



EPRESS

Questions from Directors

Has any supervised visitation program in Florida received money from the fund that collects fees from Florida Statute 939.185?

Yes, but as far as we know, only two programs have received funding under the fund set up pursuant to that statute. Here's how it works: There is a \$65.00 assessment on criminal and traffic offenses (939.185(1)(a)). Under that statute, the funds collected must be used for a very limited number of projects: to fund legal aid programs, law libraries, juvenile justice programs, and for court innovations. Our research indicates that some counties don't spend all the funds each year, and the statute mandates that unspent funds at the end of the county fiscal year must be transferred for use for court innovations. In our view, you can make a good argument that court innovations can include supervised visitation, but that decision is only made at the local level. In addition, such a request would compete with all of the other court innovations that vie for funding, like "Vet court," and "baby court," and "teen court." Building a positive relationship with your local county officials and your chief judge is a first step in receiving any funding, from any source.

I have a very experienced monitor whose adult child struggled with substance abuse problems for years. This background makes her very knowledgeable about substance abuse, so I tend to assign her to cases in which that problem is an issue. On the last phone conference, you said this wasn't a good idea. Can you explain?

There is no doubt that your monitor has studied substance abuse issues and may be more knowledgeable on that issue than your other monitors. However, what I talked about at the phone conference was exercising caution about having anyone generalize their own experiences to predict or advise others on similar experiences. In other words, your monitor should not offer opinions about what a client should do about certain treatment, therapeutic, or criminal justice options because he or she may have very different circumstances, problems, and complications. A monitor who offers such advice is likely going beyond the scope of her authority. Of course, it may be tempting

to draw comparisons and similarities about client's lives, and I know staff are only trying to help, but they have a certain role with clients, and they must keep those boundaries between themselves and the clients. To be clear: the monitor can still sit visits with those clients who have substance abuse issues, but she should not offer advice on the substance abuse issues. If she cannot refrain from offering her opinion or talk about her own history, she should be assigned to other cases.

If a child makes a statement like "Daddy hit me" to staff, but we are convinced that the child was prompted by a relative to say it, do we still have to call the Abuse Hotline? We have had this case for a long time.

Yes. You must still call the Hotline (1-800-96-ABUSE) and make a report according to your program protocols. (Usually it is the director who makes those calls, so be sure you are familiar with your protocol.) In addition, you must record the statements the child makes in the case file. You should also note the circumstances around the statement -- the child pointing to a bruise, the child's other statements, and who was present. The fact that you have your own doubts about the child's veracity does not negate the importance of reporting the statement so that the designated child investigators in your area can make the final determination of how (and whether) to proceed. Also, this is a good time to remind everyone that supervised visitation staff should not directly or indirectly "vouch" for clients, even if they have been showing up every week for a long time. Tragedies occur when we become complacent about clients, no matter how well we think we can predict their behavior.

Repairing the Parent/Teen Relationship

By Sally Peterson and Morgan Lodes

Introduction

It is easy for parents – or anyone for that matter! – to make mistakes in their relationships with others. When this occurs between a parents and child, this can cause further difficulties in the relationship than were present before and make repairing the relationship quite challenging. As supervised visitation providers, your job is to help nurture this important relationship with your clients. This EPress will discuss ways in which you can help parents and children recreate a healthy relationship with one another.



Objectives

One of the main goals of supervised visitation providers is to help clients create healthy relationships and boundaries with their children. This relationship is important to not only the child's development and sense of self, but to the client's own emotional well-being as well. In this EPress, the topics covered will be:

- What can cause distress in the parent-child relationship, causing a need for the employment of repair strategies
- How supervised visitation providers can encourage parents to rebuild their relationship with their child
- A case example of a damaged relationship between a parent and child, covering efforts to fix it during supervised visitation

Causes of a Damaged Parent-Child Relationship

There are various causes of a damaged parent-child relationship. While every parent makes mistakes, it is important for parents to understand that even one, simple damaging behavior, such as criticism, over a long period of time can weaken their

relationship with their child. Below are five causes of a damaged parent-child relationship and explanations of why they are harmful to a harmonious relationship between a parent and child.

1. Poor communication

- Both parents and children need to not only speak to each other, but effectively listen as well. In a parent-child relationship, poor communication can create a disconnection between the two individuals, which often times leads to misunderstandings and arguments.

2. Lack of attention

- A lack of attention can cause children to act out in an attempt to receive attention from their parents. This can create tension between parents and children which places strain on their relationship. Parents should spend more time with their children and make consistent attempts to stay up-to-date with what's going on in their child's life.

