



Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation

The Institute for Family Violence Studies

Florida State University

OCTOBER EPRESS

QUESTIONS FROM DIRECTORS

We listened in on the last phone conference about mental illness. Our problem is that we have a parent who has a severe mental illness, and a history of violence. How do we prepare for these visits? My staff is alarmed by this case.

It's important for everyone to know that some parents can be very negatively affected by mental illness, and that such an illness can affect the visitation environment. The first issue, and the most important, is safety. Before accepting a referral and scheduling the first visit, you should always ask yourself: does the program have the safety procedures necessary for taking this case? Does staff have the ability to safely provide visits? Is the environment here conducive to appropriate visits in this case? These questions should be asked not just once, but *continuously* throughout the long-term visitation process. Cases are not static. They change. That's why it's important to staff cases regularly.

With a history of violence, your program should use off-duty law enforcement as security, whenever possible. The problem is that such security is expensive, and many programs cannot afford to use it for every visit. That means you may have to limit the frequency of visits to those times when you can afford to have security on site. I realize that this is not an optimal situation, but remember that safety is paramount. If your staff are alarmed, you should find out why. Do they feel that security is not close enough when the visits are occurring? Be sure that security is *inside* the building. Have there been any direct threats to staff? If so, visits should immediately be suspended and the court should be alerted. Does staff feel supported in their supervision? Never have just one staff person on duty during visitation days. There should always be more than one trained staff person in the building on visit days.

Is there medication involved for the parent? Many mental illnesses are treatable, but medication often needs to be adjusted and that takes time. In addition, some parents don't take their medication regularly, or stop taking it when they feel better. This can result in a parent's erratic behavior. If you suspect that medication is the issue, be sure to ask the case manager about it. There may indeed be cases in which a parent is not

allowed to visit unless they have complied with their medication prescription, especially when failure to comply results in poor behavior.

Always document a parent's behavior and statements in your file. Don't assume that you will remember what happened a few months from now: write it down as accurately and specifically as possible. If you still have concerns about being able to monitor the case safely, go back to court. You maintain discretion for your caseload according to the Supreme Court's Minimum Standards.

We have a case in which the mother does not like the case manager, and she always says negative things about her at visits. Are we supposed to be recording that information?

Whenever anyone asks me whether they should write something in the case file, I inevitably say yes. This is not just about a case manager. Err on the side of including comments about anyone involved in the case. And don't make a secret of writing it down. The parent should know and understand that what is said at visits is likely to go directly into the case file. Be transparent. It's the best practice here. The court will look at the totality of the visits, and it is the judge's job to sort through any extraneous information and decide its value.

Do you do any management skill building lessons available, such as employee evaluation strategies or strategic planning lessons?

No. We focus on knowledge building and practice skills for visitation. If you need help building your management skills, check online for tutorials. There are many sites available, including <http://humanresources.about.com/>

Helping Children Build Resilience

By Kimberly Newby

Introduction

Resilience is the ability to navigate through challenges in life and bounce back from them. Resilience consists of a broad set of abilities and skills that help people manage in difficult times. Being resilient is mentally and physically beneficial. People who respond to hardships with resilience are healthier, happier in their relationships, more successful in school and work, and are less likely to become depressed. Like many things, resilience can be learned and built upon over time in a variety of ways. As a parent, you are the most influential and important person in helping your child build resilience. This E-Press covers a few ways that you can help your child build his or her resilience.

Help Your Child Become Resilient

1. *Build Caring Relationships*

A caring relationship is one in which your child feels loved, understood, accepted, and protected from harm. There are many ways to create caring relationships. For instance, you can give your child attention and affection with smiles; or show interest in his or her day and activities. Playing with your child and comforting them when they need it are good ways to build trust and create a close relationship.

2. *Be a Positive Role Model*

- Listen to Your Child and Others
- Stay Calm
- Show Patience
- Show Positive Outlook
- Keep Trying
- See Strengths
- Take Responsibility
- Be Involved

3. *Gather Community Resources*

An important part of building resilience is to reach out for help when you need it. Building a network of people and resources you can count on will show your child that it is okay to ask for help. Community resources can be beneficial in many ways.





4. Develop Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is what helps us handle life disappointments, worries, and frustrations. You can help your child build self-regulation by making sure your child gets enough sleep and eats healthy foods. In order to learn and understand patience, you can practice waiting with your child. For example, you can play waiting games with them such as “Red Light – Green Light” or “Freeze.”

