



EPRESS

News Holiday News from the Family Safety Program

"Among a lot of other toy donations from our community, this year a local restaurant set up a giving tree for cash donations. They keep a cash donation box in each of their five restaurants year round as well. We received \$3000 from the giving trees (the owners matched each donation up to \$10 and a total of close to \$10,000 for the year (the owners have matched the cash box donations too.)"

Questions from Directors

I had a very difficult holiday season with a client who is the custodian/guardian of the children. She is the grandmother, and a lawyer, and she wants to completely control the visit. If I don't agree with everything she wants me to do, she threatens to sue me for "interference with custody." Everyone else has resigned from the case – no one will stay because the custodian is so difficult. There have been three case managers, and

several GALs. I do not like to be threatened, but I've already accepted the case and had several visits with the visiting parent and children. Help!

There is good news in this case, because the father also has a lawyer, and you definitely need to go back to court. If you don't already have a means by which you can communicate these numerous difficulties to the court, and the case manager won't help, I suggest that you alert the parties, in writing, that you need guidance from the judge because of difficulties with the case. Then at least one of the parties will likely set a hearing. The fact that supervised visitation programs are not parties to the cause has frequently resulted in problems for programs that do not have a way to communicate with the referring judge. It is untenable to have a client threaten you with a lawsuit. My advice is to get the judge to weigh in immediately, so the policies at your program are clear for this client and every client.

At a visit last month, a child complained to her father that her mother did not give her a specific toy. We forgot all about it until the father showed up at the next visit with that toy, and gave it to the child. Well, the mother was upset when she picked the child up because she said the toy was not age-appropriate. We are unsure of what to do now, because the toy was not really dangerous or objectionable – it was just designed for older kids.

It's true that some gifts can be dangerous or inappropriate, and that's why you should always screen gifts before the visit. But since the child has the toy now, it will be up to the custodian to decide if the child can play with it. There is also the chance that the father was trying to manipulate the child (and irritate the mother) by giving the child the toy. But the gift could also have been given in all innocence. I can't tell from here. In the future, you should not let any package go into the visit room unexamined. The visit monitor knew that the toy was disallowed by the mother, so she could have intercepted the package before he gave it to his daughter. The silver lining here is that you have learned that re-training staff on gifts and packages is essential. It could save a life. Every single package or gift or bag or box must be examined by staff before it comes into the program.

The information you've provided about helping parents with specific tools reminded us of a family in which the parents were both abused as children and lived very traumatic lives. I don't think anyone ever told this mother that she was a good person, or that she did something right. So now she has no skills in encouraging her children. We gave her a list of things to support her and help her support her children for "just being." Can you develop a handout on that? Not just praise for doing something right, but just for being a person, a valuable person?

Yes! We will give you that handout at the next phone conference, so please plan to attend!

VIDEOS ON GOOD PARENTING

We've done the work for you and found quality videos that you can use with parents and staff training.

Ways to Bond with Your Child

Four Ways for Parents to Connect with Their Kids (2:45)- This video demonstrates four ways to encourage a child to stop playing with technology and start reconnecting with family. This includes adrenaline play, mirroring, baby play, and reading with family members. Each of these techniques encourages bonding and gives your child the attachments he or she is looking for.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAU5MljXJMw>

Tips to Help You Bond with Your Baby (4:36)- Just being close to your baby helps you start bonding, through touch, feeding, playing, bath time, massage, and bedtime. Interacting through these moments can help create powerful bonds for both you and your baby.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJKxviGPAAA>

Bonding with Your Adopted Newborn Baby (1:10)- Bonding with an adopted newborn is similar to bonding with a biological baby. The best way to bond is to interact with and be present as the baby familiarizes with his/her surroundings. Ways to facilitate

this with adopted babies are to get them familiar with your voice in utero, perhaps by recording your voice and having the biological mother play it to the baby regularly while pregnant.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hj7VFMTAFPU>

Child Bonding (3:59)- This video goes in-depth on some ideas for entertaining and bonding with your child for free or at a low cost. Suggestions include building a fort, playing with bubbles in the bathtub, having a fondue night, going star gazing, creating a game night, and hosting a family movie night.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCH4es2w5w8>

For Moms

Top Parenting Advice From Moms (2:25)- This video polls moms on various questions such as, “What do you wish someone told you about having a baby?”, “How did you survive the early years?”, and “What’s your favorite part about being a mom?”, giving future and current moms increased information on parenting from a mother’s perspective.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMwLODGE-lc>

Parenting Tips for Moms of Boys (3:15)- Sometimes boys need to cool off and get rid of frustrations due to increased hormones. This can at times cause overreactions to your discipline methods. Encouraging boys to get involved in sports or some other fitness activity as an outlet can help them get out their energy, allowing them to approach interactions calmly.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKzBUgs-PoY>

For Dads

The 3 Phases of the Father Daughter Relationship (5:18)- Covers the stages of a growing daughter’s relationship with her father, including the Hero Dad/Princess Daughter phase, the Dorky Dad/Adolescent Daughter phase, and the World’s Greatest Dad/Adult Daughter phase. This video emphasizes how difficult, yet important, the middle phase is, and provides reasons for why this phase is so crucial within the relationship.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ik707BYBRFM>

