



Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation

The Institute for Family Violence Studies

Florida State University

DECEMBER EPRESS

QUESTIONS FROM DIRECTORS

I am having a very hard time with a parent who calls on the phone to complain about the visit, his ex-wife, the program schedule, how we treated him at the last visit, and a host of other problems. Last month I spent over three hours on the phone with him, and I can't bill this extra time. This has been going on for several months. When I am not here when he calls, he takes up staff time, even though they are sitting visits. I asked him to stop calling me between visits, and he sent me a very long email with a series of long questions that would have taken hours to write out the answers to. He is acting as his own lawyer. What can I do?

It seems like this client is disgruntled, and you have taken many reasonable steps to try to limit the extra time you spend with him. You have spoken to him on the phone, in email, and in person. You have not raised your voice, even though he has. You have tried to get him to see the program as a partner in his case. I suggest that it is time to set and stick to reasonable limits. After all, if you spent this much extra time with his ex-wife, he might complain that you are giving her extra benefits. You should sit down with staff and talk about what is a reasonable amount of additional contact – perhaps a few (5 -10) minutes after a visit -- to address his concerns. You should tell him in writing that you are unable to provide additional time beyond that, and that he must go directly to the referring judge if he has additional grievances. At this point, I do suggest you treat his concerns as grievances and direct him to the judge to resolve anything that you yourself have not resolved. Most importantly, make notes of all conversations and how you respond to complaints. I can see your point that you could not possibly spend this much extra time with all of your clients. Fortunately, this is the only case that is currently causing you extra work. You are on the right track: stay mild-mannered and reasonable, limit the extra time, keep records, and refer him to the judge for any other unresolved grievances. Please do not, under any circumstances, lose your cool. The judge needs to see who is being reasonable and unreasonable here. Don't muddy the waters.

We had a problem after Thanksgiving: a mother brought a plate of turkey/veggies to the visit to share with her child. We thought it was very nice, but the foster mother was very upset when she came to pick up the child, because she was bringing the child to a relative's house right after the visit for dinner. The child ended up with a stomach ache (probably from all the fuss the foster mother made). What should have been a nice visit ended up pretty unhappy for everyone. How could I have avoided this?

This is a dependency case: the goal is reunification. The mother gets points for remembering to celebrate Thanksgiving with her child. There have never been any concerns about food safety in this case, so you are right to encourage nurturing behavior. The foster mother is doing an important job, one that is honorable and appreciated. Perhaps we can chalk this episode up to a misunderstanding, and maybe even the emotions that the holidays evoke. But going forward, here are some suggestions. First, when a confrontation seems imminent, have a plan to remove the adult from the presence of the child, so that the child doesn't witness everything. In other words, asking the foster mom to step into an office with you is something you should be ready to do at any time. Leave the child with other staff for a moment. Also, give credit where credit is due. Maybe the foster mom feels unappreciated – be sure to acknowledge the important role she is playing in this child's life. Actually say the words: thank you. She probably hasn't heard them enough! Then explain why you allowed the mom to bring food. And be sure to listen to the foster mom. (And always check the records for food issues/risks). Second, be sure that all adults know what your policies are regarding food prior to the first visit. Everyone should be on the same page. Third, be sure to document the incident and your response, and let the case manager know what happened. Last, take a deep breath and know that this was not a crisis, just a bump in the road.

More from our Skills Chapter

(to see all of the developing manual, go to <http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/clearinghouse/> and click on New Manual in Progress)

Recording

Keeping records enables programs to identify elements of a client's system and need for services, document range and duration of services provided, and document critical incidents that occur, among various other benefits.