5. Support Confidence

When we have confidence in our abilities, it helps us respond to our problems with resilience. Ways to help your child with his confidence:

- Encourage Your Child to Keep on Trying
- Show Your Child that Mistakes are Okay
- Offer Your Child Choices and Opportunities to Make Decisions
- Read or Tell Your Child Stories
- Teach Your Child Ways to Solve Problems and Resolve Conflicts



6. Develop a Positive Outlook

Being resilient includes looking for positives in life. By seeing things in a different perspective and making the best of situations you can help show your child how to bounce back from disappointment. For example, if an outdoor picnic had to be cancelled because of rain, stay positive and have the picnic inside. Creating new plans and adapting to speed bumps are crucial to being resilient!

7. Encourage Responsibility and Participation

Responsibilities will allow your child to feel like he or she is contributing. By participating in sports or other activities your child will feel like he or she is a part of something. Having responsibility and participating in activities will help build your child's interests and strengths.

References

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Encouraging Parents to Get Involved in Their Children's Education

By Aundrea Dilanchian

Introduction

Parental involvement is a large contributing factor to a child's success in school and in his or her future endeavors. For this reason, it is important to help parents develop different ways they can get and stay involved in their children's education. For example, students have shown to have higher grades and test scores, regular attendance patterns, and high graduation rates when their parents were actively involved in their academic progress.

This E-press will offer different methods and activities parents can do with their children to help motivate and engage them in the academic setting. Visitation monitors can print this E-press and distribute to parents at their visitation center. Monitors may also discuss these options with parents to encourage involvement with their children's education.

Tips for Getting Involved in Your Child's Education

Volunteer

According to The National Parent and Teacher Association, volunteering at least three hours over the course of the school year will have an immense impact on a student's academic performance. If the student sees his or her parent involved in school and participating in school events, the student will be more inclined to partake in activities as well. Volunteering for different events or groups within the school builds a sense of community for the parent by allowing the parent to gain relationships with other parents, staff, and faculty.



Here are a few ways parents can volunteer at their child's school:

- Join the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)
- Volunteer in the office, library, classroom etc.
- Sign up to receive the school newsletter
- Attend school functioned events with child

Homework Help

An effective way for parents to stay involved with their child's academic success is to offer homework help. Sitting down with children to do homework not only helps parents track their child's academic progress but it also lends support to the child ensuring them that he or she is not alone. Also, keeping a homework time routine is an important factor when keeping children engaged and successful. Parents should schedule an allotted amount of time each day after school to work on homework with their child. If by chance the child does not need help with his or her homework that day, parents should still sit with their child and either read a book or finish some work of their own.

Make it Fun!

Get creative while doing homework:

- Have the child estimate how long it will take for them to do their homework. Then, set a timer with the estimated time (plus 10 minutes) and see if the child can finish in the given time.
- After the child finishes their homework, parents can encourage something fun to do afterwards. For example, play time outside, dancing to the child's favorite music, or let the child pick what he or she would like for dinner.

Communicate with Teachers

Keeping an open line of communication between parents and teachers is a sure way to allow for student success and parental involvement. Each year a child's teacher changes and with those changes come a new set of expectations. It is not only important for children to understand what is expected from them at school but for parents to understand as well. With this understanding, parents can create an environment in which their child can meet those expectations. A way to strengthen the parent-teacher relationship is to schedule monthly meetings with the teacher to discuss a child's academic performance.

The following are some questions for parents to ask teachers during a meeting:

- Is my child giving their best effort in the classroom?
- What can my child do to improve their academic success?
- What more can I do to support and encourage my child's academic success?



Be Vocal about School

Being open and vocal is an important factor regarding parental involvement in children's schooling. Taking a small part of each day to talk to children about their day at school can make an immense impact on how children view school. The value of school will increase when parents make a point to talk openly about it with their children. Some helpful tips for creating an open conversation about school are:

