



Supervised Visitation Monitor Training

The Role of a Supervised Visitation Monitor- Scope of Service & Definition

Hi. Welcome to part three of the Supervised Visitation Monitor Training, brought to you by Family & Children’s Counseling Services, Inc. FCCS is located in beautiful Northern California. You can find us online at www.HealPlayLove.org.

In this segment, we will learn about the Role and Responsibilities of the Supervised Visitation Monitor- specifically, the Definition and Scope of Service.

Let’s take a look at California Standard 5.20 and Family Code 3200.5.

If you are not planning on doing supervised visitation in California, don’t worry. These laws are extremely helpful to Providers in any state.

Scope of service

Standard 5.20 reads: “This standard defines the standards of practice, including duties and obligations, for providers of supervised visitation under Family Code sections 3200 and 3200.5. Unless specified otherwise, the standards of practice are designed to apply to all Providers of supervised visitation, whether the Provider is a friend, relative, paid independent contractor, employee, intern, or volunteer operating independently or through a supervised visitation center or agency.

The goal of these standards of practice is to assure the safety and welfare of the child, adults, and providers of supervised visitation. Once safety is assured, the best interest of the child is the paramount consideration at all stages and particularly in deciding the manner in which supervision is provided. Each court is



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encouraged to adopt local court rules necessary to implement these standards of practice.”

A key point to remember here is that these rules apply to all Providers, whether they are Professional or Nonprofessional. We’ll talk more about the differences between these two distinctions in a later segment.

We also want to notice the phrases “assure the safety and welfare” and “best interest of the child.” Our job is to ensure safety, not to act as a babysitter or a therapist or legal counsel. We ensure safety and we document everything.

Now, let’s look at the legal definition of Supervised Visitation.... Section b reads, “Family Code section 3200 defines the term “provider” as including any individual or supervised visitation center that monitors visitation. Supervised visitation is contact between a noncustodial party and one or more children in the presence of a neutral third person.”

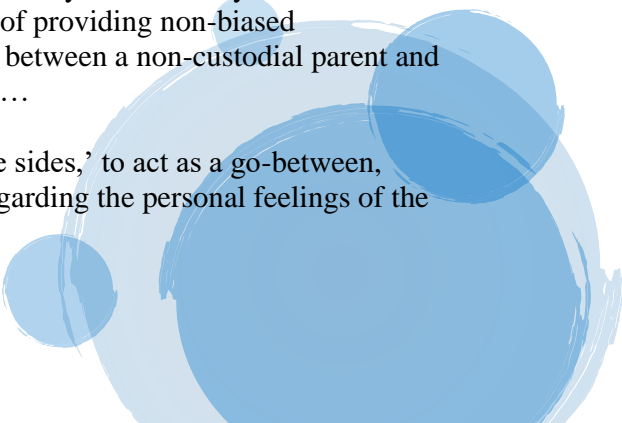
The phrase, “neutral third person” is key. When we are working as visitation monitors, we are non-biased.... neutral. We are aware, and neutral. We are safe, and neutral. We are friendly and respectful... and neutral.

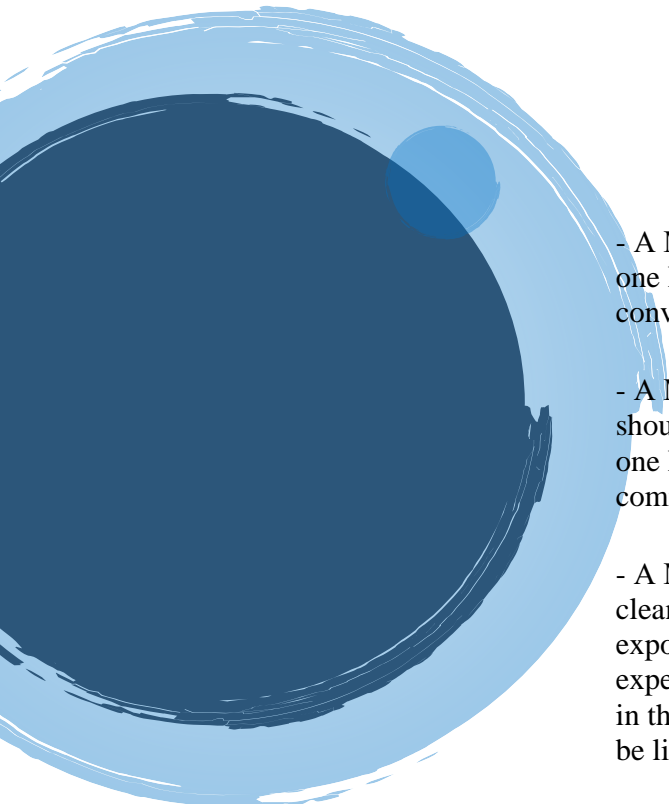
As a Provider, you may run into situations where one or both parents want you to side with them. They will tell you how horrible the other parent is and get frustrated if you don’t agree. To help clarify your role, and hopefully avoid this issue, FCCS has created a Neutrality agreement. Please find it in your Provider Manual now. Pause the video if you need time to find it.

