

2014 Pennsylvania State Roundtable Report

What's Happening with Visitation?

An Activity Book for Children, in Out-of-Home Care,
who are visiting with their siblings and parents



**“Visitation is a right,
not a privilege”**

Dear Statewide Children's Roundtable Members,

As you may recall, you approved the visitation workgroup 9 Best Practice Key Components in 2012. We completed the 10th component, oversight, as well as the Parent Visitation Guide in 2013. At your charge, we now submit for your approval the Resource Parent Guide, the Young Child and Young Adult Visitation Guides, respectively. We have also worked diligently with Rob Winesickle of the Child Resource Center to revise the "209" Visitation Curriculum for CRC training. Rob provided us with tremendous guidance on adult learning and he blended resources for a rich collaboration. We found his good spirit and writing skills invaluable to hopefully, a long legacy of our work in ongoing caseworker training.

By the time you read this report, we will have completed a well-received statewide training of Judges, Hearing Officers, Attorneys and Children and Youth Administrators in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg and Philadelphia areas to share our work and findings. We trust this training begins to affirm, provoke and educate folks to adopt and use the 10 Key Components in Visitation. We thank our judicial analyst Christy Stanek and Attorney Kathy Gomez for their commitment to this training as a "key component" of practice/culture change.

As we wind down our work, we feel an amazing sense of gratitude and accomplishment. We thank the Workgroup Members who gave their time and traveled from East, West, North and South to come together and work for the visitation common good. We did not always agree on all matters, however, we never had any doubt that each voice spoke from the heart.

We feel accomplished in that we have completed your charge to this workgroup and we thank you for the trust you placed in us and the opportunity we all shared to make a difference for children and families.

As a consumer once said on a panel, "You can terminate parental rights, you cannot terminate love."

We submit our work, dealing with visitation, with the hope that it helps to bring greater understanding of the responsibility to recognize family love as a powerful need, worthy of heroic efforts in our work together for children and families.

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“Visitation is a right, not a privilege”

Background and Accomplishments

2011 State Roundtable

In 2011, the State Roundtable determined that it was necessary to separate the originally combined issues of Incarcerated Parents and Visitation, recognizing that each of these issues required careful exploration and individualized attention. Visitation was then separated into its own Workgroup and began to complete the following charges from the State Roundtable:

- Creation of a Visitation Guide for distribution at the Roundtable Summit in September
- Approve the best practice recommendations around visitation (right to visits, frequency, contact and supervision)
- Exploration of the effects of Act 101 on visitation
- Development of hearing cards and bench cards
- Collaboration with the PA Child Welfare Resource Center to develop training for the following:
 - ✓ Visitation supervisors and transporters for engaging parent and resource parents
 - ✓ Resource care agencies in the role of foster parenting (visitation is a part of resource care)
 - ✓ Understanding reactions of children and parents before, during and after visits (Agency, Attorneys, Judges and Masters, visitation supervisors and foster parents)
- Creation and distribution of handbooks – child, parent and foster parent

2012 State Roundtable

Through exploration of the State Roundtable charges, the Workgroup adopted the following motto for a visitation practice philosophical shift: **“Visitation is a right, not a privilege.”** As the Workgroup’s overarching theme, the following 9 Visitation Best Practice Key Components were developed and approved by the State Roundtable in 2012.

1. Visitation is strength based and empowerment driven.
2. There is a careful assessment of risk and safety to help develop objectives for the family designed to drive the purpose and goals for the visits. (Visitation Manual p23)
3. Teams, who provide collaborative efforts to strengthen and build families, are

present in each County.

4. A creative visitation plan includes clearly identified and communicated roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the visitation plan.
5. Frequency and duration of visits respects the individualized needs of the children and their parents/guardians and the evidenced based value of promoting reunification through maintaining family contact. (Pennsylvania Visitation Manual)
6. The developmental needs of the child and their parents/guardians are individually considered.
7. The location of visits are creatively designed for privacy and interaction only as restrictive as required to protect the children. (Visitation Manual)
8. Effort and planning to manage participant reactions to visits occur both initially and ongoing as part of the visitation plan.
9. Effort and planning to provide all avenues of positive connections to the family and community occur both initially and ongoing as part of the visitation plan.

Also approved in 2012, was the completed Parent Visitation Handbook. The Workgroup was relieved of any continued work to explore the charge of Act 101 as it related to visitation.

Finally, the following recommendations were presented and approved by the 2012 State Roundtable members:

1. The Visitation Best Practice Components be adopted for implementation and application in the child dependency system;
2. Further exploration related to visitation oversight occur with recommendations for the best practice component provided to the 2013 State Roundtable;
3. The Parent Visitation Handbook be approved as a companion resource to help implement the Visitation Best Practice Components in the child dependency system;
4. Continue to work with the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center or any other entity, to develop training on Visitation Best Practices Components;
5. Continue the development of the remaining handbooks charged by the 2011 State Roundtable – Resource Parent, Child and Youth and present to the 2013 State Roundtable; and
6. Forward approved Bench Cards to the Bench Book Committee for possible inclusion with the next addendum to the Dependency Bench Book.

2013 State Roundtable

At the 2013 State Roundtable, the Workgroup presented its recommendation for the final Visitation Best Practice Key Component, Oversight. In an effort to produce the best recommendation, assistance was provided by guest speaker Judge Lynn Tepper, Circuit Judge, 6th Judicial Circuit at Dade County Florida, who has worked tirelessly on enhancing visitation in her jurisdiction. Judge Tepper has also spoken at many national events on this topic. Additionally, the Workgroup sought the inclusion of an older youth

ambassador to ensure that the voice of the child was considered, as well as the parent's voice through a parent focus group. Finally, a statewide survey was conducted to determine current visitation practices and trends.

This diligent work resulted in the **2013 State Roundtable acceptance of the Workgroup's oversight recommendation.**

Additional 2013 approved recommendations included:

1. Continued development of the remaining handbooks (Resource Parent, Child and Older Youth) and present to the 2014 State Roundtable;
2. The visitation outline be accepted with approval to continue development of the full visitation curriculum, including any possible roll-out regional training sites;
3. The State Roundtable supports a state-wide regional overview of training of enhancing visitation through the use of the Visitation key Best Practice Components, to begin after January 2014; and
4. Continue to explore the impact of congregate care on enhancing visitation.

Progress and 2014 State Roundtable Recommendations

The Workgroup met several times throughout 2013-2014. The focus over the past year has been to "get the message out" about enhancing visitation. The Workgroup broke into five smaller sub-committees to complete the remaining charges in the most time efficient manner. These five sub-committees included:

- Child welfare training
- State-wide training
- Resource parent
- Older Youth
- Young Child

Training:

The Workgroup felt strongly that efforts over the past several years to develop the visitation best practice key components needed to be highlighted through training on all professional levels. As such, the Child Welfare Resource Center, in collaboration with the Workgroup, completed a revised visitation curriculum for child welfare professionals. The revisions to the curriculum now include content surrounding the research and work reflected in the 10 Visitation Best Practice Key Components, as well as tools developed by the Workgroup. It is anticipated that the first pilot training will be held in the summer 2014. The completed curriculum can be found at the end of this report (***Attachment A***).

As the child welfare curriculum was being developed, it was recognized that in order for real change to occur legal professionals in dependency cases would need to hear the same message, at the same time. To accomplish this, Visitation Workgroup co-chair, Judge Jolene Grubb Kopriva led efforts to create a statewide training overview for

Judges, Hearing Officers, Attorneys and Child Welfare Administrators. This half day training, titled “Visitation and the Courts” provided participants with the following:

- Education on the philosophical practice shift that is needed to enhance visitation
- Supportive legislation, case law and regulations
- 10 Visitation Best Practice Key Components
- Judicial leadership needed to support change

The training team included:

- Honorable Jolene Grubb Kopriva, President Judge, Court of Common Pleas of Blair County
- Katherine J Gomez, Managing Attorney, Family Advocacy Unit, Community Legal Services, Inc., Philadelphia
- Christy R Stanek, Judicial Analyst, Office of Children and Families in the Courts
- Elke Moyer, Administrative Associate/Graphic Designer, Office of Children and Families in the Courts
- Sandra Moore, Administrator, Office of Children and Families in the Courts

Training sites included:

- Pittsburgh May 2, 2014
- Mechanicsburg May 8, 2014
- Blue Bell May 9, 2014

In addition to these training sites, the information was also presented to over 40 participants at the Pennsylvania Family Group Decision Making conference held on April 23, 2014. The completed power point for the statewide legal training, “Visitation and the Courts,” can be found at the end of this report (**Attachment B**), along with the results of participant surveys for all three training sites (**Attachment C**).

Visitation Guides: Young Children, Teenagers, Resource Parents

The remaining visitation guides for young children, teenagers, and resource parents were also completed over the past year; however, all remain in draft form. Upon State Roundtable acceptance of the draft guides, the Office of Children and Families in the Courts would like to test their use, in selected counties, for effectiveness and ease of understanding.

The resource parent and teenager guides follow similar formatting as the previously approved parent visitation guide. It was decided that the younger child visitation guide would continue the same formatting as the Legal Representation Workgroup’s children’s court activity book titled “What’s Happening in Dependency Court?” To maintain consistency with young children, the long-term thought for continuing with this format

was that future State Roundtable topics, aimed at helping children understand, could follow the same format; thereby creating a series of children's books. All three guides

can be found, at the end of this report, as the following attachments:

Young Children's Activity Guide (***Attachment D***)

Teenager Visitation Guide (***Attachment E***)

Resource Parent Visitation Guide (***Attachment F***)

Congregate Care:

The final charge of continuing to explore the impact of congregate care on visitation will continue throughout the summer 2014. In collaboration with other OCFC Judicial Analyst, several State Roundtable workgroup topics will be explored through planned focus groups of children in congregate care. The findings and recommendations from these focus groups will be provided to the Transitional Youth Workgroup.

Recommendations:

The Visitation Workgroup respectfully submits to the Pennsylvania State Roundtable the following recommendations:

1. Acceptance of draft young children, teenager and resource parent visitation guides in accordance with testing and distribution plan;
2. Continued exploration of the impact of congregate care on visitation to be provided to the Transitional Youth Workgroup; and
3. The State Roundtable permit the disbanding of the Visitation Workgroup, acknowledging that its assigned tasks have been completed.

On behalf of the co-chairs and workgroup members, we would like to thank the State Roundtable for the privilege of serving on the Visitation Workgroup. We trust that positive change will occur for children and families across Pennsylvania as a result of the work done by this group. As research has demonstrated, visitation provides one of the strongest correlations to determining reunification. As such, we hope that this topic continues to remain at the forefront of local roundtables and that all professionals in dependency embrace "visitation as a right, not a privilege."



**209:
Visitation: Permanency, Positive Connections,
and Reducing Trauma**

Standard Curriculum

**Developed by:
Robert Winesickle**

**For:
The Pennsylvania Child Welfare
Resource Center**

**University of Pittsburgh,
School of Social Work**

**May 2014
(Pilot)**

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Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

- Describe the 10 Visitation Best Practice Key Components developed by the Pennsylvania State Roundtable Visitation Workgroup.
- Identify how feelings about families and visitation can influence the success of visits.
- Identify means by which a visitation team can be developed.
- State the roles of the child's and family's team.
- Identify the key components of a visitation plan.
- Explain how to assess the necessary level of visit supervision.
- Explain how to assess the necessary level of visit support.
- Describe how the visitation team assesses visitation plans.
- Explain how to determine frequency, duration, and location of visits.

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Section I: Welcome and Introductions

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Section II: History and Future of Children in Placement

Step 1: History

5 minutes

Over time a shift occurred from a focus on using orphanages to house children neglected, abused, and/or abandoned by caregivers, to the use of group homes, to the use of foster care.

Initially individuals looked to orphanages because, while they understood that the best environment for children was with the family, those children without a family became a problem to society. The orphanage was a way to protect children from the dangers of living on the streets and living with parents who were not providing adequate care. Over time however, people came to realize that orphanages might not be the best setting for children/youth in care because of the mistreatment of the children and their need for bonding and attachment to their adult caretakers. Studies showed that children in these institutions did not thrive because of the lack of nurturing and affection or bonding.

A shift in thinking occurred in the early 1800s with Charles Loring Brace who became concerned about children being abandoned in institutions and on the streets. In 1853, Brace and a group of New York City ministers founded the New York Children's Aid Society and began to advocate for and believe they had solved the issue of dependent children. Brace initiated the use of transporting children to willing families across the country. The children were transported by rail to cities and towns in the west that were called Orphan Trains. Many times churches would greet the train and select families for the children as they disembarked. This practice, continuing well into the 1920s, became known as 'placing out' and was the early beginnings of foster care.

Soon, another shift in thinking occurred. This shift resulted in the foster care trend we now see – the use of foster care to assist neglected, abused, and/or abandoned children, a situation which many times turns into a permanent placement setting, when it was never meant to be so. Even now, we learn lessons about the benefits and disadvantages of foster care. Ask participants to reveal some of the benefits of foster care, capturing those comments on flip chart paper. Benefits include:

- An environment that most likely ensures safety
- An environment that might better ensure well-being

Ask participants to reveal some of the disadvantages of foster care, capturing those comments on flip chart paper. Disadvantages include:

- Removal from familiar environment
- Removal from family, school, friends, pets
- Possible movement from placement to placement leading to concerning reactionary behaviors.

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Step 2: Introduction to the Future 5 minutes

Over history, we see how thinking and practice have shifted. As we learn more, we will continue to shift the way we think and the way we practice. We see in our brief discussion surrounding the benefits and disadvantages of foster care that there are areas for improvement. Just as our learning has brought us to where we are today, it will continue to move us forward.

Inform participants that, as part of Pennsylvania's Court Improvement Program, the State Roundtable established workgroups to research and address statewide areas of concern for the Pennsylvania Dependency System. One of the areas of concern identified was visitation. When exploring the disadvantages of placement, the Visitation Workgroup found that there are three things that visitation can do for child children in placement as well as their families. Display **PowerPoint Slide #2 (Three Overarching Goals of Visitation)**. Tell participants that those three things can be found in the course title. They include permanency, positive connections, and reducing trauma.

Permanency

Step 3: What is Permanency 5 minutes

Display **PowerPoint Slide #3 (Permanency Goals)** and state that we tend to think of permanency in terms of the Adoption and Safe Families Act goals.

Ask participants, "But what is permanency?" Allow a brief discussion and then display **PowerPoint Slide #4 (What is Permanence)** and show the video "[Permanence](#)". Following the video seek participants thoughts about how permanence is defined in the video compared to what they described permanency to be. The video makes connections to brain functioning and development (i.e., science), which makes permanence a more tangible concept.

Step 4: What if you don't Have Permanency? 20 minutes

Ask participants, "What happens if you don't have permanence?" Allow a brief discussion and then display **PowerPoint Slide #5 (What Happens if you Don't Have Permanence)** and show the video "[What Happens if you Don't Have Permanence](#)". Following the video seek participants thoughts about the information shared in the video. It is more likely to be in line with participants ideas than the previous video.

In 2012, more than 23,000 aged out of the system [AFCARS, 2012]. That is more than 23,000 children who never achieved permanence. That is more than 23,000 children who potentially experienced those things just discussed.

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Distribute **Handout #1 (Quiz)**. Allow participants approximately 3 minutes to answer the questions individually. When they have finished, as a table, they should reach consensus regarding what they believe to be the correct answer to each of the questions. When reviewing as a large group, they should be prepared to offer, on what they based their answers.

Use **Trainer Resource #1 (Quiz Answer Key)** to review the answers with the group. After reviewing each answer, there is supplemental information to offer to compare statistics of youth who age out of the system to those in the general population at either the national or state level.

The youth that age out of foster care, as revealed by the previous statistics, tend not to do as well socially, mentally, and economically, as compared to other children provided with stable environments and nurturing families. Many of the children that age out of the system have higher tendencies to have mental and emotional concerns, expose themselves to drugs, and gain forms of employment that place them at economical disadvantages. According to Richard Wertheimer in a [Child Trends Research Brief \(2002\) entitled, Youth who “Age Out” of Foster Care: Troubled Lives, Troubling Prospects](#), the outlook for young people leaving foster care is challenging.

We just looked at some statistics associated with foster care, and the importance of finding a safe and permanent home in a timely manner, we will tune in to ourselves to discover our own beliefs about visitation as a vehicle to achieving reunification.

Even while using foster care as one of the primary means of assisting neglected, abused, and/or abandoned children, we must constantly have in mind the concept that the system might not be perfect. In many instances, reunification with the family is, whenever possible, still the preferred permanency goal for reasons we saw in the statistics offered. Frequent and effective visitation is a primary means of ensuring successful reunification, as we will consider in moment.

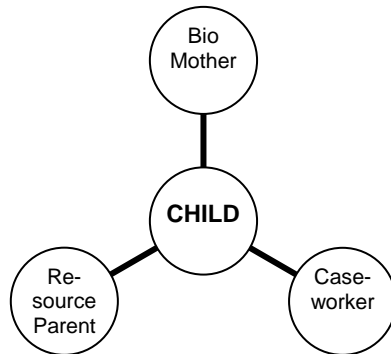
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Positive Connections

Step 5: Connectograms

15 minutes

Trainer Note: An example of a Connectogram for the next activity.



Ask for a volunteer who is willing to share information about a child in foster care with whom they just started working, without sharing any identifying information. Ask the volunteer to offer information related to the meaningful connections currently being maintained for the child/youth. Create a Connectogram based on this child/youth.

Now, ask a volunteer, to offer similar information concerning a child/youth who is a part of their own family. Create a Connectogram based on that information. Ask prompting questions that help get at the heart of connections. Seek the obvious such as parents, sibling, grandparents, etc., but also seek connections such as to their neighborhood, school, friends, religious community, friends' parents/family, family friends, etc. These are all potential connections that are lost when a child is placed in out-of-home care.

Discuss the differences between the two Connectograms concerning supports and what this means for the child now and in the future.

Step 6: Why Connections?

5 minutes

Tell participants that Connectograms reveal the general isolation typical children and youth in foster care experience. Connectograms of typical youth in foster care tend to include four people: the young person, the biological caregiver, the resource parent, and the caseworker. The isolation that families experience tends to stem from the fact that the child/youth and his/her caregiver have few connections outside the system. The reason for the failure of most plans that families create in the system is that once

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the caseworker and resource parent (external supports) are removed from the equation, the family is again left without the supports necessary to succeed.

Display **PowerPoint Slide #6 (According to the International Committee for the Red Cross:)**. Ask participants to state what the quote means to them.

Ask participants whether the government truly loves children, not whether the government cares for them or that they really want what is best for the kids, but whether the government will definitely be there once children/youth age out. Likely the answer is “no.” Tell participants that:

Few individuals that encounter a family will ever know family members or means of helping family like family members will. Federal and state law and related guidance recognizes this. Family is the best resource for supporting each other, creating their own case plans, and finding their own solutions (e.g., via using Family Group Decision Making, Family Group Conferencing, Family Finding, or other family-engaging/empowering methods).

Connectedness implies a caring relationship *with* a person. While this is true, for connectedness to exist, a physical visit does not necessarily need to occur. Other forms of contact can occur, such as letters, birthday cards, emails, telephone calls, Skypeing, etc. Helping a child understand their past and make connections is important for a child to understand who they are and from where they came, as their history is a major part of their identity.

Children in out-of-home placement have many losses. Especially in terms of relationships, the effort to re-establish past relationships and maintain existing relationships will assist in diminished losses for children. It is important that participants understand that establishing connections can diminish the sense of loss that an individual experiences – especially children and youth in out-of-home placement. Establishing connections and diminishing the loss a young person experiences is an important goal.

Reducing Trauma

Step 7: Guided Imagery: Tuning in to Loss and Separation 5 minutes

In exploring the other two overarching goals of visitation, promoting permanence and positive connections, we touched on the concept of loss. We are now going to explore this issue a little further.

Inform participants that you will now walk them through a guided imagery exercise that will require them to close their eyes and visualize in their minds the images that you will describe and assume the role of the individual offered in the descriptions.

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Ask participants to close their eyes and read the following in a friendly and pleasant tone of voice. Inform participants that you will ask questions for reflection along the way. They are not to answer those questions out loud, rather to themselves. Pause briefly (approximately 10 to 15 seconds) between asking questions and resuming the script.

You go to the airport and board a plane. You and the rest of your family are sitting in different aisles. While sitting in your seat you cannot see the rest of your family. You have no idea where you are going – because it is a surprise. Once you land you deplane and walk out into a concrete block building with no windows. The room is huge with very high ceilings. You haven't noticed how cold the room is because you are busy trying to find your family. You search every part of the building you are in. You have no idea how to get out of the building. You continue to look and even yell your family's names. Finally, you realize they are not there. You start asking people where you are and realize you cannot speak the language.

(What are you feeling? What would you do?)

After an hour or so, a very tall, thin man with an unusually long beard comes up to you and starts talking to you. You can't understand what he is saying. He seems to be getting a little frustrated with you and just starts motioning to you to follow him. You are not sure what you should do. You decide to go with him because you don't know what else to do and besides maybe he is taking you to your family.

(What are you feeling now?)

You and the stranger leave the building you are in and walk in silence for quite some time. You have no idea how long it has been because you have recently lost your watch. You are walking down dirt streets and looking at sights you have never seen before. Some of these sights are beautiful and others scare you. The stranger finally turns around and motions you to open the door to your left. The building he is asking you to enter looks different than anything you have ever seen. You have no idea what is store for you on the other side of the door. You reluctantly start to push open the door.

(What are feeling? What reactions would you have at this point?)

