



Family Visitation Program Parent Handbook/Policies and Procedures

Welcome to the Family Visitation Program. This handbook for parents explains how the program works and what you need to know.

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Overview

The primary goal of the Family Visitation Program (FVP) is safety. We believe that every child should have the opportunity to have a positive, safe, and healthy relationship with their parents, regardless of any past conflict or trauma. Our policies and procedures are designed to ensure that visits and exchanges happen in a way that minimizes the risk of ongoing trauma, violence, abuse, and conflict for adults and children. We work with families with a history of domestic violence or child sexual abuse, as well as families with a history of mental health concerns, high-conflict separation, abuse or neglect, and substance use.

We support parents in having a positive and safe relationship with their children. Parents have no contact before, during, or after visits or exchanges. We offer two services:

- **Supervised Visitation** - Parents and children spend time together in a safe, secure, and child-friendly environment at the Family Visitation Program's facilities. We provide activities, toys, and games for parents and children to enjoy together. Each parent and their children visit in a private room. A visit monitor is always in the room to ensure safety, take notes, and support the visiting parent and child.
- **Safe Exchange** - Children move through our building between parents without parents having contact. The parent picking up the child leaves with the child. Parents can exchange children for a few hours, a weekend, or longer.

We offer visits and exchanges in Henderson and Transylvania Counties. During intake, we will provide you with specific information about the location.

Getting Started and Logistics

Intake and Orientation

The first step is for each parent to complete the intake process. Parents complete their intake appointments separately. During intake, we will learn more about your family and safety needs, collect documents, and review policies and procedures.

After both parents complete the intake process, we can usually schedule your first visit or exchange within two weeks. We will work with you to find openings in our schedule that work for your family.

Preparing Your Child for Visits and Exchanges

After we schedule the first visit or exchange, we will provide an in-person orientation for your child so they can see the space and feel more comfortable. Child Orientation is generally required for children over 18 months old and encouraged for all children.

Some children have difficulty adjusting to visits or exchanges. These tips can help you prepare your child for a smooth and happy visit or exchange:

- Express your support for the child enjoying their time with the other parents.
- If a child is concerned about their safety or feels anxious, reassure them and let them know they can communicate their needs to the visit monitor.
- Mention games and toys that the child can get excited about

We are happy to discuss strategies for making visits and exchanges smoother.

Scheduling

Visits and exchanges are scheduled at set times.

- **Scheduling Supervised Visits:** We provide up to one one-hour visit to each family weekly. Because many families need our services, this is the maximum we can provide, even if the court order allows more time. We schedule visits on weekdays between 2:00 PM and 8:00 PM. Your visits will be scheduled for the same day and time each week. If you cancel the visit, it will not be rescheduled. You can return to the next regularly scheduled visit. If you have an ongoing change to your schedule, please talk to the Client Services Coordinator right away.
- **Scheduling Safe Exchanges:** We can provide multiple exchanges in a week. Some families exchange children for a few hours, and some for a weekend, week, or

longer. Exchanges may be scheduled on weekday mornings, afternoons, and early evenings. Exchanges are scheduled on regular days and times and unavailable at the last minute. If you must cancel because of an emergency, we may be able to reschedule an exchange for the same day or week.

Pausing or Discontinuing Services

Sometimes, we have to pause or end services to a family or end a visit or exchange that is already happening. We may do this because of violations of policy and procedure, safety concerns, a child who refuses to visit, a pattern of cancellations, non-payment, or if we cannot meet a family's needs.

At other times, families choose to pause or discontinue services.

If visits are paused or discontinued, we may be unable to reserve your family's scheduled time. If we cannot offer you the same time when visits or exchanges resume, we will work with you to find a new time.

If families do not visit or exchange for 6 months or more, a new intake appointment will be required for both parents before restarting services.

Fees

If there are fees for our services in your county, you must sign a Fee Agreement before the first visit or exchange.

If you cannot afford the fee, you can submit a Fee Reduction Application and provide income documentation. If you qualify, you will pay a reduced sliding-scale fee. You must update your Fee Reduction Application and provide new documents annually to qualify. If you report having no income or assets, you must re-apply for a reduced fee every three months.

Unless the court order says otherwise, the Visiting/Non-Custodial Parent pays the service fees. If the court order says that you and the other parent split the fee, or if there is no court order, each party will pay half the cost.

Parents pay fees before the start of each visit or exchange. We accept cash and cards. If you are behind by more than two visits or exchange fees, visits will be paused until all past-due fees are paid.

Cancellations and No-Shows

It is important for children that visits and exchanges are consistent. We often have families on a waiting list and move waiting families into openings that are not consistently used. We understand that illness, emergencies, and scheduling problems are sometimes unavoidable.