Myths of Fatherhood (5:14)- This video discusses popular myths about fathers and babies. It covers the topics of fathers helping out at night, a father's ability to take care of babies, and the life shifts that occur for dads.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFfS6pQ_EUc&list=PL8M6Q4vT_I6jjZTLDYSd8fs6HuNbrgLsh&index=15

Being a Good Parent: Children Live What They Learn

Advice for Parents: Positive Parenting Style (1:32)- This video discusses the benefits of raising a child using positive parenting skills, including the benefits of growing up happier and having greater self-confidence. Positive parenting includes the strategies of mutual respect, listening, consistency, and non-physical consequences for bad behavior.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-L2yqlcwJU>

How Parenting Affects Your Child's Brain (9:22)- This video shows how a parent bonds with a child, specifically through the hormone oxytocin, and explains how important nurturing the parent-child bond is. This means not talking "at" your child, but "to" your child. It is important to be able to step into your child's shoes and try to imagine what he or she is feeling at the time. It is also necessary to step back from saving your child from normal, bad experiences, such as dropping an ice cream cone on the ground, so that when you are not there to protect your child from these little issues, the child is prepared to deal with it. When there is secure attachment to the parent, the child is calmer and able to learn better.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFckNenV-QE>

Keeping Children Safe: Protecting the Well-Being of Children of Arrested Parents

By Cristina Batista



The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) released a document in August 2014 entitled *Safeguarding Children of Arrested Parents* (SCAP). The purpose of the document was to expose the significant issues centered on children who are adversely affected by a parents' arrest and in determining ways to reduce trauma. Through this research, the IACP created a model policy to be used as an example for other agencies to follow in order to better ensure that children's well-being is protected when a parent is arrested.

As a supervised visitation provider, you should to be aware of the current status of policies regarding child safety, law enforcement, and parental arrests at your program to be able to serve the needs of your clients. You can use this information to better understand the needs of children during parental incarceration, to become knowledgeable on new definitions and policies regarding parental incarceration, and to create better partnerships with law enforcement agencies in your community to protect children. You can also inform parents on the potential harmful effects of parental incarceration on children and how to best protect children in these situations. **Finally, you should use this information as you develop program policies and coordinate/partner with law enforcement agencies regarding arrests made at supervised visitation.**

The Problem

Today there are over 1.7 million children who have a parent in prison. This number indicates that there is a significant population of children whose needs have been overlooked. However, through the research that has been done, along with the push for the specific Model Policy, a great effort to focus on child well-being has been recognized by law enforcement agencies. Children of arrested parents need to experience immediate care to protect their future physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. The procedures proposed in *Safeguarding Children of Arrested Parents* are designed to enhance the reliability of arrest procedures, increase officer safety, and provide protection to vulnerable children.



When a parent is arrested or incarcerated, there are many negative impacts on children. In fact, parental incarceration is currently recognized as an adverse childhood experience. This experience of trauma contributes to lasting negative consequences including alcoholism, suicide, domestic violence, illegal drug use, depression, health issues, and criminal activity.

Currently, there is a lack of consistent law enforcement policy when it comes to awareness of the care that should be taken with children of arrested parents. Law enforcement agencies are working to build connections with partner organizations to minimize the trauma children face during or after parental arrest.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions are included to provide clear descriptions of what the IACP perceives as important terms of the Model Policy. These definitions will help law enforcement agencies and partnering organizations define aspects of safeguarding children in a standardized way.

- **Child:** Any unemancipated person under the age of 18, or as otherwise defined by state law, whether or not he or she is present at the arrest.
- **Parent:** Any adult who is legally responsible for the well-being, supervision, and care of a child. In most cases, this individual is a biological or adoptive parent, or guardian.
- **Caregiver:** A responsible adult selected to temporarily care for the child in situations where another individual with legal custody of the child is unavailable. In some cases, responsibility for the temporary care and supervision of a child

may be delegated to a relative, neighbor, friend, or another adult, as they are willing and able.

- **Child Welfare Services (CWS):** A public service agency, or its contractee, that has authority to assume responsibility for the care, welfare, and temporary supervision of a child pursuant to law.
- **Partner Organization:** A group or agency with interests aligned with this department with regards to safeguarding a child from trauma when his or her parent is arrested. This may include, but is not necessarily limited to, CWS, probation/pretrial entities, victim advocates, corrections, medical/ mental health services, schools, youth-serving organizations and faith-based programs.
- **Trauma:** Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, mental, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.
- **Responsible Adult:** An individual over 18 years of age who can pass a preliminary NCIC check and clear a child protection registry background check to ensure that he/she does not have any arrests for founded cases of child abuse, sexual crimes, domestic violence, recent arrests for drug use or possession, or other violent felony violations.

Statistics

The IACP offers recently updated data on the number of children and families who are affected by parental arrest. They do recognize, however, that the statistics under-represent the true number of arrests.

- An estimated 809,800 prisoners of the 1,518,535 held in the nation's prisons at mid-year were parents of minor children—a total of 52 percent of state inmates and 63 percent of federal inmates.
- An estimated 1,706,600 children have a parent in prison (i.e., 2.3 percent of the U.S. population under 18 years of age). Note that this does not include children who have parents in jail.
- Incarceration of mothers increased 122 percent and incarceration of fathers rose 76 percent between 1991 and 2007.
- More than half of mothers held in state prison reported living with at least one of their children in the month before arrest, compared to 36 percent of fathers.
- Among federal inmates, mothers were 2.5 times more likely than fathers to report living in a single-parent household.
- Among parents living with minor children prior to incarceration, more than three-quarters of mothers, compared to just over a quarter of fathers, reported providing most of the daily care of their children.