Inside the building are several people sitting on the floor. They look like they could be a family. There are several adults and several children. The stranger motions for you to sit down on the floor next to those already there. There is a lot of talking between everyone there, but you do not understand any of it.

(What are you feeling?)

The stranger then brings out dishes of food. You are thankful because you haven't eaten in a while. When the dishes are put on the floor, you realize that you don't

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recognize anything on the plates. You can't even begin to guess what you are being offered.

(What are you feeling? What will you do?)

You haven't eaten in a while and are feeling quite hungry. You taste some of the food and concluded that you just can't stomach it. The stranger then offers you a blanket and toothpaste. This makes you realize this is where you are spending the night and you have no other clothes. Then it hits you, as you think, 'Where is my family? How long will I be here?'

(What are you feeling?)

All of the people in the dwelling wrap themselves in their blankets; blow out the candles and go to sleep. You have not eaten, you have no clothes, you have no idea where your family is and if they are safe, and you do not know where you are. And this is only the first day.

(What are you feeling?)

Step 8: Reactions and Feelings Regarding Guided Imagery **15 minutes**

Display **PowerPoint Slide #7 (Reactions and Feelings)**. Ask for volunteers to respond to the questions on the slide.

Summarize the group's responses into the following feelings and reactions concerning the experience, ensuring to include the following:

- Feelings:
 - Fear of the unknown and potential personal harm.
 - Feelings of abandonment.
 - Loss of everything that is familiar and stable.
 - Concerns of whether or not you will be fed something you can eat.
 - Feeling sad, lonely, empty, depressed, and hopeless.
 - Feelings of helplessness; an inability to find a way to get home again.
 - Anger at having been forced into this situation.
- Reactions:
 - Wanting to run to find help.
 - Wanting to hide from the strangers around them.
 - Want to fight all those around them to get out of the situation and find their family.
 - Give up and let things happen as they will.

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The feelings the participants just experienced are the same or similar for children who have been removed from their homes and enter the foster care system. Separation and loss create very strong emotions such as uncertainty, feelings of abandonment, helplessness, and anger. Of important note is the concept that separation affects all participants engaged in visitation, as participants will see throughout the next 2 days in addition to what this means for visits and how to begin to address this appropriately with all participants involved in visitation.

Step 9: Effects of Separation and Loss on Children’s Development **15 minutes**

Distribute **Handout #2 (Effects of Separation and Loss on Children’s Development)**. The handout offers both short-term effects and possible long range effects of separation and loss based on chronological age. Allow participants a couple of minutes to review the handout. Ask for a couple of volunteers to offer possible uses for this resource. If participants are having difficulty, you may use the following examples to prompt their thinking.

- Exploring observations by / with resource providers
 - Possible reasons and potential responses
- Exploring observations with parents
 - Possible reasons and potential responses
- Informing case plans

Handout

Effects of Separation and Loss on Children’s Development

Susan Hois, Child Development Specialist

<http://www.pcv.org/assets/files/Articles/'s%20Development.pdf>

It is only within the context of the adult-child relationship that children accomplish the various developmental tasks related to psychological maturation. Separation from or loss of parents due to death, divorce, incarceration or removal to foster care will have a major impact on the child’s psychological development and possibly on his/her cognitive and physical development as well.

Although the effects of parental separation/loss will vary from child to child and family to family, the negative impact this has can be minimized if the child can live in an environment that is supportive to the grieving process and able to offer an explanation and understanding of his life events. Unfortunately, many, many children who have suffered this trauma have not received sufficient help in resolving loss issues and are, to one degree or another, psychologically “stuck” at the age of the loss of their primary attachment objects.

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Separation and Loss During the First Year of Life

Short term effects:

- Regression in terms of dependency needs.
- Undermining of the child's sense of security and trust that adults will be available.
- With the changes in daily routine that accompany changes in caregivers, there will be interruption in the acquisition of sequencing and basic cause and effect.

Possible Long Range Effects of the Loss:

If the infant's dependency needs are not met, the child will grow up to be one who continues to think life owes him. It is quite likely that he will have trouble ever meeting the dependency needs of others. Trust for others will be impaired. Learning problems, secondary to problems with cause and effect, may occur although they may not become evident until grades 4 – 6.

Separation and Loss during the Toddler Years (Ages 1 – 3)

Short term effects:

- The balance between age appropriate dependency and independency will be disrupted.
- Interference with identity – with changes in family position, the child's ego development may be disrupted.
- The child's awareness of both internal and external stimuli may be dulled and there will likely be regression in terms of the most recently acquired skills.
- The normal acquisition of language may be temporarily interrupted with parental loss, especially if that parent was the child's "interpreter."

Possible Long Range Effects of the Loss:

There is the possibility the individual will permanently take on the "victim" or "victimizer" role. Long term control issues may be prominent. A serious effect may be the disruption in ego development, with an increased incidence of "borderline personality" problems. Lack of self-awareness may be ongoing. There may be long term subtle language problems. As adults, these individuals may be rigid, inflexible, and not able to deal appropriately with aggressive impulses.

Separation and Loss During the Preschool Years (Ages 3 - 6)

Short term effects:

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- The child's egocentric magical thinking can cause him to misunderstand the causes of the separation and loss. It is important that adults work hard to identify the child's personal magical thinking about the loss. Does he think he caused the loss? Does he think he can do something to reverse it?
- The child may display indiscriminate attachment to adults and have conflicting feelings about the "good" and "bad" traits in himself and others.

Possible Long Range Effects of the Loss:

Because of the combination of magical thinking and the "good vs. bad" struggle, the preschooler may perceive himself as so "bad" that he caused the loss. Secondary to the combined effects of the magical thinking and the Oedipal conflict, the child may think the loss was related to his wanting the parent of the opposite sex all to himself. This may have long term ramifications in terms of sexual identify issues. This can be amplified in cases of sexual abuse. The magical thinking and the "big vs. little" struggle may lead the child to attribute the loss to his either being too "big" or too "little" in his family.

Separation and Loss During the Grade School Years

Short term effects:

- As the grade schooler goes through the grieving process, he will have less energy available for the usual tasks of this age.
- School-age children become acutely aware of differences between themselves and their peers and these may lead to problem behaviors with peers.

Possible Long Range Effects of the Loss:

If the child has a series of disruptions in schooling and peer relationships during this stage of development, he may have long-term problems in either or both of these areas. There may be problems with the internalization of conscience.

Separation and Loss During the Adolescence

Short-term effects:

- In order to successfully complete the tasks of psychological separation the adolescent needs to come up against and oppose parent figures who are nonetheless consistently available and caring. Parent separation and loss will disrupt these tasks.
- Control issues will continue to impact the adolescent's behaviors, especially if he feels a large part of the decisions about his life are out of his control.

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Possible Long Range Effects of the Loss:

If the adolescent believes he has lost all control over his life, he is likely to become either suicidal or to act out in a variety of antisocial ways.

Step 10: Connecting the three overarching goals of visitation?

20 minutes

Small group work requiring participants to consider the role of visitation in relation to the three overarching goals of visitation.

Divide participants into three small groups.

- Permanency
- Positive Connections
- Reduce Trauma

Provide each group with a sheet of flip chart paper. Ask them to develop a list of ways in which visitation can help accomplish their assigned overarching goal of visitation. When they have finished, ask each group to report to the large group. The large group can provide comments and feedback to each small group.

Step 11: Legislation and Visitation

20 minutes

To this point, we have considered history, the three overarching goals of visitation, and ways in which visitation can help accomplish the three overarching goals of visitation. As we discussed earlier, over history, we see how thinking and practice have shifted. The need for change is not only visible to those doing the work, but to those who have the ability to influence change at the legislative level. Legislation is one of the most effective ways to cause change. Let us take a look at some of the legislation that touches visitation as we view it through the lens of the three overarching goals of visitation. Ask participants to offer any federal laws, state laws, and state regulations they can think of that apply. Ask them to offer how each applies. After they have exhausted their list, distribute **Handout #3 (Legislation and Visitation)**. Review the list of legislation on the handout and compare to see how participants did.

While legislation is one way to affect change, that which is legislated is the minimum expectation. While it is a good start, the minimum will only get us so far. Minimum effort will not yield the optimal results. Inform participant that, as part of their work, the Visitation Workgroup identified 10 Best Practice Key Components, which are the foundation for the training today and help guide us towards accomplishing the three "Ps". Distribute **Handout #4 (Pennsylvania's Visitation Best Practice Key Components)**, reference **Poster #1 (Pennsylvania's Visitation Best Practice Key Components)**, and review. The handout provides detailed descriptions of the best

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practice key components. Do not read the information, rather provide participants with a brief summary of each component.

Inform participants that we will be referencing these Best Practice Key Components throughout the day. A little friendly competition will be introduced at this point. Each table will be a team. All participants are responsible for keeping an eye on the Best Practice Key Components and pointing out connections to the training throughout the two days. The table whose members have identified the most connections wins. Assign each table a number. Post a sheet of flip chart paper on the wall with columns for each table group. Tally the number of connections for each table on this flip chart. The flip chart should be posted beside **Poster #1 (Pennsylvania's Visitation Best Practice Key Components)**.

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Section III: Challenges and Benefits of Visitation

Step 1: Tuning In to Feelings about Removal/Placement 20 minutes

To this point, we have considered significant ways in which visitation benefits children in placement. However, we know we come to this training with a history of experiences, thoughts, opinions, etc. surrounding visitation. Before we can move on, we need to take some time to reflect on what this means and how it influences our actions. Distribute **Handout #5 (Tuning In)**. By now, participants should understand the skills of Tuning in to Self and Tuning in to Others. They are two of Lawrence Shulman's Interactional Helping Skills that participants should have learned about in Charting the Course and other trainings. They will now be asked to practice those skills. The handout just provided to them has several questions intended to cause reflection. Ask participants to answer the questions on the handout. Ask them to be completely honest and inform them that they will not be required to share their answers with anyone, if they do not wish to do so. Allow approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

Step 2: Understanding Reactions and Supporting Visitation 15 minutes

Most likely, reactions, behaviors, and/or emotions of one or more of those involved in the visits were identified as why feelings about visits were identified. Distribute **Handout #6 (Understanding Reactions and Supporting Visitation with the Child, Parent(s), and Foster Parent(s))**. This document offers potential reasons for a variety of reactions, behaviors, and emotions that may be exhibited by the child, parent(s), and foster parent(s). Additionally, it offers potential responses to those reactions, behaviors, and emotions. Allow participants a few minutes to review the handout and consider whether any of the concerns they identified on the Tuning in handout are listed. If so, they should return to the Tuning in handout and document ideas for addressing their concerns identified. Ask if there are any volunteers willing to share.

Step 3: Participant Identified Benefits of Visitation 15 minutes

As a large group, ask participants to share any success stories in making adjustments and/or accommodations to a visitation plan. Have they tried any of the ideas on the Understanding Reactions and Supporting Visitation with the Child, Parent(s), and Foster Parent(s) handout? Be prepared to share some of your own experiences if participants have trouble identifying any. Tie identified benefits directly to that which participants just Tuned in to. Also help participants draw the connections to overcoming their identified barriers.

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Step 4: Research Identified Benefits of Visitation **15 minutes**

We have looked at some success stories in relation to improving visits for children and families. In their table groups, ask participants to list as many benefits/outcomes for children and families of visitation as they can in 5 minutes. When time is up, allow the table groups to share their lists with the large group. You may choose to give a small prize to the table that identifies the most benefits. Suggest that each participant documents all of their benefits. They will learn later why this will be of benefit.

Distribute **Handout 7 (Benefits of Visitation)**, which lists some of the benefits identified by research. Allow participants time to review the list and see if there are any benefits that they missed. Tell participants to keep the handout available, as they throughout the training, they will consider how they can intentionally help to ensure these benefits are realized.

The benefits of visitation Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.212, subdivision 4, (b), identifies that the county social service agency provide parent(s) with a notice about the benefits of the parent-child maintaining visitation according to the out-of-home placement plan. Research identifies the following as benefits of parent-child visitation:

- Supports parent-child attachment
- Eases the pain of separation for all
- Maintains and strengthens family relationships
- Reassures a child that their parent(s) is/are alright and helps them to eliminate self-blame for placement
- Supports the family in dealing with changing relationships
- Enhances parent motivation to change by providing reassurance that the parent-child relationship is important for a child's well-being
- Provides opportunities for parent(s) to learn and try new skills
- Supports a child's adjustment to the foster home
- Enables the parent(s) to be active and stay current with their child's development, educational and medical needs, church and community activities
- Provides opportunities for parent(s) to assess how their child is doing, and share information about how to meet their child's needs
- Assists in the assessment and decision-making process regarding parenting capacities and permanency goals
- Increases the likelihood of reunification.

Research on parental visits with children in foster care reveals that foster children:

- Who were visited frequently (once a week or once every two weeks) exhibited fewer behavioral problems than children who were visited infrequently (once a month or less), or not at all. (Cantos & Gries, 1997)

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- Children who had frequent contact with their parent(s) showed less anxiety and depression than children whose parents' visits were either infrequent or nonexistent. (Cantos & Gries, 1997)
- Who were visited frequently by their parent(s) were more likely to have higher well-being ratings, and adjusted better to placement, were more likely to be discharged from placement, and experienced shorter placements. (Hess, 2003)

Wrap up this section by telling participants that, when they are having a hard time with those challenging families they identified on their Tuning In handout, they need to always think about these benefits of visitation to help motivate, to avoid losing sight, and to avoid the child and the family losing hope. Remind participants that positive visits with their children can become the primary motivator for a parent to accomplish the changes needed to safely bring their children home.

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Section IV: Team Development

Trainer Note: At some point during this section, participants may challenge the use of teams, as they have to develop and plan within 48 hours of placement. That first plan may not have the use of the whole team. This is just an initial plan to get visits underway. The team can be more fully formed and a more comprehensive and appropriate plan can then be developed.

Step 1: Team Development Approaches **10 minutes**

Draw participants attention to Pennsylvania's Visitation Best Practice Key Components #3 and #4. Our focus

Ask participants if they currently use teams for visitation planning. If so, how do they develop those teams?

There are a variety of models across the state to which agencies subscribe. A few examples include

- Family Group Decision Making
- Family Group Conferencing
- Family Finding
- Family Team Conferencing

While there is a variety of approaches, they all share common purposes, values, and beliefs. In most cases, the visitation team would not be the entire team from any of the models listed above. Most likely the visitation team would be a portion of those teams and potentially individuals who are not part of those teams.

Step 2: Teaming Introduction **15 minutes**

As we see on **Poster #1 (Pennsylvania's Visitation Best Practice Key Components)**, the third Best Practice Key Component, which is also in alignment with Pennsylvania's overall practice model, is surrounding teaming. Earlier in the training, we considered Act 55 (the family finding act) as a piece of legislation that connects with visitation. We also find alignment with Act 55, which requires county children and youth agencies to search for and identify extended relatives and kin who may be willing to support children and families entering the child welfare system. It is the belief in Pennsylvania that children, youth, and families are best served through a team approach with shared responsibilities.

- All team members have a role and voice.
- Involving the child, youth, family, and extended support networks as active members of the team empowers the family. Reference **Poster #1**

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(Pennsylvania’s Visitation Best Practice Key Components), Key Component #1.

- Teams are strength-based and collaborate toward common goals. Reference **Poster #1 (Pennsylvania’s Visitation Best Practice Key Components), Key Component #1.**
- Team members are accountable for their actions, keeping commitments, and following through with agreed upon responsibilities.

Ask participants to consider the Best Practice Key Components and offer ways in which teaming can help best implement those components.

Reference **Poster #1 (Pennsylvania’s Visitation Best Practice Key Components)** and establish that, without a team, we are unable to

- Truly empowering the family in the process (Key Component 1)
- See the whole picture, resulting in an inability to fully and accurately assess for risk and safety (Key Component 2)
- Explore the available spectrum of options to develop a creative plan (Key Component 4)
- Create a visitation plan that is family centered, maintain family contact with all connections, and likely offer optimal frequency and duration (Key Component 5)
- Access all potential visitation locations (Key Component 7)
- Explore all avenues of positive connections to the family (Key Component 9)
- Likely implement the least restrictive oversight and allow for natural interaction (Key Component 10)

Step 3: Purpose of the Visitation Team 5 minutes

Before we begin to consider who potential team members, we must first consider the purpose of the team. Distribute **Handout #8 (Visitation Team Members’ Roles and Responsibilities)**. Following Pennsylvania Office of Children Youth and Families’ (OCYF) best-practice, and having an understanding that the team’s purpose can change from meeting-to-meeting and that each member on the team has individual roles and responsibilities, the team has overarching functions. Review the handout with participants.

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Step 4: Potential Team Members **10 minutes**

Ask participants, based on the purposes of the visitation team, to brainstorm potential team members.

- If participants did not identify sibling, Remind participants that Act 115 of 2010 requires sibling visitation at least once every two weeks, for siblings who are not placed in the same home.
- If participants have not raised the importance of the father as a team member, it is important to do so. Fathers are often excluded due to concerns or circumstances that may not be valid or appropriate reasons for exclusion. Distribute **Handout #9 (The Impact of Fathers on Child Well-being)**. The handout is intended to help drive home the importance of father involvement in a child's life. Research shows fathers to be critical to the well-being of children. Ask participants to take a couple of minutes to review the handout. When they have finished, ask a couple of volunteers to share any points that stood out to them and ask them to explain why.

Every attempt should be made involve not only the father and ensure his right to visitation is granted, but also his family. The father's family is a part of who the child is and where they are from. By not involving the father and his family, you are essentially denying the child half of their family and half of their resources. It should be stressed that even if the father is not able to attend, participate, and/or visit, the paternal resources can still participate and are existing connections that the child should not be denied.

Inform participants that they can attend *302: Building and Sustaining Father Engagement* for a more in depth look at father engagement.

- If participants did not explore incarcerated parents, make sure to

Tell participants they can go to the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections website to find information related to visitation that is applicable to all facilities as well as facility specific information. On the left of the web page they can click on *Inmate and Visiting Information* and additional options will become available.

Step 7: Team Meeting Coordination **10 minutes**

Ask participants to take a look at their lists and consider whether there might be any differences of opinion, if all of those individuals participate on the team. Participants will undoubtedly respond that there will be differences of opinion. We cannot simply schedule a meeting and hope for the best. It is important that time is spent in

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preparation for the meeting. Preparing team members to be part of the team and for team meetings can make all of the difference in developing an effective and successful plan. A great model for this practice is found in Family Group Decision Making (FGDM). Ask if there are any participants in the room who are familiar with the coordination phase of FGDM. If there are, ask them to share what is involved in coordination.

After identification of team members, it will be important to reach out to each of them to invite them to be part of the team and to attend the initial team meeting. It is important that each team member is fully prepared. They must understand the purpose of the meeting and their role within the meeting and beyond. This helps them to understand what they contribute to the team and how to participate.

Ask participants to locate **Handout #10 (Visitation Team Members' Roles and Responsibilities)**. Tell participants that they will now be responsible for reviewing the role specific responsibilities.

Divide participants into three small groups. Assign the groups as follows:

- Group #1: Public Agency Child welfare professional & Private Agency Caseworker
- Group #2: Resource Parents & Child's Parents
- Group #3: Child & Others

Inform participants that they are going to become the experts on not only the roles of their assigned parties, but also on how to engage them / bring them on as team members. They will then be responsible for teaching the members of the other groups about their assigned roles and identified engagement approaches. Tell participants that they can and should use any resources to which they have been introduced to this point to assist.

- They will be given 5 minutes to individually review the roles of their assigned parties.
- They will then be given 40 minutes to explore how to engage / bring on board as team members, their assigned roles. When they have finished doing so, they will agree upon a uniform / best way to teach members of the other groups about their assigned roles and how to engage them.
- When finished, participants will be broken into triads in which a representative from each of the small groups will join them. Once in their triads, each member will have an opportunity to teach their colleagues about their assigned roles and how to engage them. They will have approximately 45 minutes to complete this portion of the activity.

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Step 8: Individual and Small Group Preparation (45 minutes)

Display **PowerPoint Slide #8 (Review and Prepare)**. Inform participants that they will have 5 minutes to review the protocol for their assigned role on **Handout #11 (Visitation Team Members' Roles and Responsibilities)**. When they are finished, as a small group, they will be given

- 10 minutes to explore how to engage / bring on board as team members, one of their assigned roles.
- When they have finished doing so, they will be given 10 minutes to agree upon a uniform / best way to teach members of the other groups about their assigned roles and how to engage them.
- They will go through the same process using the same timeframes for their second assigned role. Tell participants that, as they prepare, consideration should be given to how they will present the material in a manner that makes sense and makes the information tangible. One approach may be to apply the protocol to a scenario. They may choose other means, if they wish.

Ask if participants have any questions. Then allow participants 5 minutes to review the protocol for their assigned role on **Handout #12 (Visitation Team Members' Roles and Responsibilities)**.

Trainer Note: It will be important to circulate around the room for the duration of the small group work. When doing so, make sure participants understand their assignment, answer any questions, and offer guidance based on the discussions taking place.

Distribute a blank sheet of 8.5" X 11" paper to each participant. Inform them that they may choose to take notes on their small group discussion to help them prepare for their presentation in their triads. In their small groups, participants should now begin to prepare to teach their colleagues about their assigned role.

Provide participants a 2-minute warning to wrap up for each step. Let them know when the 10 minute allotted time is reached for each step so they know when to move on to the next step.

Trainer Note: This will be the end of Day 1.

