

Family Preservation and Home Visiting

Home visiting is an essential element of Family Preservation service delivery. Seeing a child or young person (child) in their home, where they sleep, eat, and play will give you greater insight into the subtle strengths and risks in their care. It also has the potential to reduce the power imbalance for the family.

When home visiting, be aware not to let personal bias or symptoms of poverty impact your understanding of a family. Not having a bed frame does not mean a child's basic needs are not being met. Look for indicators of connection and nurturing, like activities done together, for example, building a fort out of blankets under the table, planting fruit seeds or braiding hair.

Planning and Purpose



Visiting a child and parent/s in their home is important for relationship-building, assessment, and parental accountability. However, it can also feel invasive for the parent. To minimise a parent's fear of judgement or disempowerment, every home visit must be purposeful and when possible, practical, and helpful for the family.

Family preservation is very much about working in partnership with the family. It is a good idea to phone the family prior to the visit and explain your involvement and what they can expect at the visit. Negotiate with them the most suitable date and time for the visit and together work out an outline of the priorities you would both like to discuss. On the day of the visit recap what is happening, why you are there and what they can expect from you and your organisation. Check with them whether anything has changed since your phone call that, they may like to discuss. At the end of each visit organise your next visit include the best date and time to meet, recap if there is any work they need to do and if unclear how they can demonstrate they have completed the work/made change.

Do not just focus on what you need to get done at a home visit, also look for opportunities to support a parent to achieve practical tasks like dropping a car at the mechanic, collecting groceries, or attending an appointment.

You should prepare before a home visit, by reviewing the Family Action Plan for Change (FAPFC) and home visit records. Do this to ensure you have completed any tasks or follow up you had committed to and note any items you needed to follow up with a family. Not doing what you said you will do or forgetting important information a parent or child told you, is likely to damage your relationship with the family and impact their respect for you. For more information see [Relationship-Based Practice](#) and [Working with Families](#).

Coaching and Skills Modelling

Coaching and mentoring is an important part of Family Preservation services. Some parents have never experienced nurturing parenting themselves so may need guidance and examples of what they are being asked to do for their own child. Some examples:

- The parent of a 5-year-old girl with recurrent nit infestations may need you to do a treatment with them, and then explain all the household items that need to be washed, like hats, car seats, bedding, and pillows. Assist where you can with this.
- A mother who is feeding her 5-month-old small pieces of take-away chicken nuggets, may need you to demonstrate how to steam and puree vegetables.
- A father may need you to sit on the floor and role play how to engage in imaginative play with his toddler. Some adults do not automatically know (or remember) how to play.
- You may need to 'baby proof' an apartment with a parent, who may not recognise risks like ashtrays, cleaning products, heaters, fire guards and sharp table corners.

Some Family Preservation services will include evidence-based coaching and mentoring programs such as SafeCare. In some regions these services can be brokered.

Home Visiting Safely

Home visiting in Permanency Support Program (PSP) Family Preservation carries different risks to home visiting in other areas of the PSP. This is because Family Preservation is a family-led process of bringing together assessment and family work to help the family make a clear link between specific actions and behaviours that

increase the safety of their child or children. It is an ongoing cycle of working with the birth family to identify family goals and outcomes, while actioning, supporting, monitoring, and reviewing change. You may work with a parent with a criminal record, who uses substances that impact their behaviour and aggression levels, or with a parent who invites unsafe people into their home.

For these reasons it is important to be aware of your personal safety when you conduct a home visit as part of your role in Family Preservation. You must be familiar with your agency's home visiting policy and procedures and be mindful of these when attending a home visit.

Documenting a Home Visit

Finally, you must document every visit with a child and their family. All file notes and reports must be written as if the child or parent was reading them. Documentation must be balanced, noting both strengths and concerns, and when possible, use the child or parent's own words.

Sometimes, families who have been engaged with Family Preservation services will subsequently have a child removed. In these circumstances, the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) will rely on your case notes and FAPFC as evidence in Care Proceedings. Take care to be accurate, spell check and always note the date, time, and who was present. For more information see [Quality Documentation in Casework](#) and [Quality Documentation in Casework – Tips and Examples](#).