The Arrest of a Parent

Children face great trauma in the event of a parental arrest, whether they are present at the time of arrest or not. Children may encounter feelings of shock, anger, fear, and/or anxiety, and may very likely develop those emotions towards the arresting officer or law enforcement in general.

“Though witnessing a parent’s arrest may appear to be a short, relatively quick life event, the trauma that it can create may be a compounding risk factor that ultimately has a detrimental impact on the child’s well-being and development.”

After the event of a parental arrest and the parent is removed from the child's life, temporarily or permanently, common issues that arise are separation anxiety, sleep disruptions, and irritability. When a parent is arrested, children may experience immediate trauma, or experience traumatic reactions later on in life. Many children, after some time, experience general issues with



authority figures and particular issues in response to law enforcement.

In some cases, children of an arrested parent come to believe that they also did something wrong and are being punished by having their parents taken away. Children need help in understanding that they are not to blame for the arrest of their parent. Whenever possible, it is helpful for a child to be placed with a familiar adult. This maintains a level of stability in the child's life at a time when he or she is experiencing a high level of stress.

Future Law Enforcement Interaction

When children are protected from traumatic experiences during or after a parent's arrest, they are increasingly likely to have a better perception of authority and law enforcement entities. During an arrest, children form an image of police that can create a lasting impression well into adulthood. If children interact with officers who are attentive to their needs and who check to make sure of their safety, they are more likely



to form a positive view of law enforcement than if they have a negative experience with the officer. Throughout the parental incarceration, children's experiences with law enforcement will ultimately shape their view of police long-term. The focus of the new policy calls for preventative action to be taken using protective factors in order to ensure that during a parent's arrest, officers show children care and support.

These protective factors include:

- **Pre-Arrest Planning:** Officers should try, whenever possible, to determine whether it is likely for a child to be at the scene of the arrest. If timing is not of immediate concern, it may be beneficial to postpone the arrest so that a child is not present. If a delay of arrest is not possible, arrangements should be made to have additional officers or Child Welfare Service employees at the scene.
- **Language:** Officers should determine if the parent being arrested is English-language efficient. If not, arrangements should be made for a translator to be present. This is important because the translator could speak with the parent to determine if he or she has children. Additionally, if a child is present, and does

not speak English, it is very important for a translator to explain what is happening in an age-appropriate way.

- *Booking:* When an arrested individual is being processed, it is important that law enforcement officers utilize the intake process as another way to determine whether the individual is responsible for any children under the age of 18. A dependent child can be negatively affected in a multitude of ways throughout his or her parent's incarceration.
- *Appropriate Placement of the Child:* The best placement for the child is either with the other parent or legal guardian, especially if that means the child can stay in the same home. The individual(s) the child is placed with should be able to provide proper physical care, supervision, and emotional support to the child. If there are concerns regarding the abilities of the other parent or legal guardian, another placement should be made. If appropriate, the arrested parent should have the right to make a recommendation and/or express his or her preference. If the parent is a single parent, he or she should have the primary opportunity to select a caregiver (unless the arrest involves child abuse or neglect). It is important for officers and Child Welfare Service employees to also talk to the child to determine if he or she feels safe and comfortable with the appointed caregiver. Whenever possible, simple checks can also reduce the traumatic effects of a parental arrest. These follow-ups not only ensure that the child's well-being is being protected by the new caregiver, but will also help children view arresting officers in a more positive light.

Law Enforcement and Community Partner Organizations

“Officers in only 13 percent of law enforcement agencies ask whether an arrestee has dependent children every time an arrest is made, whether or not children are present.”

There is a current need for law enforcement and communities to treat the event of parental arrest with more compassion. There needs to be a focus on ensuring that law enforcement and social service agencies are working towards the physical and emotional safety of a child as much as they are providing a public safety by making an arrest. Protecting the innocence of a child at the scene of an arrest is as much of a legal responsibility as protecting the public from the arrested individual.

What is most integral in developing an environment of compassion in these situations is proper training on how to proceed and respond during parental arrest. For example, there have been many times when the arresting officer does not realize that the arrested individual is a parent. This problem may arise because the child is not present at the time or the parent is arrested in a location that is not his or her personal home. In these cases, it is advised that arresting officers ask specific questions to determine whether or not the arrested individual has a dependent minor in his or her care.



A minor is defined as any youth under the age of 18, but many officers currently allow for teens under the age of 18 to take care of themselves in the event of a parental arrest. Research has shown that teenagers are the most vulnerable to being overlooked after a parent has been arrested. For example, in police departments that have a written policy on handling minors, only 55% use the definition of child as stated above. The other 45% of police agencies alternated between the definition of child as 10 and under and/or 16 and under. There have been cases in which teenagers have been allowed to live alone for weeks at a time in empty houses after a parental arrest. The IACP wants agencies to recognize that older teens do not have the accurate resources and capability to support themselves on their own. The IACP's model policy helps to establish a foundation on how situations of a parental arrest should be handled in order to protect the well-being of the child.

The Model Policy

The Model Policy created by the IACP and BJA lists four basic steps to establish interagency cooperation.