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Step 9: Day 1 Review 25 minutes

Trainer Note: Before the day begins, it will be necessary to hang **Poster #2 (Supervision Continuum)**, **Poster #3 (Oversight vs. Support Matrix)** and place enough sticker dots at each table for each participant.

Also, place a 12 X 12 X 18 ¼ box somewhere in the room with three lines of tape on the floor in front of the box. The first line should be at 8 feet away, the second line at 10 feet away, the third line at 12 feet away. This will be utilized in the activity in Step 2.

1. Divide participants into two teams.
2. Tell each team that they will have 5 minutes to generate 5 questions based on the content from yesterday.
3. The participants may use any or all of the resources provided to generate their questions.
4. Once questions have been generated the teams will take turns asking questions to the other team.
5. Prior to asking the question, the answering team will select one player from their team to be the shooter.
6. If the team answers the question correctly, the shooter can choose to shoot the foam ball from the first, second, or third line. If the shooter gets the ball into the box without bouncing it, they receive one point if from the first line, two points from the second line, and three points from the third line.
7. Once all questions have been asked, the team with the most points is declared the winner.
8. You may elect to award the winning team with a small prize.

Step 10: Triads Teach and Discuss (50 minutes)

Allow participants 5 minutes to review their preparation work from their small group work yesterday surrounding coordinating the team. After 5 minutes, divide participants into triads, ensuring that one member of each small group is in each triad. You may do so by counting off by threes in each small group. Numbers may not work out so that you have all triads. It may be necessary to have four or more participants in a group rather than three. It is, however, crucial that you ensure one member of each small group is in each triad for this activity to work.

Display **PowerPoint Slide #9 (Teach and Discuss)**. Tell participants that, based on their small group work, they will now teach the other members of their triad about one role at a time.

For each role, during or after teaching their colleagues, as a triad participants should discuss any additional ways to engage the individuals. They may find that there are

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certain approaches that work across roles. Fifteen minutes will be devoted to each person. This allows each 7 ½ minutes to teach and discuss each role.

Allow the full 7 ½ minutes per role. Provide participants a 1-minute warning to wrap up for their role. Let them know when the allotted time is reached so they know when to move on to the next role.

Step 11: Coordination Resources 15 minutes

Spend a brief amount of time introducing the following resources and ideas, in case they were not identified in each group.

Handout #13 (Visitation Team Functions) is a resource participants may use to explain the purpose/functions of the team.

It is critical to stress that they are not undertaking the process for any county/state agency; rather, they are doing so for the child. It is important to always keep the focus on the child. This is something that should be stressed over and over. This helps create buy in and also creates a focal point. Remember, there will likely be a variety of personalities, opinions, and agendas at the table. This indisputable focus will be helpful when the team meets.

It will be helpful to share that which we are trying to accomplish through visitation. While those goals might be different for each child, they all come back to permanency, positive connections, and reduced trauma for the child. Participants can use the knowledge they gained this morning during the section on these three main goals to help them have these meaningful and important conversation. They can also use **Handout 14 (Benefits of Visitation)** as well as the list of benefits they created during the first day of training. Some family members may have a difficult time seeing the visitation as anything more than visiting. It can be helpful for them to understand the positive results of visitation. Also, there are times when parents are not together and one (or both) of the parents does not wish for the other to visit the child or be involved at all. This handout contains valuable information to help explain the importance of the other parent being involved and having visits with the child. In most instances the father is the parent who is not included. Just before this activity we considered **Handout #15 (The Impact of Fathers on Child Well-being)**, which is another resource to help mother's and the maternal side of the family understand the importance of the father in the child's life.

Ask participants to locate **Handout #16 (Pennsylvania Visitation Best Practice Key Components)**. We can turn to the Visitation Best Practice Key Components to help guide the conversation with team members. Ask participants to share how they might use this resource to hold necessary discussions with team members. Some examples are provided below.

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- Key Component 1: Share that the purpose of the team approach is to empower the family and place some of the decision-making ability on the family.
- Key Component 2 and 10: The team will be making decisions based on researched assessment tools. The team will be able to share information that informs these assessments, so the most accurate conclusions can be reached. This allows the team to decide upon the least restrictive oversight possible, while still ensuring the child's safety.
- Key Component 3: There will likely be other system partners on the team. It is critical that we involve our partners in making the best and most informed decisions.
- Key Component 4: The team will hopefully consist mostly of family, which will demonstrate that this truly is a family centered approach. As the team meets and form and decisions are made, roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined and documented.
- Key Component 5, 6, 7 and 9: By using a team that knows the child and family, the decision will be informed about the individual needs of the child and their parents/guardians. This will help to inform how frequently visits occur, how often, and where. It will also inform who will visit/have contact with the child and in what capacity.
- Key Component 8: Operating as a team also allows for supports to be put in place. Visits can invoke a lot of emotions. It is important that there is a healthy way to deal with those emotions.

Distribute handbooks developed by the Visitation Workgroup to each participant. Explain that these handbooks share information about visitation as it relates to each audience including what to expect, rights, etc.

Trainer Note: Handbooks will be available as long as supplies last. When supplies run out, inform participants that the handbooks may be available at their agency.

While these discussion with team members allow the child welfare professional the opportunity to share information and prepare the team members for successful meetings, it also provided the opportunity for the child welfare professional to gather information. In preparing the family for a successful meeting, it is important that the child welfare professional have a discussion with the family regarding how their family dynamics can affect the meeting, including the emotional and physical safety of all participants. Family dynamics include the ways that individuals work together or how a family interacts, communicates, or handles situations in their lives. The child welfare professional will get whatever background information is needed to understand the family dynamics and to work with participants so that these dynamics do not threaten the safety of any participants. It is the responsibility of the child welfare professional to assist the family in addressing these dynamics and any family members that could negatively affect the meeting. If extra guidelines or extra preparations are needed to

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ensure safety, the coordinator and family will address these concerns prior to the meeting. It will be important for the child welfare professional to share this information with the facilitator, if there is a separate facilitator, so that they are better prepared for the meeting.

Step 12: Promoting Teaming at your County **5 minutes**

As a large group, ask participants to brainstorm and discuss ways in which they can help promote the use of teams for visitation planning in their counties, if they do not already use them? Allow 5 to 10 minutes for discussion.

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Section VI: Determining Oversight

Step 1: Oversight vs. Support 10 minutes

To this point in the training, we have discussed the history and future of children in placement in Pennsylvania as related to visitation, the challenges and benefits of visitation, visitation team development, and visitation plan development. There are two components that we touched upon numerous times throughout that are critical components of visitation.

Draw participants' attention to **Poster #3 (Oversight vs. Support Matrix)**. State that both supervision and support can be necessary for effective parent-child visits when the child is in care. The goals of each, however, are different. Supervision ensures children's safety and well-being; whereas support increases parental confidence and competence. While they frequently overlap, they should not be confused as one and the same concept. Supported and mentored visits are fundamentally different from traditional supervised visits. (Beyer, 2008).

The simple 2 x 2 matrix shown below plots the concepts of *oversight* and *support* against each other. This representation shows four categories of visitation, any of which may be determined to best meet the needs of a family, and provides a description of each. Ask participants how they believe the matrix should be filled in. **Trainer Resource #2 (Oversight vs. Support Matrix Answer Key)** contains the correct responses. Use this answer key to help guide their responses. Ultimately, you should fill in each of the four quadrants. Examples are talking points, however should not be documented on the poster. Simply record the high level answers in each quadrant.

Explain that the focus of the next two sections will be on the two topics of oversight (supervision) and support. We will begin with oversight.

Step 2: Supervision Continuum 10 minutes

Draw participants' attention to **Poster #2 (Supervision Continuum)** and the sticker dots in front of them on their tables. Inform participants that the main focus of this section surrounds visit supervision. There are a variety of practices in the counties and we would like to get a sense of common practice of the participants in the room. The continuum on the poster ranges from least intrusive to most intrusive supervision. At the far left, the continuum reads "Unsupervised in the location of the family's choice. At the far right, the continuum reads "Supervised in an agency office with no break in supervision". Ask participants to take one sticker dot from their table and place it along the continuum where they believe the most common practice in their agency lies.

After they have finished, ask for volunteers to share

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- Why do participants believe most of their agency plans fall in that location on the continuum?

Step 3: Where should the dots be? 5 minutes

Display **PowerPoint Slide #10 (Where We Should Be)**. Using the visual, explain that the entire circle represents all children placed in out-of-home care. Share that it is the opinion of the Visitation Workgroup that the center ring represents the population of children in out-of-home care that truly require visits to fall on the extreme right side of the supervision continuum.

We would like to see the level of supervision more closely correlate with the visual depiction. Ask participants why that might be?

As we discussed earlier, it ultimately boils down to the purpose of visitation. We are trying to accomplish the three overarching goals of promoting permanency and positive connections while reducing trauma. It is very difficult for the intimate level of bonding and connection to occur in an unnatural situation when you are sitting in an office at a county agency with someone watching your every move, listening to every word you speak, and you that same someone will be reporting to the caseworker (if it is not the caseworker supervising the visit) and the courts.

Step 4: Six Key Operating Principles for Determining Oversight 5 minutes

Distribute **Handout #17 (Six Key Operating Principles for Determining Oversight)**. Offer the 6 Key Operating Principles for Determining Oversight. Make the following connections between what we have explored to this point and what we have yet to explore.

1. In the previous section we explored the need to consider the bond and attachment between the child, parent, siblings, and family.
2. We will explore the connection between the Safety Assessment and Management Process (SAMP) in determining oversight during this section.
3. We spent a significant amount of time in Section IV, which spanned both days of the training, exploring teaming, and will further explore the assessment and reassessment of visitation plans in Section VIII.
4. During this section, we will consider how to determine when the level of intrusiveness of oversight can be reduced and how to do so.
5. In the next section, we will explore how visits can be supported.

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6. A parent and/or child's physical, developmental, emotional, and cognitive abilities are considered, will also be considered in this section, as they are directly related to the SAMP.

Draw participants' attention to Pennsylvania's Visitation Best Practice Key Component #2. "Visitation planning includes a careful assessment of risk and safety to the child." Decisions surrounding oversight are grounded in the Safety Assessment and Management Process (SAMP). It is easy to draw the conclusion that, if a Safety Threat was identified that necessitated the removal of a child; the concern rises to the level of requiring visits to be supervised. This seems like a very reasonable conclusion; however it is not that black and white. This conclusion does not take full advantage of the SAMP. The process requires a much more critical level of thinking which can be applied to decisions regarding visitation.

Step 5: Safety Threats and Protective Capacities **40 minutes**

One has to look at the nature of the Safety Threat(s) that have been identified and the associated Protective Capacities. Simply the existence of a Safety Threat does not mean visitation should automatically be supervised. When taking this critical thinking approach, it is absolutely necessary to remember we are not viewing the Safety Threats in relation to reunification; we are viewing them in relation to visitation. Let's begin by taking a look at the nature of the Safety Threat(s). Distribute **Handout #18 (Visitation Scenarios Part I)**. The handout consists of three scenarios in which Safety Threats have been identified. Participants should

- review each scenario and determine, as a small group, whether supervision is necessary
 - If they believe supervision is necessary, what conditions of supervision would typically be applied? Also, with what frequency/duration and what location might be considered?
 - What creative ways can they think of to reduce the conditions, increase the frequency/duration, and utilize locations resulting in a more natural visitation setting?
 - What would be necessary for them to decrease the level of supervision, hold more frequent/longer visits, and in a location natural to the family?

When processing out the small group work, make sure that participants draw the connection to enhanced Protective Capacities, when discussing what is necessary to decrease the level of supervision. While the necessary Protective Capacities may not be enhanced to the point that the Safety Threat is mitigated, they may be enhanced to the point that oversight can be minimized or even unnecessary. It is important to drive the point home that the assessment of safety and Protective Capacities in relation to visitation is just that, in relation to visitation, not reunification. What may be safe for visitation may not be safe for reunification. It is important that we critically think about

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safety assessment from this perspective when determining oversight for visitation. We should always be considering the overarching purposes of visitation and honoring the attachments and bond between the child, parent, siblings, and family.

Looking back to the Six Key Operating Principles for Determining Oversight handout, we see that principle #4 says that, “When a visit requires oversight, objective measurable goals are identified to determine what the family is to accomplish in order to eliminate visitation safety threats, build parental protective capacities, and move to the least restrictive visitation.” Just as caregivers must know what has to occur for reunification, it is necessary that they understand what must happen to minimize and ultimately eliminate the need for visit oversight. How can they accomplish a goal that does not exist? Too often, we do not set these goals and have nothing to measure against. This failure on our part results in stagnant visitation plans, typically with a high level of oversight, and often the bare minimum required under state regulations.

Earlier in the training, when discussing team development, we identified one of the team’s responsibilities to be “*provide all information relevant to planning visits that: maintain and build the parent-child relationship; are safe; support the permanency goal and service objectives; and change over time to reflect progress toward the permanency goal*”. The team is going to help provide more accurate and comprehensive information to inform the assessment of safety and Protective Capacities that a child welfare professional can gather on their own. This results in more accurate assessment in which the child welfare professional can feel more confident.

Step 6: Challenges and Barriers **25 minutes**

Divide participants into three small groups. Distribute a blank sheet of flip chart paper to each small group. Tell participants that we know these things should be less, natural and more, respectively, however there are many things that get in the way of our ability to ensure this. They are now going to participate in an activity to exploring why we struggle to accomplish what we would like. Assign Oversight to group #1, Location to group #2, and Frequency/Duration to group #3. Ask them to title their flip chart accordingly. Ask them to make two columns by placing a line down the middle of the paper while holding it in portrait orientation. They should label the left column “Challenges/Barriers” and the right column “Solutions”. In their small group, ask participants to list the challenges/barriers they experience to minimizing oversight, holding visits in a location that allows for natural interaction of the family, and scheduling frequent and long visits, respectively. Allow up to 10 minutes. Tell participants to not record solutions at this time.

When they have finished, ask participants to post their work on the wall. Each group should then stand by the challenges listed on the flip chart paper to the right of their group’s work. They should then be given approximately 5 minutes to review the identified challenges and record possible solutions to several of the challenges. After 5

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minutes have passed, ask the groups to rotate clockwise and conduct the same exercise with the next groups work. Again, allowing 5 minutes. Finally ask the groups to rotate one last time. This should place them at the flip chart on which they developed their list of challenges. Allow 5 minutes to review and discuss the solutions their peers identified. They may ask for clarification on any solutions, but it is not necessary to report ideas to the large group.

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Section VII: Supporting Visits

Trainer Note: Prior to the beginning of this section, hang **Poster #4 (Positive and Concerning)** on the wall in a location visible and accessible to participants, as they will need to write on the poster.

Step 1: Introduction to Visit Support **10 minutes**

In the previous sections we considered necessary levels of professional involvement from the perspective of supervising visits to ensure safety. In this section we will consider professional involvement surrounding visits from the perspective of supporting the family. Display **PowerPoint Slide #11 (Support Continuum)**. State that similar to the visit supervision, we can view professional involvement along a continuum. The level of a child welfare professional's involvement surrounding a visit exists on a continuum, similar to the decision to supervise a visit. Identify each end of the continuum and explain that there is a range of support that can happen in between the two endpoints.

Display **PowerPoint Slide #12 (Areas of Visit Support)**. When considering visit support, there are two main areas of support that can be provided. They include helping to

- explore and manage feelings and reactions and
- plan the content of the visit and surrounding logistics.

We will explore both of these areas during this portion of the training, beginning with supporting the area of feelings and reactions and then moving on to content and logistics. Before we do so, it is important that we begin by establishing our foundation. Visits must have a purpose. We do not arrange visitation simply because the regulations say we have to. And the regulations do not require visitation without good reason. In the beginning of the training we established that visitation can help accomplish the three overarching goals of permanency, positive connections, and reducing trauma. We cannot expect these goals to be supported passively. It is necessary that we are intentional in identifying how these goals will be supported by visitation. This requires that visits be purposeful and that the purpose be clearly defined for all involved. The purpose establishes the foundation for the support we will provide. Without the purpose, we are limited in what support we can provide and the support lacks focus and ultimately value. The purpose should also connect back to the Family Service Plan and goals that can specifically be addressed during visitation. As we discussed in the previous section, part of our purpose can be to enhance Protective Capacities, which are foundational to the Family Service Plan, decreasing the need for supervision, increasing the possibility for more frequent and longer visits, and expediting the mitigation of Safety Threats. Ultimately leading to more timely permanency. Ask participants to offer examples of purposes of visits that connect back to the three

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overarching goals. Record participants responses on a flip chart paper titled “Purposes”. Save this list for use in a later activity surrounding visit content and logistics. If they are having a difficult time identifying purposes, a few are offered below to help get them thinking. Make sure to record the following purposes on the flip chart paper if participants do not identify them, as they will be the purposes used in a the later activity.

- Bonding
- Knowledge and Skill development
- Maintaining contact/routine
- Establishing connections

These are all likely purposes they have considered. The reason for thinking through possible purposes of visits is simply to lay the foundation for support. The child welfare professional can always bring focus to the visits based on their purpose, as we will explore shortly.

Step 2: Difference between Feelings and Reactions Lecture 25 minutes

Early in the training, participants began to explore feelings and reactions to visits. This section will further define feelings and reactions and consider the importance and ways in which child welfare professionals can help family members manage their feelings and reactions.

Before the start of this section you should have hung **Poster #4 (Positive and Concerning)**. Divide participants into six small groups based on the categories in the left-hand column of the poster. Small groups of two are fine if you have a small audience. They should include:

- Positive
 - Parent
 - Child/Youth
 - Resource Parent
- Concerning
 - Parent
 - Child/Youth
 - Resource Parent

In their small groups, participants will think of an example of a reaction/behavior they have seen their assigned role exhibit during a visit. Encourage participants to share reactions/behaviors that are the result of situations that occur outside of the visit and are exhibited during visits as well as reactions that are the result of something that has happened during a visit. You may choose to assign direction specifically to ensure a good mix of examples.

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After participants have identified a reaction/behavior, they will discuss what they believe to be the source of the reaction/behavior. They should ultimately connect it to a feeling or feelings. After they have finished, ask them to record their examples in the corresponding boxes on **Poster #4 (Positive and Concerning)**.

Before asking them to work in their small groups, guide them through an example considering a situation in which a parent misses visits. This impacts all parties involved and typically requires support provision to all parties, but focus on the perspective of the parent who failed to show up for the visit.

Trainer Note: It is important to circulate among the groups during this exercise to ensure they are critically thinking about the connection between reaction/behavior and feelings. They should connect to a situation, but ultimately we want them to connect the situation to feelings, whether they are real or perceived.

When they have finished, have each group share their examples. If the small groups do not verbalize well the connections between the reactions/behaviors and feelings, help them to do so as you did while participants were in their small groups. It is critical

You may choose to make the connection between examples provided by participants, however the connection should be clearly made that it is important to recognize the difference between feelings and reactions. Individuals might feel angry; and as a result they might react by yelling at someone. People must understand that feelings are quite natural; and there is little that we as human beings can do to free ourselves of the feelings we have because of a situation we face. However, we can control the reactions we have that result from those feelings. Reactions are the result of feelings and feelings are the result of a situation, whether the situation is real or perceived.

Step 3: Feelings and Reactions Before, During, and After Visits **20 minutes**

Ask participants to remain in their groups and provide each group a blank sheet of flip chart paper. Have them fold it in thirds long way. Then ask them to label the thirds “before”, “during”, and “after”. Ask them to consider how they can support their identified individual surrounding their feelings and reactions. The support should be grounded in the purpose of visitation for that family. Allow participants 10 minutes to complete this portion of the activity. For the sake of time, only ask a couple of groups to describe the support they would provide before, during, and after visits.

Distribute **Handout #19 (Supporting Feelings in Visitation)**, which lists considerations for support before, during, and after visits in regards to feelings and reactions. It also lists common feelings and possible sources for the feelings. Allow participants time to individually review and then consider it along with the ideas they came up with. Ask

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them to consider if there is anything they might do or do differently based on these considerations. Allow a couple of minutes for their consideration.

It is not possible to account for all situations. The purpose of this activity was to get participants thinking about the connections between reactions and feelings and how they might help family members manage them in an effort to promote positive, quality visits that are purpose focused and assist in achieving the three overarching goals.

Step 4: Visit Content and Logistics **35 minutes**

Display **PowerPoint Slide #13 (Areas of Visit Support)**. To this point in this section we have considered managing feelings and reactions. We will now shift focus to the content of the visit and surrounding logistics. Participants should recall from the work surrounding managing feelings and reactions that it is critical that we have a well-established purpose for visits. Without a purpose, it is very difficult to plan what will occur during visits and support the parents in their efforts. Focus could end up being on the wrong activities and support. Ask participants to look back to the list of purposes they developed earlier in this section. Using these purposes, participants will explore various activities that may occur during visits, as well as how they can support the parent in carrying out the activities and accomplishing their goals. Hang four sheets of flip chart paper at equal distances around the room. Each sheet should be labeled one of the following.

- Bonding
- Knowledge and Skill development
- Maintaining contact/routine
- Establishing connections

Participants should circulate around the room individually recording activities with which they are familiar that may occur during visits so support each purpose. Allow up to 10 minutes for participants to record their ideas.

When they have finished, hang another sheet of flip chart paper beside each list with before, during, and after written on it. Participants should continue to circulate individually recording ways in which they believe parents can be supported before, during, and after visits to ensure the activities occur and are successful. Allow 10 to 15 minutes for this portion of the activity.

Participants are permitted and should be encouraged to talk with one another. If they see any ideas that are unclear to them, they can place an asterisk beside that idea and request clarification when they have finished.