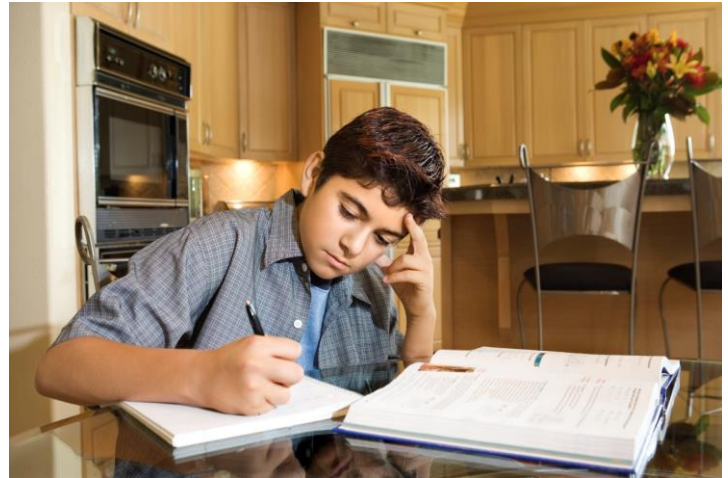
- Set a time when both parent and child can sit down and talk about the child's day. For example, in the car, after homework is done, or during dinner.
- Parents should give the child their undivided attention. Parent should avoid multitasking during this time.
- Parents should talk **with** their child, not at them.
- Ask frequent open-ended questions.

Talk about the Future

It is never too early to talk about what a child wants to do when he or she grows up. Conversations about a child's future career goals can fuel the child's drive and motivation to do well in school to arrive at those goals.

Some ways parents can engage in conversation with their child about future academic plans:

- Encouraging children to "think outside the box" when it comes to future plans.
- Finding different professionals in the work field for children to shadow for exposure to different professions.
- It is never too early to start looking at different colleges! Schedule a college tour!



Conclusion

Education is the greatest tool children possess. A child needs the support of a parent to do well and excel in their studies. There are different ways to encourage parents to get involved with their kids at school and monitors should take opportunities to discuss this with parents. Parental involvement in school will not only offer the support children need, but it also has the potential to be a memorable and rewarding journey towards children's success in life.

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Let's Talk about Examples of Positive Parent Modeling & Coaching in Supervised Visitation

Parent modeling and coaching can be used in all areas of visitation and the parent-child relationship, but can be essential when parents are utilizing negative parenting practices.

(We will discuss these at the phone conference, too)

Situation	What You Can Say To The Parent	What You Can Say To The Child
<p>Parent expresses that they are tired, upset, or frustrated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Well, I’m glad that you were able to come today so you can visit Mark.” • “I know you’re tired/frustrated but I just wanted to tell you how much you’re improving your behavior/promptness during visitation.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Want to read a book to your mom?” • “I know you were looking forward to telling your mom about your school dance. Would you like to share about it with her now?”
<p>Parent becomes frustrated with child or doesn’t know what to say.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Last week, Jimmy wanted to play Monopoly. Does that sound like something you want to do today?” • “We have some new books this week. Would you like to read one to your daughter?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Erin, I know you didn’t do “nothing” at school today. Let’s try talking about what you did in science class.” • “I’m sure your mom would like to hear about how you learned to play soccer in school.”
<p>Parent and children aren’t sure what to do or play.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What kind of things did you do when you were eight? Do you think Farrah would like to do those things?” • “I know Johnny mentioned he wanted to read one of the new books today, how about you read to him?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Shayla, you are such a big girl. Why don’t you ask your dad to play Legos with you!” • “Kyla, is there another game you would like to play? We have so many things you can do with your mom!”

<p>Parent is visiting with multiple children who may have different ages or interests.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What kinds of games to Jeremy and Johnny like to play together?” • “Can you think of any activities that would be fun for a three year old and a nine year old?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you two like to do when you are together? • Tell me about a time you had fun with your sister.
<p>Child is acting out or not responding to the parent.</p>	<p><u>During the visit:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Mom, remember what we said about sharing?” • “Uh oh, Dad, looks like Marquis is getting a bit upset. Why don’t you try those new skills we talked about?” <p><u>After the visit:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have discussed Shayla’s outbursts before. I think it would be helpful if you could cut in when she starts to have a tantrum and ask her to calm down for you.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Kevin, I can see you’re frustrated, but we do not yell during visits with your mom. Is there something we can do to help you calm down?” • “Dani, this time is special, for you and your dad to play and talk. Would you like to answer your dad so you can have a good time?”
<p>Parent is opposed to certain parenting behavior that the monitor is trying to model or encourage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Well, we’re here to work on your case plan. Let’s work on making visits successful and follow the program rules so that you and your son can have a good visit.” • “This may not be how you were raised or what your parents did, but we want you to succeed at your case plan today. There is so much positive that can happen at visits. This will make your relationship better in the long run.” 	<p>N/A</p>

Don't forget the WHY. Explain WHY you make the suggestions to parents. It may be obvious to you, but the WHY is important to parents who have low skill sets.