- 1. There should be a written agreement between law enforcement agencies and local child welfare services to protect a child's well-being during a parental arrest and to address any trauma that the child experiences.**
- 2. Law enforcement agencies and local child welfare services should maintain open communication and meet regularly to share appropriate information on individual cases and to access the effectiveness of joint work.**

3. A liaison should be appointed by law enforcement to ensure that follow-ups are conducted with children affected by a parental arrest.
4. Officers should be given a list of names and contact information for partnering organizations and agencies that can assist in safeguarding child well-being.

Hope for the Future

Currently, there are not many interagency links that exist between law enforcement agencies and social service community organizations to ensure the protection of child well-being during parental arrest. The IACP hopes to correct this through the Model Policy, as well as through encouraging increased collaboration. Guarding the safety of a child’s well-being is a responsibility for both community organizations and law enforcement agencies. The expectation for the future is that officers will be specifically trained on how to successfully recognize and respond to a child whose parent has been arrested and that social service agencies can rely on law enforcement for help in protecting children of arrested parents.

Resources for Parents

Tips to Make Your Child’s Shots Less Stressful



While no shot is “painless,” usually it is the anxiety over getting the shot that is more upsetting to a child than the actual shot itself. Here are some ways to calm a child down and help distract them during vaccinations and other procedures:

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blow bubbles, play with a toy with them, or recite a nursery rhyme with them to distract them | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure they know that shots protect them, and are not a punishment. |
|---|--|

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a comfort object such as a blanket or stuffed animal nearby to help them feel safe and comfortable. Also, hold the child afterwards and have them stay seated for a few minutes in case they get dizzy when they stand up. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes, children throw tantrums over getting shots because they know their parent might get upset and stop it from being given. If this is the case, it is usually best to step away so the medical staff can do their job quickly. The parent can maintain eye contact with the child for support.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach them to blow out the pain, or cough during the shot. This helps relieve some of the tension they may be holding, which can cause a shot to hurt more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If shots really seem to cause the child pain, try using an anesthetic cream about 20 minutes before a shot
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a pacifier to the child if they use one, because the sucking sensation helps distract from the pain of the shot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with the doctor about the order the shots could be given, as some followed by certain others have been shown to cause less pain

Further Resources

Here are some recommended books you can read to your children to help prepare them for their next doctor's visit.

- [Lions Aren't Scared of Shots: A Story for Children About Visiting the Doctor](#) by Howard J. Bennett
- [The Berenstain Bears Go to the Doctor](#) by Stan & Jan Berenstain
- [The Saturday Shot](#) by Morgan Thomas

Movie Reviews

By Kayla Kirk

Deciding which movies are appropriate for children can often be challenging. Here are some recent family-appropriate movies that you can play at your visitation site or

recommend to parents to watch with their children. A background is provided for each movie, along with its rating.

G-General Audiences	This rating implies that the movie is appropriate for all ages. This movie contains little or no content that would offend parents for viewing by children.
PG-Parental Guidance Suggested	These movies have some material that may not be suitable for young children. The movies we have selected are PG for very limited inappropriate material, such as action scenes between cartoon characters or a scene that may scare some sensitive children. Advise parents to use their best judgment for their own children.

Rio 2

Rated G

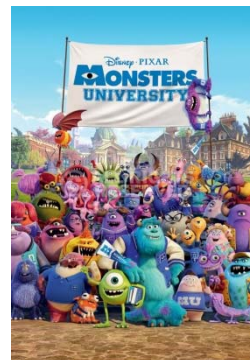
Blu, Jewel, and their three kids live a domesticated life in the city of Rio de Janeiro. But when Jewel decides the kids need to learn to live like real birds, she insists the family journey to the Amazon rainforest. There they encounter characters born to be wild and stumble upon Jewel's long-lost father. Soon they realize that the Amazonian habitat is threatened and that Blu and Jewel's old nemesis, Nigel the cockatoo, is returning for revenge.



Monsters University

Rated G

Mike Wazowski and James P. Sullivan are an inseparable pair, but that wasn't always the case. From the moment these two mismatched monsters met, they couldn't stand each other. They must work together to win the Scare Games so that they may stay in school as first year scare majors; otherwise, they will be expelled from school.



Frozen

Rated PG for some action and mild rude humor.

Princess Elsa has the power to turn things into ice, and her powers end up curing her home in infinite winter. Her younger sister Anna teams up with a mountain man, reindeer, and snowman to stop the winter and help her sister control her powers and use them for good. True love isn't what you would expect in this movie focused on the positives of sibling love.



Despicable Me 2

Rated PG for rude humor and mild action.

For those who loved the original Despicable Me, they will love even more minion madness! The reformed criminal mastermind, Gru, is back for another round in Despicable Me 2. An evil force is out to get those closest to Gru when his bumbling minions are snatched from the safety of their home by a faceless villain. Dr. Nefario and the girls also return for round two with a score of new characters.



The Croods

Rated PG for some scary action.

The Croods have never experienced the world outside the cave they call home. When their rocky shelter is destroyed, the family of six set out on an adventure of a lifetime. They trek across an awe-inspiring landscape in search of safety and discover a brave new world, full of wonderful and dangerous creatures that will leave them questioning if they could ever return to the dark confines of a cave.



Wreck it Ralph

Rated PG for mild action/violence and rude humor.

