

Roles & Responsibilities for Visitation

Worker

Before the visit

- Place children in a home that is close and will support visits and family connections
- Place siblings together or ensure they have frequent visits
- Explain rules, roles, and expectations to the parents, children, youth, and caregivers
- Work with parents, foster parents, and other as needed in developing a visit plan.
- Provide everyone with a written visit plan
- Help parents prepare what to say to their children, what to bring, what activities are allowed/expected. DO not expect that parents know how to perform parenting tasks. Assume parents will feel “unnatural” during visits. Prepare them to succeed.
- Explain to the children the purpose of the visit, safety rules, how long it will last, and returning to the caregiver following the visit. Practice what they may want to say to parents.
- Arrange transportation and location.
- Be willing to put the children’s best interest first.

During the Visit

- End visit if parents violate rules or if children indicate their safety is at risk
- Enforce all rules of the visit (location, activities, people attending)
- End visit if parent shows any signs of intoxication, extreme stress, or abusive behaviors
- Do not talk to others during the visit, do not get involved in activities even if asked, and only intervene if safety issues occur.
- Provide direct modeling or teaching of parenting skills. You can give advice to parents during the visit.
- Take notes during the visit
- Continue to make visit planning a high priority

After the visit

- Confront parents who break rules and explain what would be appropriate behavior.
- Give parents feedback on their interactions, behaviors, parenting skills, or other issues. Communicate in a strength-based manner. DO this out of the hearing of the child.
- Provide feedback to the foster parents or caregivers about how the child responded to the visit and if anything occurred that they need to know.
- Call and check with the children and/or caregiver to see how they are reacting to visits.
- Ask everyone about how to improve the visits.

Parent

Before the visit

- Ask about any rules/expectations you don't understand. Follow all the rules
- Find items to bring
- Arrange transportation
- Call as soon as possible if the visit must be cancelled or you will be late
- Ask for help on how to handle your own emotions and the child's emotions that may occur during visits.

During the visit

- Follow the rules. Come prepared. Come on time. Bring required items for the visit and nothing else. Do not bring other people without permission.
- Give your child 100 percent of your attention
- Do not use drugs or alcohol during a visit and do not come to a visit intoxicated
- If you are having a mental health crisis, ask for the visit to be postponed.

After the Visit

- Listen for feedback and ask questions about how to improve
- State concerns to the social worker
- Provide suggestions for the next visit
- Take care of yourself – visits are hard emotionally
- Talk to a friend, the worker, or therapist to debrief after a visit.

Child / Youth

Before the visit

- Tell adults what you prefer regarding visits: location, frequency, who attends, activities, safety
- Ask any questions you have about the visits
- Tell adults if you are having feelings you cannot handle, are afraid, or need information
- Think about what you want to tell your parent or perhaps bring to share, such as a picture or school work

During the visit

- Have fun
- Be on time
- Follow the rules
- If you feel unsafe, ask the visit supervisor to end the visit

After the visit

- Tell adults if you have any questions, feelings, reactions or concerns about the visit
- Tell adults what you think would make the visits better.

Foster Parent

Before the visit

- Prepare the child for a visit by talking about the visit, how to handle emotions, and the safety plan
- Pack clothes, food, medicine, comfort item, or other items needed for a visit.
- Say positive things to the children about the visit and their parents.
- Give information about the children to the worker and parent, including anything that might affect the visit, i.e. school, illness, behaviors.
- Support contact with siblings and others.
- Visits should never be talked about as a reward or punishment for a child's behaviors
- Believe that family connections are essential for children's healthy development.

During the visit

- Have the visit in your home
- Model or teach parenting skills to the children's parents
- Supervise or monitor visits
- Help with transitions at the beginning and the end of visits, especially if the children are emotionally attached to you or they do not remember the family members who will be at the visit.
- Be willing to meet with the children's parents before and after the visit. Avoid "handing off" the children to a third party in order to avoid meeting the parents.

After the visit

- Have a routine that will comfort the children and allow for emotions to be safely expressed
- Discuss "abnormal" reactions the children have to visits with the caseworker
- Document the visit if you supervised or it occurred in your home.
- Take care of yourself, the child, and your family—recognize and understand your emotions.