



TEXAS

**Department of Family
and Protective Services**

Child Protective Services

**Conservatorship (CVS)
Safety Visit
Resource Guide**

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Resource Guides

The purpose of Resource Guides is to provide information that helps you do your job better. This information includes reference material, procedures, and guidelines that help you complete the tasks you are required to do by policy.

It's important to remember that the information in Resource Guides **does not substitute for policy**. We may sometimes include policy statements, but only to show you the policy to which the information is related. We will highlight any policy that actually appears in the Resource Guide, and will almost always include a link to the actual policy. For example:

Per [4222.2 Re-Allowing Placement](#):

If the caseworker learns of a detailed justification for changing the status of and considering placements in a foster family that is on Disallowed Placement status, the caseworker must elevate this consideration through the regional chain of command to the regional director.

The policy in the handbook always takes precedence over what is in the Resource Guide. We try to keep policy and Resource Guides synchronized, but sometimes there is a delay. **If you have questions, always follow the policy in the Policy Handbook.**

Resource Guides provide important information on a range of topics, for the purpose of assisting and guiding staff to:

- make essential decisions
- develop strategies to address various issues
- perform essential procedures
- understand important processes
- identify and apply best practices

The information in the Resource Guides is not policy (except where noted), and the actions and approaches described here are not mandates. You should adapt the way you perform critical tasks to the individual needs and circumstances of the children and families with whom you work.

State office and field staff are working together to identify Resource Guide topics, define the content, and develop the appropriate guides. CPS will regularly post Resource Guides as they are developed, and update them as needed. Check the Resource Guides page, in the CPS Handbook, to see new or revised Guides.

We hope these Guides provide useful information to guide and assist CPS staff in effectively performing their job tasks. These Guides, combined with clear and concise policy in the Handbook, should help staff provide a high level of service to children in Texas.

INTRODUCTION

See [6414.7](#) Conducting the Monthly Visit

Questions can be directed to CVS Program Directors or to [Carol Self](#) in the state office Permanency and Conservatorship Division.

Ensuring child safety is the fundamental job responsibility for Child Protective Services. In order to ensure that all of our children are safe and well cared for, this guide was developed to provide additional guidance to CPS staff that conducts home visits. This guide consists of pre-visit tasks, specific directions about tasks to complete while visiting the home, as well as questions to explore during the home visits. This guide supplements CPS policy and should not be used in place of current agency policy.

The items below should be addressed with children and families during home visits, if applicable. If during the home visit, the worker finds that there are safety issues, then the worker must take proactive action immediately to ensure the child's safety.

BEFORE THE VISIT

- Review the kinship home assessment, if applicable, and any identified concerns noted for follow up discussion during the actual home visit.
- Contact the assigned CVS worker for the child and FAD worker for the home (if verified) to obtain information about any current issues and/or concerns being addressed during their on-going contact with the caregiver.
- Ask for copy of developmental plan (if any) and review prior to making the home visit.
- Review definitions for frequent and regular visitors listed below.

DEFINITION OF FREQUENT AND REGULAR VISITORS

Regarding regular or frequent adult visitors to the caregiver's home, the following are the factors most often considered in determining whether a regular or frequent visitor to the home requires a background check:

- Is the person likely to have unsupervised access to any foster child?
- What type of access does the person have to the home? For example, does the person have a key or the freedom to come and go at will?
- How closely connected is the person to the caregiver? For example, all persons regularly or frequently present who are related to a member of the foster family must have a background check?

QUESTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS DURING VISITS WITH THE CHILDREN

- Have your normal conversation with children using age appropriate language.
- Take pictures of children if any observable injuries and/or change in appearance from last visit.
- Who lives in the home? Who stays in the home or spends the night?
- Where do they sleep? Anyone else sleep with them?
- Who babysits and/or watches them when caregiver is not home?
- Are there weapons? Are they secured?
- Who visits the home and how often?
- What does it look like when the adults argue/fight?
- Who transports the children?
- What happens when they get in trouble at home and at school?

- Ask for examples of the last time that they got in trouble.
- If there are older children and non-verbal children, ask the older children to tell you what happens when the younger ones (including babies) get in trouble.
- Do you take medicine? Who gives you your medicines (if applicable)?
- What do you do every day? What do you do with the caregiver? What's your favorite time with your caregiver/family?
- Observe and interact with any non-verbal child and observe the interactions between the non-verbal child and the caregiver.
- Where do you eat meals?