Wreck-It Ralph wants to unplug his loathsome reputation as a bad guy so the video game character sneaks out of his virtual world and into another one where he hopes a heroic quest will make him a lovable good guy, but his quest brings havoc to the whole arcade where he lives. Will him and his friends be able to work together to save their arcade and all the characters trapped inside?



How to Train Your Dragon 2

Rated PG for adventure action and mild rude humor.

Five years after Hiccup and Toothless united dragons and Vikings on the island of Berk, the now inseparable pair journey through the skies, charting unmapped territories. When one of their adventures leads to the discovery of a secret ice cave that is home to hundreds of new wild dragons and the mysterious Dragon Rider, they find themselves at the center of a battle to protect the peace.



The Lego Movie

Rated PG for action and rude humor.

An ordinary LEGO is mistakenly thought to be the Master Builder, the one who can save the universe. With the aid of an old mystic Vitruvius, a tough young lady, and Batman, he will fight to defeat the evil tyrant Lord Business who is bent on destroying the universe by gluing it together.



10 Things for Parents to Learn About Toddlers

By Sally Petterson

Introduction

Supervised visitation providers have a unique opportunity to help parents understand child development and ways to improve the parent/child relationship. In this EPress, supervised visitation providers will learn a variety of facts and tips about toddlers that can help the parents they serve understand their toddlers and improve their relationships. Below each fact is an example of how to use this knowledge during supervised visitation.

10 Facts About Toddlers

- 1) Toddlers have no sense of time.** Toddlers live in the present; their brains are not developed enough yet to understand what it means when their parents say, “We’re leaving in five minutes.” From this statement, young children would only understand that they are not leaving *yet*. Therefore, to help learn about the concept of time, parents should use words such as “first, next, and then” when explaining things to their toddlers to clarify time-order.

Example: When children attend supervised visitation, parents can explain the amount of time it will take by pointing to a clock and saying, “We will be there until this hand hits 12.

*First we will do _____,
next we will do _____,
then it will be time to go”.*



- 2) Everything is about control.** Children have very little that they can control, and they look for ways to gain control over new parts of their lives. This includes: the food they’ll actually eat, the clothes they’ll wear, what they’ll say, when they’ll fall

asleep, and if and when they'll use the toilet. In order to keep the peace, parents should allow children to make decisions whenever possible so they can learn important developmental skills, but in limited ways. In this way, the child will feel a sense of control, while the parent is still able to place appropriate limits to ensure that the child is safe and healthy.

Example: A parent interacting with their child during visitation could make sure to include the child in the choice of what they do during their session, such as, "We're going to be putting together a puzzle today. Would you like to make the puppy puzzle or the garden puzzle?"

- 3) Toddlers can be easily overwhelmed by too many rules.** Instead of having a long list of rules for a toddler to follow, parents can prioritize just a few rules that focus on safety. As the toddler learns these rules, parents can gradually add more. In order to help him or her follow the rules better, childproofing the home and keeping temptations out of sight can be helpful.

Example: For the first few visitation sessions, the parent should focus on helping the child learn just one or two rules. These could include not running away when he or she is upset or not yelling when other children yell. As the child begins to master these rules, one or two more could be added to help him or her learn additional positive behaviors.

- 4) Give toddlers room to be creative and imaginative.** Children do not need all the latest toys; crayons or even an empty box can inspire them! Parents should allow their children to have creative and imaginative play, as this is important in their development. Through play, children practice what they experience in the world.



Example: Some creative activities a parent can provide his or her child are musical instruments, paints, a costume box, or construction toys or blocks, all of which can be enjoyed during supervised visitation together.

- 5) **The more you talk and read to toddlers, the quicker they will learn.** Between the ages of 18 months and 2 years, toddlers learn at least one new word a week. This is the time when children need for parents to constantly converse and read with them, as their language development is occurring so quickly.

Example: A parent can read a book to his or her child, or have the child practice reading out loud during each visitation session.

- 6) **The characteristics that are most difficult to deal with in toddlers are often ones needed for adult life.** When children are young, they can be difficult to handle because of their independence, stubbornness, curiosity, and persistence, but as they grow up, these are the very characteristics that will help them in life. By keeping this in mind, parents can learn to embrace or at least better understand some of these traits as they come about.

Example: If a parent begins to get frustrated at the way his or her child is acting during supervised visitation, the service provider can educate the parent on how certain behaviors will benefit the child in the long term and can remind the parent of this in subsequent sessions to help the parent stay calm and have patience with the child.

- 7) **Allow toddlers to feel mad or sad.** Instead of swooping in to try to make children happy all the time, parents need to let them experience what sadness or anger feels like. If parents constantly try to make things better, children come to believe that it is wrong to feel this way. This should never be used as a reason for neglect of a child's emotions. After allowing the child to feel mad or sad, parents should discuss these emotions with the child and comfort them.

Example: During supervised visitation, a child may want to participate in a certain activity that he or she is not able to do at that time. This may cause the child to get upset and angry at his or her parent or the service provider. The parent can let the child get some of his or her feelings out, then sit down



and explain that sometimes plans must change, and it can be frustrating, but the different experience may be just as fun if he or she gives it a chance.