Imagine if a client switches visitation programs, or the monitor assigned to the family is sick for the day. Recording client history and past visits enables service providers the information necessary to maintain continuity and stability. Or perhaps a visit needs to be terminated due to a critical incident, such as a client bringing a weapon into the program. Documentation can help programs accurately record what occurred. It is important for monitors to maintain a record of every visit that is factual and contains, at a minimum, the items in the following checklist.

| Checklist of the Minimum Requirements for Recording a Visit | |
|--|--|
| | Client identifier or case number |
| | Who brought the child to the visit |
| | Who supervised the visit |
| | Any additional authorized observers |
| | Date, time, and duration of visit |
| | Who participated in the visit |
| | A detailed description of any Critical Incidents that occurred. See section on "Critical Incidents" for further instructions on documenting critical incidents. |
| | An account of termination, cancellation, or temporary suspension of visitation by the program, including the reasons for the termination or suspension of contact. |
| | Any failure to comply with program's procedures |
| | Cancellations, tardiness, or no-shows by the client and the reasons given by the client for cancelling, being late to, or missing the visit. |
| | Incidents or suspicion of abuse or neglect as required by law, including documentation of any calls made to 1-800-96-ABUSE. |
| | Visitation Notes of the parent-child interaction, either Summary or Observation Notes as described in the next section. |
| | Contact Notes , which are summary accounts of all other contacts by the program staff in person, in writing, by telephone, or electronically with any |

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| party, the children, the court, attorneys, or other paraprofessionals or professionals involved in the case. These Contact Notes must be kept in the case file. All entries should be dated and signed by the person writing the Contact Note. |
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Visitation Notes

In addition to keeping basic records of information regarding parent-child contact as described above, all supervised visitation programs should have policies regarding any other kinds of documentation and recording they may keep about the contact, such as summary or detailed observation notes on the interaction between the parent and child.

Recording Visits

There is variation across programs in terms of how observation reports are written. Some programs use narrative reports written by visitation monitors and others use checklists. Other programs only record whether the parties came to the program as scheduled. Because of this variety, the content here may or may not apply to any specific program but is useful for monitors to be familiar with the issues involved in observation and recording of visits.

Summary Notes provide an overview of the interaction that took place between the parent and child during a supervised visit. The summary note must be factual, objective, and absent of any professional recommendations. Unlike the detailed observation note, the summary note shall not contain a comprehensive list of all observations. Instead, this report is meant to provide a brief synopsis of the parent-child contact.

Observation Notes are detailed observations that offer a comprehensive account of events that took place between the visitor and child during visits, signed by the staff member/volunteer who completed the notes. Observation notes must also be factual, objective, and absent of any professional recommendation. In addition, observation notes may also include various observations and direct statements from the child, parent, or other authorized observers. When developing policies governing observation notes, programs should take into account the potential for the notes to be reviewed by courts,

parents and/or his/her attorney, and other outside agencies. All notes should be constructed in a way that is sensitive to the cultural identification of the family, the safety needs of vulnerable parents and/or children, and provisions of Florida law addressing the collection of information about the case and family. Due to the potential for observation notes to be interpreted incorrectly and be used to harass

the program or client, programs should consider keeping only summary notes, without lengthy details of activities, except in cases of Critical Incidents.

Writing Contemporaneously

When observing visits, monitors are encouraged to take notes during the interaction. This concurrent, or contemporaneous recording, is beneficial for a number of reasons including:

- Memories fail
- Observations tend to be more accurate
- Clear notes for each case
- Reduce confusion
- Increase reliability
- Observers feel more confident in their capability to capture observations

In a busy visitation center, monitors may not always be able to write case notes immediately after a visit occurs. Writing and taking notes while the visit occurs can aid monitors to remember what occurred accurately during the visit and what to include in the visitation note.

How to Record Helpful Observations

It's important to avoid putting your judgment or perceptions into your notes. Only objective observations, such as visible actions and words spoken, are helpful in the recording of visits.

Objective observations are behaviors or verbalizations that were seen or heard, such as “Mr. Gandy yelled at his son Marc when he started crying” or “Mrs. Johnson held her 3 year old son on her lap and read him a book”.