If there is a pattern of no-shows or cancellations (more than twice in any 90-day period), we will review your case and decide what to do next. During this review, we will look at the reasons for cancellation, any documentation, and how far in advance visits were canceled. We may briefly pause visits to work with parents on a plan to reduce cancellations. We may also pause visits for an extended period or discontinue services.

During Supervised Visits and Safe Exchanges

Special Policies for Visits Involving Alleged or Substantiated Child Sexual Abuse

If your case involves alleged or substantiated child sexual abuse, more restrictive policies may apply to supervised visits. These policies protect children from potential harm and Visiting Parents from allegations about what happened during the visit. We will decide if these policies apply to your family based on the case history and documentation provided to us. You can review these additional policies within the sections below.

Arrivals and Departures

For safety, all parents must arrive and leave precisely on time. You may not be on the premises except for scheduled appointments with us or at the scheduled time of your exchange or visit. Do not stop by at other times. You may not be on the premises for programs, classes, events, or other services offered by other providers or businesses on the campus at any time. You may not return to the premises for six months after ending your services. To request an exception, submit a written request to the program director.

If you arrive early for a visit or exchange, you must leave the premises and return at the designated time.

Each parent is assigned a designated parking area. Park only in this area. Each parent is assigned a designated entrance. Use only this entrance. When you arrive, ring the bell, and we will open the door.

If you know you will be late, please call right away. If the Visiting Parent or the parent picking up the child arrives more than 5 minutes late, we will notify the other parent to delay their arrival. Visits that start late will still end at the same time. We may cancel the visit or exchange if either parent is more than 15 minutes late.

Do not come to visits or exchanges under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or your visit or exchange may be canceled.

Straighten up the visit and waiting room before you leave and clean up any messes. We encourage you to include your child in tidying up and putting things back in their place.

Arriving and Departing for Supervised Visits

Custodial Parents will arrive at the start time of the visit. We will come to the waiting room and escort your child to the visit room where the other parent will be waiting. You

can wait in the waiting room or leave the premises during the visit. Anyone accompanying you must also wait inside or leave the premises. We will escort your child back to you in the waiting room at the end of the visit. Please depart right away.

Non-Custodial/Visiting Parents arrive 15 minutes before the start of the visit and stay 15 minutes after the end of the visit. The visit monitor is available to parents during this time. You can use this time to plan the visit, talk about past visits, and update the visit monitor about your family and child. If we have a concern about how things have gone in past visits, we may talk to you about it during this time. If the child and Custodial Parent are delayed leaving, you may have to wait longer after the visit. The Non-Custodial/Visiting Parent must wait until they are escorted out by staff. You may not leave until given permission.

Anyone accompanying you to the visit must leave the premises as soon as they drop you off. They can return to pick you up at your scheduled departure time. Waiting in the car is not allowed.

Arriving and Departing for Safe Exchanges

The parent bringing the child to the exchange will arrive at the time of the exchange. We will escort the child to the other parent. You will wait for 15 minutes after they depart. If the other parent and child are delayed in leaving, you may have to wait longer.

The parent coming to pick up the child will arrive 15 minutes before the exchange time. You will wait in the waiting room until the child and other parent arrive. We will escort the child to you, and you can leave right away.

What to Do During Visits

We want visits to be safe and fun for kids. We have a variety of games, toys, craft supplies, and activities you can choose from to enjoy with your child during the visit or while waiting for an exchange. You may also bring food, games, toys, crafts, and activities from home. Activities and conversations should be age-appropriate; visit monitors can help you find something suitable.

Observation Notes

A visit monitor will be in the room with the Visiting Parent and child during visits, and accompany your child during exchanges. The visit monitor will take factual, neutral, and objective notes about what happens, concerns or interventions, and policy or procedure violations.

The only way to get copies of the observation notes is by subpoena or court order. When we receive a subpoena or court order, we provide notes directly to the court. Please ensure all subpoenas are received 10 days before your court date.

We do not provide parenting evaluations or make recommendations about future custody, visitation, or exchange arrangements.

Staff Intervention

We will intervene if there is any concern or violation of policies and procedures. We may redirect you or tell you to stop a specific behavior. When the child is not present, you may talk with us about how you would like us to communicate these things to you.

If we ask you to change your behavior, you are expected to do so immediately. If you don't, or there is a pattern of concerns, we will review the case. During this review, we will talk with parents, review documentation, and decide what to do next. We may pause visits briefly to work with parents on a compliance plan, pause visits for an extended period, or discontinue services.

