

## **J. HARVEY RODGERS SCHOOL HOME VISIT POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

### **Rationale**

Home visits are an important way to foster positive relationships between home and school. Home visits can be used to introduce staff members to families, celebrate student accomplishments, assist parents in social/emotional and behavioral support at home, and support academic growth and learning, as well as support families in need to find community resources.

Home visits allow for both the school staff and parents to share information, which is in the best interests of the child and support to be offered, if needed. Visits allow parents/guardians to share sensitive information without fear of being interrupted or overheard and for the child to feel relaxed in their home setting. However, some families may not feel comfortable meeting at their home, and it would be appropriate to choose another place to meet such as a library or other public meeting place.

Families should feel empowered after a home visit and feel that their views have been listened to. Home visits should always be discussed with administration and always be carried out in the best interest of the student.

### **Procedure Prior to Visit**

- ❖ Staff must make sure that they notify administration of the visit complete the Home Visitation Information sheet and leave it with front office staff. Staff should sign out when leaving the building and note the time.
- ❖ The majority of visits should **NOT** be unannounced, however there may be certain situations, such as poor attendance or unable to contact a parent through other means of communication, when required.
- ❖ The home visit should only take place if the parent or legal guardian is present.
- ❖ A brief risk assessment should be carried out before the first home visit takes place and referred to for subsequent visits. If a home visit presents significant safety risk, consider alternative sites for visiting with the family or take along a coworker.
- ❖ A code word should be set up between the member of staff and the school office in case of emergencies.
- ❖ Make sure you have all pertinent information such as address and phone number of the party you are visiting in case you should run late.
- ❖ Be prepared for the visit and bring with you any materials or resources you feel you may be able to offer the parents to help support them.
- ❖ Check all relevant files and obtain background information. Consult in a confidential and non-judgemental way with colleagues who have had previous contact with the family.

- ❖ Be aware of relevant cultural background information and cultural sensitivities i.e. eye contact, shaking hands, touching babies, etc.
- ❖ Home visits should not exceed an hour.

### **Procedure During Visit**

- ❖ Members of staff should always make sure to have their school identification badge on with their picture to identify themselves.
- ❖ Members of staff should introduce themselves and the purpose of the visit should be explained.
- ❖ One adult/staff member should lead the visit while the other staff member takes notes to avoid the parent/guardian feeling overwhelmed.
- ❖ Notes should be taken to inform future planning for the family.
- ❖ Staff should be cognizant of the “climate” of the visit to ensure that they do not put themselves in danger, including animals.
- ❖ Confidentiality should be respected at all times, unless there is a Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) concern.
- ❖ Prior to leaving, establish if a follow up visit is required and try to set up a meeting day and time.

### **Procedure After Visit**

- ❖ All notes should be written up and shared appropriately.
- ❖ Referrals to be made if necessary.
- ❖ Make sure to fill out the Home Visit Log and provide the administrator with a copy for their reference.
- ❖ A follow-up letter or phone call to a parent/guardian after a visit thanking them for opening up their home will foster trust and a positive relationship with the family.

### **In Case of Emergency**

- ❖ The school office should be aware of who is making a home visit and to which family/address and time the visit will take place.
- ❖ Make sure the school office has an updated cell phone number for staff so that they can be easily accessible.
- ❖ If the member of staff does not return at the agreed time, then the school office will call the mobile phone number to try to reach staff member.
- ❖ The Police must be called if there is no answer or return phone call within a reasonable amount of time and a cause for concern.
- ❖ If the school office receives a call from the staff member and the code word is use, then the police are to be called immediately.
- ❖ If the visit is taking place after school office hours, administration should be made aware and the staff member must still check in with administration (mobile number of administrator) and follow the aforementioned procedures for checking in following the visit.