QUESTIONS FOR CAREGIVERS

- Any changes to family composition, including frequent and regular visitors (see definition above).
- Where do the children sleep? (address safe sleeping/look for safe sleeping habits)
- Are medications stored securely? Where are they stored?
- What type of discipline is used? Who administers the discipline? Ask for an example of last time they had to use discipline.
- Who provides care for the children when you need to leave?
- Are there weapons? Are they secured (if applicable)?
- Who visits the home and how often?
- Who transports the children?
- Are there appropriate car seats/boosters for each child in the home? Is the car large enough to seat all children?
- Ask each caregiver to describe daily routines, including supervision of the children.
- Ask questions about family stressors including finances, marital concerns and child management. (Feel free to use a genogram if you prefer).
- When asking about stress, ask for concrete examples of sources of stress.

OBSERVATIONS INSIDE THE HOME

The worker must be required to conduct a physical walk-through of the child's home and backyard to observe the environment in which the child is living.

- Observe every room in the home
- Check for cameras/video, intercom systems, baby monitors or other technology being used for supervision, safety.
- Fire extinguishers (properly charged) & Smoke detectors (do they have working batteries?)
- Observe if gun and ammunition are stored separately (have caregiver open storage areas for observation) Check to ensure that the key is not accessible to children.
- **All living areas:**
 - Garbage, trash, clutter?
 - Broken glass?
 - Flooring safe for walking, no evidence of animal feces/urine?
 - Insects or vermin?
 - Exposed wiring or fire hazards?
 - Ask how they will heat the home over the winter months.
 - General odor/cleanliness/maintenance of home?
 - Running water?
 - Leaking/standing water, wet carpeting, rotting wood, broken tiles?

- Is there an odor of urine, mildew, etc.?
- **Bathrooms:**
 - Good working order, hot/cold water in tubs and sinks?
 - Stopped up drains?
 - Toilets flush/clean?
 - Medication storage (check medicine cabinet or closet in bathroom; are they accessible)?
 - Check for cleaning supplies stored in bathroom cabinets (inaccessible to children?)
 - Open cabinets that are accessible to children.
- **Kitchen:**
 - Question about food supply, if needed?
 - Milk, water, fruits, veggies, variety of foods?
 - Formula/baby food?
 - Evidence of insects/vermin?
 - Excessive garbage.
 - Any rotting food?
 - General sanitation?
 - Cleaning supplies securely stored?
 - (Observe where are sharp objects are stored? Refrigerated medication (locked)?
- **Laundry/garage areas:**
 - Secure storage of poisonous/flammable materials?
 - Laundry supplies (stored age-appropriately)?
 - Tools and dangerous equipment inaccessible?
 - Obvious hazards?
- **Bedrooms:**
 - Adequate space and privacy per number of children?
 - Individual beds if applicable with mattresses and covers?
 - Clean linens?
 - Sufficient clothing for the season, appropriate sizes, underwear and socks?
 - Is there an odor of urine, feces, vomit?
 - Toys and personal possessions?
 - Fire or safety hazards?
 - (Observe all bedrooms, including foster parent/bio/adoptive children.)
- **Infants and toddlers:**
 - Cribs/bedding?
 - High chairs and equipment?
 - Diapers and clothing?
 - Toys?
 - Overall safe environment?
 - Outlet covers.
 - Small objects/choking and tripping hazards?
- **Pets:**
 - Behavior around the children?
 - Well-cared for and healthy?
 - Feces or urine?
 - Problems resulting from pets (odor, excessive pet fur, large number of pets for size of home, etc.)?

OBSERVATIONS OUTSIDE THE HOME

- Storage of tools, equipment, poisonous/flammable substances?
- Play equipment safe and in good repair?
- Standing water?
- High grass?
- Insects?
- Rodents?
- Broken fencing?
- If there is no fencing, what supervision is provided?
- Dangerous pets?
- Stray animals?
- Feces?
- Pools, hot tubs, bodies of water: maintained per standards, no unsupervised access (Check)
- Vehicle safety: Car seats/seat belt in working condition?
- Insurance/ Inspections current?

ASSESSMENT OF CHILD SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

The child's caseworker documents information from the interviews and walk-through and documents his/her assessment of how the child's safety and well-being are met in the home and whether additional follow-up is needed in any area.

- Are the caregivers actively engaged in the care of the children?
- Are the child's healthcare needs being met? Are there any current unmet medical needs?
- Is there a clear schedule of who is working with each child and when?
- Are there stimulating recreational activities for the children?
- Are children integrated in daily activities in the home (not isolated in another area)?
- Is the child's area and medical equipment clean?
- Is there evidence of bonding/a relationship between the children and caregivers?
- Do the children have the ability to be mobile in the home?
- Have you asked about any and all frequent or regular visitors in the home?
- Does the home have daily schedules for each child?
- Is there enough food to feed the children?
- Do the children have enough medications?
- Are there individual beds and appropriate bedding for each child?
- Are the children clean and well cared for?