential Drug Treatment

Date Issued: February 27, 2006

RECIPIENTS

- **All OASAS Certified Providers**
- **Local Governmental Units**

PURPOSE

This Local Services Bulletin has been developed to inform providers of OASAS' new Policy and Practice Principles concerning visiting between children and parents engaged in residential drug treatment.

BACKGROUND

OASAS and New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS) developed a protocol for collaboration between treatment providers and the child welfare system. This protocol addressed issues concerning procedures for release of information, assessment for appropriate treatment and treatment planning for families affected by both systems.

In December of 2000, ACS issued its Best Practice Guidelines for Family Visiting Arrangements which emphasize the importance of frequent and meaningful visiting between parents and children involved in the foster care system. Despite implementation of the Protocol and issuance of the Visiting Guidelines, problems persist in maintaining connections between children and parents during treatment. Since enactment of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, the consequences for families involved in the foster care system who are unable to maintain meaningful relationships during treatment can be grave, including termination of parental rights - which permanently ends the legal relationship between parent and child and forecloses the possibility of family reunification. For children who are separated from their parents but not in foster care, the problem can also be serious since there may be no court orders for visits and no agencies involved in helping the family plan for reunification.

CONCLUSION

OASAS believes that in order to keep parents motivated and committed to the recovery process, there is a need for a clear set of principles and policies pertaining to family visiting during treatment.

OASAS believes that when it is the desire of the parent, it is important to keep parents and their child(ren) closely connected throughout treatment to enhance and preserve their relationship, support the parent's recovery process, and assure the child(ren)'s healthy development.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

The fact that visits between a parent and their child(ren) is a right and not a privilege, as well as the understanding that visits cannot be used as forms or rewards or sanctions must be clearly communicated to treatment staff.

- Policy and Practice Overview—Discusses the impact of Adoption and Safe Families Act on parents with chemical dependence issues and the role of visiting in effecting reunification. ([Attachment 1](#))
- Policy and Practice Chart—Outlines principles, policies and practices recommended to ensure that parent's child welfare issues are integrated within the treatment plan. ([Attachment 2](#))
- Policy and Practice Recommendations—Recommends policies and practices that will assist chemical dependence programs in providing child welfare friendly services, and achieving successful outcomes for families. ([Attachment 3](#))
- *Best Practice Guidelines for Family Visiting Arrangements*. (Available upon request)
- *Operational Protocol for Client Referral and Communication Between Child Welfare Staff and Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Providers*. (Available upon request)

Questions concerning this Local Services Bulletin may be referred to Lureen McNeil, Assistant Director, OASAS Bureau of Systems Development & Public Education at (646) 728-4578.

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<http://www.oasas.state.ny.us/mis/bulletins/index.cfm>

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