



Supervised Visitation Monitor Training

Screening, Monitoring, and Termination of Visitation- The Child Interview and Orientation

Hi. Welcome to part twenty-six of the Supervised Visitation Monitor Training, brought to you by Family & Children’s Counseling Services, Inc.

In this segment, we will explore the Child Interview and Orientation.

If the child is old enough to understand, you must have an Interview and Orientation with the them as well. The Child’s Interview and Orientation can be a few days or a week before the first visit, or it can be immediately before the first visit. Just give yourself enough time to do the full Interview and Orientation for each child and also allow the Custodial Parent enough time to leave the premises with that 15-minute buffer time.

I’ll set the schedule so I have about 15 or 20 minutes per child. The Custodial Parent is required to stay nearby so I can speak with each child individually. When there are sibling sets, we want to talk to each child separately in case one sibling tends to feed off the other or say what the other wants to hear. This is a very common dynamic with siblings.

When speaking with the children, we want to be age appropriate and stay away from the ugly details of their parents’ relationship, Court proceedings, Protective Orders and so forth. Our conversation with them will usually include...

- An introduction
- A few question
- Listening ears
- An explanation
- Individual time



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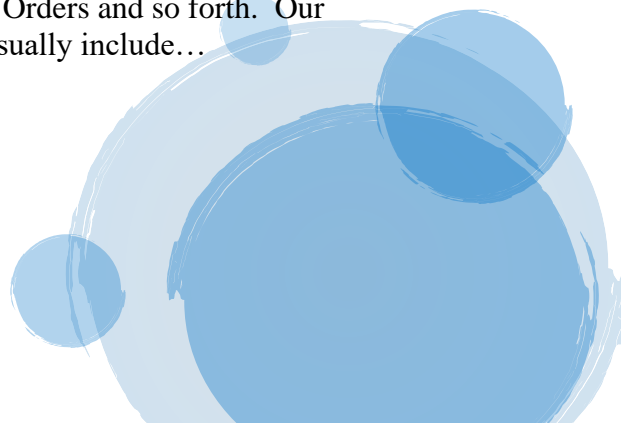
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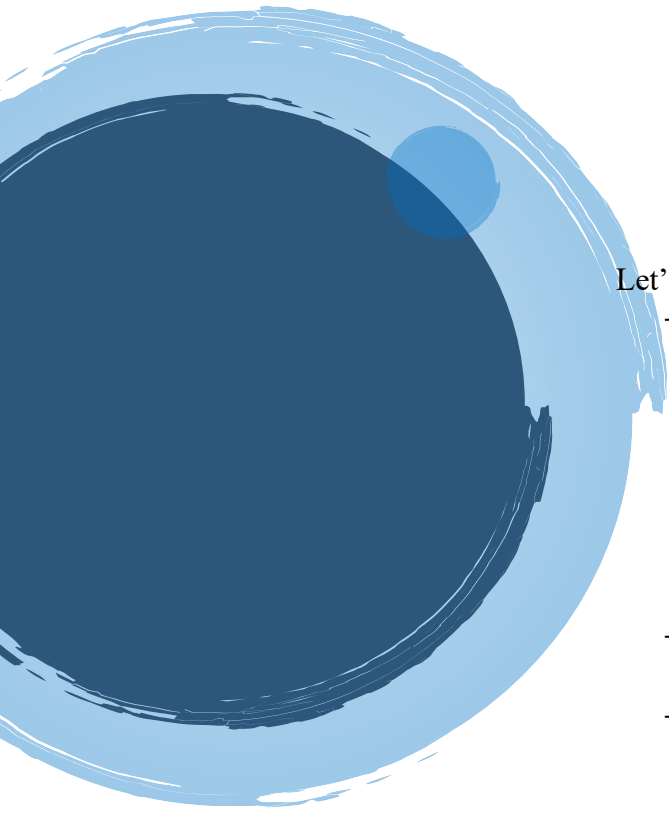


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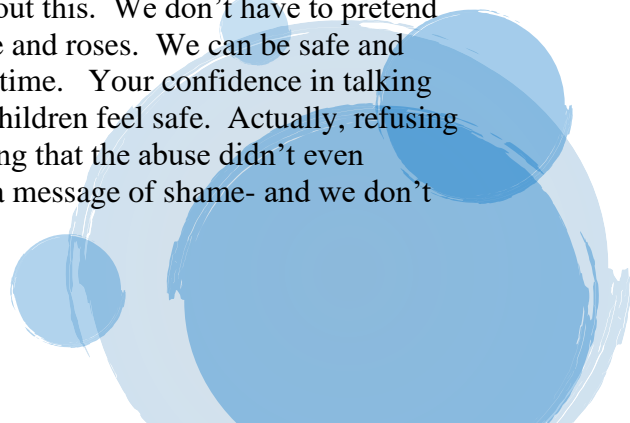