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Distribute **Handout #20 (Supporting Content and Logistics of Visitation)** and allow participants to review independently. When they have finished, ask for several volunteers to share reactions to the information and ideas. Make sure to draw attention to Bridging the Gap if participants do not raise it as a point of interest. This handout includes possible visit activities as well as considerations for supporting before, during, and after the visit.

Step 5: The Skill-Building Process **10 minutes**

Some of the examples participants identified as well as some of the examples on the handout are skills that parents must develop. There is a process for teaching skill. Also on **Handout #21 (Supporting Content and Logistics of Visitation)**, participants will find information on skill building with parents. As it is a means of building parent skill, we must have the patience to walk them through the skill-building process. We must also have the knowledge of what the skill-building process looks like.

To frame the skill-building process for participants the relate that the skill-building process involves:

- Telling the parent what you are going to teach them;
- Mirroring the skill for the parent;
- Asking the parent to help you perform the skill;
- Having the parent perform the skill with you helping where appropriate; and
- Having the parent perform the skill on their own.

Using pieces of masking tape, and a volunteer from the class (who preferably has never before made a tape doughnut):

- Tell the volunteer that you are going to teach them how to make a tape doughnut to hold posters and other items on the wall using a piece of masking tape roughly one finger in length;
- Walks the participant through the skill of creating a tape doughnut (by making the doughnut and telling the volunteer what you are doing);
- Asks the volunteer to help make a tape doughnut (the participant cannot take the tape from you, you must make the doughnut together);
- Asks the volunteer to make the tape doughnut, (if necessary you can help the volunteer); and
- Relate that the volunteer now has the ability to make a tape doughnut to hold flip chart paper or other items on the wall.

Note that obviously the more complex the task is the more potential exists for frustration to occur for both the child welfare professional and the parent. Patience is crucial if we are to empower caregivers to do for themselves. We must remember the Chinese proverb, amended for political correctness:

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Give a [person] a fish and [that person] eats for a day; teach a [person] to fish and [that person] feeds himself [or herself] for a lifetime.

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Section V: Developing the Plan

Step 1: Existing Plan Components **20 minutes**

Now that we have the team together, we need to explore what it is the team will do. The product of the meeting should be a visitation plan that is grounded in Pennsylvania's Visitation Best Practice Key Components. Distribute **Handout #22 (Visitation Plan)** which is the visitation plan taken from the Pennsylvania Child Permanency Plan. Review the components of the visitation plan, explaining that these are, at a minimum, the decisions that need to be reached by the team/recommended to the court.

Participant(s)

We are well established on this component based on the significant amount of time spent yesterday and today considering who should be at the table and how to get them there.

Level of Supervision

This is a critical component that has significant impact on all components of the plan. This decision point has an entire section dedicated to it and will be considered later in the day.

Frequency/duration

Draw participants' attention to Pennsylvania Visitation Best Practice Key Components #5 and #6.

Ask participants how they currently determine frequency and duration of visits. What considerations need to be made when determining frequency and duration? Make sure to share the following if participants do not identify these considerations.

- Child Safety: If supervision is necessary, a variety consideration come into play, including
 - who can provide oversight and that individual's schedule
 - Possible locations and location availability

We will further explore child safety, its impact, and ways to ensure safety while still providing frequent visits.

- Bonding issues: If the child is young, we should see very frequent visits.
- Family Service Plan goal and objectives
- Child Permanency Plan goals and objectives
- Level of visit support necessary

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- Is the child in a kinship placement

Distribute and review **Handout #23 (Frequency, Duration, and, Intensity of Visits)**. Make sure to review the opening paragraph.

Location

Ask participants what they currently consider when determining location of visits. Make sure to share the following if participants do not identify these considerations.

- Child safety is paramount in any decision. As you will consider shortly, there are ways to hold visits in locations that are natural to families while still ensuring safety.
- Level of supervision and the individual responsible for supervisions ability/willingness to meet in specific locations.
- Family Service Plan goal and objectives
- Child Permanency Plan goals and objectives
- Level of visit support necessary
- Is the child in a kinship placement
- What are the cultural considerations?

Draw participants' attention to Pennsylvania Visitation Best Practice Key Components #6, #7, and #9. Principle #7 has a very clear connection to may be clear in their connection to location, #9 is relevant, in that, location may have impact on who is able and willing to visit.

We are trying to accomplish the three overarching goals of promoting permanency and positive connections while reducing trauma. It is very difficult for the intimate level of bonding and connection to occur in an unnatural situation when you are sitting in an office at a government agency with someone watching your every move and listening to every word you speak and writing notes. Additionally, you know that person will be reporting to the caseworker (if it is not the caseworker supervising the visit) and the courts.

One of the youth on the Visitation Workgroup shared the following,

- "It was written that there was little bonding and interaction during my supervised visits with my mother. The truth was that we didn't know how we were supposed to act or what we were allowed to say."
- "Supervised visits always come with a level of pressure. I always felt in the middle. Should I say something? Can I hug my mom? Will I make my mom or caseworker angry if I do or say the wrong thing?"

Ask participants to share where most visits occur in their agency. Then ask them to brainstorm the variety of possible locations a visit can occur. Distribute **Handout #24**

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(Potential Visit Locations) and review. Do not read, rather summarize each the information under each potential location, highlighting what you believe to be some of the key point of consideration. Also share the following quote from a youth to share perspective.

- “The nice thing about having visits in a family member’s home is that if something goes wrong and your parents don’t show up, you still have time with your family”

Transportation Responsibility

The agency is responsible to develop reasonable transportation plans for visits. These may vary depending upon the community’s resources (such as public transportation), the distance of the child’s placement from the parents’ home, the special needs of the child, and the availability of family members, agency or contractual personnel, and foster parents for transportation.

Accommodations/Barriers

In many instances, effective visiting is undermined by lack of resources. Therefore, the identification of services and resources that will support children and parents in following through with the visit plan is necessary. These may include tokens for transportation, provision of transportation, a visit supervisor with skills to assist the family in managing the visit interactions, and assistance with planning meals when children are home for lengthy visits. Often agencies arrange or purchase services from other community resources to support visiting.

Step 2: Other Plan Components **15 minutes**

Ask participants if there are any other decisions/recommendations to the court they feel should be addressed by the team. Distribute **Handout #25 (Visitation Plan Decision Points)** and review. If participants identified any of the points on the handout, simply offer praise and move on to the next. The bulleted list below contains the same information on the handout with additional talking points.

- Are there other forms of contact that should be considered (phone, email, Skype, etc.)? There are ways other than visitation to help promote permanency and positive connections, while reducing trauma
- What kind(s) of support are necessary and who will provide that support? An entire section of the training is devoted to supporting visits.
- What will occur during visits? Distribute **Handout #26 (Developmentally Related Visit Activities)**; however do not review, as this is just a resource. Simply describe the contents using the column headings. Visit activities will be revisited later during the visit support section.
- How will the plan be monitored and reviewed/revised? This will be explored near the end of the day.

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- What the family is to accomplish in order to eliminate visitation safety threats, build parental protective capacities and move to the least restrictive visitation.
- What is the resource family's role?
 - Visit supervision?
 - Visits in their home?
 - Support?
 - Facilitating other types of contact?
- How can the visitation plan help towards accomplishing goals on the Child's Permanency Plan and the Family Service Plan? What is the concurrent goal and how can the visitation plan help towards this concurrent plan? This will also be visited in the visit support section.

We know that Even children who will not reunify with their parents benefit from visitation with their family. Visitation for children with a goal of PLC/SPLC/APPLA (especially those "aging out of care and likely to return to their parent) can help them:

- Reestablish a relationship with their family.
- Understand the safety/risk factors that may still exist.
- Understand their parents', or other caregivers', capacity for change.
- Recognize their own needs versus the family's needs and recognize their feelings of loyalty and obligations to their families.

Children with a goal of adoption benefit from visitation in the following ways (Hess, 2003, p. 3):

- Visitation offers an opportunity for a child and parent to say goodbye to each other. These ties in with the fact that the child may eventually reconnect with the biological family.
- Visitation offers an opportunity for the parent to accept, demonstrate and/or communicate responsibility for the behavior that is preventing the child from returning home: and,
- Visitation offers an opportunity for the parent to send the child a supportive message to move on to a new permanent family.

Ask participants to locate the Visitation Plan they brought with them as pre-work. They should review the plan and compare it to the decision points just discussed. Using **Handout #27 (Action Plan)** they should document the decision points they were successful in including in the plan as well as those that they may wish to further consider incorporating. Inform participants that they will not have to share their answers. Tell them to keep the handout and visitation plan accessible, as they will revisit them in just a moment.

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Step 3: Facilitating Decision Making **5 minutes**

Distribute **Handout #28 (Group Dynamics and Facilitation)**. There is not time to review this handout, rather provide participants with a brief description of the components of the handout and explain that it is a resource for them to review back at their offices.

Step 4: Plan Documentation **15 minutes**

It is critical that the visitation plan be documented. Documentation serves a variety purposes. Ask participants to offer what they believe to be the purposes of plan documentation. Below is a non-exhaustive list of talking points:

- Required as part of the Child's Permanency Plan (CPP)
- Court documentation
- A contract between all responsible parties. Helps to establish accountability.
- Roles and responsibilities are clear and in black and white
- Monitor progress
- Child knows what to expect
- Can be hung on the refrigerator as a reminder
- Progress monitoring

Display **PowerPoint Slide #14 (S.M.A.R.T)** and state that it is important that we ensure the plan can be all of these things. In addition to making the decisions/court recommendations discussed a moment ago, we must also be "S.M.A.R.T." about how we document the objectives within the plan.

Objectives must have certain characteristics in order to be appropriate objectives. One way to remember the criteria is to remember the acronym S.M.A.R.T.

Specific: Objectives should explicitly answer four of the five "Ws". Who will do what, where they will do it, and when they will do it.

Measurable: We cannot measure progress, unless we have something to measure it against. Objectives must include measurements such as frequency, duration, quantity, quality, etc. The measurements should be observable.

Achievable: Objectives should realistic for the person(s) responsible for the action(s). Otherwise, they are set up for failure. As mentioned earlier, the plan needs to be manageable for those involved, including the child.

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Relevant: Objectives should influence accomplishing the goals. Looking back at the overall goals, does it influence the promotion permanency and positive connections, while reducing trauma? How?

Time-bound: Objectives should identify a target date for completion, frequencies for actions, and/or duration of actions.

Ask participants to locate the Visitation Plan they brought with them as pre-work. Ask for one or two volunteers to offer an objective they believe meets the S.M.A.R.T. criteria. With the large group, identify each criterion within the objective. If any are missing, discuss ways to make the objective S.M.A.R.T.

Using **Handout #27 (Action Plan)** and reviewing their Visitation Plan, ask participants to review several of their objectives and determine whether they are S.M.A.R.T. Can they identify a criterion they tend to overlook when writing objectives? If so, what will they do to make sure they incorporate that criterion in future plans? Allow 5 minutes.

Ask if anyone wishes to share their findings.

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Section VIII: Assessing and Amending Visitation Plans

Step 1: What are we assessing?

5 minutes

Ask participants what the team assesses throughout the child's placement in relation to visitation. They should respond saying everything. Attention must be given to everything we discussed throughout this training. Including whether the team has everyone at the table that should be there. As humans, our lives are in constant change. Our situations do not remain static. We have good days and bad days. The families with whom we work are no different. It is important that we are always monitoring, assessing, and adjusting as circumstances change. Earlier we talked about the some of the purposes of visitation. One example of the importance of monitoring, assessing, and adjusting is in the case of an infant. The early years are when bonding occurs. While it is absolutely critical that we ensure safety, it also critical that we ensure that bonding occurs. As soon as we see that we can increase the frequency and duration of visits for the infant, we must make those adjustments. Those decisions have long-term implications.

Special attention can be paid to **Handout #25 (Visitation Plan Decision Points)** which was covered during the section on plan development. It highlights the main decision points, which are expounded upon throughout the rest of the training. Also, the team should always be returning to the purpose of visits for the child specifically as well as the three overarching goals of permanency, positive connections, and reducing trauma.

Step 2: The Teams Role

5 minutes

Earlier in the training, we spent a significant amount of time focusing on the development of the visitation team. The team plays an important ongoing function to the visitation process. It is the team that is monitoring, assessing, and making recommendations for changes in visitation plans. It is only with the input and best thinking of the team that effective changes will be made to the visitation plan, when changes are necessary. With the broad perspective and eyes on the team, more information can be gathered to adequately inform changes. Without the team, necessary changes may be overlooked. The team members serve to inform one another and the plan, to keep one another accountable, and to make the best decisions possible for the child and family. For those participants who are familiar with the Quality Service Review process in Pennsylvania, one of the indicators reviewed by the state for quality is functioning of the team. It is critical that the team function at a high level to successfully accomplish all of these goals. This is identified as critical to child welfare practice as a whole. It is not unique to visitation.

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Step 3: Gathering/sharing information, measuring progress, and other considerations

5 minutes

It is critical that pointed feedback be gathered by all parties involved in the process. It is the aggregation of this feedback that will allow the team to make informed decisions surrounding revisions to the visitation plan. Feedback can be gathered in a variety of ways. Ask participants for ways in which they gather information relevant to visitation. Several examples could include:

- Observations
- Observations forms that are used during the visits
- Speaking with counselors, therapists, etc.
- Speaking with resource parents or placement facility staff
- Speaking with parents, children, siblings, and relatives

This intentional gathering of information can help drive forward progress. It

- Should measure actions
- Should measure behaviors
- Must be collected and reported in a manner so that everyone on the team can understand it

If the plan was developed using SMART goals, it will be much easier to see where progress is occurring and where it is not. This highlights the importance of taking the time to make sure that goals are SMART.

In addition to assessing the visits themselves, it will be necessary to explore other assessments such as safety and risk to help inform amendments to the visitation plan. Progress related to these assessments will inform decisions relating to all portions of the visitation plan. Also, under consideration should be the child's well-being. How is the child responding to the visits? We discovered earlier that just because a child is upset following visits does not mean we reduce the frequency and duration. In fact the appropriate response might be to increase frequency and/or duration. We must understand the why as we make these kinds of decisions.

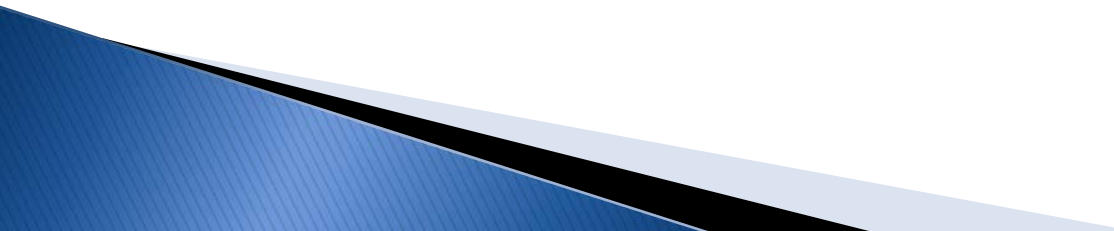
Display **PowerPoint Slide #15 (Additional Considerations)**. As information is gathered, consideration must be given to how that information will be shared with the team, under what circumstances does the information suggest a need for the team to come together, and how the team will reconvene when necessary.

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Section IX: Session Closing

10 Minutes

Attachment B



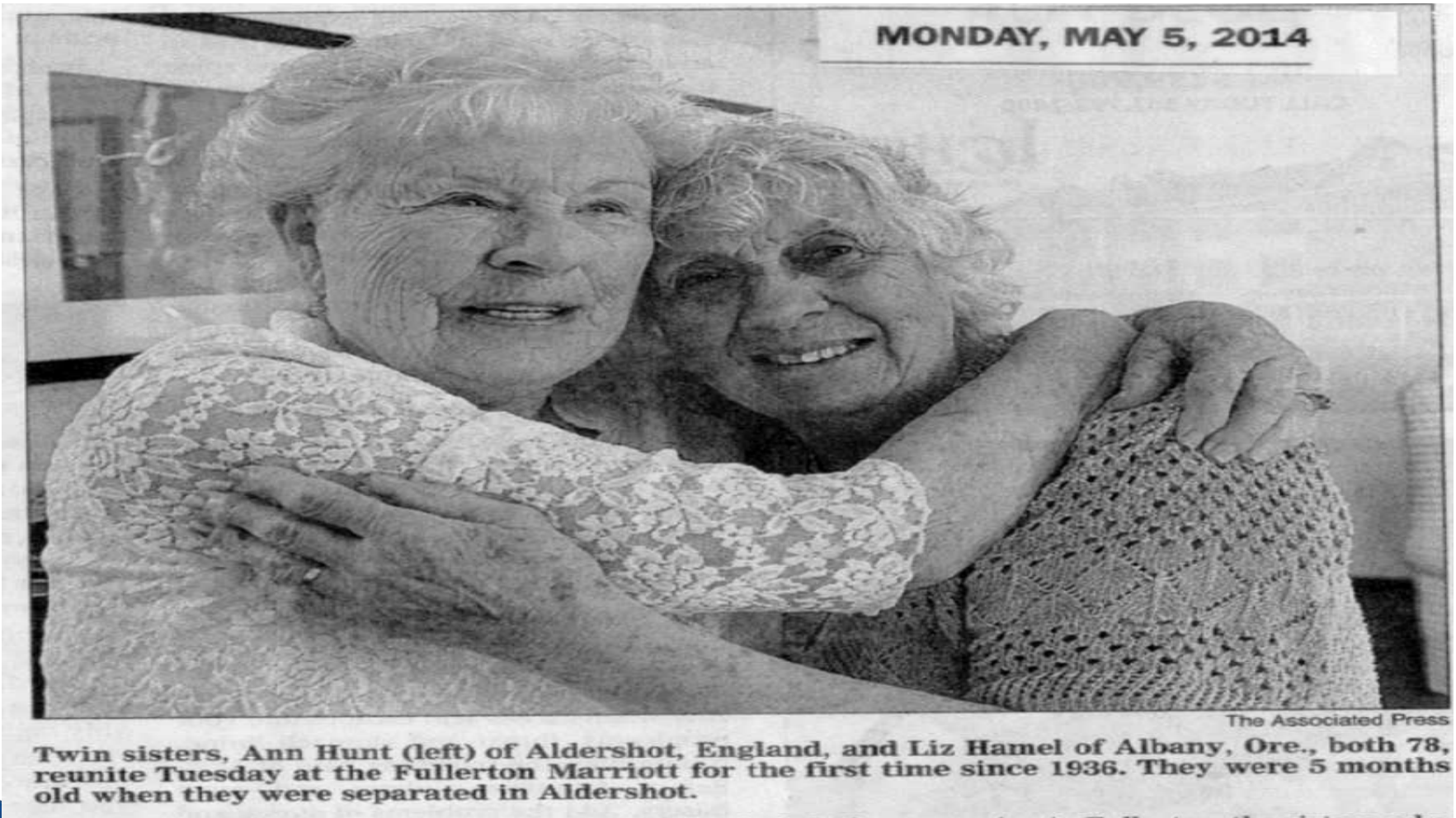
Hand in Hand... Building the Bridge to Stay Connected

Honorable Jolene Grubb Kopriva, President Judge
Blair County

Katherine J Gomez, Managing Attorney, Family
Advocacy Unit, Community Legal Services, Inc.,
Philadelphia

Christy R Stanek, Judicial Analyst
Office of Children and Families in the Courts

Twins Reunite after 78 years apart!



The Associated Press

Twin sisters, Ann Hunt (left) of Aldershot, England, and Liz Hamel of Albany, Ore., both 78, reunite Tuesday at the Fullerton Marriott for the first time since 1936. They were 5 months old when they were separated in Aldershot.

What is Visitation and Why Do We Do It?

“Visitation is a Right, not a Privilege”

Preserves Parent/Child Bond - Increases Better Outcomes and Reunification - Addresses the issue of Well-Being

- ▶ Visitation preserves and develops attachment and bond
- ▶ Maintains a connection with extended family and a sense of belonging and identity, often lost when a child is removed
- ▶ Important to keep in mind why the child was removed when considering visitation
- ▶ Unsafe to live full time with a parent may or may not equal unsafe to visit unsupervised with the parent

What is Visitation and Why Do We Do It?

“Visitation is a Right, not a Privilege”

- ▶ Research has shown that children are not only more likely to be reunified with their parents if they have early and frequent visitation, but will suffer less trauma in the meantime
- ▶ Visitation is a key component of the agency’s “reasonable efforts” toward the goal of reunification
- ▶ Visitation is the law

Visitation: A Charge from the State Roundtable

- ▶ 2011 State Roundtable charged a workgroup to focus solely on Visitation (<http://www.ocfcpacourts.us/childrens-roundtable-initiative/state-roundtable/2013-state-roundtable>)
- ▶ Visitation is a key indicator of reunification
- ▶ Regulation 1 x every other week = 1 ½ days per year

Visitation: A Charge from the State Roundtable

2013 Statewide Visitation Survey

Visitation Planning:

- ▶ Almost 60% of Counties reported NOT having a visitation policy or procedures
- ▶ While 87% of Counties reported practicing FGDM, only 14% said that visitation is included in the FGDM plan, but when included, the visitation plan was accepted by the agency and the Court in 75% or more of the cases.

