

Children's Services  
**Non-Resident Parent Procedure**

**AUTHORITY:** Minnesota Statute 260C.150  
Minnesota Statute 260C.201  
Minnesota Statute 260C.212  
Minnesota Statute 260D  
Minnesota Judges Juvenile Protection Handbook (December 2004)  
Minnesota Department of Human Services Relative Search Best Practice Guide (June 2005)

**DEFINITION:** A non-resident parent is a parent who does not live in the same household as the child. A non-resident parent may be divorced, separated, or never-married to the child's custodial parent.

**BEST PRACTICE:** Washington County Community Services recognizes the importance of a child's relationship with both mother and father. Research outlines the benefits of a father's involvement in the life of a child, along with the resources extended family and kin provide. It is imperative that exhaustive efforts are made to identify and engage mothers and fathers throughout the life of the case as a means to increase child safety, permanency, and well-being. The expectation is that the assigned social worker will contact the non-resident parent(s) and actively work to involve them in the assessment/case planning (the only exceptions are outlined below).

**ENGAGING NON-RESIDENT PARENTS:**

- Voluntary cases: With the approval of the custodial parent, non-resident parents will be included in case planning and safety planning discussions, unless this is deemed contrary to the welfare of the child.
- Parents residing together: The worker will make every effort to conduct joint and/or individual meetings with the mother and father. Case plans must identify strengths and needs of each parent.
- Monthly Face-to-Face: Workers are required to meet with both mothers and fathers a minimum of once per month. If visits are less than the minimum, there should be substantial SSIS documentation to support the need for less than monthly face-to-face contact. In cases where monthly face-to-face contact is not possible (i.e. parent lives out of state) the worker will continue to make monthly attempts to contact the non-resident parent either by phone or correspondence.
- Out-of-Home Placement: Out-of-Home Placement Plans (OHPP) will be developed with the custodial parent from whom the child was removed. Additionally, case planning will be encouraged and offered to the non-resident parent. Visitation plans for the mother and father shall be outlined in the OHPP and reviewed with each parent.

**PROCEDURE EXPECTATIONS:**

**Child Protection Investigation, Family Assessments, and Child Welfare Assessments:** To start the assessment process, the SW will first request permission from the custodial parent and/or court to assess the suitability of the non-resident parent in case planning. Once the non-resident parent has been identified and permission obtained, the worker will contact the non-resident parent within seven days to schedule a meeting date. A thorough assessment of non-resident parent resources to provide support and safety for the child will be made by the worker. The worker will meet the non-resident parent face-to-face to gather social history information, construct a genogram, assess the condition of the home, and review the appropriateness of further involvement in case planning. The assessment will also include consulting with collateral sources (mental health, chemical health, legal records, extended family, etc.) to evaluate the role the non-resident parent may play in supporting and/or caring for their child. **Distribute Parents are Important and/or Fathers are Important flyers to custodial parent.**

**All non-resident parents must be identified in the SSIS workgroup before the case is transferred to ongoing case management or the case is closed.**

**Family Assessment (FA)** will not pursue engagement of the non-resident parent if the primary parent is cooperatively working with the agency and requests that the non-resident parent is not contacted. The Family Assessment worker is expected to talk with the custodial parent about the benefits of the non-custodial parent-child relationship and document requests for contact information. This position is supported by the Department of Human Services and based on voluntary nature and engagement philosophy of FA intervention.

**ONGOING CASE MANAGEMENT (CHILD PROTECTION/CHILD WELFARE/CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES):**

- **Voluntary In-Home Cases:** The custodial parent will be asked for the name, current address, and phone number of the non-resident parent(s). If the custodial parent is unwilling to provide this information, the worker will engage the custodial parent throughout the duration of the case about the benefit of the non-resident parent's involvement. The role of the non-resident parent will be reassessed at case plan reviews and will be consistent with the safety, permanency, and well-being needs of the child. **Distribute Parents are Important and/or Fathers are Important flyers to custodial parent.**
- **Placement Cases:** Prior to placement, the custodial parent will be asked for the name, current address, and phone number of the non-resident parent, relatives, and kin to determine suitability for placement.

For children with whom both parents have legal custody, both parents shall sign the Voluntary Placement Agreement. Relative search for possible placement alternatives and support for the child will be explored for both parents. For any out-of-home placement cases, an OHPP will be developed with the custodial parent from whom the child was removed and, if determined appropriate, the non-resident parent. Visitation plans for the mother and father shall be outlined in the OHPP and reviewed with each parent.

- **Court Cases:** Non-resident parents will be listed on petitions brought before the court. If the custodial parent is unwilling to provide the name, current address, and phone number, the worker will attempt to locate the non-resident parent via other resources and technology or will request the Court order the custodial parent to release the information.

**PLACEMENT OF A CHILD WITH A NON-RESIDENT PARENT:**

When the child has been removed from the custodial parent's home for safety or treatment issues, a thorough assessment of the non-resident parent's home will be conducted to evaluate their ability to meet the needs of the child(ren) in placement. Should placement with the non-resident parent not be in the best interest of the child(ren) a case plan will be developed with the non-resident parent, identifying the needs and services to promote future placement and relationships between the child(ren) and the non-resident parent.

**WHEN NOT TO ENGAGE THE NON-RESIDENT PARENT:**

The expectation is that non-resident parents will be involved in the assessment/case planning, unless, through the assessment process, there is substantial documentation that demonstrates a safety issue and/or the non-resident parent's involvement is contrary to the welfare of the child. The supervisor must provide approval and the SW will document decision making on the case plan signature page.

References: Checklist  
 Parents are Important flyer  
 Fathers are Important flyer  
 PIP Tip: Involving Father (MN – DHS)  
<http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Legacy/DHS-5575A-ENG>