- 8) Let toddlers figure it out themselves.** Children need to be faced with a small amount of frustration, as this allows them to learn coping skills that will help them function in the real world. Minor frustration or failure helps children learn how to become flexible to situations, overcome them, and learn to take risks. Again, this would never be a reason to allow neglect or abuse and is only appropriate in safe circumstances not relating to basic needs of shelter, water, food, or safety.

Example: During supervised visitation, a child may become frustrated trying to accomplish an activity he or she has never completed before. Due to inexperience, the child may be unable to properly solve a hard puzzle or may have difficulty reading some of the words in a new book. However, the parent should refrain from stepping in for a few seconds to give the child a chance to work it out.

- 9) Praise toddlers' hard work, not their intelligence.** If children recognize their success as a reward of the work they put in, it will encourage them to try harder. However, if they feel that their destiny is shaped by their IQ, they'll only think they can go so far and that their future is pre-destined. Parents should praise their young child on how hard he or she worked on a project, rather than just the outcome.

Example: During a supervised visitation session, a child who normally has several temper tantrums only has two small outbursts. Instead of focusing on the fact that the child was unable to make it through a session without any tantrums, the parent



should focus on how hard the child tried to express him or herself in acceptable ways, and give encouragement for self-control.

- 10) Toddlers are at their happiest when they feel safe and secure, rather than once every desire is met.**

Toddlers feel safe and happy when they feel that they are being heard, not when they have all the latest and greatest toys. Giving them empathy when they are frustrated or upset can go a long way. For example, if a toddler's favorite jelly just ran out, instead of panicking and running to go get more to keep the child happy, a parent can tell their child, "Oh, no, it's so frustrating when we run out of things we enjoy, isn't it?" As long as the child's basic needs are met, simply sharing in a child's upset feelings over a situation can help the child learn how to cope.

Example: If a child gets sad during a visitation session, the parent can ask the child what he or she is feeling, and mirror those feelings back to the child, showing that the parent has heard and understood what he or she is going through.

Case Scenario

Amy is 20 months old and has started to become much more independent and stubborn. She lives with her mother, who has difficulty controlling her and often gets into power struggles with her, especially when trying to get to appointments on time. Her mom comes to you, the supervised visitation provider, for some advice because she is getting frustrated and overwhelmed.

Based on the tips in this article, what could you explain to her that could help her better communicate with Amy?

Answer: You can start off by explaining that Amy's concept of time is very limited right now and to help her understand short timelines, her mom can use words that describe the order they will be doing things in. For example, she could say, "First, I am going to finish reading this book to you, then we are going to put our shoes on, and finally, we are going to walk calmly to the car and drive to the doctor's office." This kind of explanation can help Amy comprehend what is going to happen better than, "We're leaving in five minutes, so finish up playing!"

Since many of these power struggles seem to occur as Amy and her mother are trying to get somewhere, another tip might be to have everything set out earlier in the day to prepare to leave on time. For example, if Amy always grows stubborn and upset about the toy she is allowed to bring with her, her mom can help her pick it out ahead of time and remind her that she already decided the toy she will be bringing. An example of

how to say this could be, “Now Amy, later today we are going to the doctor’s office. You can bring one toy with you to show the doctor and nurses. Do you want to bring Gerry the Giraffe or your blue teddy?” In this way, her mother limits the choices Amy has to two, so that a decision will be made in a timely fashion, but also gives her a sense of control so Amy feels empowered and independent.

Finally, as Amy’s behavior improves and she reacts appropriately, her mother can encourage her and thank her for how well-behaved and grown up she is being, and how hard it is sometimes to do that. By showing Amy that she understands the difficulties she sometimes has in following directions and praising her for the hard work she has put into acting like a big girl, Amy feels that her mother understands where she is coming from and in turn, glows under the positive attention she is receiving. Remember, Amy’s desire for independence and her persistence are character traits that will help her later in life. These tips can help relieve some of the stress and frustration of trying to get to appointments on time with a toddler and further positive parent-child relationships.

Conclusion

In conclusion, toddlers are not small adults but are developing and learning all the time. Therefore, supervised visitation providers can help parents understand more about how their toddlers interact so that they can react in positive and educational ways. By helping a parent to learn about how toddlers think and feel, providers are encouraging healthy relationships and bonding with their clients.

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Being Held Back in School: Helping with the Transitions

By: Sally Petterson

Introduction

Schools commonly engage in the practice of retaining students who are not performing at the same academic level as their peers in order to give them the chance to relearn the material and comprehend it better before moving on to the next grade level.

The main objectives we will cover are:

- The potential impact of being held back in school- socially, academically, and emotionally
- How parents can help a retained child perceive their situation as being an opportunity rather than adversity
- Steps to take to ensure academic comprehension
- Implications of client retention on social service providers
- A case example of how service providers can be supportive to a child who has been held back

The Micro- and Macro- Impact of Retention

Sometimes children need extra time to learn, and sometimes this results in the child being held back a grade in school. Frequently, holding students back has positive outcomes for the child, who benefits from the repetition. Positive outcomes usually involve proper support and encouragement. However, there is some controversy regarding the effects of being held back in school. Several studies have shown negative effects on not just the individual being retained, but also their classmates and potentially the school system.