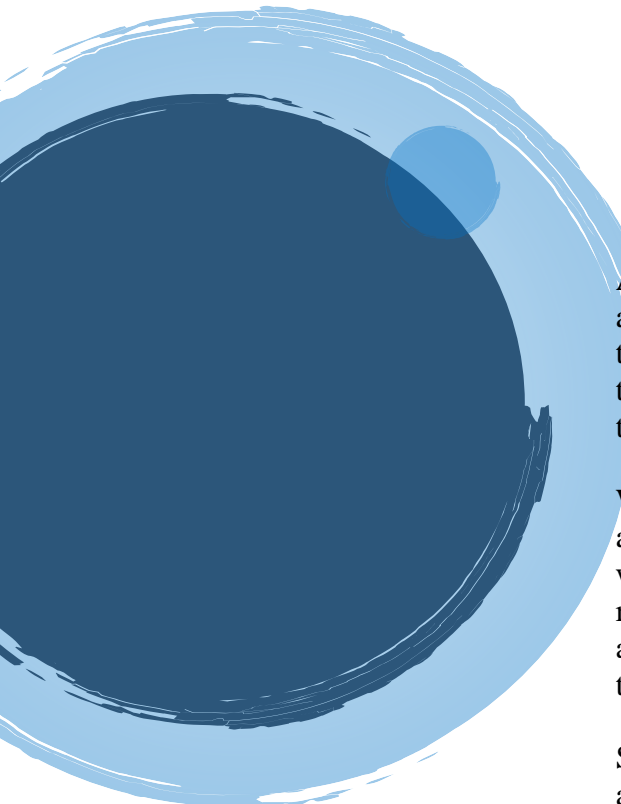


Let's explore what this might look like:

- Introduction- We first introduce our selves (name only) and ask them for their name. We are friendly and approachable. We might kneel to the child's level and/or shake hands with him/her/them. We might show them around the office and let them explore the toys. If we are in the community, we might have a fun ice breaker game to play. We want to set the tone as comfortable and casual.
- Question – We will then ask them if they know why they are here or why they are meeting us.
- Listening ears- We listen for the child or children's answer/s. We are listening, not only for what the child knows, but how they feel about it. We'll be watching for body language and listening to tone of voice. We may notice a child is angry or nervous, for example. This information will help us explain what our role will be.
- Explanation- We then tell the child generically what our job is and what the rules are regarding our time together. This will include things like staying together, staying where I can see and hear you, following instructions and cleaning up after yourselves.
- Individual time – At this point, we will meet with each child individually. We will ask the other children and the Custodial Parent to wait in the lobby (or at a space out of earshot if we are in the community). We ask the Child if he or she has any questions or anything else they want to tell us. This is when we ask if the Child wants a secret code word to use if they start to feel uncomfortable.

In some cases, it will be necessary to tell the children that you will be listening for specific things. Some children have been exposed to emotional manipulation, threats and other forms of abuse, and they are very nervous about visiting with their Parent. Talk with them about this. We don't have to pretend that everything is sunshine and roses. We can be safe and matter-of-fact at the same time. Your confidence in talking about these things helps Children feel safe. Actually, refusing to talk about it or pretending that the abuse didn't even happen can actually send a message of shame- and we don't want to do that.





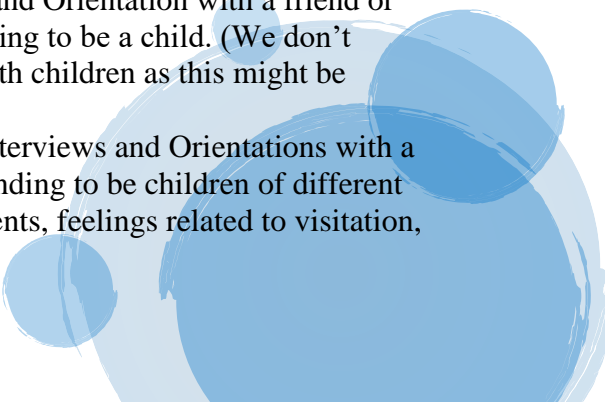
After we have spoken with each child individually, we bring the all of the Children and the Custodial Parent back together and ask them if they are ready. This should be about 15 minutes prior to the scheduled visit time if we are doing this on the same day as the first visit.

We then tell the Children that Custodial Parent is going to leave, and we are going to hang out and play for a few minutes while we wait for the Visiting Parent to arrive. Of course, we aren't referring to parents by the title of "Custodial" or "Visiting," we are calling them Dad and Mom or Daddy and Momma. We'll use the titles the children use.

So, at this point, Custodial Parent will leave, and you will be left alone with the Children before their first visit with their other parent. You do not need to feel awkward, or to absorb their feelings – or what you think they are feeling- for them. Have games and toys in your office or bring something with you if you are meeting in the community. Bring easy-to-carry games like cards or story dice. Once the Visiting Parent arrives, you will stop interacting with the kids and allow the focus to be on the Parent-Child relationship. You will then be observing, listening and documenting.

Throughout the visit, watch for signs of distress in the Children. If they become emotional or agitated and will not calm down or receive comfort, the visit needs to end. Both Parents should know this from our Orientation. If the visit is terminated for this or any other reason, the Visiting Parent should leave the premises and Custodial Parent should be notified. You will then wait with the Children until the Custodial Parent arrives. If only one Child is distressed, that Child may be returned to the Custodial Parent and the other child or children may continue the visit, as scheduled.

Before moving on to the next segment, do the following:

- 1) Conduct a mock Interview and Orientation with a friend or family member who is pretending to be a child. (We don't recommend doing role play with children as this might be upsetting for them.)
 - 2) Conduct additional mock Interviews and Orientations with a friend or family member pretending to be children of different ages, with different temperaments, feelings related to visitation,
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and energy levels.

Thank you for watching. I'll see you again at the next video, The Visit.

Family & Children's Counseling Services, Inc. is a California LMFT non-profit Corporation directed by Melinda Haynes, MA, LMFT 102308.

You can find FCCS online at www.HealPlayLove.org.