64 Visitation: A Charge from the State Roundtable

2013 Statewide Visitation Survey cont.

Visitation Planning (cont.):

- ▶ 74% of Counties reported that they did not complete a visitation plan with the family beyond the logistics of the Child Permanency Plan
- ▶ Visitation seemed to be supervised throughout the life of case with little modification

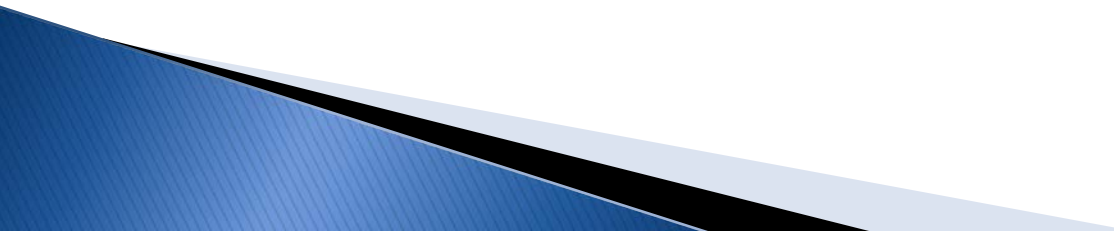
Visitation: A Charge from the State Roundtable

2013 Statewide Visitation Survey cont.

Visitation Location:

- ▶ 65% of Counties reported that only 1–25% of visitation occurred in a relative home
 - ▶ 58% of Counties reported that only 1–25% of visits are unsupervised
- 

Visitation: A philosophical shift in thinking

- ▶ Similar to FGDM, we have to look at how we think about visitation
 - ▶ Do we believe that family will protect?
 - ▶ Do we believe that there are healthy family members
 - ▶ Is there a place for family to be involved with the visitation planning
 - ▶ Traditional visitation versus best interest visitation
- 

Visitation: A philosophical shift in thinking

Past

- ▶ We must change people
- ▶ Professionals know best
- ▶ The agency plan is best
- ▶ People need us to keep them safe
- ▶ The apple doesn't fall far from the tree
- ▶ Extended families must come forward
- ▶ First goal – safety by removal

Present

- ▶ People change themselves
- ▶ The family know their needs
- ▶ The family plan is best
- ▶ People can recognize safety if guided there
- ▶ All families have healthy members
- ▶ We must find extended families
- ▶ First goal – keep family safely in tact

Visitation: A philosophical shift in thinking

Past

- ▶ Foster care is best
- ▶ Bad behaviors means not caring
- ▶ Angry disruptive teen is incorrigible & needs group care
- ▶ Adversarial Court/CYS
- ▶ Compliance is most important
- ▶ Professional concern for system
- ▶ Visitation is an earned privilege

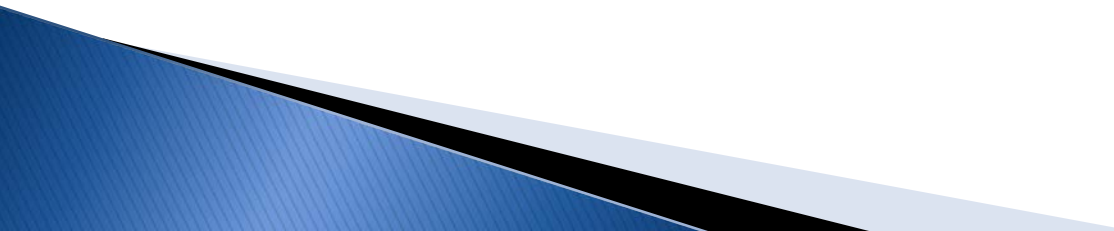
Present

- ▶ Kinship Care is best
- ▶ Grief and loss can cause poor decision making
- ▶ Angry teen is often hurting and misdirecting emotions
- ▶ System must share common interest & must communicate for child/family
- ▶ Measured behavior change is most important
- ▶ System collaboration is critical
- ▶ Visitation is a right

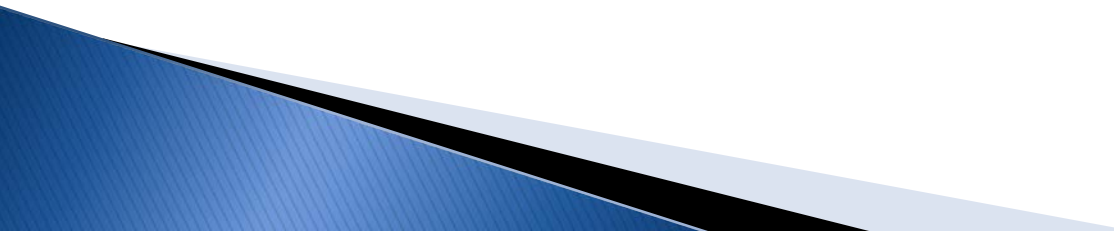
Imagine...



Imagine being a parent...

- ▶ of a 3 year old...imagine something went terribly wrong in your life and your child had to be removed from your care and placed in foster care...
 - ▶ How soon after your child was first taken from you, would they need to see you?
 - ▶ How often would that child need to see you thereafter?
- 

How do “we” justify giving these children less?

- This child doesn't need to see their parent as frequently because...
 - The child _____
 - The parent _____
 - The agency _____
 - The child's foster/kinship parent _____
- 

Visitation:

A philosophical shift in thinking

Traditional Practice

- ▶ Visitation is earned by parents and children
- ▶ 1 X every other week = 1 ½ days per year
- ▶ 1st visit schedule once time permits after crisis and shelter hearing is over
- ▶ 1 hour in duration
- ▶ Occurs in an agency room
- ▶ All visits start supervised
- ▶ Not much focus on law and research regarding visitation

Best Interest Practice

- ▶ Visitation is a right, not a privilege
- ▶ As frequently as possible, with consideration of age
- ▶ 1st visit scheduled within 72 hours of removal from the home
- ▶ Duration is flexible based on needs and age of child
- ▶ Occurs in the most family-like setting
- ▶ Least restrictive oversight considered to allow the most natural interaction
- ▶ Aware of the law, research and SRT recommendations

73 Right to Visitation between parent and child is grounded in Constitution

- ▶ Parents have a “fundamental liberty interest . . . in the care, custody and management of their children” Santosky v. Kramer, 455 U.S. 745, 753 (1981).
- ▶ This right is implicated when the state attempts to limit a noncustodial parent’s visitation with his or her children. Interest of Rhine, 456 A.2d 608, 611 (Pa. Super. 1983).

Safety and Visitation

“Visitation is a Right, not a Privilege”

Courts and child welfare agencies may not suspend parents’ visitation with a child unless the party seeking to limit the visitation proves **by clear and convincing evidence** that visitation poses a **“grave threat”** to the child. *In re Rhine*, 310 Pa. Super 275, 456 A.2d 608 (1983),

Grave Threat...

- ▶ In order to conclude that a “grave threat” exists, the court must find that “**there are no practicable visitation options that permit visitation AND protect the child**” *In re Rhine*, 310 Pa. Super. At 286, 456 A.2d at 614. (1983).

Parent is incarcerated? ...Same standard

Visitation between a child and **incarcerated parent** should not be denied unless it poses a **grave threat** to the child.

-In re C.J., 729 A.2d 89, 95 (Pa. Super. 1999)

⁷⁷ Case law: Restrictions on Visitation should be sparingly imposed & least intrusive

- ▶ Cases restricting visitation suggest a careful tailoring of restrictions to meet specific circumstances and needs.
- ▶ “to avoid unduly impinging upon a parent–child relationship, *a court must sparingly impose restrictions on the relationship . . . and must furthermore impose the least intrusive restriction(s) necessary to assure the child’s welfare.* In re Constance W., 506 A.2d 405, 407 (Pa.Super. 1986), quoting Fatemi v. Fatemi, 489 A.2d 798, 802

Case law: Sets forth different standard if goal in case is not reunification...

- ▶ If goal is not reunification... then the grave threat standard does not need to be met in order to suspend visits, rather the best interest of the child standard is used by the COURT. In the Interest of M.B., 674 A.2d 702, 705-706 (Pa. Super. Ct. 1996)

DPW Regulations: Affirmative duty to provide visitation

“The County Agency **shall** provide opportunity for visits between the child and parents

- ▶ **as frequently as possible**
- ▶ but no less frequently than once every 2 weeks
- ▶ at a time and place convenient to the parties
- ▶ and in a location that will permit natural interaction” DPW Regulation – 55 Pa. Code § 3130.68(a)

⁸⁰ DPW Regulations: What does “as frequently as possible” mean?

- ▶ Courts and agencies have the responsibility and opportunity to shift their emphasis to the affirmative requirement : to “provide opportunity for visits between the child and parents as frequently as possible”
- ▶ But, what is “*possible*”?
- ▶ What makes something possible or impossible?
(What types of issues might make more visitation less possible or *impossible* in a case?)

DPW Regulations: What does “as frequently as possible” mean?

- ▶ **Who should determine that? How? With what information?**
(Who/what has traditionally been the decider or determining factor of what is “possible” in your county?)

DPW Regulations: Affirmative duty to provide visitation

“The County Agency **shall** provide opportunity for visits between the child and parents

- ▶ as frequently as possible
- ▶ but no less frequently than once every 2 weeks
- ▶ **at a time and place convenient to the parties**
- ▶ **and in a location that will permit natural interaction”** DPW Regulation – 55 Pa. Code § 3130.68(a)

Whose role is it to advocate or ensure that visitation is as frequently as possible?

- ▶ Parent/Lawyer for parent?
- ▶ Child/Lawyer for child / GAL?
- ▶ CYS / CYS lawyer?
- ▶ Court?

DPW regulations: Visitation is not earned nor is it a tool for punishing a child or parent

- ▶ Youth in Congregate Care have visitation rights. 55 Pa. Code § 3800.32.
- ▶ Resource family cannot use denial of visitation as a form of punishment. 55 Pa. Code § 3700.63 (b)(7).

What if Agency suspects _____ and wants to reduce/suspend visits?

–Agency may only reduce visitation without prior court approval if they suspect child is at risk of abuse and file a motion with the court requesting a hearing within 24 hours of the action taken. 55 Pa. Code § 3130.68(b)

DPW Exceptions to Visitation

- ▶ The county agency shall provide opportunity for visits between the child and parents as frequently as possible ... unless visiting is:
 - (1) Clearly not in keeping with the placement goal.
 - (2) Freely refused in writing by parents.
 - (3) Not in the child's best interest and is limited or prohibited by court order.
- 55 Pa.Code 3160.68

Right to Visitation Extends beyond parent-child

Federal law and the PA Juvenile Act now require visits between separated siblings:

- The federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 **requires agencies to make reasonable efforts to provide frequent visitation to separated siblings.** 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(31).
- Act 115 of 2010 amended the Juvenile Act to **require visits between separated siblings at least twice a month.** 42 Pa. C.S. § 6351(b.1)& (f)(11).

Right to Visitation Extends beyond parent-child

- The recently-enacted Children in Foster Care Act states that children in placement should be provided with **“permission to visit and have contact with family members, including siblings, as frequently as possible,”** consistent with their service and permanency plans. 11 P.S. § 2633 (10).

Visitation is an important component of Reasonable Efforts

- ▶ Agency required to make “reasonable efforts” to “preserve and reunify” the family
 - 42 Pa. C.S. 6351(b)&(f)
- ▶ “The agency must not only provide preventive and reunification services to families in need, but can be required also to provide services that are generally the province of other agencies.” In the Interest of James Feidler, 573 A.2d 587(Pa. Super. Ct. 1990)

89 Court can review visitation as part of Reasonable Efforts

“In order to proceed effectively toward successful reunification in a case involving out of home placement, frequent and meaningful family visitation is essential. Visitation is also a key component of the agency's “reasonable efforts” toward the goal of reunification, which the court must review on an ongoing basis” –
–PA Dependency Benchbook p. 65

⁹⁰What is reasonable efforts in one case may not be enough in another case

- ▶ Once a week for a 3 month old child?
- ▶ Offering visits only during business hours for a working father?
- ▶ Visits in a location where mother has to take 3 buses?

Role of advocates: Family needs are dynamic...Advocate Between Hearings

Trouble shoot between hearings

- ▶ Are there communication or logistics problems that you should address?
- ▶ Have “internal” rules / policies / expectations about visitation become barriers?
- ▶ Does the visitation plan need changes?
 - Request changes to the plan
 - File a Motion to modify /enforce visits

Role of Advocates: Advocate at Court Hearings

Be prepared to advocate about visitation changes/issues to support your client

Be aware of issues around testimony, visitation reports and post visitation reactions. Testimony/reports can vary, some issues to consider...

- What was the primary purposes of supervision?
- Were expectations clear to all?
- What was quality and content of feedback provided to parent soon after negative observations?
- Who supervised? skilled for the purpose? potential bias?
- Natural environment for parenting interaction?
- Stating observations or drawing conclusions? (opinions, inferences, conclusions and/or interpreting child behavior)

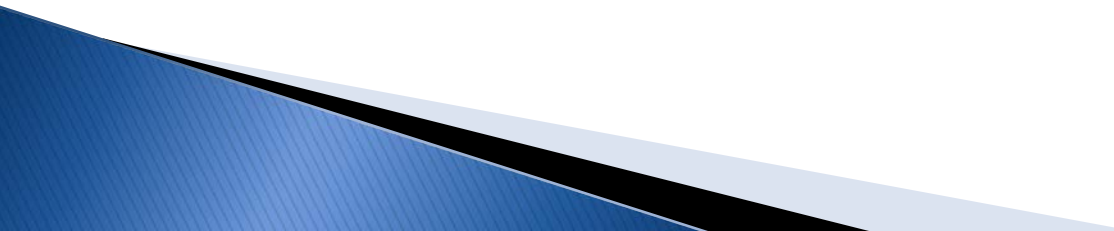
****Note also person providing care for the child may submit a report to court prior to permanency hearings, including a description of child's experience involving visitation with birth parents, specifying if visitation is supervised or unsupervised and any significant events which occurred. 42 Pa. C. S. § 6336.1**

Important Role of the Court

“When the court decides to place a child outside the home, additional steps are needed to **minimize the harm of separation**. The court should set terms for appropriate visitation and parent–child communication. The court may need to **specify services** needed to help the child deal with the trauma of separation and to deal with the child’s other special needs. When the separation of siblings is unavoidable, **visitation and communication between siblings** must be addressed during disposition.” *Resource Guidelines: Improving Court Practice in Child Abuse & Neglect Cases, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges*

Please review scenario

Based on the information in the scenario...

- ▶ What visitation would likely occur in your county between Ms. Jacoby and her children between the removal on Monday and the shelter hearing on Wed?
 - ▶ What visitation between shelter hearing on Wed and the adjudicatory hearing in 10 days?
- 

Visitation should be an important issue at all stages and court hearings...

- ▶ The time between removal and the Shelter hearing and between Shelter and Adjudicatory is not inconsequential for a child that has just been removed.
- ▶ Note that at Shelter Care hearings, the order should specify any orders of visitation. Pa. Juv. Ct. R. § 1242 (e).

⁹⁶ Visitation should be an important issue at all court hearings...

- ▶ Juvenile Court Rules specify that all dispositional Orders should include “a visitation schedule, including any limitations.” Pa. Juv. Ct. R. §1512 (D)(1)(j).
- ▶ *Juvenile Act 6351 (f)(2)* requires that “The appropriateness, feasibility and extent of compliance with the permanency plan developed for the child” be reviewed at each permanency hearing. 42 Pa. C.S. 6351 (f)(2). The Judicial Benchbook, explains this includes a review of compliance and quality of visits. P. 102.

Courts have broad discretion to issue orders to meet child's best interest:

- ▶ court can issue "orders of disposition best suited to the safety, protection and physical, mental, and moral welfare of the [dependent] child." 42 Pa.C.S.A. § 6351(a), and to impose "conditions and limitations." 42 Pa.C.S.A. § 6351(a)(1), (a)(2), (a)(2.1).
- ▶ The Court has broad discretion to issue orders in the child's best interest. Tameka M., 580 A.2d 750, 753 (Pa. 1990).

The Content of Orders Matter

- Comprehensive, includes details
- Builds in expansion/ladder (tied to child/family safety and needs, not meeting FSP goals or other carrot/stick)
- Avoids terms like “by discretion of ,” “by agreement of”
- Avoids use of compliance with goals as a proxy for safety,
- Avoids use of visitation as a carrot or stick
- Flexibility, Creativity (ex: must all visits be supervised by agency or can some be supervised by family to increase frequency?)
- Separates visits from medical appts, school events
- Includes visits with siblings
- Considers visits with family even if not a placement resource
- Addresses special situations like DV, Incarceration

Is My County There Yet?

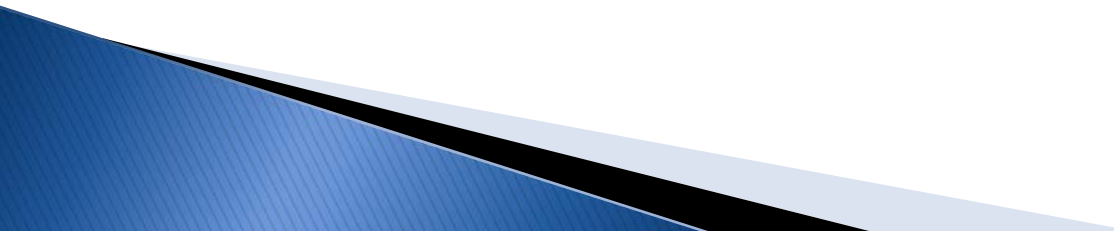
1. Are the majority of visits in your county supervised? Do they always start supervised?
2. Does the level of supervision change over time?
3. Is age considered in the visitation planning process?
4. Have you seen a visitation plan, other than what is in the CPP?
5. Do visits occur frequently?
6. Are the majority of visits held in a relative home, community, visitation house or agency-like setting?

100

Visitation is Often the Missing Piece to Connection and Well-Being for Children



10 Best Practice Key Components

1. Strengths Based and Empowerment Driven
 2. **Assessment of Risk and Safety**
 3. Collaboration of Teams
 4. **Visitation Plan**
 5. **Consideration of Frequency and Duration**
 6. Developmental Needs Considered
 7. **Location**
 8. **Planning and Managing Reactions**
 9. Ensuring Connections are maintained
 10. **Careful Consideration of Oversight**
- 

Who shared these moments in your life?

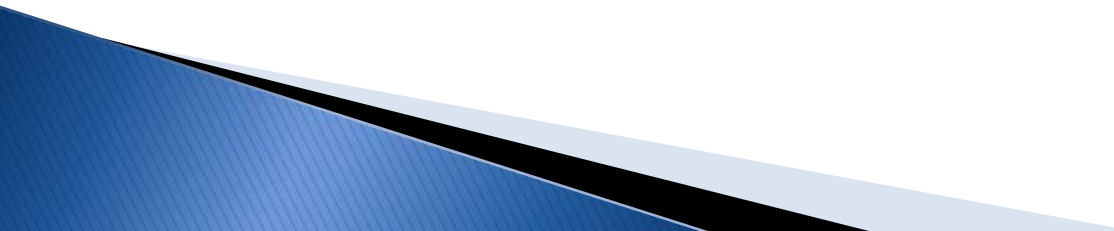


Critical Components

Risk and Safety
Frequency and Duration
Location
Managing Reactions
Visitation Oversight
Visitation Plan

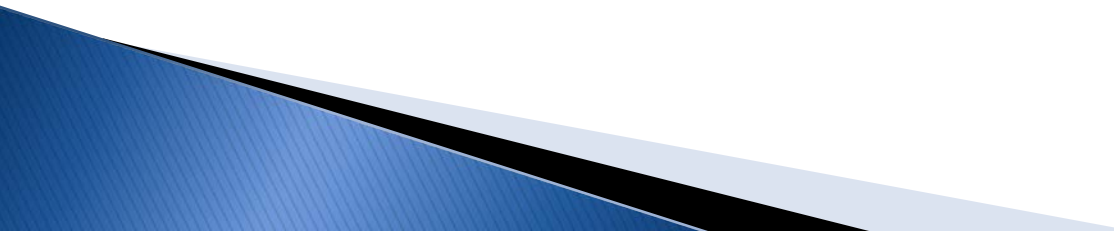
Critical Components

Assessment of Risk and Safety

- A careful assessment of risk and safety is done from the initial placement
 - What must change for the child to be safe during visits
 - Risk and safety as foundation for visitation planning, oversight, frequency, location and activities
- 

Case Scenario

Based on the information in the scenario...

- How often would Claire, John and Lisa visit their parents in your county? Why?
 - Where would visitation take place for Claire, John and Lisa in your county? Why?
- 

Critical Components

Frequency and Duration *(refer to Guide)*

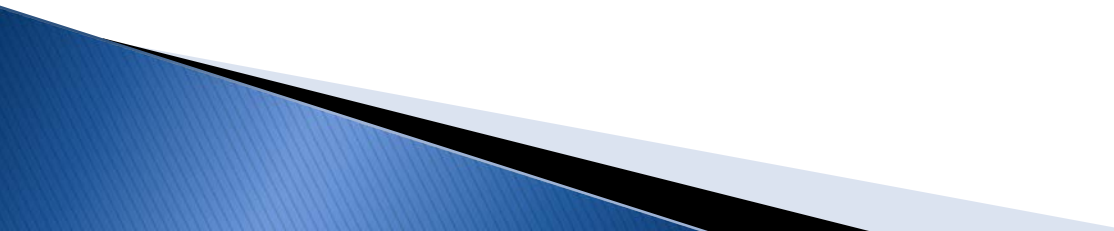
- Frequent visits = Decreased trauma
- Frequent visits = Higher education scores and less negative behaviors in school
- Frequent visits = Motivated Parent
- Frequent visits = expedited reunification and fewer days in care
- Infant, toddler and early latency years need more frequency over duration

“Mom who???”