Subjective observations are labels or judgments such as “Mrs. Young was anxious during the visit” or “Joseph was being aggressive toward the monitor”. These statements don't convey helpful information. What would be more helpful to note would be, “Mrs. Young was pacing back in forth during the visit and verbally expressed feeling anxious about her work assignment due tomorrow.” Or “Joseph threatened the monitor, saying, ‘If you tell me what to do one more time, I may have to do something about it’ and raised his fist at her.”

STOP and Think

After reading this section, you should be able to answer the following question regarding the case scenario from the start of the chapter.

What would have been helpful observations for Christie to record?

Recording Children's Behavior

Recording children's actions can be especially important, as children often express more in actions than in words. By recording your observations, you can document children's behavior and the quality of parent-child interactions, leading to more accurate goal-setting for your clients. Observations of children can, over time, lead to the discovery of a multitude of important findings regarding the child's well-being, including:

A Note on Cultural Sensitivity:

It is important to be sensitive to cultural values, such as differences in eye contact or displays of affection. Every family is different.

More information is available in Chapter XX, Working with Culturally Diverse Families.

- Developmental gains or setbacks
- Modes of coping
- Individualized learning preferences
- Behavioral patterns that may indicate the presence of abuse or neglect
- Special needs, such as a developmental or learning disability or attention-deficit disorder
- Medical concerns

It is imperative to the quality and safety of supervised visitation programs that visit monitors keep precise records of. Records not only help programs facilitate services that are effective for clients, but can also be compiled and used to determine best practices, or to help display the need for continued funding of supervised visitation.

Cultural Differences

As staff fill out forms and describe the parent-child interaction, or recount interactions in narrative format, it is likely that the information is based on one's own cultural norms. It is important for monitors to recognize the cultural differences of the families and the dominant culture. Monitors must be sensitive to differences in other culture's ideas of respect, affection, and parent-child interaction. While there is training available to address the needs of other cultures who use supervised visitation, programs must ensure that they are promoting an understanding and familiarity rather than simply adding a superficial, heightened respect for minority cultures. Within dominant and minority cultures, there is a vast area of differences in how people raise their children. .



Remember

There is no truly objective perspective as a monitor due to personal experience and culture. Understanding the truly difficult task of observation will provide monitors with the ability to be mindful and to always work towards observing visits fairly, being mindful of the paramount role of safety.

Considering this, monitors must be mindful of how they are observing, and recording visits. When observing and recording visits, monitors must only document the facts and of the visit (behaviors, verbalizations). In this sense, monitors should avoid documenting subjective matter such as emotions, perception, or cultural norms. This means that visit notes should be written in quantifiable terms—that which can be seen, heard, smelled, counted, or measured. There are many words that are open to personal interpretation and should be avoided (manipulative, uncooperative, normal,). Instead of using these types of words, monitors should record observed behaviors and verbal communication that will allow case managers, judges, and other monitors to draw their own conclusions.

Verbal Communication of Visit Notes

Visitation monitors communicate with case managers and judges through written communication and visitation notes. In some cases, monitors may be required to discuss a client case with a third party involved with the case through verbal communication over the phone or in person. Monitors may be diligent in writing objective, fact-driven visit notes, but sometimes, when communicating verbally, the content can stray from the objective events. Noting this tendency, monitors should be mindful of the connotation of their verbal exchanges, as well as attempt to only give information that is found in the case notes or file.



Flu Season

By Caroline Johnson



Introduction

Every year 5% to 20% of people in the United States contract the flu. Children under 5 years of age are more likely than any other group to become seriously ill with the flu. For supervised visitation providers it is important to know and practice different strategies for preventing the spread of the flu between families during visits.

Objectives

- Learn how to be safe and clean
- Understand flu shots
- Know the importance of hand hygiene
- What to do if families are sick during visitation

Safety Precautions

The Flu (influenza) is a viral infection that affects the nose, throat, and lungs, with multiple influenza strands that can be spread. The flu can spread from droplets that come from an individual's infected coughs, sneezes, or saliva to another. The flu virus for an individual is generally contagious for 5 to 7 days. There are several precautions to consider when attempting to prevent the spreading of the influenza virus.