3. Disciplinary Issues

- When parents focus primarily on compliancy with their growing children, some children may be driven to rebel against their parents. Children need to grow



into their own unique character, and if parents are too restrictive, then older children and teenagers may feel like their parents do not understand them as the growing individuals that they are. Parents should aim towards guiding their children in the right direction instead of controlling their every move.

4. Lack of mutual respect

- If parents demand respect from their children but do not grant any kind of respect in return, there is no concept of cooperation present in the parent-child relationship. There needs to be a mutual agreement between parents and children on how they expect and deserve to be treated.

5. Parental criticism of the other parent

- This occurs when one parent is critical of the other parent and directly addresses those issues with his or her children. Children should not feel like they need to choose between parents. Children may become resentful of the

parent either criticizing the other parent or become hateful towards the accused parent. This can create many problems in the parent-child relationship and should be avoided at all costs. Parents should direct communication regarding concerns about and conflict with their partners to a therapist or adult friend, rather than a child stuck in between the two parties involved.

Ways to Repair the Parent-Child Relationship

It takes a lot of work to rebuild a damaged relationship, as the child has often lost basic trust in the parent and even taking the first step to admitting there is truly a problem can be a difficult thing for a parent to confront. Here are some ways supervised visitation providers can encourage parents to help repair the relationship with their child:

- **Have parents continue to talk to their child, even when it is difficult.** Talking is so important in a relationship, and it can help keep communication lines open, even when things are difficult.
- **Remind parents to listen.** Listening is also very important in the parent-child relationship, and unfortunately, children are not always skilled in this regard. Therefore, it is up to the parent to be attentive to what his or her child is expressing. In addition, the parent may need to look past what the child is actually saying, regardless of the angry or irrational words said, in order to try to figure out what is really going on with his or her child.
- **Have parents think through what triggers them to react in a negative manner, as well as what triggers their child.** By planning ahead before these triggers occur, parents can come up with alternatives to the way they respond to their child in certain situations. Having a plan decreases the chance that the parent will react in a damaging way and prepares them to respond in a positive and healthy way. Planning ahead sets parents up for a greater chance of success!



- **Encourage parents to be consistent and persistent.** Parents need to try to keep up normal routines within the relationship and should demonstrate to their child that they are trying to be the best parent they can be. They should treat their child with respect and courtesy, as hard as that may be. Parents should not give up easily!

Rebuilding relationships hinges on taking the time to be with one another and putting effort into it. Here are four types of activities that can help re-build the relationship, while also allowing parents and children to practice problem-solving, expressing feelings, and other important skills. Supervised visitation is a great opportunity to engage in these activities with parents and children.

<p style="text-align: center;">Play</p> <p><i>Parents and children can play with a toy or game together to provide cohesion.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use with younger children. • Let the child be in control. • Avoid discussing discipline or displaying any judgment in order to support the child’s freedom to play and express creatively. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Conversation</p> <p><i>Parents can speak with children to help communicate interest, feelings, and understanding, promote identity-building, identify problems, and solve conflicts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use with adolescents in particular. • Listen more often and let the child do most of the talking sometimes. • Avoid lecturing.
<p style="text-align: center;">Activities Outside the Home</p> <p><i>Parents can go on walks or check out local entertainment, such as a zoo or movie theater, with their child to spend more time together.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the child as special and loved while out and about in the world. • Have a weekly routine of positive time together to allow the relationship to be re-built. • Activities can be as simple as going out to lunch or on a bike ride together. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Verbal Recognition</p> <p><i>Parents can give children verbal recognition to give support and encouragement, building their self-esteem.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rather than saying a generic “You are so smart!” – which can actually put the child under a lot of pressure to always be that way – parents should be descriptive in the recognition they give their child, such as “I noticed you studied really hard for that test. Your hard work paid off!” This shows the child that the parent truly noticed the effort he or she put into the action.

Verbal recognition is especially important. For more suggestions on how parents can encourage their child, please see the handout “Speaking Encouragement to Your Child”.

Case Scenario

Emilia had a long day at work and was feeling frustrated and irritable by the time she arrived at home. Earlier in the day, she had asked Johnathan, her 14 year old son, to clean his room and have it done before he watched TV. When she returned home, Johnathan was watching TV on the couch and his room was still dirty. Emilia stormed into the living room, grabbing the remote from her son and shut the TV off. She pulled him off of the couch by the arm yelling at him, “I said no TV until your room was clean! You are so incompetent!”