Each parent must read and sign the Neutrality Agreement and we go over it with each Parent during their individual Orientations. It reads...

I understand and acknowledge that my Monitor may not take on additional roles outside the role of providing non-biased documentation during visitation between a non-custodial parent and his or her children. For example...

- A Monitor’s role is not to ‘take sides,’ to act as a go-between, and/or to receive information regarding the personal feelings of the other parent.



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- A Monitor's role does not include viewing text messages sent by one Parent to the other Parent, nor does it involve moderating conversations Parents have during non-visiting hours.
 - A Monitor's role does not include deciding how or when Parents should communicate, if one Parent is a poor communicator, and/or if one Parent is emotionally upset by the other Parent's manner of communication.
 - A Monitor's role is not to police the within-normal-limits of cleanliness of a child during a visit, nor is it to judge the potential exposure to germs in a park or other public setting. Parents should expect potential dirt or stains on clothing and/or exposure to germs in the course of normal childhood activities. Any limitations should be listed in the Court Order.
 - A Monitor's role is not to police the nutritional value of foods presented by the Visiting Parent during a visit. This is a parenting, cultural and/or economic issue, and the Monitor cannot address such things unless specifically stated in the Court Order.

This is not an exhaustive list. The Monitor shall remain a neutral third party at all times. The issues listed above should be presented to your attorney, the Court, your therapist, the approved mediator and/or other professional.

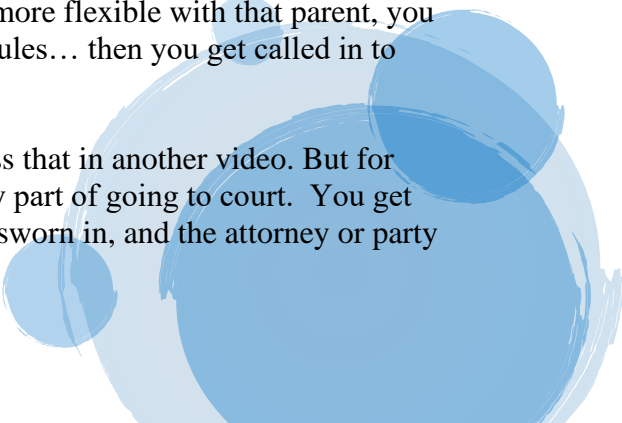
All communication between one parent and the Monitor must be related to 1) setting schedules for visits and 2) regarding the health, safety and wellbeing of the children.

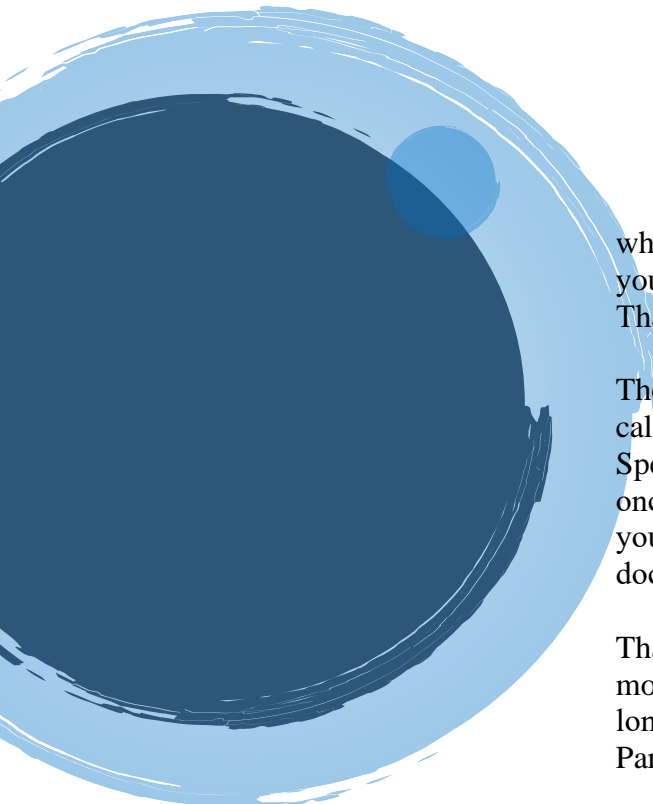
Attempts to involve Monitor in the interpersonal relationship dynamics of Parents may result in a Hold or Termination of services.

