



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Social Services

325 North Salisbury Street • MSC 2409 • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2409
Courier # 56-20-25

Michael F. Easley, Governor
Dempsey Benton, Secretary

Sherry S. Bradsher, Director
(919) 733-3055

July 29, 2008

Dear County Director of Social Services

**Attention: County Directors, Child Welfare Program Managers, Supervisors
and Child Welfare Workers**

Subject: Use of Technology for Meeting Caseworker visit Requirements

The Division has received several questions over the past few months about using technology such as video conferencing or webcams to satisfy caseworker visit requirements. While the Division is sympathetic to the burden to counties from new requirements around caseworker visits with children in foster care, this technology cannot be used to satisfy those requirements. The federal policy around caseworker visits requires monthly face-to-face contact with the child and further requires that the majority of these visits be in the residence of the child.

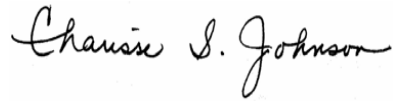
There may be some situations where the use of this technology might be appropriate. In situations where a telephone conversation would have ordinarily been used, a video conference may offer some advantages. Video conferencing may be useful as a supplement to regularly scheduled visitation between siblings that are placed separately, as long as the children are comfortable with technology, as many are.

The use of video conferencing or web cam technology is never appropriate to satisfy any of the face-to-face contacts required in a CPS assessment or for any contact where there is a need to assess safety.

In addition to the policy issues, it is important to consider that social work is not an activity that lends itself well to this technology. Good social work practice requires the utilization of the skills of communication, perception, intuition and assessment accommodated by face-to-face contact that is not possible in a video conference interview. It follows that, although videoconference and web cam technology may enhance contacts that would otherwise be accomplished by phone, they are not adequate to accomplish social work functions.

If you have any questions or concerns about this information, please feel free to contact Thomas Smith of the Foster Care and Adoption Policy Team at 919-334-1089 or at thomas.smith@ncmail.net or Terri Reichert of the CPS Policy Team at 919-334-1106 or terri.reichert@ncmail.net.

Sincerely,



Charisse Johnson, Chief
Family Support and Child Welfare Services

cc: Sherry S. Bradsher
Sarah Barham
Local Business Liaisons Managers
Jo Ann Lamm
Children' Services Program Representatives
Family Support and Child Welfare Services Team Leaders
Work First Representatives
Hank Bowers

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