Did Emilia overact? What could she have done differently?

Emilia knew that she was stressed from work and could have taken an extra minute to compose her emotions before returning home. Upon finding out that Johnathan did not clean his room, she could have went into the living room and sat down on the couch and pursued a conversation with him discussing his actions.

What can Emilia do to repair the parent-child relationship with Johnathan?

First, Emilia can apologize to Johnathan for pulling him from the couch in a threatening way, instead of sitting down to talk to him or simply asking him to clean his room again. Next, she can engage in a conversation that encourages Johnathan to explain why he didn't clean his room right away or how he felt when Emilia overreacted. The most important thing for both the parent and the child to remember is to be patient and listen. Once trust has been re-gained and Jonathan starts to feel listened to by his mother, Emilia and Jonathan can start discussing ways to approach difficult topics, such as

“Johnathan not doing his chores,” in order to have a peaceful and respectful resolution to future disagreements.

Conclusion

It is important to remember that every parent makes mistakes that at times cause his or her child to feel misunderstood or even hurt. Children will often react by distancing themselves from the parent, acting out in spite of the parent, or copying the parent’s use of overreacting or yelling. These actions often cause a rift in the parent-child relationship and need to be addressed immediately in order to ensure a healthy relationship can be re-built. Parents must be willing and able to admit their mistakes and take actions to apologize, re-build trust, create healthy dialogue on the subject at hand, and find solutions to dissolve anger, pain, or frustration felt by the child and/or the parent. Once the parent puts in the energy and time required to re-build a relationship, the parent-child bond will strengthen and often times, negative effects of future mistakes and disputes will be lessened.

Exceptions to this E-Press include parents who often make detrimental mistakes with their child, such as frequent yelling or criticism. In these cases, the help of a professional and/or skill-building parenting classes may be required to give parents the skills needed to parent positively and repair their relationship with their child. Instances of neglect or abuse may constitute the inability to rebuild the parent-child bond, if trust has been demolished. As a supervised visitation provider, it is your responsibility to report any cases of abuse or neglect to the proper authorities to ensure the safety of any children involved.

References

- <http://www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/829791/how-to-repair-your-relationship-with-your-child>
- <http://www.healthyplace.com/parenting/articles/how-to-repair-a-damaged-relationship-between-you-and-your-child/>
- <http://www.thesuccessfulparent.com/categories/parent-child-relationship/item/repairing-the-parent-child-relationship#.VIYWgDHF-VM>
- <http://www.parentalalienation.org/articles/types-alienators.html>
- <http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/parentchild-relationship-problems-3128.html>

How to Encourage Young Children to Sleep through the Night

By Morgan Lodes



One of the most challenging tasks for new parents to face is getting their baby to successfully sleep through the night. Parents usually want what is best for their babies but can make mistakes along the way that can hinder their child from developing healthy sleep patterns. Parents may either provide a bedtime ritual that their baby becomes too reliant on, such as being rocked to sleep, or parents may simply put their baby down to sleep too late at night. Although these efforts are made with the best intentions, there are better ways to help encourage a baby to sleep through the night. You, as a supervised visitation provider, can use the following information to educate parents on

the negatives of some sleep methods, as well as healthy sleep techniques that parents can try out at home.

Reevaluate Current Sleep Methods

If a parent complains that his or her child is not able to sleep through the night, it is important for you to explain that the child has most likely developed underlying habits that are preventing the child from getting a good night's rest. Many commonly used sleep techniques can prevent children from developing healthy sleep patterns due to dependency on one method or inconsistency. Here are a few examples of sleep techniques that often hinder babies and young children from sleeping through the night:

- Rocking a baby to sleep.
 - Even though this method can be soothing to babies, it can sometimes cause them to form a dependency on rocking in order to fall asleep. Parents should not always give into the gratification of sleep that this method immediately grants but rather use multiple methods to build a more constant sleep schedule for their baby.
- Co-Sleeping
 - Allowing a baby to co-sleep with parents for even a few nights can create a new sleep habit that can hurt the goal of eventually having babies sleep soundly through the night in their crib. After allowing any age child to sleep in his or her parents' bed, it can be very challenging to reintroduce

sleeping in a crib or bed without having the comfort of the child's parents nearby.

