



Supervised Visitation Monitor Training

Screening, Monitoring, and Termination of Visitation- The Visit

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

In this segment, we will explore the Visit. This will be the bulk of our interactions... actually doing visits. It’s best if we, as Monitors, can help the visits go smoothly. Some of that is done in laying the foundation with the Interview and Orientation, and with helping Parents avoid each other through staggering arrival and departure times.

But there is more. We can help the visit go smoothly by following Guidelines, showing respect and remaining, well... not weird. What I mean about ‘not weird,’ is we are not going to sit there in a corner with a scowl on our face, scribbling notes on a clipboard about all the things we see that are wrong. We are going to be neutral and observant, but in a pleasant way.

After the Custodial Parent has dropped the child off with you, you have about 10 minutes to supervise the children before their Visiting Parent arrives. During this time, you can play a game, ask them about how their day is going, or if they are excited to see their parent. Important information can be gathered during this time, but we never go fishing for information. We don’t want to lead the Child one way or the other. We are neutral. In being neutral, we may find out that the child does not want to see their parent or is bouncing off the walls with excitement. Document that.

We just don’t want to sit in awkward silence or stare at our phone. A child will feel ignored and that’s hurtful. They are already in a



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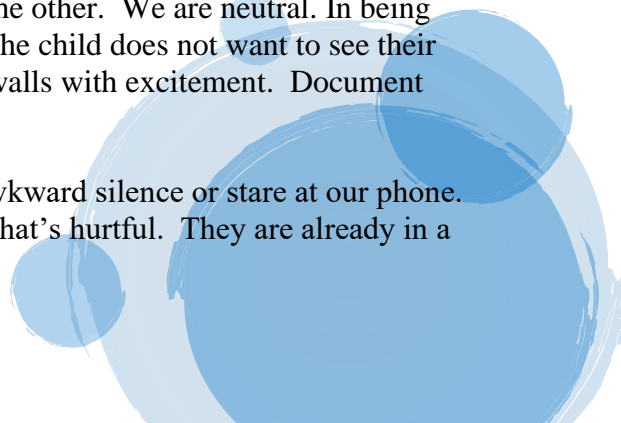
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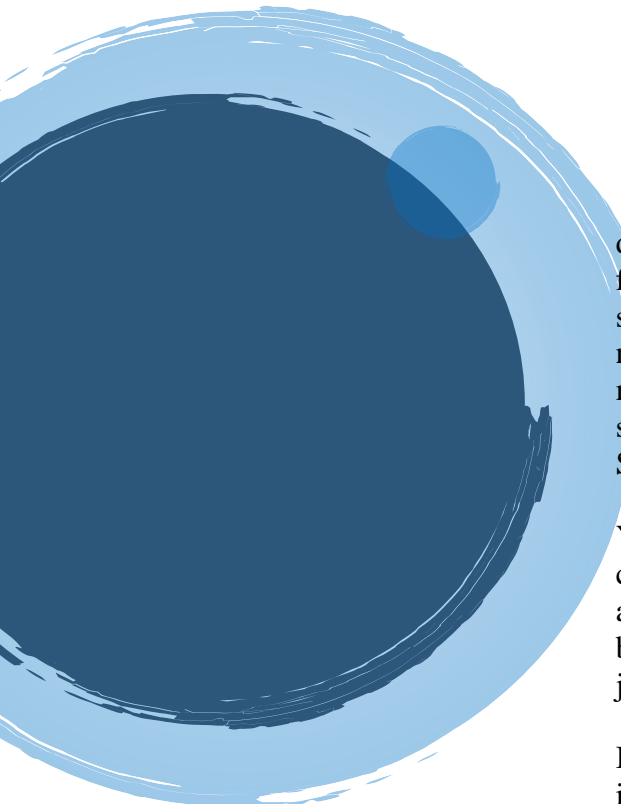


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difficult situation as it is. Interact with the child, help him or her feel at ease. Think about how you would feel if you were in this situation. You're a kid and you kind of know what's going, but no one will really talk about it. You just know that one parent has moved out of the house and now this stranger is going to be sitting here watching you and your parent visit. It's confusing. So, be mindful of that and try to have a little fun.

You will document the location of the visit, the transition of the children to the Monitor, what happened during the waiting time, and what time the Custodial Parent arrived. From there, you will be busy observing, listening, watching for safety, making judgement calls and documenting everything.