- When coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth and encourage others to do the same.
- Try to avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose. Germs are easily spread this way.
- Keep all areas clean by using disinfecting wipes on countertops.
- Encourage others to throw away used tissues in a garbage can.



Flu Shots

Flu Vaccines are made from strands of an inactivated virus. The vaccine creates antibodies in the body to better fight off the flu. Flu vaccinations are given to try to reduce the likelihood of one getting the flu. Although you can still get the flu if you are vaccinated, the chances are less than someone who is not vaccinated. Below are some facts that you should know about the flu and flu shots.

- You cannot contract the flu from a flu shot
- Even healthy people can get the flu
- There are different strands of the flu, which is why most suggest to get vaccinated each year
- Vaccination is not the only way to steer clear from contracting the flu

Hand Hygiene



Everyone has heard the suggestion to wash your hands thoroughly to prevent illness. This thought holds true for reducing the risk of getting the flu. Some examples of when you should wash your hands:

- After sneezing or coughing into your hand
- After cleaning an area where someone was sick
- After coming into contact with anyone who was sick
- Before eating or preparing food.

For Supervised Visitation

Supervised Visitation providers come into contact with many families each day. During flu season, it is important for providers to be aware of individuals or families who are sick during visitation. Because the flu is contagious, it is imperative to know how to reduce the chances of others receiving the flu from the supervised visitation facility.

- Make sure the facility has an adequate amount of soap for everyone to use.
- Recommend everyone wash their hands before and after a visit.
- Clean up after an individual or family by disinfecting everything that was touched. For example, toys, chairs, door handles.

A fun way to encourage children to wash their hands for the suggested amount of time is to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice while scrubbing hands with soap.

Conclusion

Since flu season is for several months out of the year, supervised visitation providers need to be aware of the precautions against spreading this virus. With various recommendations, providers can assist with keeping their families, and themselves, healthy.

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Safety Planning with Children

By Alexander Sullivan

As visitation monitors, safety is the most crucial component of the supervised visitation process. Many children and families are referred to supervised visitation due to safety concerns related to domestic violence, substance use, or child abuse. Considering these issues, it is important for monitors to understand the many risks that children may face. With many safety concerns present, monitors and parents should work to develop safety planning skills with children in response to strangers or other unsafe adults. In addition to teaching children about safety and strangers, it is also important to consider the effectiveness of parents' teaching, as well as the type of world view that is painted for children in the process. Safety planning is more than teaching children not to talk to strangers. This E-press will provide information to encourage monitors and parents to have healthy conversations about safety and to teach effective safety planning strategies.

Stranger Safety

In the most basic sense, a stranger is any person a child or the child's family does not know well. By this definition, most people are strangers to children. Knowing this, teaching stranger safety to children in an effective way is of the utmost importance. In many families, parents will have a conversation about safety using a phrase as simple as, "don't talk to strangers." This outdated theory of "stranger danger" does not provide children with appropriate knowledge about safety. Parents and monitors should promote a more comprehensive concept of stranger safety to ensure the safety of children.



The old adage of "stranger danger" is ineffective in several ways:

- Teaches that only strangers hurt kids
- Children are unable to correctly define or identify a stranger
- Children believe "bad" strangers look mean or ugly
- Fails to adequately teach children how to respond in a threatening situation
- Can paint the world as an evil and dangerous place

The focus of teaching stranger safety is to prepare children to:

- Identify trusted adults in any situation
- Recognize potentially dangerous situations
- Respond appropriately to potentially dangerous situations
- Have a healthy understanding of strangers

Teach children skills and critical thinking, so that they will be able to respond to any situation on their own and stay safe.

General Guidelines for Safety Planning

There are several general recommendations that are generalizable to a variety of situations. The purpose of these is to provide principles that are easy for kids to remember, and would promote their own safety in every setting. Parents should identify safe adults, safety nets, and implement general safety practices with their children.