When a child is held back, if the proper supports, encouragement, and academic assistance are *not* put into place, the child can develop low self-confidence regarding their academics, which may affect their social adjustment. This can cause a dislike of school and can produce behavioral problems. In fact, retention is one of the highest predictors of drop-out rates. If people treat a retained child as if he or she is not intelligent enough, or they do not appropriately support



him/her in understanding the material, the child may begin to believe that he or she is not able to succeed.

If a school uses test results to determine whether a child can move on to the next level or not, children who have learning disabilities are at a greater risk of being held back. Ensuring that this is not the case is important to the child's academic development and reinforces the need for appropriate outside support, including tutoring and extra practice.

At the institution level, schools that have high rates of retention often find that the overall behavior of the students is negatively affected. Studies have shown that higher rates of students, including those that have not been held back, get in trouble when schools have larger numbers of older and retained students. However, the actual students who have been held back generally display more negative effects than those in the same classroom.

Some students who are held back may benefit by having the extra year to cover the coursework, but unfortunately, these gains often drop off after 2 or 3 years. Therefore, in order for retention to actually benefit the student, practices must be put into place that will assist them in sufficiently learning and understanding the material. Teachers and policymakers need to be aware of best practices, so that appropriate support may be put into place for the good of the individual student, as well as the school.

How to Help Retained Students Succeed

Retention should not be a sentence of failure as a student or parent.

Retention can be positive when extra assistance is also given to supplement the regular learning material. This helps the retained student to more easily adjust socially, as well as help them with their academic and behavioral skills. With support, the child becomes more motivated to achieve. In a



study on Florida schools and their retention policies, results showed that in the short term, 3rd graders who were held back benefitted more than students who were recommended to be retained but instead were moved into the next grade. These results only show the short term benefits, but that is why outside academic support is also

necessary to expand those benefits into the long-term by instilling self-confidence in the student's knowledge of the material and their academic ability.

So how can parents help their child who has been held back?

Parents/caregivers can be a child's most dedicated advocate and supporter. Ultimately, how a parent/caregiver reacts to their child's retention is likely to influence how the child will end up feeling about it. The child's academic performance can be further affected by how they perceive being held back. If the parent acts as though the child is a victim, the child will most likely feel victimized. However, if the parent depicts retention as an opportunity to really grasp the material and to be a leader in their class, the child has a more positive self-concept and is motivated to succeed. This can be a chance for the child to learn and teach others in the class, rather than to feel that they are incapable of learning.

Some steps to take to help a retained child succeed are:

- Keep in frequent contact with teachers/school administrators to make sure the child is on the right track
- Supervise homework and assist them as needed
- Consider using extended year-, extended day-, and summer school programs
- Consider getting a tutor
- Participate in available reading programs
- Make sure the child's classroom is equipped with a teacher's aide for more one-on-one or small group attention
- Look for an intervention specialist at school who can work with at-risk students to ensure comprehension
- Request a student-support-team meeting, usually made up of the teacher, an administrator, an academic support staff, and the parent to plan and evaluate the student's goals and progress



Implications for Social Service Providers

Social service providers should be aware that some of the children they interact with may be dealing with situations at school that stem from being held back. It is very important how you communicate with and encourage any child, especially a child who has been held back in school and may benefit from extra support. If you find that this is something one of your clients is dealing with, here are some tips to help you communicate with them:

- Start where they are at: be empathetic if the child tells you how much they dislike school, but help them find the positives about it
- Help them identify their own strengths so they feel more motivated and capable of success
- Be an encouraging, nonjudgmental presence for them
- Involve case managers or Guardians ad Litem in the process.
- Ensure that the child has an advocate.

You can also help the parents of a child who has been held back by respectfully telling them some of the suggestions listed above for parents. Remember to preface this with asking if they would like advice, because it is important for the parent to not feel demeaned or flawed because their child has been held back.

Case Scenario

This case scenario below about a young client named Christopher, whose father brings him to the supervised visitation program, can help social service providers to understand the role they can play in the academic success of their clients.

Christopher is 12 years old. Last year, he repeated 6th grade after being held back. During the year, he was able to gain enough academic ground to be promoted to the seventh grade. However, it is three months into the school year, and he is displaying difficulty comprehending the material. His father tells you that Christopher was enrolled with a tutor the previous year and has been using supplementary worksheets with his grandmother to help him practice his school material. After reading this article, you know that sometimes after achieving short-term academic success, it is still difficult to catch up with the comprehension of new material for children that have been previously held back and are now in a new grade level.



What would you tell Christopher's father that could help Christopher achieve academic success?

Here is an example of what you could say:

His father is concerned about Christopher's academic success and asks for your advice. You first commend him on being so invested in his son's success and encourage him that he is being an excellent parent by doing everything he can to help Christopher. If there is a case manager or a Guardian ad Litem, you involve him or her for assistance. You then suggest that he set up a meeting with Christopher's teacher and principal to go over his learning and what goals need to be accomplished. During this meeting, he can find out if any other supplemental assistance is available through the school, such as a teacher's aide or counselor who can do one-on-one review with him. An individual education plan may be appropriate, and the school has the policies to implement that. You also tell him that one other thing to look into would be extended-day or summer programs. Finally, you educate Christopher's father on the importance of being encouraging and showing Christopher that he has faith in him so that he does not feel inadequate and overwhelmed, which would further complicate his success.