If the Visiting Parent arrives and appears to be under the influence of a substance or otherwise overly emotional or agitated, we cancel the visit immediately. Seeing their Parent in a compromised state is not emotionally safe for the children. And, it's not safe for anyone.

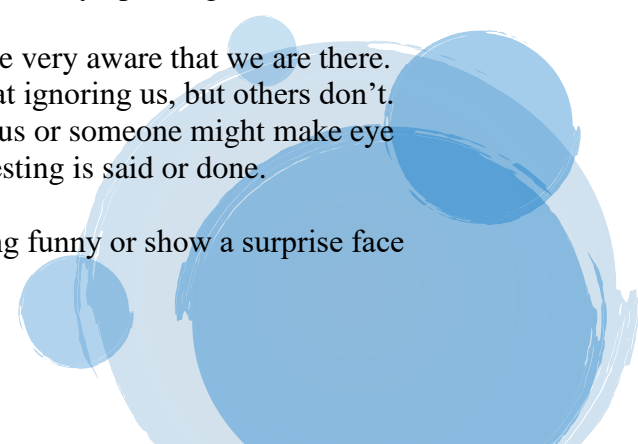
You will remember that we discussed substance use with the Parent during our Orientation meeting. They know they should not arrive to a visit under the influence of any substance- not even prescribed medications if those medications have an impact on their level of functioning.

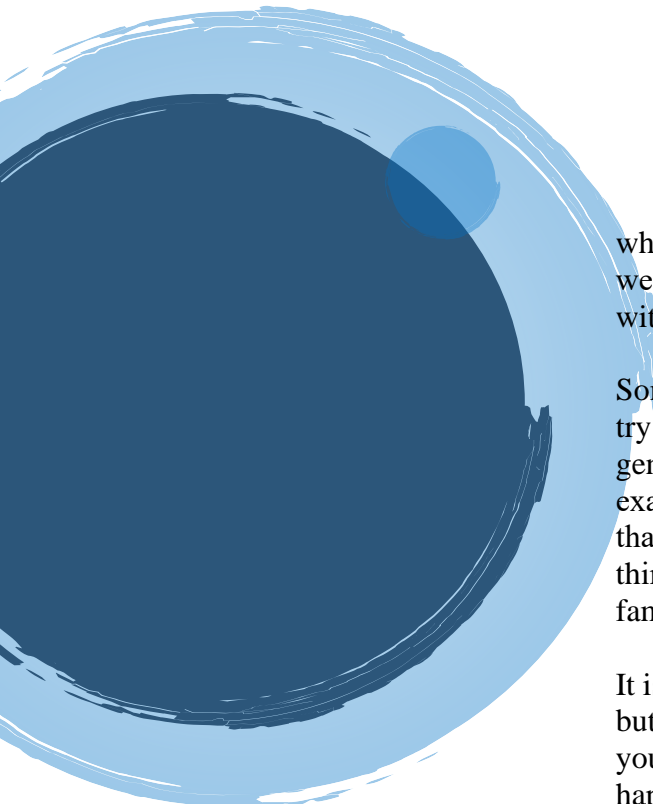
In the best cases, the Parent arrives sober and alert, and is ready to interact with the child or children. You will document their arrival time and if they brought anything. Some parents will bring a meal or a snack, and a game or a toy.

If it is inappropriate, you must speak up and have the Parent place the inappropriate items in a bag or otherwise out of site. Examples of inappropriate items would be a T-shirt that has a marijuana leaf on it, a weapon, or pictures of the family when they were together... anything that is in general inappropriate for children or that could be emotionally upsetting for the children.

The families we work with are very aware that we are there. Some of them do a good job at ignoring us, but others don't. Some families will chat with us or someone might make eye contact after something interesting is said or done.

It's okay to laugh at something funny or show a surprise face





when a child does something silly. A little interaction is fine, but we don't want the Parent or Child to spend their visit time talking with us. The visit is about them and their relationship.