Items Brought for Children

We may review the contents of anything you bring for your child, including food items and toys, to decide if the items are appropriate. We will also make notes about anything given to children. If you want to give your child a wrapped gift, use a gift bag or bring gift wrap materials. Gifts should be limited to what the child can carry.

We will review and approve notes and cards given to children before the visit or exchange, and we may keep a copy.

Children may leave visits and exchanges only with items for the child. You may not use visits or exchanges to transfer items or money to the other parent.

We do not administer any medication to children. We may provide minor first aid. If a child needs medicine during a visit or exchange, the parent must administer it. If you need to send medication to the other parent for the child, you must provide written instructions on the prescription bottle or a Child-Related Communication Form.

Special Rules for Visits Involving Alleged or Substantiated Child Sexual Abuse: Parents may not bring anything into the visit, including food, games, toys, gifts, photos, notes, cards, or medication.

Cell Phones and Cameras

We encourage you to focus on your child during visits and exchanges. Refrain from texting, and do not make or receive phone calls.

You may take photos of your child during a visit or exchange. You may not take photos of other people at FVP.

If you want to show your child something on your phone, we will review it first. We will observe your phone screen while it is shown to the child.

You may not record video or audio at FVP. Playing home video or audio recordings for the child is not allowed.

Special Rules for Visits Involving Alleged or Substantiated Child Sexual Abuse: Cell phones and cameras must be left in the car or stored in the Visiting Parent's pocket or handbag. The Visiting Parent may not take out their phone or camera during visits. Parents and children may not take pictures during visits.

Talking with Children

You must speak so that the visit monitor can hear and understand you. Whispering is not allowed. If no interpreter is present, you must speak a language spoken by the visit monitor. If you want to speak a language other than English during your visit, please tell us during intake so we can arrange for an interpreter or a visit monitor who speaks your language.

Conversations between parents and children should be present-focused, positive, and age-appropriate. The following are examples of inappropriate conversation:

- Promises or talking about times in the future when visits may be unsupervised.
- Court proceedings or decisions
- Quizzing, interrogating, or probing the child for information.
- Asking the child for information about the other parent or home.
- Negative comments about the other parents or the child's family members
- Profanity, threats, or threatening behavior

If your child brings up these topics, you must change the subject.

Special Rules for Visits Involving Alleged or Substantiated Child Sexual Abuse: Visiting Parents may not talk about allegations of abuse or abuse. You may not talk about the child's appearance, dating, sexuality, gender, or gender expression are not allowed.

Touch and Physical Play

We encourage you to let your child take the lead and initiate physical contact, including hugging, kissing, and physical play. We will support children who express boundaries and preferences about touch and physical contact.

Wrestling and rough play are not allowed between parents and children, or between children. Parents are expected to intervene in rough play.

You are not allowed to use physical punishment or threats or physical punishment. This includes spanking, slapping, pinching, grabbing, or squeezing.

Special Rules for Visits Involving Alleged or Substantiated Child Sexual Abuse: The Visiting Parent may not initiate physical contact with the child. The child may initiate a brief hug at the beginning and end of the visit. Beyond that, no physical contact between the Visiting Parent and child is allowed. Examples of contact that are not allowed include tickling, lap sitting, roughhousing, prolonged hugging, kissing any part of the body, stroking, handholding, hair combing or brushing, and changing diapers or clothes.

When Children Refuse to Visit or Exchange

We want to help your child feel comfortable at FVP. We will work with you to encourage children to participate in visits and exchanges. Except for children under 2 years old, we will not physically move a child between parents.

If the child refuses to visit or exchange or decides to leave a visit early, we will cancel the visit or exchange for that day. If the child refuses to visit or exchange more than twice, we will review the case. During this review, we will talk with both parents, review strategies used to encourage the child, and decide what to do next. We may pause visits to work with parents on a plan to encourage the child to participate. We may also pause visits for an extended period or discontinue services.

Toileting and Diapering

We do not assist children in the restroom or change diapers. However, we will guide parents unsure how to change diapers or help a child in the restroom.

Children who do not need help go into the restroom alone.

If a child under 5 needs a diaper change or help in the restroom during a visit, the Non-Custodial/Visiting Parent will accompany the child to the restroom. The visit monitor will

discreetly observe interactions in the restroom with the door open. We will make every effort to preserve the child's dignity and privacy.

The Custodial Parent is responsible for providing diapering supplies for use during visits. For sanitary reasons, diapers must only be changed on the restroom changing tables.

If you tell us that a child who is 5 or older needs diapering or toileting assistance, we will require documentation from the child's physician or the court before starting visits.

We do not supervise custodial or exchanging parents who assist a child in the restroom or change a diaper.