Domestic Violence leads to murder of officer

A tragic and compelling article below describes a murder by Joel Smith, who killed Deputy Sheriff Bill Myer, a process server, last week when Myer was serving him with an Injunction for Protection and collecting Smith's weapons. This case serves as a reminder of how dangerous domestic violence cases can be. Please note that bystanders did not even recognize Smith as the shooter because he was dressed up in business clothing. Smith and his wife had an eight-month old child. DV cases with young children get referred to supervised visitation all the time in Florida.

<http://www.nwfdailynews.com/article/20150923/NEWS/150929721/?Start=2>

Joel Dixon Smith told his wife Sunday night that "someone was leaving in a coffin" if she called the cops on him.

That someone would be "him or a police," the wife said in a petition for injunction she filed at the Okaloosa County Clerk of Court's Office the following day.

One day later deputy Bill Myers arrived at Smith's attorney's office to serve the injunction and, as it dictated, collect Smith's guns.

Smith used the opportunity to make good on his promise.

The man Okaloosa Sheriff Larry Ashley Tuesday called "a sick little coward," waited until Myers' back was turned before firing numerous rounds into the officer's head and midsection.

He then went back into the attorney's office of Cotton and Gates for an undetermined amount of time.

David Wray, who owns a business next door to the Plew Avenue law firm, heard the shots and came over to investigate. He was bent over the fallen deputy when Smith left Cotton and Gates for the second time.

Wray recalled Smith wearing a light blue, long sleeved dress shirt and slacks. "He was dressed to see his attorney."

The formal attire threw him off, Wray said. He thought when Smith came out the door he was a law firm employee.

“The guy popped out of the door and I said ‘Have you called 911 yet?’ ” Wray said. “Then a lady across the street started yelling, ‘He’s the shooter,’ or something along those lines.”

Wray said he left the unresponsive Myers and tried to follow Smith. He got some good photos of his vehicle license plate but found there was too much traffic between them to risk pursuing him.

“I thought, ‘I’m not going to drive like James Bond trying to knock this guy off the street,’ ” he said.

Wray said he got back to Myers' side before emergency personnel arrived and did what he could to ease the now somewhat conscious officer's pain, things like removing his shattered glasses from his face.

Myers was still alive when he was taken from the scene to Fort Walton Beach Medical Center, but died several hours later.

Smith also ended up dead after a shootout inside a Niceville Comfort Inn.

The Sunday night altercation that resulted in Smith's wife filing for an injunction began, she said in her affidavit, when the couple's 8-month-old fell off a bed at the family's Niceville home.

“I said we need to be with him when he is on the bed at all times,” the affidavit said. “My husband then asked me if I thought he was a bad parent ...“Before I could answer he grabbed me by my neck.”

Smith pushed his wife, who was still holding the baby, against a wall. When she threatened to call the police, he “took my phone and twisted my arm” and then he warned her that if officers were summoned someone would be leaving in a coffin, the affidavit said.

At the time of the shooting, 33-year-old Smith was being treated medically for mental health issues that included severe anxiety and anger, his wife reported in the affidavit.

She also checked a box on the report that asked if her husband was a drug addict, and wrote beside that “weed.”

Smith's wife was no stranger to domestic violence, police reports show.

Walton County deputies arrested Smith in April of 2008 when his wife reported that he'd picked the lock on a bathroom door and “grabbed her by the arms.”

She told them at the time “that her husband hit her in the past.”

Myers, 64, had retired from the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office in 2013 after 24 years as a deputy. He had returned to the agency in January and was working part-time as a process server the morning he was gunned down.

Smith owned three guns, according to the petition for injunction. Two were shotguns and the third a 9mm handgun.

A stunned community did what it could Wednesday to gather itself following another fatal law officer shooting. Myers' death was the fourth since deputy Anthony Forgione was killed in 2008.

Students attending at least one local school set out flags to honor Myers' memory and a memorial was set up outside the Cotton and Gates law firm.

Former Okaloosa Sheriff's Office Capt. Mike Busby was visiting the memorial late Wednesday afternoon. He said he had traveled from Washington D.C., after hearing of Myers' death.

Busby said he was Myers' boss for about five years when the two were employed at the Sheriff's Office. Myers was a model employee, Busby said, who simply "never opted to look for a promotion."

"He liked doing what he was doing," Busby said.

Karen Oehme, J.D., Director