Basically, we are serious about staying neutral. And sometimes it's a challenge.

But, think about this issue played out in real life. You favor one parent over the other, you are more flexible with that parent, you allow one parent to break the rules... then you get called in to testify.

It happens - and we will discuss that in another video. But for now, let's look at the neutrality part of going to court. You get called up to the stand, you are sworn in, and the attorney or party





who called you has a lot of questions. They obviously thought you had something of value to their case against the other Parent. That's why you're there.

Then the other attorney or party has some questions for you. It's called a cross-examination. And they will examine you. Specifically, they might try to undermine your neutrality because once you've lost that, you've lost credibility as a witness. Now you're partial; you're biased. And that can mean that your documents don't hold any weight anymore.

That has the potential to set the case back by several months or more. The Parent may be ordered to do supervised visits for longer now because the judge doesn't have a neutral look into the Parent- Child relationship.

Prepare for this one. Even when you find it easy to remain neutral, the parents will not. Most of the time.... perhaps 95% of the time... the Parents will have negative feelings about each other. Strong negative feelings. Let them. It does not help the situation or the Court case if we take sides.

Now, we can refer clients to therapists, support groups, and parenting classes within the community. You may work for an agency that already provides those services. Either way, encourage both the Visiting and Custodial Parent to engage in self-care. And, remind them to include the children in healing activities. This is a stressful process for all of them.

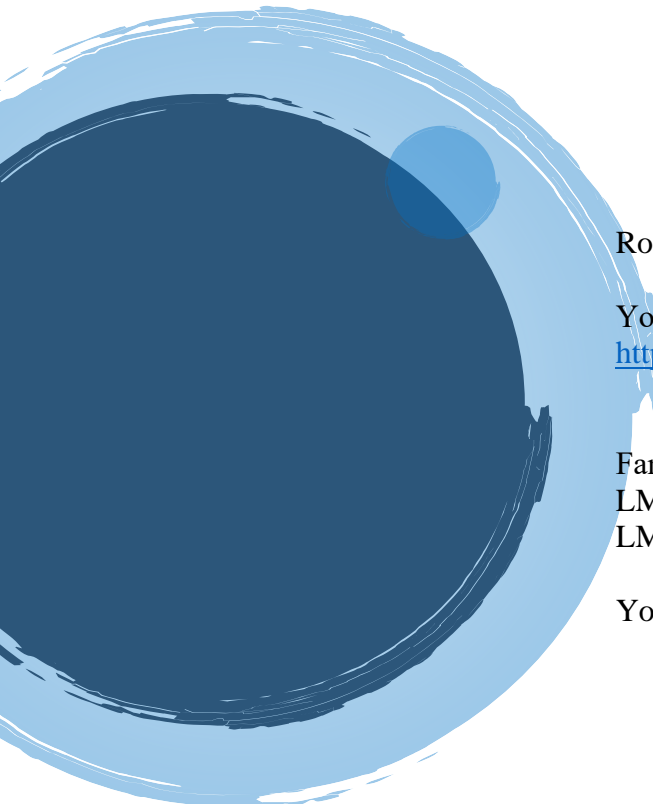
Before moving on to our next segment, your homework assignment is to answer these questions:

- 1) Think about a situation that might lead you to feel biased, or to take sides. Describe the situation and how you will remain neutral.
- 2) Write a list of strengths that you have. Use these strengths to help you stay neutral.
- 3) Does the agency provide coaching, counseling or classes?
- 4) What other resources are available in your community?

Create a list of resources that might help your Supervised Visitation clients.

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





Role of the Supervised Visitation Monitor- Types of Providers.

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

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

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