Safe Adults

In order to set up children for safe interactions with strangers, parents should discuss safe adults to go to in times of need. Parents can use the following definitions to identify adults in their children's lives that may be useful in certain situations.

- **Responsible Adult** – an individual specifically responsible for the well-being of the child at any given time. This primarily includes the child's parents, teacher, and close family friends. Young children should never be without the supervision of this type of adult. Older children should know how to get back to or contact this person at any given moment. Parents should remind children of the responsible adult in every situation.
- **Trusted Adult** – an individual who may or may not be a stranger to the child, but does not have specific responsibility over the child. This is the type of person that a child can go to in a time of need. Examples include police officers, other teachers, store employees, parents of other children and so on. These are good people for children to go to in an emergency situation. Parents should identify with children who trusted adults are in case there is no responsible adult present in emergency situations.



Safety Nets

The following are strategies for parents to teach their children about safety planning.

- Always ask permission from a responsible adult before going anywhere or accepting anything from anyone.
- Memorize all important personal information. This may include:
 - Home address
 - Parent/Guardian's full name
 - Parent/Guardian's phone number
 - Parent/Guardian's place of employment
 - Contact information for close relatives
- Never give out personal information except in a case of emergency, such as being lost. Parents should also emphasize that personal information should only be given to trusted adults.

- Stay in groups with a responsible adult at all times or keep close to other children. Children should not be left unattended.
- Encourage children to stay in the same location when lost. This will allow parents to find the children when they return. Children should not leave their location unless assisted by a responsible or trusted adult, such as a police officer.
- Remind children that they own their bodies. It is also important to teach children how to say no and to promote telling trusted and responsible adults about any situations where they feel uncomfortable.

REMINDER
 Any guideline regarding safety must be adjusted to accommodate the child's age, maturity, and life circumstance.
There is no one size fits all approach when it comes to safety.

Tips for Parents

It is important for parents to teach their children good safety habits but it is also important for parents to know what behaviors should be implemented to promote safety for their children. Below are some tips for parents in safety planning.

- Know where your child is at all times and have a means to contact them if needed.
- If leaving your child in someone else's care, be clear and direct on the transition of supervision responsibilities. This practice prevents children from being unsupervised due to miscommunication.
- Teach children to trust their instincts. If they are feeling threatened or uncomfortable, there may be a legitimate reason for this feeling. Encourage children to seek their responsible adult in these situations.
- Keep lines of communication open.
 - Ask children questions and listen to their response with patience.
 - Don't dismiss or undermine what your child says.
 - Dismissing a child's comments may prevent him or her from sharing other information later. Children may not bring important information to an adult's attention if they feel that they will be dismissed or ignored.
- Plan safety protocols in every setting where children may find themselves (e.g. becoming lost in public, answering the phone or door, using the internet)
- Don't assume any location is always safe, as danger can happen anywhere.
- Don't assume the world is evil. Avoid painting the world as a fearful place as children will pick up on this and may develop anxiety.
- Encourage young children to remain close at all times.
- Be willing to interrupt your own priorities at any moment to keep an eye on the child or respond to his or her needs.



Skills for Children

At the most basic level, children should be able to recognize potentially dangerous situations and know how to respond appropriately. Parents should encourage children to act appropriately in any situation to keep themselves safe.

Recognize

Parents and visitation monitors should help children recognize situations that may be unsafe. Parents can help children evaluate situations and feelings that may develop from these unsafe situations. In unsafe situations children may have feelings of discomfort and these feelings can be protective factors for the child.

Some situations for parents to help children recognize include:

- Adult asks child for unreasonable help.
- Adult encourages child to break a rule set by the parent.
- Adult asks child to keep a secret for them.
- Adult makes the child feel uncomfortable.

While some of these situations may be more or less threatening, these may be precursors to unsafe situations for children. Even if children can't comprehend why, they should be able to recognize these as potentially dangerous situations.

Respond

After discussing how to recognize unsafe situations, parents should work with children to respond to these situations.