Resources

If you are interested in more information on the potential benefits and consequences of holding a child back in school, you can visit these websites:

- Repeating a Grade: The Pros and Cons-<http://www.greatschools.org/special-education/health/659-repeating-a-grade.gs>
- Research review regarding grade retention and promotion-
<http://www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/revisedpdfs/graderetention.pdf>
- Research brief on if Retaining Students in the Early Grades Self-Defeating?-
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- Getting Ahead By Staying Behind- <http://educationnext.org/getting-ahead-by-staying-behind/>
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LGBT Adoption: Facts and Issues

By Jerry Kivett

Social service providers should be aware of the changing family dynamics that can result in same sex couples being referred to supervised visitation programs. Florida programs have been sent courtesy cases from out of state with same sex parents, and we expect the trend to continue with more states legalizing same sex marriage and adoption. The following article introduces information about LGBT adoption.

Introduction

As service providers it is important to be aware of the facts and issues surrounding LGBT adoption. According to 2012 Census data, there are approximately 110,000 children being raised by over 90,000 same-sex couples in the United States.

Although this is a small minority of the total population, it is important service providers are aware of the legal policies and issues about LGBT adoption. Laws regarding LGBT adoption vary state by state, and decisions about granting these adoptions are often made by judges on a case by case basis



because of a lack of explicit legislation.

State-by-State Facts:

Florida visitation programs often receive out-of-state referrals. Therefore, you should know that some states do have specific policies on LGBT adoption. Here is a breakdown of states that have different policies regarding LGBT adoption as of 2012. To clarify, the term second-parent adoption used in this chart refers to when states allow the adoption of a child by a partner who is not married to the legal parent of the child. This is helpful for LGBT parents in states that do not permit gay marriage or civil unions. Also, the third category in the chart refers to states that have no specific legislation permitting or denying second-parent adoption, but as stated earlier adoptions have been determined on a case by case basis. In the states listed, second-parent adoptions have been granted to LGBT parents.

Specific Policy:	States:
Permit same sex couples to jointly adopt:	Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, D.C., Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Vermont
Explicitly permit second-parent adoption by law for same-sex couples:	Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, D.C., Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont
Has granted second-parent adoptions to same-sex couples, but has no specific legislative policy permitting this:	Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Washington
Restrictive policy that bans same-sex adoptions:	Mississippi and Utah

Recent Changes in Florida Policy:

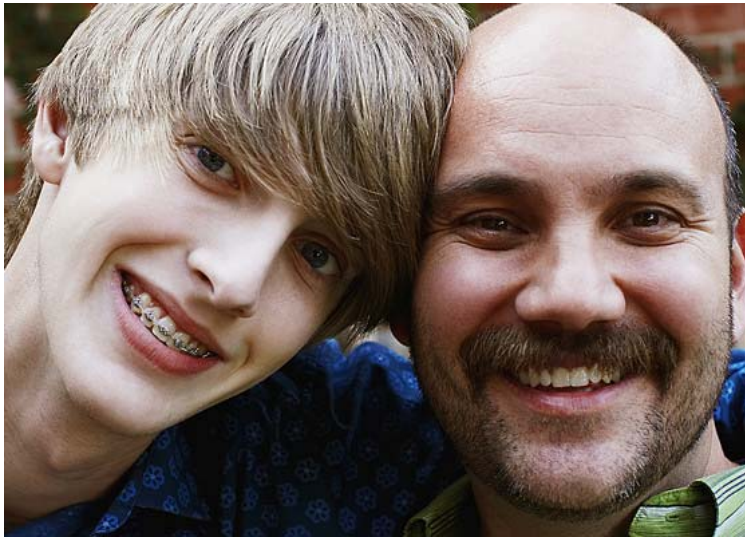
In 1977, Florida created a legal policy that explicitly banned same-sex couples from adopting children. This could have been mainly caused by Anita Bryant’s Save Our Children campaign. This ban remained in place, and even was upheld in several court cases, for 33 years. In 2010 in the court case Re: Gill, an openly gay couple petitioned to overturn the ban in order for them to adopt two brothers whom they had been raising for the past six years as foster children. The Miami-Dade circuit court sided with Mr. Gill, and found the ban unconstitutional and struck it down.

The decision was not appealed further by the Governor or Attorney General, ending the 33 year ban. Although this decision was effective at the circuit court level, it was not pursued further to the Florida state supreme court. The Attorney General, Bill McCollum, stated that this was not the appropriate case to take to the Supreme Court to

determine the constitutionality of this statute, even though he does believe the ban should be removed. As of now, the statute still remains, leaving these decisions to a case-by-case basis still on the circuit court level even though a ban no longer technically exists.

Issues Regarding LGBT Adoption:

The American Psychological Association specifically states that there is no empirical evidence that same-sex couples are in any way less effective parents than heterosexuals or that they will impair the children's functioning or development. The American Psychological Association has also stated that sexual and gender identities develop similarly between children of same-sex and heterosexual couples, suggesting that the fears of opponents of LGBT adoption that LGBT parents will "turn their children



gay" is unfounded. As service providers, it is important to show the same respect to all families regardless of structure and to understand that LGBT parents are just as capable as heterosexual parents.

As service providers, the main concern should be providing equal and effective assistance to all families, regardless if the parents are heterosexual or LGBT.

Service providers should practice culturally competent services by being aware of the specific legal issues that same-sex couples seeking adoption face as well as promote policies that encourage the health and well-being of all children regardless of the parents' sexual orientations.

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