



Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation E-Press



June 2018



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QUESTIONS FROM DIRECTORS

We have a client who is constantly saying that she is going to have unsupervised visitation “next week.” She tells this to her six-year-old daughter every visit, or several times a visit. We have tried to stop her, but the words are out of her mouth before we can do anything. If we try to correct her, she gets angry. Help!

I completely understand that this is frustrating behavior, but Mom’s unrealistic expectations are pretty common in supervised visitation. Let’s unpack that behavior. First, let’s assume the best, and think about mom as hopeful about the future, and anxious to have her child back in her home. Think about the mom’s behavior as coming from a place of fear or hope, not as a behavior that is directed at defying you or your policies. That’s a good assumption to start with. But her statements are creating confusion for the child, and the statements are inaccurate. So let’s try to start here: conduct intake again. Sit down without the child present and talk to mom about how you understand that she is hopeful and you are hopeful too. Spend time affirming mom’s strengths first. Point out the things that have gone well at visits. Gently remind her that you don’t control the court process, the judge does. When she gives the child incorrect information, she is setting the child up for disappointment, confusion, frustration, fear, and sadness. These are all negative emotions that can be avoided. In addition, the child now mistrusts what the mother says. If mom continues these statements in visits, you can correct them gently. You can say, “I know you’re hopeful, but we

don't know exactly when you'll be leaving the program. But as soon as we find out, we will let you know." You can soothe and reassure her by saying, "Your mom is here right now, so let's do something fun so you can have a good time together."

I would not threaten to stop the visits from this behavior as you've described it. Even if the mom refuses to stop making these statements, you can balance them with positivity and redirection. Try to remember that this behavior is not personal – it's not about you. I would classify this behavior as only mildly resistant. Try to remember that this is not personal. The mom is not saying these things to annoy you or defy you. Correct the statements mildly, and move on. Don't escalate the behavior by getting angry. Call me again if you want to talk through this.

I like all the training you are doing on trauma, but I'm afraid that this approach will just be changed next year, when we will decide that some different approach is better. I remember when we said everything had to be client-focused, or strength based. It's hard to keep up with.

Your work is challenging, and the research does shift in its focus. But your work remains client focused and strength based. That has not changed. What has changed is the profound realization and acknowledgment that clients have often suffered from terrible trauma. Your practice has changed because of it. Try to think of your practice as improving, not just changing.

When you read the documentation of the case and conduct intake, you realize what your clients have been through. The research tells us that trauma --negative events (either one time, or ongoing/chronic) that result in the person feeling

overwhelmed and powerless – can have a devastating, long term negative impact on their physical and emotional health. For over a decade, scholarly research has revealed and continues to link unresolved trauma to illness, victimization, perpetration, and a host of public health issues. Try to think of all the new training as improving your strength based practice. Every time you think about trauma, remember that you now have new skills: improving resilience. When families are resilient, they are stronger. Your work makes families stronger. Your work matters, and it should be informed by the most recent research. Your work is now trauma-informed, too.

Finally, just a word about self-care. You are working in a field that is full of traumatized families, and you need to take time to take care of your own emotional needs. The Clearinghouse has created a set of resources on self-care. They are on the website.

I would like to find a way to communicate better with our judges. Can you help with that? Our judges have had a change over, and many do not know about what we do. I've heard far too many times from judges "this case is not appropriate for a supervised visitation program," when I think it is perfectly appropriate and would make a world of difference for the family. I need help.

You have raised an important question. Yes, the Clearinghouse will be working on Bench Cards that will inform judges about the values and uses of Florida's supervised visitation programs. As we research how best to communicate within the wide variety of processes and

services available throughout the state. If you would like to serve on the review board for these Cards, please let us know!

Updates

- **June Phone Conference** date change to Thursday, June 28, 2018 12pm/11ct
- **Remember to send in your program, staff, and services changes to the Clearinghouse! Use koehme@fsu.edu**
- Call the Clearinghouse at 850-644-1715.
- Karen is on annual leave June 18-26. Morgan can be reached during that time at 850-644-1715 or mlodes@fsu.edu
- It's summertime: keep entering your Access and Visitation data into the database!

Working with Non-Offending Parents

By: Katherine Parker



Introduction

Supervised visitation is focused on the child and the interaction between the child and parent. The needs of the non-offending parent, the parent who was not involved in the offense against the child, are often forgotten about or misinterpreted. Social service providers should be aware of possible emotions of non-offending parents and resources to provide. Social service providers hold an important task of bridging the gap between non-offending parents and available resources, services, and support for these individuals and their families.

Objectives

In this E-Press, supervised visitation monitors will learn information about the following topics of working with non-offending parents:

- Research on non-offending parents including what non-offending parents may be personally experiencing
- Barriers for non-offending parents and how they can overcome these barriers
- Ways supervised visitation monitors can support non-offending parents

Non-offending Parents' Experiences

Non-offending parents have a past and story of their own. Parents of a child or children of abuse are considered secondary victims. This stress of being a secondary victim may lead to other stressors for a parent including their work, family life, and other relationships. Non-offending parents may feel a range of emotions similar to the stages of grief, including shock, denial, anger, and acceptance. Unfortunately, if a parent has their own history of abuse, this can negatively affect their own skills in parenting.