In any interaction with a stranger, children should follow the **Move Away, Check First** approach.

- Stepping away to place distance (at least an arm's length) between children and the stranger.
- Child should always check with a responsible adult for permission before going anywhere, talking to anyone they do not know or accepting anything.
- Children should be clear in saying no.

Older children, teens, and adults follow a different approach called **Think First**.

- Older children should evaluate the situation
- Decide if they want to or should comply.
- Consider potential risks, benefits, and requirements before making a decision.
- Clearly say no and remove themselves from the situation.



In the event that a situation with a stranger turns violent, children should know they can defend themselves. The best way to respond to a violent situation is to:

- Look for an opportunity to get away. If the child is restrained, they should always look for a chance to get away. Run to the nearest store, trusted adult, or even another stranger, and ask for help.
- Make as much noise as possible. Saying words like “stop it” and “I don’t like that” alerts others passing by that the child is in a danger.

Practice

Children should rehearse how to respond to a number of situations to keep themselves safe. To accomplish this parents and visitation monitors can discuss a number of “what-if” scenarios with children during safety planning. In this method, parents and monitors can propose real life situations and ask children what actions they would take. This also allows an opportunity to gently correct children’s mistakes.

While out, parents can ask children to identify adults they can ask for help, where they would go if separated from the parent, and so on. Parents should take advantage of outings to help children identify how to respond in a real world setting.

Conclusion

Safety is the most important factor in supervised visitation and monitors should encourage parents to promote safety outside of visitation as well. The strategies in this Epress can help both monitors and parents in developing appropriate safety plans with children. While addressing safety with children, parents and monitors must avoid traumatizing or instilling fear and anxiety. The purpose of safety planning is to raise awareness for parents and children as they move through the supervised visitation process and life in general.

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Helping Children Make Friends

By Kristen Carney

Introduction

Social interaction and friendship are important for children. Parents often want their children to have friends but for some, “making friends” comes easier than others. Some parents may worry if their children do not make friends easily but parents can implement simple skills to help children during this process. This article will give parents specific tips on how to help their children make friends by modeling appropriate social skills.

Objectives

- Understand the importance of friendship
- Provide tips for parents to model social skills
- Allow parents to feel engaged with their children’s social development

Why are friends important?

Relationships are the building blocks of our existence. Social interaction is a fundamental need and acquiring the tools to communicate effectively, empathize, and get along with others is essential. While parents can't make friends for their children, they can help them develop and practice key social skills. The process of developing social skills starts at home. Gentle coaching strategies can be used by parents to build the parent-child relationship but also help children develop relationships with others now and in the future.



Tips for Parents

The patterns of social behavior that a child develops at a younger age will follow them as they get older. For that reason, it is absolutely essential that they acquire social skills now. The ability to nourish friendships will be beneficial in the long run. These tips are applicable to all relationships. From the classroom, to the workplace and in the home.

- ***Be an active listener***
 - Active listening is the process of hearing what people are saying and responding appropriately. Active listeners should avoid interrupting and should make relevant contributions. Active listeners ask questions and

listen to the response. This tip applies to everyone. Parents should actively listen when their children speak as well.

- Play with your children. The best way to evoke the desired behavior is by showing your child how to act in a comfortable environment with someone they trust.

REMEMBER:

“To have a good friend you must learn to be a good friend!”

- **Learn how to place others needs ahead of your own**

- Empathy is an acquired social skill. Role playing can help children tremendously.
- Teach children how to read facial expressions and help them understand when others are happy or sad by reminding them of times that they were happy or sad. It is important to identify emotions that your child may be unaware of or not in tune to.

- **Focus on previous successes**

- Build confidence by commending children when they do something right.
- BE SPECIFIC: “I really liked how you shared your favorite toy with Amber.”

- **Avoid make comparisons**

- This is one of the biggest obstacles for parents because oftentimes, parents will compare their child with other children their age or even with their sibling(s).
- Recognize if your child is more introverted and would genuinely prefer solitary activities. Don't force social interactions.