Critical Components

(Frequency and Duration Continued)

- Middle and High School Children need consideration of Duration over Frequency
 - Consideration give to education, developmental, emotional and cognitive needs
- 

Critical Components

Location of Visits

- Consider travel distance and age of child
- Least restrictive and most family-like setting is considered first
- Family's home
- Relative's home
- Foster Home
- Community Setting
- Visitation House
- ****Agency – should only be used when the safety threat is severe**

If you were a kid, where would you rather go?



Critical Components

Managing Reactions

Each visit of a child in out of home placement begins with a reunion and end with another separation/loss (visitation manual)

- Feelings before, during and after
- Parent who no-shows.....Doesn't care or Hurts too much to say goodbye over and over
- Child who acts out before and after a visit...Fear of their parent or desire to be with their parent
- Lack of interaction between an older child and parent during visit....lack of bonding or unclear on how they are allowed to act
- We all struggle to feel and act "on cue"
- Services to Assist in Managing Reactions

Critical Components

Oversight

- Most natural interaction
- Least restrictive
- Ensuring safety
- Remember the presenting threat that caused removal
- Be prepared for natural reactions by children and parents to unnatural environments
- Visitation is a very important time for families and their time together should be respected
- Visitation oversight at initial removal may look different on day 30, 60, 90, etc.

Critical Components

Engage extended family and kin support.....



Critical Components

(Oversight continued)

Six Key Operating Principles for Determining Oversight

Oversight vs. Support Matrix:

- Supervised
- Unsupervised
- Either with Support

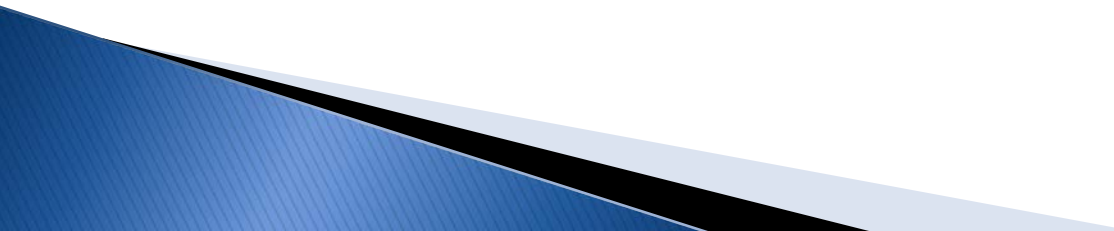
Critical Components

(Oversight continued)

- Safety for Removal does not always equal safety for visits
- Safety, Parental Capacities and Oversight
- Phases for oversight to be evaluated:
 - **Initial Phase** – Assessment and goal planning
 - **Intermediate Phase** – Parent working to meet the goals
 - **Transition Phase** – Reunification underway and/or accomplished

Critical Components

Visitation Plan

- Visitation planning and Family Group Decision Making
 - Always Developed with the Family
 - Plan should be fluid
 - Reviewed and Discussed with Client
 - Provided to the Court
 - Reviewed at every hearing and changed when appropriate (Dependency Benchbook)
- 

Critical Components

(Visitation Plan Continued)

A Visitation Plan should Include:

- Purpose
- Expectations/Conditions
- Location
- Frequency
- Duration
- Persons permitted to participate
- Team members roles and responsibilities
- Transportation
- Oversight requirements
- Creative activities permitted

What Does the Judge Want to Know?



What Does The Judge Want To know?

- ▶ **Have you differentiated visitation as to connection and not just permanency?**
- ▶ **Do you have a visitation plan**
- ▶ **Are visits occurring in the most family-like, least restrictive location**
- ▶ **Are visits occurring as frequently as possible**
- ▶ **Have you determined the most appropriate oversight based on a safety assessment for visitation**

What Does The Judge Want to Know?

- ▶ Have you considered age and developmental needs when determining **frequency and duration**
- ▶ **Who is important to the child** and will they get to see those family members
- ▶ Has there been progress since the last hearing so that **visitation plan** can be enhanced to less restriction
- ▶ Have you made “reasonable efforts” to maintain the **parent/child bond** and consider the **child’s well-being**

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What is Visitation and Why Should We Do It? Because Very Simply, It Is About a Child's Well-Being



Attachment C

Visitation and the Courts Training

What is your overall evaluation of the training?

Pittsburgh	Mechanicsburg	Blue Bell
4.6	4.6	4.4

How relevant was the information presented?

Pittsburgh	Mechanicsburg	Blue Bell
4.7	4.8	4.5

How satisfied were you with the following sessions:

Philosophical Shift for Visitation

Pittsburgh	Mechanicsburg	Blue Bell
4.6	4.6	4.4

Visitation and the Law

Pittsburgh	Mechanicsburg	Blue Bell
4.6	4.7	4.6

10 Best Practice Key Components

Pittsburgh	Mechanicsburg	Blue Bell
4.7	4.6	4.3

Expectations from the Bench

Pittsburgh	Mechanicsburg	Blue Bell
4.6	4.6	4.3

What surprised you about the training?

“The honesty of the presentation”

“I was impressed with the philosophical shift as I have not previously had this perspective on court related trainings”

“I was emotionally moved by the presenter’s stories, even though I don’t personally have children”

What two things did you learn or are able to take away from this training?

“I will connect visitation to safety”

“I will now see visitation through the eyes of the child”

“The detailed meaning of Grave Threat”

What two things will you do differently in your dependency cases beginning tomorrow?

“Look harder for family as supports to visitation”

“Continuously evaluate the visitation plan and take into consideration the child’s age”

“Look at the body, mind and soul of the child”

What questions do you still have about the material?

“I need more information surrounding continued drug use by parents and its effects on visitation”

“More about including extended family into visitation”

“How to shift visitation when the goal has been changed to adoption”

What visitation topics would you like to see covered in future training sessions?

“Visitation with Incarcerated Parents”

“Specific visitation sessions for caseworkers”

“Training on how to educate resource parents on the importance of connections with family”

Additional Comments

“Great session! This should be offered to Caseworkers and Resource Parents”

“The speakers were obviously passionate. I remember Judge Kopriva as a young Judge. You were always concerned about your rulings on ‘people’”

“This is my first time at a Roundtable committee presentation. I hope I can attend many more. Thank you for all your hard work”

What's Happening with Visitation?

An Activity Book for Children, in Out-of-Home Care,
who are visiting with their siblings and parents

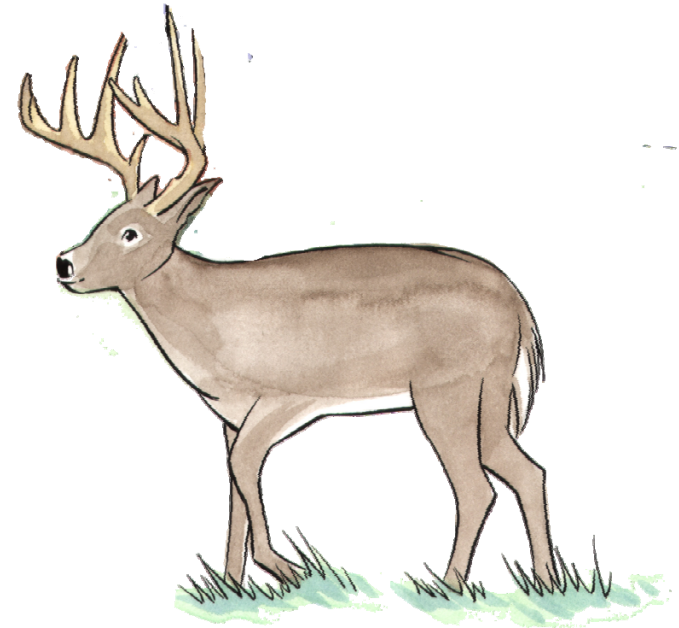


Why did I have to leave my home?

The main job of parents is to take care of their children. This is so important that there are laws to make sure that parents do this. This means they have to protect you from getting hurt, make sure you have food and clothes, take you to the doctor, make sure you go to school, and make sure your home is safe. If the judge decides that your mom or dad has not given you these things, has not been watching you or taking good care of you, you may have to go live somewhere else away from your home until the judge decides that your mom or dad can take care of you.

If you have to leave your home, there will be a lot of people by your side to help you. One is the judge who is a person who works very hard to figure out what is best for you and how to keep you safe. Another is your Guardian ad Litem (GAL) a special person who will meet with you and help the judge understand how to keep you safe. Your GAL is a good person to talk to about any problems you may be having. Your caseworker will help you and your family get the things you need and will make sure you are safe.

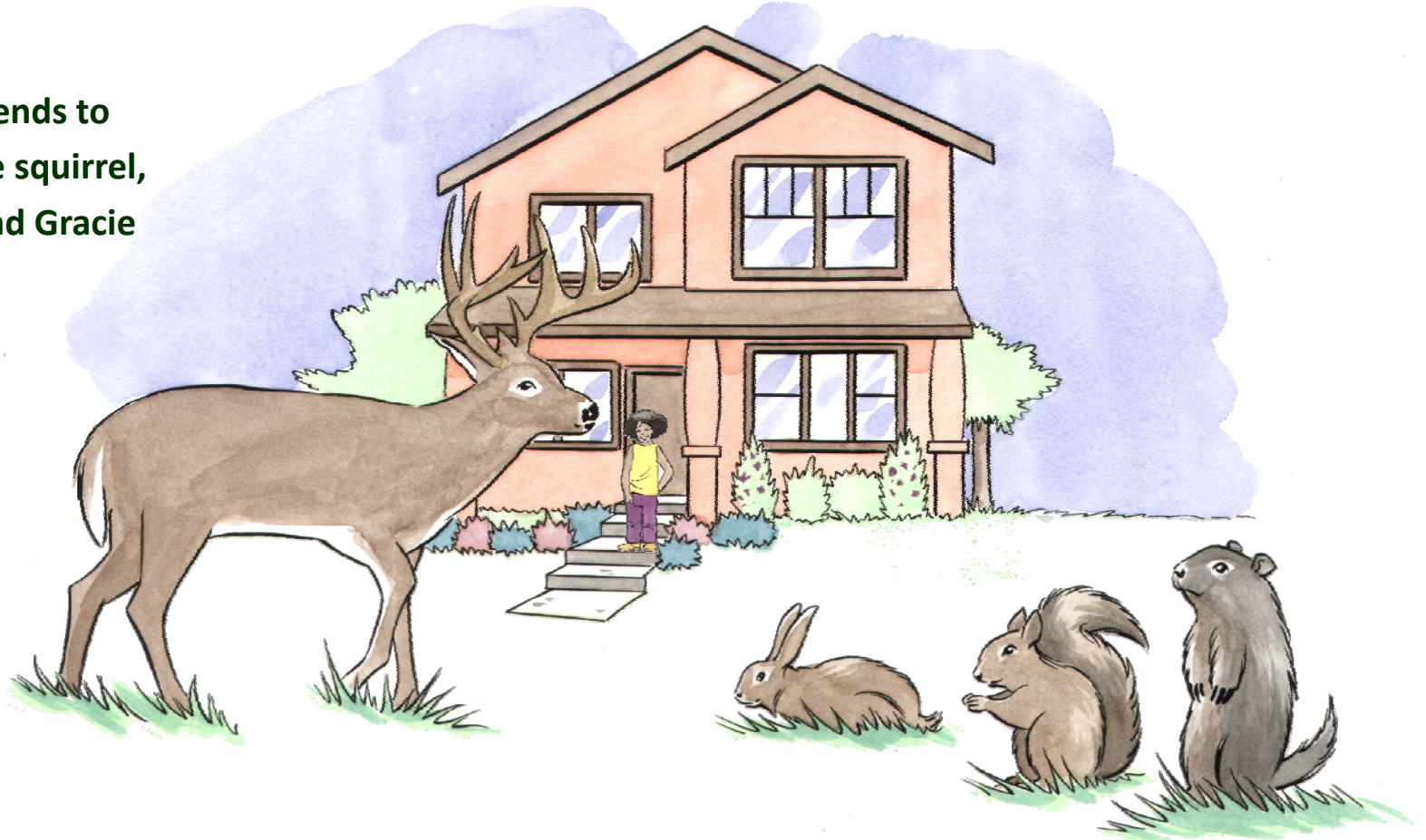
**Dexter the White-Tailed Deer says:
“Let me walk you through the steps!”**



Where will I live now?

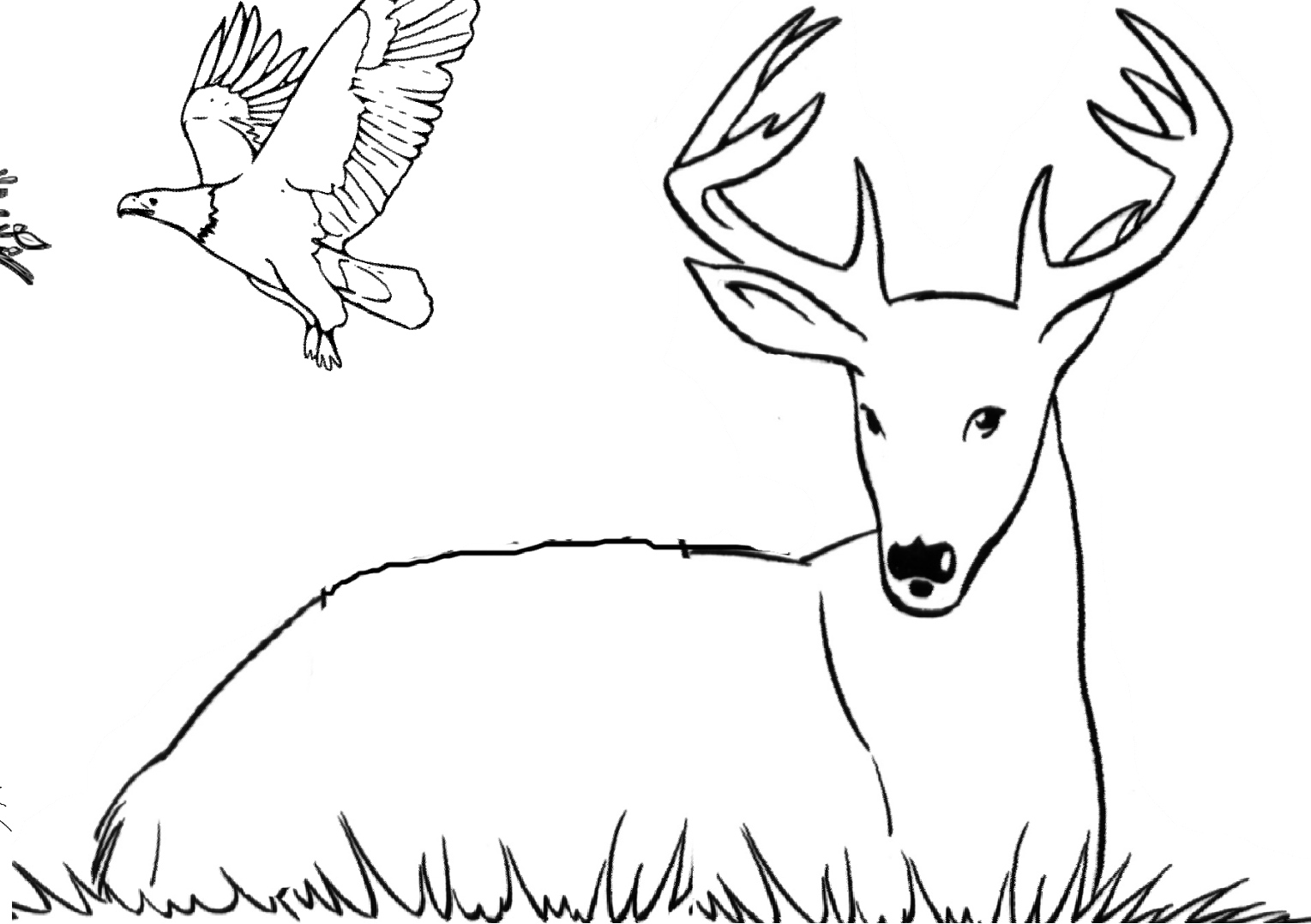
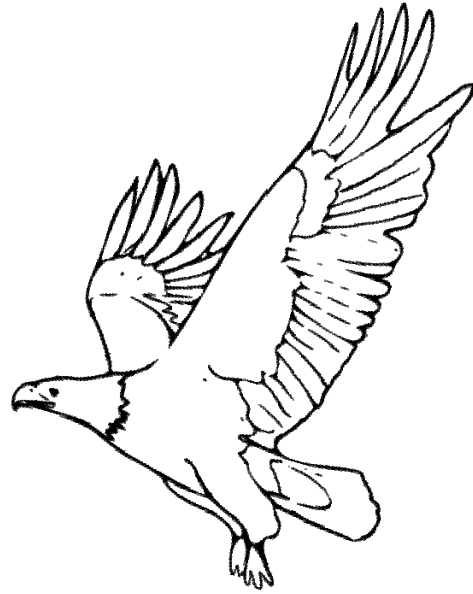
If a relative, such as your grandparent, aunt or uncle, or a family friend can take care of you, you might be able to live with them. If you know of a nice relative or other adult with whom you think you would like to stay, tell the people helping you. If there is no relative or family friend to take care of you, a nice, safe place will be found for you to stay. If you have any worries about where you are staying, call your caseworker or your GAL.

Dexter asked his friends to help. Meet Sally the squirrel, Benny the bunny and Gracie the groundhog.



Dexter

Color Dexter and his animal friends!

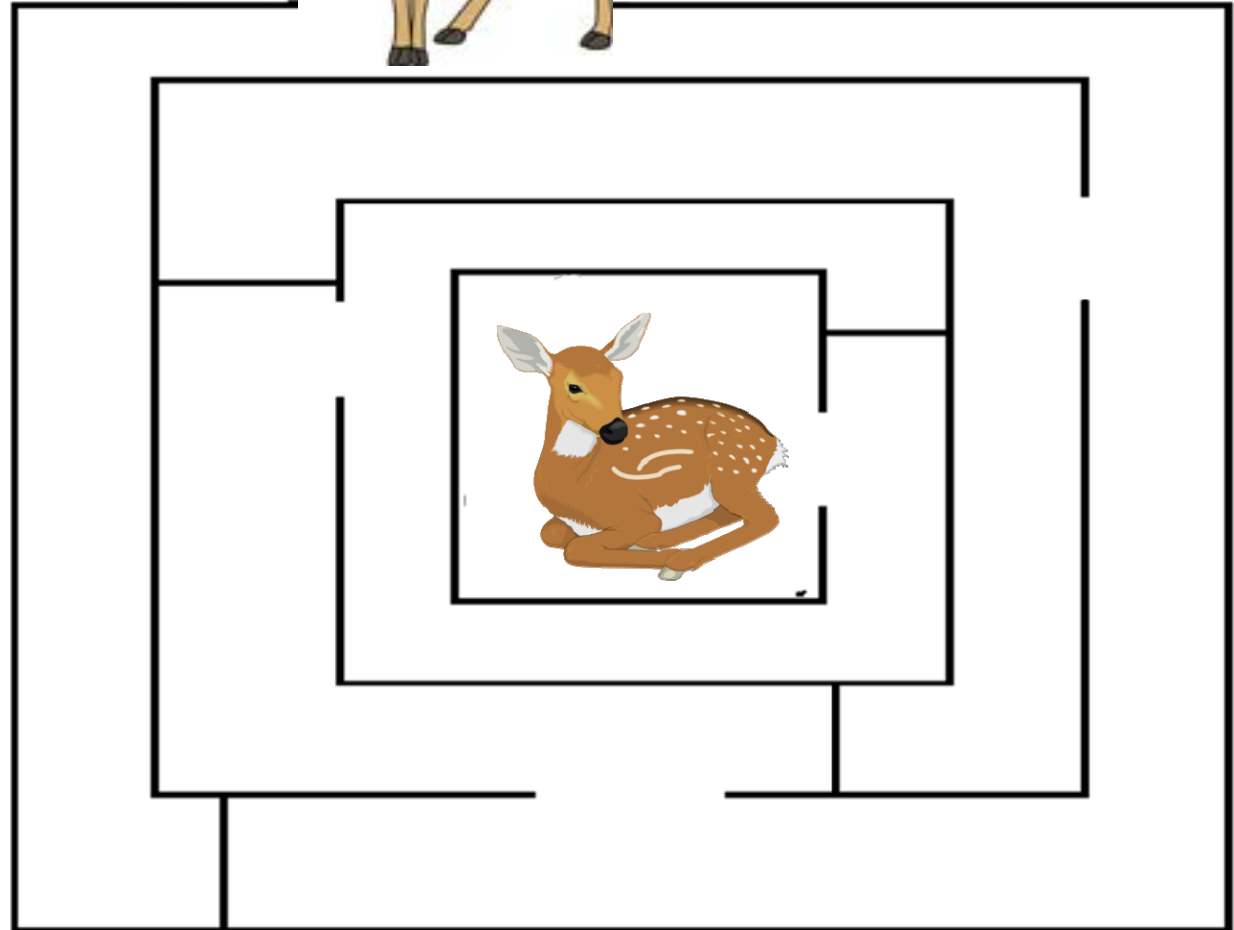


Will I get to see my mom and dad?

Most of the time, you can see your mom or dad. Your Judge, Attorney or Caseworker will let you know when, where, and how often you get to see them. These visits may be with just your mom or dad, but sometimes other people may be there too. As your parents work hard to learn what they need to do for you to come home and be safe, you may get to see them more often. You may also get to see your mom or dad when you go to the doctors, have a school event or celebrate a special occasion that is happening in your life.