Special Rules for Visits Involving Alleged or Substantiated Child Sexual Abuse: The Visiting Parent may not diaper, assist with toileting, or accompany the child to the restroom. If the child cannot use the restroom independently, the Custodial Parent must remain at FVP during the visit to assist the child.

Guests in Supervised Visits

The Visiting Parent may choose to invite family members of the child to attend visits as guests. Guests are generally not allowed for the first three visits. After the first three visits, the Visiting Parent may request to bring a guest. You must make this request at least 2 business days before the visit. We will review the court order and other documentation and talk with both parents before deciding whether to allow a guest. Adult guests are typically allowed no more than once every fourth visit. Children who are family members of the child may be allowed more frequently. We will make the final decision about guests.

Approved adult guests must show a government-issued photo ID upon arrival. We will keep a copy of the ID. Adult guests pay a \$10 fee and sign a Guest Agreement. If we decide that the guest's behavior is inappropriate or unhelpful to the visit, we may ask the guest to leave. Registered sex offenders will not be approved as guests.

Special Rules for Visits Involving Alleged or Substantiated Child Sexual Abuse: No guests are allowed unless the court order specifically allows them.

Communication between Parents

We will facilitate communication between parents only about visits and exchanges. We do not pass information between parents about other topics.

If you need to tell the other parent something about the child relevant to the visit or exchange, request a Child Related Communication form before the visit or exchange starts. We will review the form and keep a copy. If we decide it is appropriate, we will give it to the other parent.

Do not ask your child to give messages or information to the other parent.

Program Policies and Procedures

Confidentiality

We take confidentiality seriously for all adult and child clients. We are careful to protect information that may put victims of domestic violence at risk. We will not have contact with you outside of the program.

All communications with us are confidential, with the following exceptions:

- We may report information about abuse or neglect of a child, elderly person, or disabled adult to law enforcement or the Department of Social Services.
- We may share information about threats to public safety, including threats to harm yourself or someone else.
- We may share information about scheduling, pick-up, and drop-off times with individuals authorized to transport children.
- We may share information when necessary to protect the health, well-being, or safety of any client, staff member, or other person.
- We will release records to the court when so ordered while protecting information that may put victims of domestic violence at risk.
- In limited circumstances, we may release information to outside parties, including your attorney, with the permission of one or both parents.

Security and Video/Audio Monitoring

We use video and audio to monitor entrances and visit rooms, hallways, parking areas, and waiting areas. From time to time, law enforcement or other security personnel may be present.

By participating in the program, you are consenting to the use of video and audio surveillance.

We may request to search your person or belongings. If you refuse, you may be asked to leave, and we may cancel the visit or exchange.

Weapons are not allowed on FVP premises. This includes guns, knives, pocket knives, sharp objects, realistic toy weapons, and other items that might present a safety hazard. We may

cancel your visit or exchange or discontinue services if weapons or hazardous items are brought onto the premises.

Services of Warrants and Subpoenas to Parents

You may not arrange for a warrant, subpoena, summons, or papers to be served on the other parent on our premises or when the other parents leave the property. These actions can be upsetting to children and compromise safety. If you do this, you will be suspended from the program for at least 4 weeks.

Emergency Procedures

In the event of an emergency, we will assist everyone in exiting the building. All parents will leave through their assigned entrance. The visit monitor will take the children to the exit used by the custodial parent and remain with the children until the emergency is resolved. If a door is inaccessible, everyone will exit through the nearest door to safety.

When outside, parents must remain on opposite sides of the building. Parents may not communicate with each other during an emergency or approach the other parent.

Smoke and Drug-Free Policy

All our locations are smoke-free and free from illegal substances. This includes the inside, outside, parking areas, and inside cars. Do not smoke, use electronic smoking devices, or use or possess illegal substances on our property.

Grievance Procedure

You may contact the Client Services Coordinator via phone or e-mail if you have concerns. If your concern is not resolved, you may contact the Program Director. If the concern remains unresolved, you may contact the Executive Director in writing via e-mail or postal mail. The Executive Director will review your grievance and make a final decision.

Inclement Weather

FVP follows the weather-related closings and delays of the community college in each county where we operate. If the community college closes for the entire day, FVP will be closed for the day and evening. If the community college closes only for the evening, FVP will close at 5 p.m.

Non-Discrimination and Access

We will not discriminate against you or anyone else based on race, ethnicity, religion, sex or gender identity, pregnancy, sexual orientation, nation of origin, age, or ability. You may not harass any other client, staff member, volunteer, or intern.

We encourage people with disabilities to participate in our programs. If you or your child require accommodation, please let us know and we will work with you to seek reasonable accommodation.