As a supervised visitation monitor, you can be mindful of these factors:

- Non-offending parent's parenting style
- History of domestic violence
- History of substance abuse
- Financial dependency
- Mental illness

Barriers

As secondary victims, non-offending parents face many emotions including guilt, shame, sadness, grief, jealousy, betrayal, and confusion. With such a range of strong emotions, non-offending parents need support in order to navigate these strong emotions they are experiencing. Along with these strong emotions, non-offending parents may experience larger societal barriers when it comes to the treatment plan, including supervised visitation. These as barriers may include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Low socio-economic status**
- **Transportation issues**
- **Lack of communication**
- **Financial concerns**
- **Child care concerns**
- **Time constraints**
- **Other children with potential conflicting needs**

Non-offending parents who have a greater support network are better able to navigate their emotions and potential societal barriers when handling the abuse of their child. Non-offending parents may also face the challenge of negative coping skills such as substance abuse or turning to work to distract themselves from their reality. It is important as a supervised visitation monitor to provide support through their visits with the family and by linking the parent to appropriate resources.

Implications for Practice

In addition to the barriers listed above, a major barrier of non-offending parents is the lack of knowledge of available services or resources in their community. As a supervised visitation monitor, you can be aware of the resources in the community to aid non-offending parent with services such as transportation or child care. Also, avoid “mother-blaming”, and instead practice a more empathetic approach to the non-offending parent. Utilizing a strengths perspective when working with non-offending parents, which includes identifying what they do well, can be encouraging and empowering. Local support groups and utilizing group work can also help non-offending parents share information and learn new skills in a safe, nonjudgmental environment.

Non-offending parents often need:

- Someone to talk to
- Financial assistance
- Reassurance that they are doing the right thing
- Support from family, friends, and others
- Help to regain control of their life
- Information on protection orders, shelters, domestic violence services, and counseling

Case Scenario

Linda has been dropping off her child for supervised visitations for the last two months without incident. Though Linda brings her son every visitation on time and no issues arise, she appears to be increasingly upset with each visitation. The supervised visitation monitor asked Linda how she was coping. Linda was thankful the monitor cared enough to ask, and disclosed that she feels depressed and has lost all of her friends because her husband physically abused their child.

The supervised visitation monitor provided support to Linda in that moment. After the visit, the monitor researched local support groups for non-offending parents. The monitor found a support group that can offer Linda an outlet to discuss her week, ask questions, and learn new coping strategies. She also called the child protective investigator and asked for help linking Linda to more services.

At the next visit, the monitor checks in again with Linda. The monitor provides her with the information on group counseling, and encourages her to access help; she also reminds her that change does not happen overnight. Linda feels supported and validated by the monitor and says she will give it a try this week.

Conclusion

Non-offending parents' background, barriers to services, and needs should be taken into consideration as the supervised visitation monitor comes into contact with non-offending parents. Additionally, monitors can help non-offending parents by having knowledge of local and national resources which may provide support to the non-offending parent. Monitors have the essential opportunity to bridge the gap between non-offending parents' needs and the available resources to help.

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Preventing the “Summer Slide”

By: Katherine Parker



Introduction

Summer is finally here and students, of all ages, are eager to be out of the classroom. The “summer slide” is a nickname for summer learning loss that affects students of all ages and grade levels. Once children are out of the classroom, and with little to no active engagement of the skills they have learned inside the classroom, children will lose these academic skills, especially reading skills. So, what can parents do to prevent this dreaded summer slide?

Supervised visitation monitors can talk to parents about a few different ways to keep their children engaged during the summer,

Objectives

In this E-Press, supervised visitation monitors can discuss with parents different ways to engage their school-aged children throughout the summer including:

- Activities for preschool-age children
- Activities for elementary-age children
- Activities for middle school-age children
- Activities for high school-age children

Activities for Preschoolers (Ages 2-4)

Toddlers in preschool or day care are actively engaged throughout the day. They are like little sponges, wanting to soak up as much information as they can. Hands-on crafts and activities to engage preschoolers’ minds are a great way for toddlers to further develop skills and to learn new ones. Activities involving colors, shapes, numbers, and letters are appropriate for this age group. The video below suggests ten learning activities for preschool-age children with supplies that may be found at



home, or can be purchased at a local Dollar Tree.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZozHFM_aEU

Run Time: 10:28

Activities for Grade-Schoolers (Ages 5-11)