- **Reach out to the child's teacher**

- No one spends more time with your child than you and his or her teacher. Brainstorm ideas to integrate your child socially with others.
- Perhaps your child's teacher will have another child in mind, with similar attributes or personality characteristics that your child could get along with well!

- **Have realistic expectations**

- Not everyone will parent an extroverted child. Don't force your



REMINDER:

The key to enduring friendships is:
“Treating others the way you want to be treated.”

child into playdates or social interactions that truly make them uncomfortable.

- Some children are introverted. That is okay. Find children with similar personalities and interests and listen to your child if he or she is uncomfortable.
- **Lead by Example**
 - Demonstrate good social interactions in front of your child. Nurture your friendships at home and show effective communication with others. Not only will this help your child, but it will make you more aware of your own relationships.

Tips for Kids

As a supervised visitation monitor, you can share the list below with parents as guidelines for their children to work on socializing. Kids may need some guidance with this oftentimes overwhelming task. These tips break down the act of socializing into small steps and will help children feel like they can achieve these smaller goals. As a reminder, this process is different for every family, parent, and child; Monitors should always be encouraging and should advise parents to be open when discussing socializing with their children.

- Ask questions and listen— Get to know potential friends.
- Make eye contact and smile
- Share “safe” topics until you know you can trust them.
- Be positive about potential friends.
- Don’t gossip/ talk about people behind their back.

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Holiday Crafts and Activities for Supervised Visitation

By Brittney Clemons

The holidays are right around the corner and spending time with family during the holidays can soothe feelings of loneliness and bring families closer together. As a supervised visitation provider, you can provide the following simple holiday arts-and-crafts projects during visitation to help foster parent-child bonding this holiday season. These instructions could be passed out with the listed materials for families to work on together during visits. The crafts are easy to make and all of the supplies are readily available and inexpensive to make visitation a lot more enjoyable this holiday season.

Graham Cracker Gingerbread House

Materials:

- 10 whole graham crackers (8 for the house, 2 for the roof)
- A can of white frosting
- Candy to decorate your house like gumdrops, chocolate kisses, red licorice, and hard candies
- Large plate or tray
- Spoon
- Butter knife
- Small plastic bag



Instructions:

1. Wash your hands before you start.
2. Put your frosting mixture in a plastic bag and cut a hole in the corner, so you can squeeze the frosting out of it.
3. Using the frosting as 'glue', glue four double graham crackers in the shape of a rectangle on a tray or plate.
4. Now put frosting on the corners of two more graham crackers. Place the crackers on either side to make a peak. This is the roof of the house.
5. Once the structure is dry, coat each side with frosting and use candy to decorate your house! Use your imagination!
6. Be sure to decorate one side at a time so the frosting doesn't get hard before you can stick candy to it.
7. When it's dry, you can dig in.

Paint Stick Snowmen

Materials:

- Wooden paint stir stick painted white
- 3" x 3" piece of felt for hat
- 8" x 1" strip of material or felt
- 3 buttons or pony beads
- 1/2 of an orange toothpick
- 6" piece of yarn
- White craft glue
- Scissors
- Black marker or black paint
- Hot glue gun



Instructions:

1. Wrap 3"x3" fabric around the top of the stick and hot glue it together in the back.
2. Wrap 8"x1" strip of material around the neck, tie in a knot. Fringe the ends with scissors.
3. Use white craft glue to attach 3 buttons or beads below the scarf and glue the orange toothpick on for the nose.
4. Use black marker, or a toothpick dipped in black paint to create the mouth and eyes.
5. Let everything dry. All done!