The grown-ups help the parents so that the children can live with them again. Can you help Dexter get to his baby fawn?



Will I get to see my brothers and sisters?

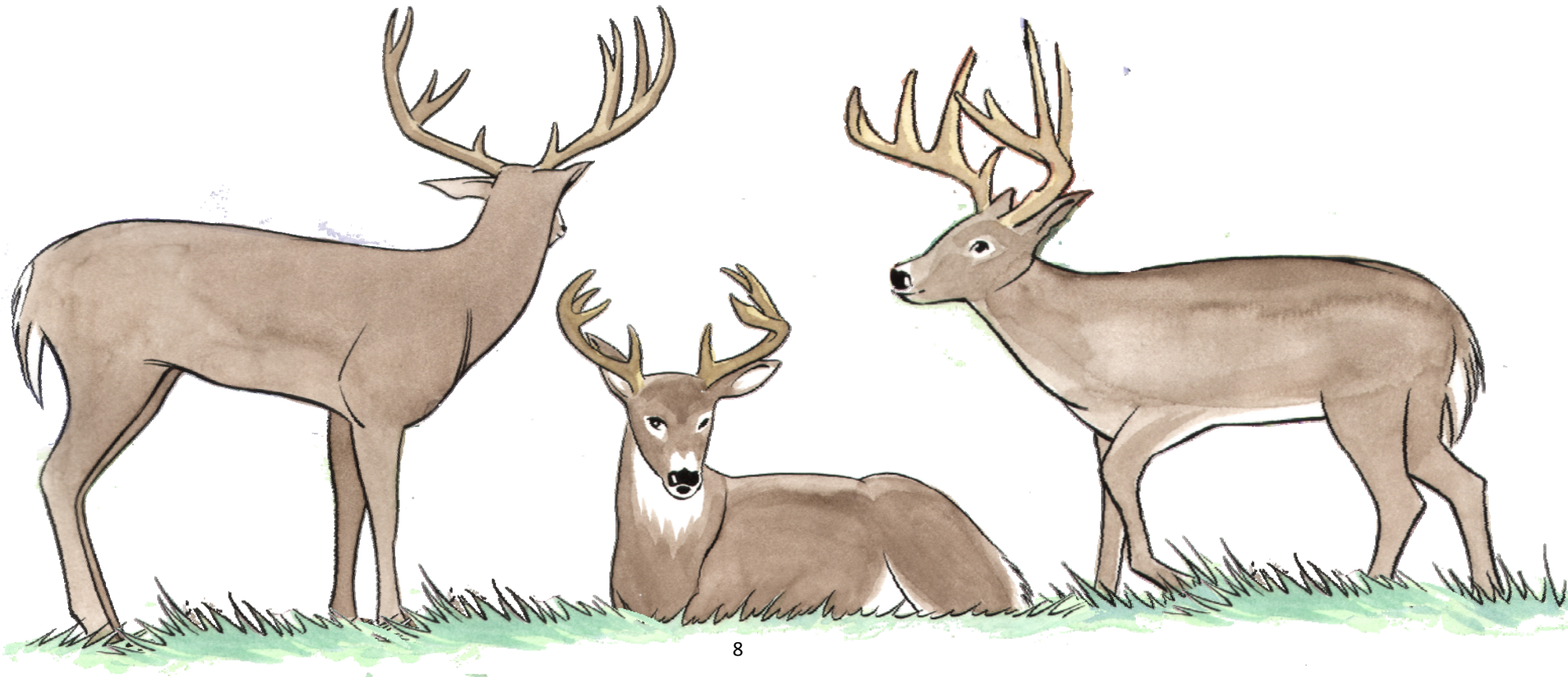
You should get to see and talk to your brothers and sisters, and most of the time you will be living in the same place with them. If you are not living with them, be sure to let someone know that seeing or talking with your brothers or sisters is important to you so they can tell the judge. If there is some reason why you cannot see your brothers and sisters, ask if you can talk to them another way, like on the phone or through email. The judge will think about your wishes and tell you when you get to visit and talk to your brothers or sisters.

Sally and Sam say: "It's important to see each other."







Will I get to see any of my other family members?

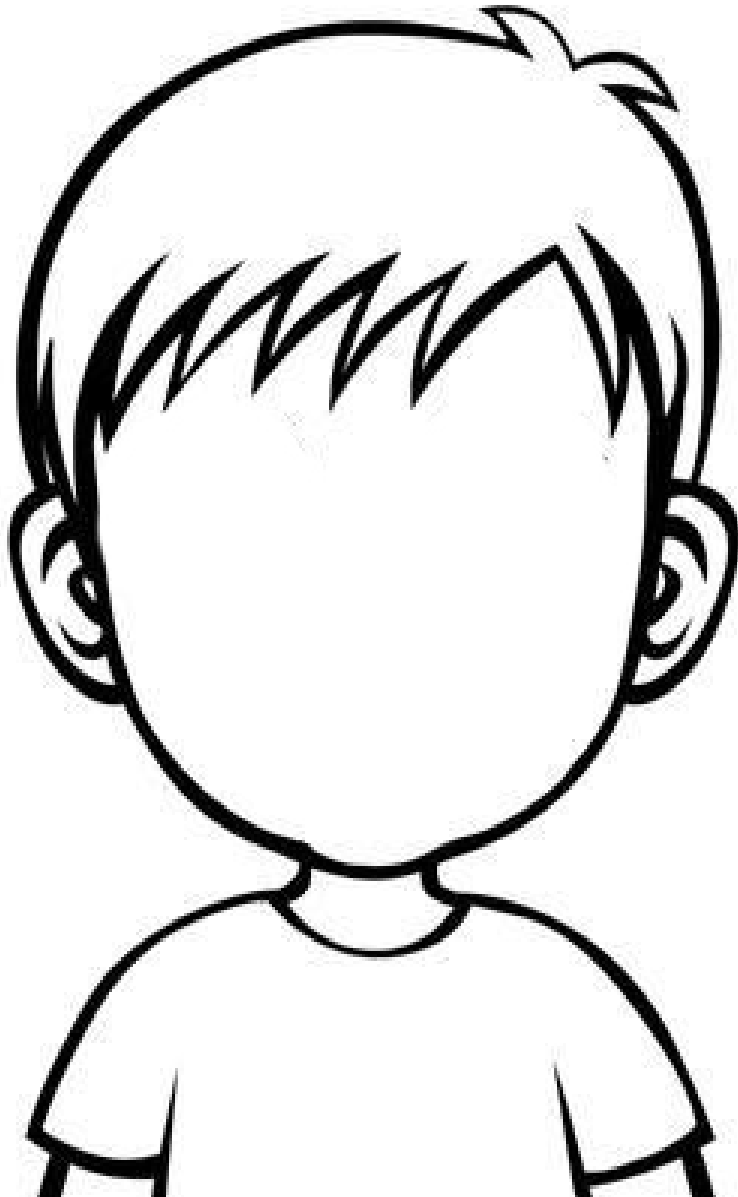
It is important that you also get to see your other family members, like a grandma, grandpa, aunt, uncle or cousin. It is important that you tell the Judge, your Attorney or Caseworker who is important to you so that they can help you to see your family. There might be a reason why you cannot see someone in your family, but everyone will work hard to make sure that you stay in touch with the safe people in your life that you love and care about.



Who is important to you and who do you like to spend time with?

Sometimes kids have lots of feelings about all of these things happening in their lives		
Can you match the picture with the feeling word?		
		Happy
		Sad
		Mad
		Scared

I feel like...

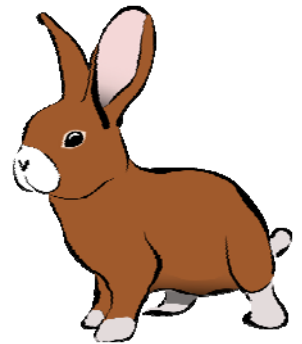


Will anyone besides my family be in my visit?



In addition to your family, you might have another grown up in your visit to help make sure your visit is safe and enjoyable for you. This person who will supervise your visit can have different names, but is often called a case aid. Occasionally, your caseworker or another caseworker from the agency may also supervise your visit.

Another grown-up that might be in your visit is the person helping your parents learn new things in order to get you home safely. This person is often called a counselor or coach.



It is important that you talk to any of these grown-ups, if you ever feel uncomfortable or scared during your visit.



13 Use these stickers to help you create how your visit looks. You may also draw or color pictures on your page to help create your visit. Have FUN!



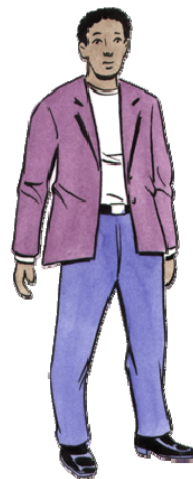
Case Aid



Guardian ad Litem



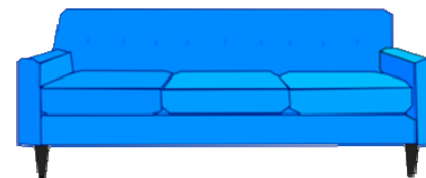
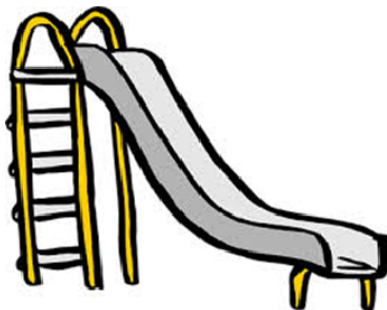
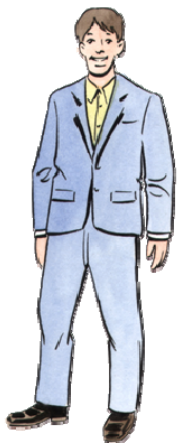
Judge



Guardian ad Litem



Caseworker



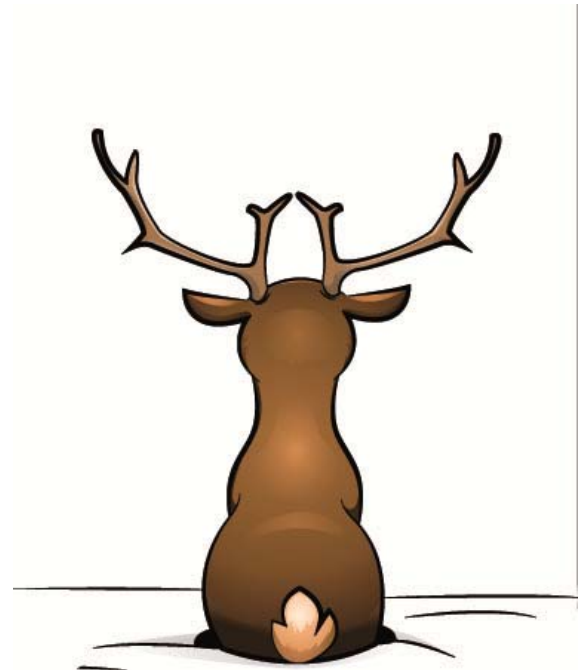
Write down or draw a picture of what you would like your visits to look like:

How might I feel before, during or after my visits

- You may be nervous
- You might want to bring something special with you to the visits like a doll, teddy bear or favorite toy to make you feel more comfortable
- You might be very happy to see your family or you might feel upset and angry
- The night before your visit you may think a lot about your family
- If you get hungry or thirsty, it is ok to tell your parent or grown up in the visit
- You should also tell a grown up if you have to go to the bathroom during your visit
- When the visit is over, you might feel sad
- You might also feel confused and need the grown-ups to help you understand

It is important that you talk with your caretakers so that they can help you feel better before and after your visit. It is also very important to tell a grown-up in the visit or your caretakers if a visit makes you feel scared.

However you feel before, during and after your visit is ok. Your feelings are important and lots of kids have the same kind of feelings.



What happens if my parent can't come to the visit?

There are lots of reasons why parents miss a visit and none of them have to do with you. Sometimes parents do not have a ride to get there. Sometimes their car breaks. Sometimes they are not allowed to leave work. Sometimes they get stuck in traffic. If this happens, your caseworker will try to give you and your parent another visit as quickly as possible.

What is important for you to know is that your parent does not miss a visit because they do not want to see you. They are often very sad when they cannot get to the visit because they love you very much and were very excited to see you.



Can my visits change?

Yes, your visits can change. As your parents work hard to learn what they need to do for you to come home and be safe, you might see your visits happen more often, longer or in different places. Sometimes visits will need to change in order to keep you safe. If this happens, it is important for you to remember that any problem with your visit is not your fault. The grown-ups working with you will work very hard to make sure that you see your parents as often as possible.



Can I talk to the Judge about my visits?

Yes! The Judge will want to see and hear from you at your court hearings. It is very important to the Judge to hear about your visits. If you feel uncomfortable talking about your visits in front of everyone in the Courtroom, you may ask to speak to the Judge in a separate room.

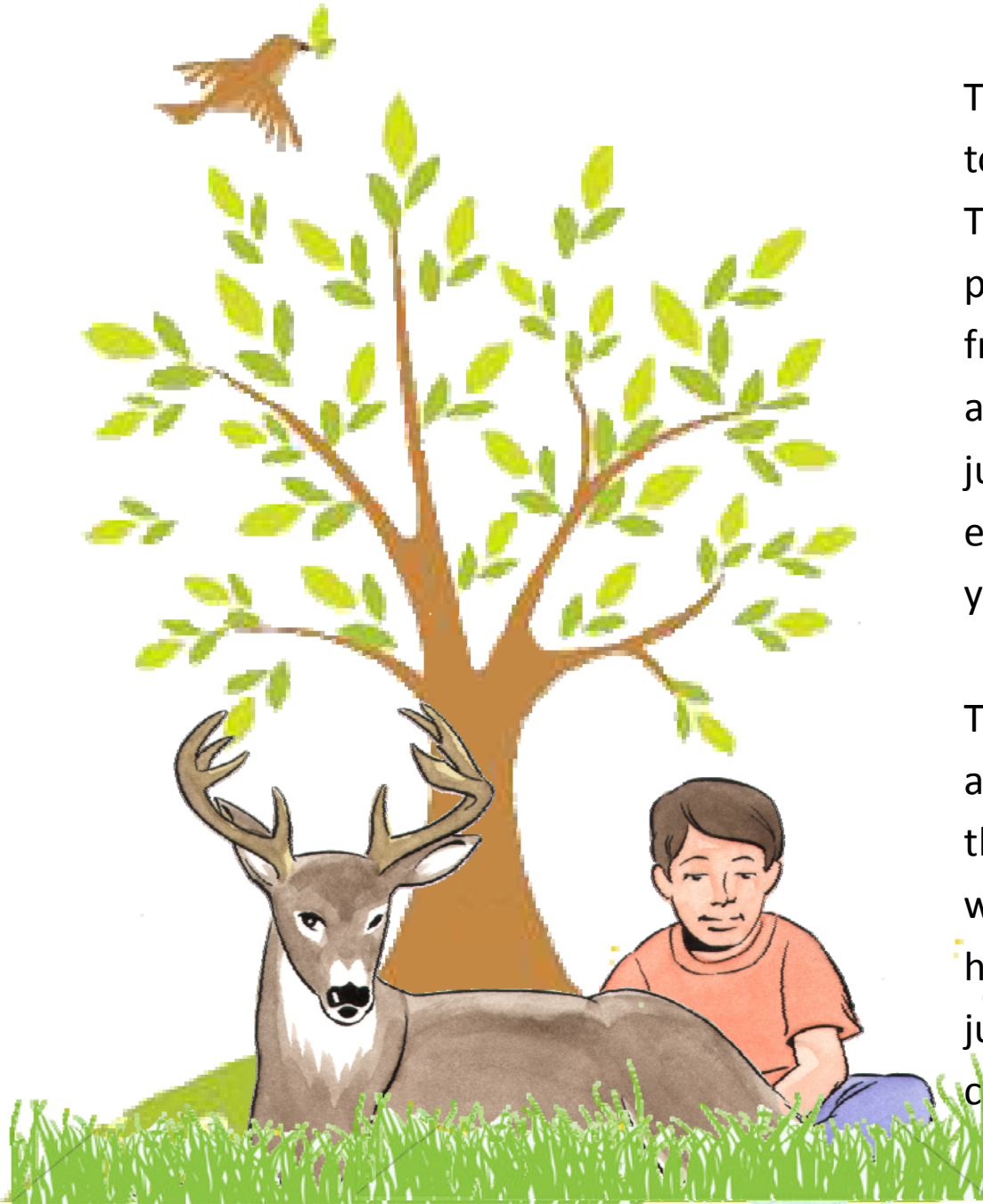
You will also have an attorney who is called a Guardian ad Litem. Your attorney is another person who will want to know how you feel about your visits. If you are uncomfortable talking to the Judge, your attorney can also share your feelings with the Judge. You do not have to wait for a hearing to talk to your attorney. Ask your caretakers to help you call your attorney, if you want to talk about your visits.



When will I know what is going to happen to me?

The judge has to give your mom or dad time to do some things before you can go home. The judge needs your mom or dad and the people who are helping you to attend court from time to time. It is called a hearing when all those people get together and talk to the judge. In the hearing, the judge listens to everyone to learn how things are going with you and with your mom or dad.

The judge has to decide what should happen and if or when you should go home. Usually the judge will tell everyone in the courtroom what will happen next at the end of the hearing. If you don't understand what the judge decides, there are lots of people who can help you understand.

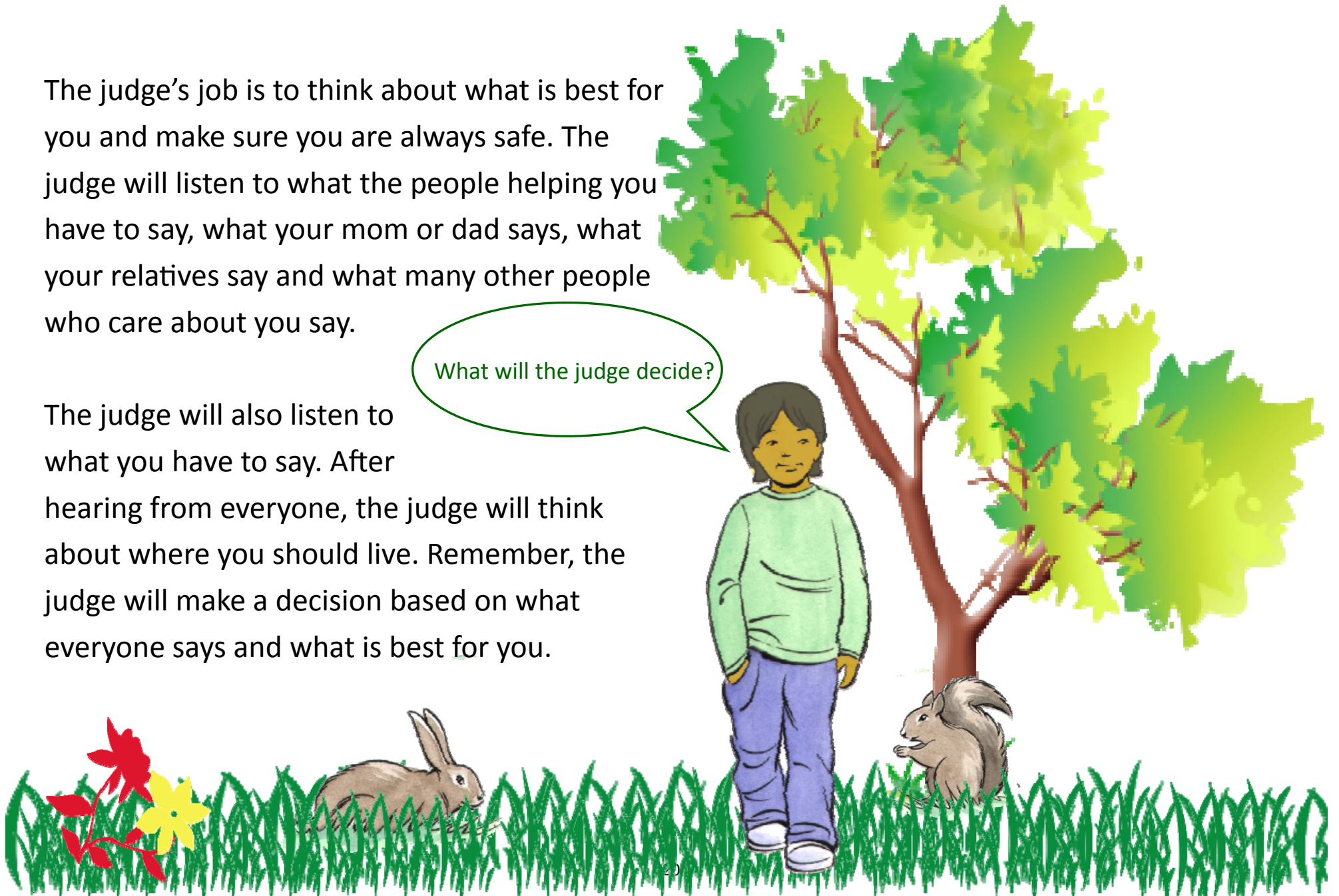


How does the judge decide if I should go home?

The judge's job is to think about what is best for you and make sure you are always safe. The judge will listen to what the people helping you have to say, what your mom or dad says, what your relatives say and what many other people who care about you say.

What will the judge decide?

The judge will also listen to what you have to say. After hearing from everyone, the judge will think about where you should live. Remember, the judge will make a decision based on what everyone says and what is best for you.



While the grown-ups are working on all of this, your job is to try to be a kid, to play, learn, grow and be as happy as you can be.