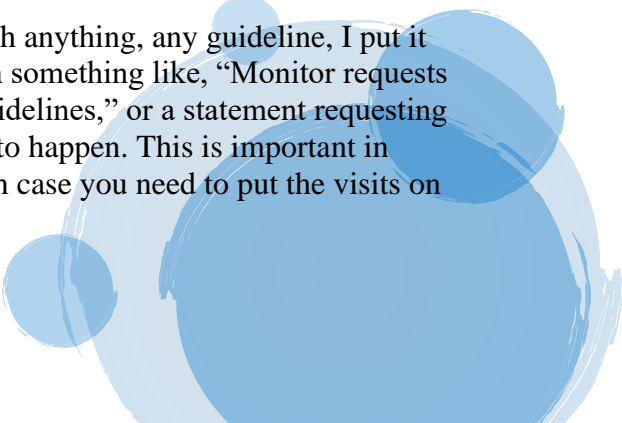
Some children, especially the middle school and older ones, will try to put the focus on the Monitor. When that happens, you gently direct their attention back to the Visiting Parent. For example, you could say, "Hmmm, you can ask your Dad about that." Or, speak directly to the parent, such as, "What do you think about that, Mom?" This helps redirect the focus onto the family and off of you.

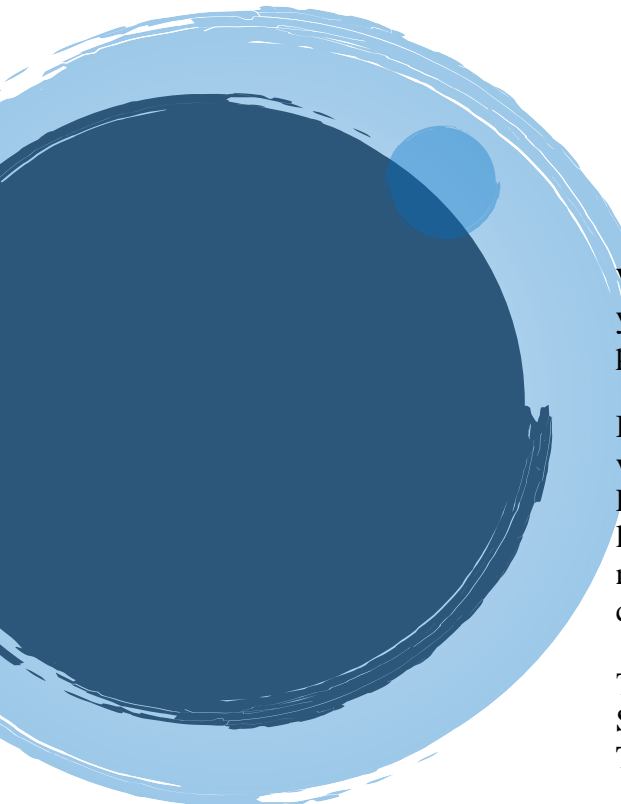
It is tempting to get on social media or text a friend during visits, but resist it! It is easy for something to catch your eye and draw your attention away. We have to be alert and aware of what is happening at all times. We are also watching for nuances, gestures, facial expression and eye contact. You don't want to be distracted right when something important happens.

When the visit is almost over, give a warning. I usually do this at 5-10 minutes before, depending on the age of the Child and the amount of clean up they might have to. If they are in the middle of a project or a game, for example, I might give an earlier warning so they can plan for a place to wrap up. Again, like much of this work, it's a judgement call.

Sometimes, it's useful to call time at two minutes, as well. I'll typically say something like, "Oh, it's about time. We have two minutes to say good-bye." Most of the time, the Parent and children will say their good-byes on time. (Remember touching isn't allowed in sexual abuse cases.) We have told the Parent during the Orientation how important a quick good-bye is, and in my experience, they follow this guideline. Some, however, struggle. They get emotional or try to drag it out. If this happens, I call final time. I'll usually say, "Ok, it's 1:30; time's up" in a polite but firm voice. If they linger, I directly say to Parent, "It's time to go." Then, of course we document this.

If there has been a struggle with anything, any guideline, I put it in the note and I'll often add in something like, "Monitor requests that Visiting Parent review Guidelines," or a statement requesting the specific change that needs to happen. This is important in documenting noncompliance in case you need to put the visits on Hold or Terminate.





We discussed documentation in our Recordkeeping segment. If you need a refresher on documenting a visit, please return to that portion of the training for review.

Before moving on to the next segment, conduct at least one mock visit with friends or family (adults) pretending to be the Visiting Parent and the Child or Children. Ask your helper to violate at least one item from the Guidelines. Your job is to notice the noncompliance, correct it, document it, and terminate the visit if it continues.

Thank you for watching. I'll see you again at the next video, Screening, Monitoring, and Termination of Visitation - Terminating a Visit.

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

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You can find Melinda's therapy channel, Can We Talk?, at <https://www.youtube.com/canwetalk>