Paperclip Angel Ornament

Materials:

- 12mm pink round pearl bead
- Butterfly paperclip from Walmart, Office Supply store, or Amazon.
- 1/8 Inch wide ribbon

Instructions:

1. Choose a bead, and use an ice pick or other sharp object to clean out the hole so you can push the ribbon through it. Don't try to enlarge the hole, just clean it out.
2. Cut a piece of 1/8 inch wide ribbon 11 inches long. Cut the ends on a diagonal.
3. Slightly twist the ends of the ribbon to start threading it through the hole.
4. Make sure the ribbon ends are even.
5. Use the loop end to push through the paperclip.
6. Make a lark's head knot or pull the ends and bead through the loop and pull up snugly against the top of the paperclip center.



7. Make another knot on top of the bead.
8. Make another knot near the ends of the ribbon.
9. Trim the ends neatly on a diagonal.
10. Hang the paperclip angel ornament using the ribbon.

Pine Cone Reindeer

Materials:

- Small or medium sized pine cone
- 4 brown pipe cleaners
- Google eyes (you could also use small white paper circles)
- Red or pink pom pom (you could also use a crumpled up piece of construction paper)



Instructions:

1. First you need to make the reindeer's legs. Wrap the ends of a brown pipe cleaner around each other to make a circle.
2. With the joint in the center, bend and squish the circle so that it's flat. Basically you are just doubling up the pipe cleaner. Repeat steps 1 & 2 twice to make the other set of reindeer legs and antlers. You should have 3 strips of "double" pipe cleaners with the joint in the middle.
3. The reindeer's body is the pine cone placed sideways. The smallest end of the pine cone is the face. Wrap one pipe cleaner around the front end of the pine cone and another pipe cleaner around the back end of the pipe cleaner. Make sure you put the pipe cleaner joint in the pine cone (that way there's no pokey ends sticking out). Bend the ends to make the feet.
4. To make the antlers wrap your last pipe cleaner around the front of the pine cone, sticking up from the top. Twist it like a twist tie at the top of the pine cone. Spread the antlers apart a bit.
5. Cut small lengths of pipe cleaner about 1" long. Fold them in half.
6. Glue the small pieces of pipe cleaner on the antlers.
7. Glue on your eyes and nose and your reindeer is complete!

Party Horns

Materials:

- A cardboard paper towel roll or a sturdier tube from a wax paper roll
- Waxed paper
- Rubber band
- Colored paper
- Glue
- Scissors
- Colorful tissue paper



Instructions:

- Cover one end of the cardboard tube with waxed paper. Then use a rubber band to hold it in place.
- Decorate the sides of the tube with colored paper.
- Make three holes near to the covered end of the tube. Make these holes about 1.5 inches apart.
- Cut colorful tissue paper into strips and then glue these tissue paper fringes around covered end.
- Blow through horn by placing fingers over holes.

New Year's Mask

Materials:

- White cardboard
- Colored paper
- Colored pen (any color)
- Scissors
- Needle and thick thread
- Pencil
- Glue
- Colored glitter glue
- Auto-adhesive crystals (any color)



Instructions:

1. Place the cardboard in front of you.

2. Use a piece of thread to measure how big the mask should be and make the markings on the cardboard, according to your measurements.
3. Using the thread Measure how big the eyes should be and make the markings for the eyes on the cardboard.
4. Draw the lower part of the mask.
5. Make an arch in the middle, where the nose will be.
6. Draw the upper part of the mask – you can make any shape you like. Make an inverted arch in the middle.
7. Cut out the mask.
8. Draw the eyes and cut them out.
9. Take the needle with thread and put it through one corner.
10. On the end of the thread make a knot, then pull the thread. The knot will stay in the front of the mask.
11. Do the same for the other corner, and now you can use the threads to tie the mask.
12. Decorate the mask. Use glitter glue to highlight all the edges of the mask.
13. Draw two stars on the colored paper and cut them out.
14. Add glue on the back of one and place it on one side, over the eye.
15. Add the second one beside it.
16. On the other side of the mask write 2016 using your colored pen.
17. Now, take two auto-adhesive crystals and place them over the stars.

Other Activities

- Come up with a New Year's Resolution
- Read Holiday Books
- Play board games
- Color
- Solve puzzles

References

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