The Office of Children & Families in the Courts is pleased to have created this publication, which was made possible through federal funding from the Dependency Court Improvement Program.





For additional copies of this Handbook please contact:

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Fax: (717) 231-3304
www.ocfpcacourts.us



**Pennsylvania Teen
Visitation Handbook**

Who can you contact?

Caseworker

• Name: _____
• Phone Number: _____

Attorney or GAL

• Name: _____
• Phone Number: _____

Casework Supervisor

• Name: _____
• Phone Number: _____

Agency Administrator

• Name: _____
• Phone Number: _____

• Name: _____
• Phone Number: _____

• Name: _____
• Phone Number: _____

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The Purpose and Benefit of this Visitation Handbook

The purpose of this booklet is to provide you, an adolescent in care, information and guidance regarding visits with your family. In this booklet, you will find information on:



- Why Child Welfare is involved with your family;
- Why visits are so important while you are in placement;
- What your rights are surrounding visits;
- Answers to some questions you may have about visits.

In the back of this booklet are the names and phone numbers of important people working with you if you have any questions about your visits.

Why is Child Welfare involved with my family?

The job of a child welfare agency is to protect children from abuse and neglect, to keep families together when possible and to make sure every child has a safe place to live. Being safe means having food, safe housing, clothing, education, medical and emotional needs met through safe parenting to help you grow.

The child welfare agency can go by different names in different counties but the names you will hear most of the time will be Children and Youth Services (CYS) and Children Youth and Families (OCF). Regardless of the name, the role of the agency is the same in all counties.

Most of the time when the agency receives a report, you can stay in your home with your parents and you all will receive services to address safety concerns. Other times you may have to live somewhere else while your parents address the safety concerns.

What types of things might I be feeling before, during or after my visits?

It is normal to have questions or have strong feelings before, during and after your visits, such as sadness, anger, fear, anxiety or helplessness when you are not with your family. You may also experience excitement and happiness. Whatever emotions you are feeling are ok.

Everyone experiences different emotions and at different times. Sometimes you might have social events going on at the same time as a scheduled visit. You may prefer to go to your social event. Wanting to spend time with friends and do personal things is very normal. This does not mean that you do not love or want to see your family.

You should feel comfortable talking to your caseworker or caretaker about the events going on in your life so that your caseworker can try to adjust your visitation schedule. If you have questions or need help managing your emotions before, during or after visits, please reach out for help. Individuals who can help you are listed on the next page.

Being away from your family can be hard. Frequent, meaningful visitation that takes place in the most family-like setting that allows you and your family to interact most naturally will help you feel connected and help your family stay involved in your life, until you are able to return home.



Will I be able to see my extended family?



It is important for you to let your caseworker know who in your extended family and community are important to you. Your caseworker is required to check out the people you identified and include them in your case planning, which includes your visitation plan.

Please talk to your attorney if this is not happening.

What do I do if I have concerns about visits?

There are several people you can talk to about your visits. You can start with the person you are living with such as a family member or foster parent. You can also talk to your caseworker, their supervisor, your attorney, or the guardian ad litem who has been assigned to represent you.

If you have a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) you can also talk to them. You can also talk to the judge. It is very important to the Judge that your voice is heard. The Judge will want to hear about how your visits are going at your hearing.

You may be placed with a relative, friend of the family, a foster home, or a group home facility. Always be sure to talk to your caseworker about family and friends who you would feel safe living with until you can go home.

Living temporarily with people you already know may help you and your family feel more comfortable.

When you have to live outside of your home, visitation must be set up for you and your parents. This will keep your relationship strong and help you deal with being away from your family. A meeting should take place to develop a visitation plan for you and your family. You and your family should ask that everyone you love and care about be included in developing this plan. Visitation is a very big part of you returning home so you should talk to your caseworker and attorney about seeing your family as often as possible.

Why are visits important?

Visitation with your family helps you stay connected. Your visits are important because you need to see your family no matter what has happened.

Visitation is a right, not a privilege, and should never be withheld as a punishment for your behaviors or as a result of your parents actions.

Visits should never be withheld because you do not reach a certain "level" or need an "adjustment period." Visits will help you get back home to your family.

Visits that are meaningful and happen as frequently as possible are important to your relationship with your parents and assist in getting you home as quickly as possible.



What are my Rights?



Understand there are times when this might not occur because of safety. The Judge will have the final say, but every effort should be made to keep you in contact with your sibling(s).

If it is not safe for you to see them in person, discuss different options with the child welfare agency and caretakers such as phone, video chat, going to an event together, or writing each other letters to help maintain the bond between you and your siblings.



If your siblings are still living in your home, your parents may bring them to their scheduled visit. If your siblings are placed in another foster home or placement location, arrangements will need to be made for you to see them. Make sure to talk to your caseworker and attorney about your desire to see your siblings.

Can visits be taken away from or my parent?

The only time visits can be taken away or limited is through a Judge's court order. If this occurs, it is most likely due to a concern for your safety. It is unlawful for visits to be taken away as punishment. Remember that visits are a right, not a privilege.

If you are in a group home setting, there may be times when your visits occur at the facility versus going home on what is often called a "home pass". As long as you are safe, these visits should gradually increase to more frequent and more family like locations.

What happens if my parents miss a visit?

Parents may miss a visit for a number of reasons including, transportation problems, unable to leave work or an illness. What is important for you to know is that your parents are not missing a visit because they do not want to see you. Parents are often very upset that they could not make their visit and seek to have a “make-up” visit scheduled so that they can see you. When a visit is missed, the agency will often do their best to schedule another visit so that you can see your parents.



Can I talk to my parents on the phone?

You will have the opportunity to talk with your parent on the phone. In most instances there may be rules surrounding the time and how long phone contact is to occur.

Will I be able to see my brothers and sisters?



Special laws were written, such as Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, that requires the county child welfare agency to arrange times and places for you and your siblings to see each other.

So I have a question about....



How soon after I am placed outside of the home can I visit with my parents?

The County Agency is to arrange for a visit between you and your parents as soon as possible, but no later than 72 hours after you are removed. The county agency is to arrange for visits to take place as soon as you are removed from your parents. They should try to schedule a visit within 3 days, when possible. You should also have a visitation plan developed right away with your family, which states when you will visit, where you will visit, how often you will visit, if a professional will be in your visit with you. Your visitation plan will also say who else will be part of your visits. Your visitation plan should become part of your Child Permanency Plan. The goal when developing your visitation plan is for everyone to work together so that you and your family can maintain and build a strong bond. A Family Group Decision Making conference is a great place for your family to develop your visitation plan. Ask your caseworker or attorney about this as an option for you and your family. You can also contact your attorney or speak to the Judge if you have any questions or concerns about your visitation plan.

How often and where can I visit my parents?

You should see your parents as frequently as possible and as approved by the court. Your visits should take place in the most family like setting to allow natural interaction between you and your parents or guardians. This location could include your own home, a family member's home, a community location, a visitation house or the agency. Visitation in the agency should be rarely used as a location.

Besides my regular visits, are there other times when I can see my parents?

There are other times when you can visit with your parents. When safe and appropriate, your parents can attend medical, educational, and social events. These should not be counted as visits, but a way for your parents to continue to meet your needs and stay connected to what is happening in your life. In order for your parents to be aware of these events, it will be important for everyone, including you, to communicate when these other events occur. If there are any other special events you would like your parents to attend, please be sure to talk to your caseworker or attorney.

Finally, your voice is necessary and important to ensure you have the most meaningful visitation with your family. If you do not feel satisfied with your visits, please talk to your caseworker or attorney.

What if my parents do not have transportation to get to our visit?

Transportation arrangements for your parents can be made when developing the visitation plan. This should be discussed with your parents at the time of the visitation planning. While the agency may be able to help your parents with transportation, family and friends should also be considered.

This is something that is your parents responsibility to discuss with your caseworker or their attorney.



Pennsylvania Resource Parent Handbook



For additional copies of this Resource Parent Handbook please contact:

Office of Children & Families in the Courts
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts
Pennsylvania Judicial Center
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Harrisburg, PA 17106-1260
Phone: (717) 231-3300
Fax: (717) 231-3304
www.ocfcpcourts.us

**VISITATION IS A RIGHT,
NOT A PRIVILEGE**

- Fear that they cannot respond to the question, “When am I coming home?”
- They are uncomfortable with the visitation location and/or oversight
- Feelings of being judged and/or rejected

Often the agency will try to reschedule a missed visit for another time. If the parent consistently misses or “no-shows” their visit, with no explanation, the agency may not reschedule the visit. It is important to remember that frequent, meaningful visits are not just for the parent, but for the well-being of the child. Children who visit regularly and in a meaningful way tend to experience less separation trauma and increase positive behaviors while in placement outside of the home.

In the event that you need to cancel a scheduled visit due to an illness or emergency, please contact the child welfare agency as early as possible to allow time for a rescheduled visit that would not interfere with the parent and child’s regular interaction.

Who can I talk to if I have a concern about visitation?

If you have a concern regarding the visitation that is occurring between the child you are caring for and their family, you need to speak to your caseworker. If your concern has to do with safety, please contact someone immediately.

If your concern is not safety related, you should still discuss it with the caseworker or your direct contact, if you are a resource parent through a provider. Because of the non-emergency/safety nature of your concern, there is likely to be time to thoughtfully and thoroughly consider it. Think about how your concern ties directly to the care and well-being of the child. Also consider solutions you might be able to offer which would resolve your concern while supporting the child’s need to be connected with their parent.

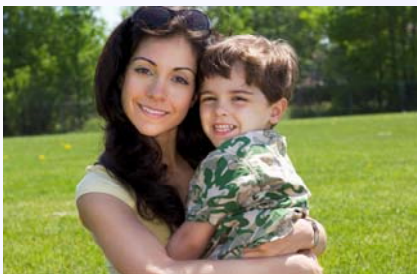
While permanency may take time to develop, connections with family will always have importance for any child’s long term emotional well-being. Visitation with a parent remains important to maintain a connection with that parent whether reunification emerges as the final outcome or not. Resource parents who can prioritize maintaining connections for the child, through visitation, will help to stabilize the child’s emotional well-being so that they can adjust to any permanent outcome, whatever shape that takes. High quality, frequent and meaningful visitation can lead to reunification with a parent, however, high quality, frequent and nonjudgmental visitation can also help a parent to accept their obstacles and agree to permanency in many other ways than reunification.

You are a valued partner in the success of the child’s visitation. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with this booklet and discuss any questions that you may have with the appropriate contact.

Finally, thank you for opening your home and heart to a child!

What happens if a parent misses a visit?

As previously mentioned, visitation creates various emotions for both the child and parent. One of the most disappointing situations for a child is a parent cancelling or “no-showing” a visit. Reassure the child that there are lots of reasons missed visits happen and that none of them have to do with the parent not wanting to see the child.



If a missed visit happens, first comfort the child and be careful not to blame or make negative comments about the parent. When the child hears negative comments about the parent, they can feel ashamed, guilty, and hopeless and may establish an emotional distance between you and their parent. They may feel they cannot trust you to express their true feelings.

A child's love for their parents is innate and most often not logically calculated by the parent's ability or inability to parent. Therefore, your forgiveness of a parent's mistakes can positively impact the child. If this becomes difficult to do, you should talk with your caseworker and ask for additional support on this issue.

It is important to be aware that just as the child may experience grief and loss due to their placement, the parent is experiencing the same. Each visit begins with a reunion and ends with another separation. Some reasons parents may miss visits include:

- It is too painful to say “good-bye” to their children after each visit
- They want to protect their child from the pain of having to say “good -bye” after each visit
- They do not have consistent transportation
- Struggles with guilt over the circumstances of placement
- An inconsistent work schedule
- Inadequate feelings that the resource family is doing a better job with their child
- Depression, anxiety or other mental health needs that interfere with their functioning

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Why are you giving me this booklet?

This *handbook* was developed to help you understand the process of children visiting with their family members while in out-of-home care. When a child is placed, frequent visitation must be arranged to keep the parent and child relationship strong or to build a strong relationship if one doesn't exist.



Let us thank you for opening your heart and home to the children in your care. Whether you are a relative or a non-relative caregiver, you are an important part of the team and your input is valued!

This handbook contains information as to why visitation is important to children, family members and you. Information provided within includes:

- How to make frequent visitation meaningful and purposeful
- Your role in visitation as a team member
- How to manage a child's reaction to visits
- How to build a relationship with the child's parents and other family members.
- The development of a visitation plan
- New practices being implemented to assist caretakers

What is the Value and Purpose of visitation?

In Pennsylvania visitation is a right, not a privilege, and should never be used as a punishment.

Some activities to facilitate this interaction outside of regularly scheduled visitation include:

- Attending doctor appointments together
- Attending school meetings and extracurricular activities together
- Inviting parents to birthday parties and holiday celebrations
- Phone calls and approved use of computer communication, such as Skype Face Time
- Sending letters and pictures to the parents
- Sharing information about the child's favorite foods, things that calm the child when upset, what scares the child, favorite activities of the child, etc.
- Offering to have visits occur at your home, when safe and approved by the court



One practice that is evolving when trying to facilitate communication between resource families and biological families is holding "Ice Breaker" meetings. The meeting is held within a few days of the child entering placement and is attended by the resource family, the parent, the caseworker and a facilitator.

Why the child entered placement is not discussed, instead, the discussion focuses on the likes/dislikes of the child, the child's routine in both homes, the structure of the homes, sleeping habits, pets and issues of religion.

A Family Group Decision Making Conference is a great way for families conduct "Ice Breaker" meetings and also allows other family members to be of support. Ask your caseworker about the possibility of having an "Ice Breaker" or Family Group Decision Making Conference.

- Allow the child to take one of their favorite toys or stuffed animals for comfort
- Allow the child to take school work they can show to their parent

After the visit, talk to the child about how they are feeling. It is very possible that the child will be sad or angry about at having to say good-bye, so reassure them that what they are feeling is normal and encourage them to look forward to the next visit, including telling them when they will next talk and visit with their parent.

If they have questions about the visit, be as honest as you can, while keeping in mind the developmental age of the child. You should contact your provider or caseworker if you need additional help or support. At the end of this handbook, there is a place for you to record important contact information.



How will I be involved in the actual visit?

Frequent, structured visitation is a key component of concurrent planning, which was first introduced as part of the Adoptions and Safe Families Act of 1997 and further

enforced in child welfare agencies through the recent implementation of the Concurrent Planning Bulletin, effective July 2014.

In response to concurrent planning requirements, agencies will be increasing the frequency and duration of visitation for children and families. Resource families, including kinship caretakers, will be an extremely important component as visitation becomes more frequent.

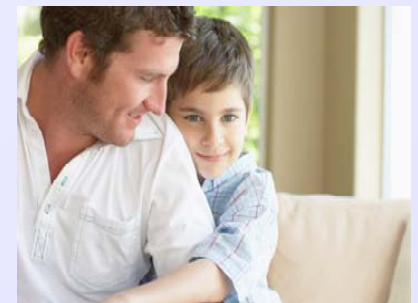
Child Welfare Agencies will be expecting resource families to have expanded contact with the child's biological family, when safety does not interfere. Communication and information sharing between resource parents and biological parents will be critical to ensuring the child's transition and adjustment to placement.

Children enter placement because of concerns with their family, serious enough, that the child's safety cannot be maintained while the child stays in their own home. Out-of-home placement is a devastating event for the child and the entire family. The trauma of separation can affect a child's learning, emotional, and behavioral well-being for a long time.

Placement is also traumatic for parents and can affect their ability to function normally. So, it is critical that children be returned to their family as soon as safely possible. Visitation must be a diligent focus from the day a child is removed until permanency is achieved. Visitation is primarily conducted to enhance a child's well-being and maintain connections with family.

The purpose of visitation between parents and their children is as follows:

- To preserve or develop the parent/child bond
- To improve a healthy parent/child relationship
- To help a child deal with the trauma of being apart from their family
- To further evaluate family strengths and identify ways to help reduce concerns within the family
- To help the parent learn, improve, develop, and practice parenting skills
- To help parents understand what activities their child enjoys
- Quality, meaningful visitation that happens often is important to maintaining the parent-child bond and getting a child home quickly and safely.



What should I expect during the Visitation Planning process?

Parents have a right to visit with their child while they are in out of home care. This right can only be taken away by a judge. The first visit, after a child is removed, should be scheduled as soon as possible, but not later than 3 days.



Some child welfare agencies arrange visitation themselves, others have a social services provider that handles their visitation arrangements. If your caseworker does not explain how visitation is handled in your county, you need to ask them for clarification. No matter who handles the details of the visitation, a visitation plan must be created and included in the Child Permanency Plan for the Court's approval.

The visitation plan should be developed by the family with, input from extended family and kin and support from the professional team members, including you. While child welfare agencies may practice more than one type of family meeting, a Family Group Decision Making conference is encouraged, as the best process for a family to develop their visitation plan. The visitation plan should consider:

- The child's age
- Safety and oversight of visitation
- Frequency and duration of visits
- Developmental needs of the child
- Location of visitation
- Transportation needs
- Participants during the visits
- Any supportive services needed before, during or after the visitation

Some emotions or behaviors you may see **following** a visit include:

- Sleep disturbance
- Crying and sadness
- Depression
- Anger
- Disappointment
- Withdrawal
- Anxiety
- Ignoring you and your family
- Significant acting-out (i.e. tantrums)



All of the above emotions and behaviors are normal. Communication between you and the parent can help a child feel more comfortable about their visits and emotions.

You can help to create a positive visitation experience for the child by doing some pre-visit activities, such as:

- Make sure the child knows when the visits will happen, where they will be held and which family members will attend
- Make all possible efforts to adjust your schedule so you can take the child to the visit
- Talk to the child about what they would like to do at the visit, games they may want to play, things they may want to talk about and communicate these things with the parent, caseworker or visitation provider
- Establish visitation rituals with the child, prior to the visit, such as: developing a "good-bye word," playing a specific word game, coloring the parent a picture, role-play who will be at the visit

What are the normal expectations, emotions and feelings that occur before, during and after family visits?

Children and parents can experience various emotions and behaviors before, during or after a visit occurs. Frequent and meaningful visitation reduces the trauma of separation.

Some of the emotions or behaviors you may see **before** the visit are:

- Patterns of sleep disturbances
- Anxiety
- Complaints of not feeling well
- Nervousness
- Excitement
- Anger

Some emotions or behaviors you may see **during** a visit include (in the event that the visit occurs in your home or your presence):

- A familiarity preference towards you, especially in infants
- Confusion about “how to act”
- Protectiveness over the parent
- Fears towards loyalty of parents and you
- Excitement of you and the parents being together



Development of the visitation plan is extremely important and as a resource parent, you need to participate as a team member. Team members should try to strengthen and build families. Team members include extended family and kin, the county caseworker, service provider, health care providers, educational partners, Guardians ad litem, Parent Attorneys, caretakers and anyone else that the family feels would provide a support to their visitation needs. Team members demonstrate a commitment to a common goal, as developed by the family.

Once the plan is developed it will remain in place until circumstances necessitate changes. Plans could be altered due to changes in work schedules, treatment interventions, unsupervised contact and increased reunification efforts. Changes could also be necessary due to deteriorating circumstances with the parent. If something changes with regard to your circumstances, notify your caseworker so that a meeting can be convened. Visitation progress is always assessed at court reviews. Reports and testimony regarding visitation informs the court of the family's progress and recommendations for continued visitation.

How do children benefit from frequent and meaningful visitation?

Research has demonstrated that frequent and meaningful visitation positively impacts a child's well-being by:

- Establishing or supporting a parent/child bond
- Assisting with healthy attachment and easing the impact of separation
- Showing the child that their parents care about them
- Showing the child that their siblings are okay



- Calming the fears of children
- Allowing children the opportunity to express anger, fear, and frustration
- Promoting and strengthening positive connections with family
- Supporting child's psychological development
- Giving the child hope of reunification or an understanding of why reunification is not possible
- Helping the child adjusting to placement and decreased days in care
- Giving the child hope and enhancing their emotional well-being
- Lessening likely to be referred to psychiatric services and to be prescribed psychotropic medication
- Lessening likely to commit delinquent acts or behave in an antisocial manner
- Are more likely to develop positive peer relationships and be liked by teachers



Frequent visitation assists parents in the following ways:

- Honors an existing bond and builds upon parent- child attachment
- Helps the parents feel more comfortable about the care of their child
- Decreases separation trauma experience by parents when their child is removed

- Involves parents in their child's everyday life
- Enhances parents motivation to change
- Keep parents up to date with the child's development
- Helps parents acquire new skills and gives them an opportunity in which to practice parenting skills



Most importantly, frequent visitation between a child and parent is the strongest predictor of successful reunification. In addition to face-to-face visitation, children should have other types of contact with their parents. This might include a parent attending their child's medical, educational or social events. In addition, this may include phone or approved computer contact, such as Skype or Face Time. Children benefit in situations where the resource parent and the biological family have regular contact outside of scheduled visitation.

Children need to stay connected to the people in their lives that they love and who love them. It is important that a child be able to safely visit with extended family and kin. It is important to remember that when children are removed from their home, they are removed from their culture, routine and traditions. For example, if a child has always celebrated their birthday at a grandparent's house, it will be very difficult for that child to not continue that tradition. A child can also stay connected to their family by phone calls, letters and attendance at various events.

In Pennsylvania it is law that children and their siblings have regular visitation. A sibling who remains in the home, may attend visitations with the parent. If a child is placed in a different resource home or with family, it will be important for you to communicate with the other caregiver to ensure that frequent and meaningful visitation occurs between the siblings.