It is important for children in elementary school to keep their minds retaining the information that they have learned during the school year. Start with daily reading! Local libraries are a great place to begin. Many businesses including Pizza Hut, Barnes and Noble, Books-A-Million, and Chuck E. Cheese’s offer rewards for reading and recording a number of books during the summer. Sidewalk chalk can be a fun way to practice spelling and math; going for a walk and collecting rocks or leaves and comparing them can make a child think like a scientist. Some activities indoors can be looking over past school assignments and discussing what children have learned, using websites like Khan Academy (<https://www.khanacademy.org/>) or Science House App (<http://sciencenetlinks.com/tools/videoscience-app/>) who both offer free lessons and videos online. The video below describes three fun ways to prevent the summer slide, directed at elementary age children. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHKQHkoWNyU>

Run Time: 1:19



Activities for Middle-Schoolers (Ages 12-14) Children in this particular age

group need activities and engagement that are less hands-on. Parents can give the task of their child picking a recipe to cook for dinner or baking a dessert. For an additional spin on this activity, give the child a budget to use when finding the ingredients needed. Children can also create a scavenger hunt or explore a new part of town or go to a museum, with parental supervision. Code Academy (<https://www.codecademy.com/>) lets children learn how to computer program for free, Duolingo



(<https://www.duolingo.com/>) is a free app, and website, to learn a foreign language, and Maker Camp (<https://makercamp.com/>) is a free online digital camp for children to build and discover.

Activities for High-Schoolers (Ages 15-18)

Children of this age are ready to begin further developing life skills and gaining their independence. Parents can encourage their children of this age to look into volunteering in the community or helping with summer camps. As college is approaching, parents can encourage their children to prep for the ACT and/or SAT, or to just keep up with their math and reading

skills. A part-time job is appropriate at this age for children to begin to learn responsibility and time management skills, develop their resume, and to earn some money. Virtual College Tours (<https://www.youvisit.com/collegesearch>) is a free resource to use to look into different colleges across the country. Khan Academy (<https://www.khanacademy.org/>) and Duolingo (<https://www.duolingo.com/>) are both free services for students to further develop and explore their skills in different subject areas and languages.



Conclusion

Supervised visitation monitors can encourage parents to view summer time as a way to help their children retain academic skills, not to feel that they have to entertain their children all summer long. Reading, math, and writing skills are appropriate for all ages to continue to develop. The level of hands-on activities may decrease with the age and maturity level of the child. Summer is the time to prevent the summer slide and to take time for children to learn new skills through engaging activities.

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Lessons in Messaging: Using Positive Self Affirmation and Restorative Narratives

By: Morgan Lodes



Introduction

Parents receive several different types of messages during supervised visitation related to program rules, case plan requirements, and important information on family functioning skills.

However, it can be challenging for many parents to be receptive to these various messages, especially when they may feel stressed or anxious while receiving visitation services.

While some parents experience no issues retaining and accepting these messages, other parents may be more receptive to program messages if they are conveyed through the following two strengths-based approaches:

Positive self-affirmation, and restorative narratives.



In order for visitation programs to fully assist the families they work with, it is essential that parents are given information in ways they will be receptive to.

Lesson 1: Positive Self-Affirmation

Over the past twenty years, behavioral health research has taught us that individuals receive messages best when they first focus on their **own personal strengths**.

Focusing on individual strengths **helps a person feel more confident, capable, and prepared to engage in difficult or challenging concepts**. In the case of supervised visitation, it can better prepare parents to receive messages about family functioning skills or family protective factors.

Incorporate positive self-affirmation language by helping parents identify their strengths and values during:

Intake: When parents understand their strengths and values they feel more prepared to engage in visitation and learn about other

program messages related to family functioning

The visit: Program staff can remind parents of their strengths and values when a challenge occurs. This will remind parents that they are capable of working through whatever issue they're experiencing.

Incorporating Positive Self-Affirmation in Your Program

- ❖ How can you incorporate positive self-affirmation language in your program?
- ❖ How can focusing on parents' strengths and values better prepare them to receive messages about parenting at visitation?

Lesson 2: Restorative Narratives

Research tells us that restorative narrative is a way of storytelling **that focuses on triumph over hardship and emotional flow** (from negative to positive) These **narratives** help individuals overcome challenges because they **reinforce positive messages of encouragement and capability**.

Examples of Restorative Narratives

All people struggle at some point and negative to positive restorative narratives normalize struggle and give hope for triumph. Programs can use these narratives during intake or during visitation to provide encouragement and support to parents.

- **"Other people have done this before me and have made it through"**
- **"I can do this."**

Programs can tell stories about former clients to new parents in their program while maintaining confidentiality to normalize struggle normalize struggle and give parents hope that they too can overcome the challenges they're experiencing.

Incorporating Restorative



Narratives in Your Program

- ❖ How can you incorporate restorative narratives into your center's messaging?
- ❖ How can storytelling benefit the parents in your program?
- ❖ When can programs use restorative narratives during the visitation process?

Conclusion

These two ways of expressing messages in supervised visitation can help parents retain and be more receptive to the information they receive at visitation. Using these strengths-based strategies in supervised visitation can help monitors and parents build rapport and create a positive working relationship.

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