- **Putting a baby or child to sleep late at night**
 - Although some parents believe this encourages the child to sleep in longer the next day, it will ultimately prolong an erratic sleep schedule. Children need consistency in their sleep patterns to be able to fully adapt to them.
- **No established sleep routine.**
 - During the early stages of life, a child relies solely on his or her parents to establish a nighttime routine that encourages restful sleep. Children with no established sleep routine will most likely not get enough sleep, potentially leading to developmental delays and mood swings.

Tips for Developing Healthy Sleep Patterns

Forming consistent sleep schedules for babies and young children enables them to sleep through the night, leading to children getting the sleep needed to promote healthy development and emotional stability. Here are some tips you can provide parents with to promote healthy sleep in babies and young children:

- **Limit stimulating activities too close to bedtime.** Make the transition from day to nighttime obvious to children by having rules limiting TV, homework, and athletic activities before bed, allowing children to calm down and start to relax.
- **Encourage calming and relaxing activities before bedtime.** Soothing activities, such as reading or taking a bath, can help young children lower their energy levels and start to feel ready for bed.
- **Initiate a bedtime routine.** Providing a bedtime routine can allow for children to know when to expect sleep, giving them the opportunity to mentally ready themselves for sleep. This can help prevent temper tantrums at the mention of “bedtime”, as children have already accepted bedtime is coming soon.



- **Stay consistent with rules and bedtime routines.** As a child first adjusts to a bedtime routine, he or she may not sleep through the night, but by the end of the first week of a consistent routine, the child should start to develop healthier sleep time habits. Stay consistent and the child will eventually adjust to the routine.

Conclusion

As a supervised visitation provider, you can offer this guidance to parents with young children to provide them with healthy alternatives to common sleep techniques that can help to establish a healthier bedtime routine. These techniques can be altered to the individual needs of a particular child by choosing to limit activities that most excite the individual child and promote activities that most calm the child. The most important aspect in creating healthy sleep habits is for parents to not give up on the sleep techniques that best benefit the needs of their child. Ultimately, providing children with healthy, consistent sleep routines gives them the rest needed to live out productive, active lives and develop into adults.

References:

<http://www.parents.com/baby/sleep/issues/getting-baby-to-sleep-through-the-night/>

<http://www.parents.com/videos/v/97363615/getting-a-new-baby-to-sleep-through-the-night.htm>

<http://www.babycentre.co.uk/a123/how-can-i-get-my-baby-to-sleep-through-the-night>

Refresher Course in Child Physical Abuse Issues

By Jerry Kivett

Past E-presses have been published to highlight the statistics and indicators of child physical abuse, but it is important to update these statistics as they become available. As supervised visitation providers, it is crucial that you are knowledgeable in the most current information regarding child physical abuse. This is particularly important with the Adrian Peterson case being highly discussed in the media in the past months, as this case has brought child physical abuse into the media spotlight, and it is therefore especially important for service providers to be aware of indicators of physical abuse as well as the current statistics. Below are the most recent statistics on child abuse in the United States from 2012.



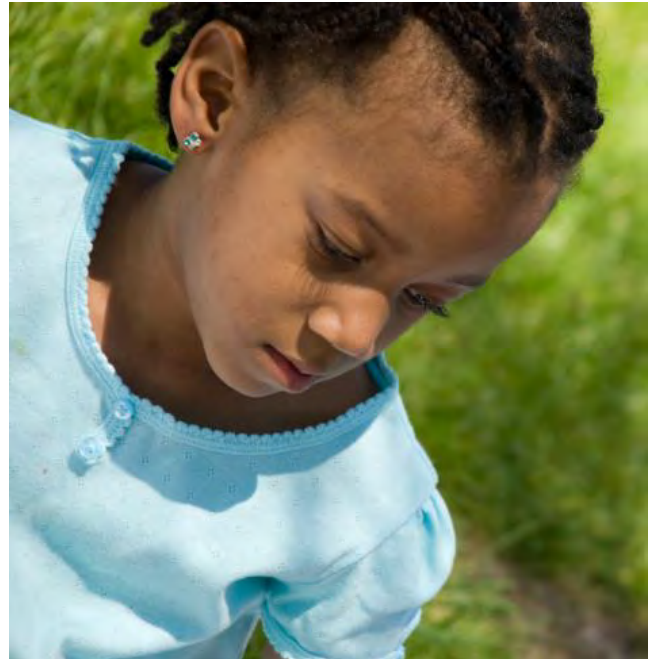
Child Physical Abuse Statistics

- In 2012, there were approximately 716,000 reported cases of child abuse, 18.3% of which were physical abuse cases.
- In Florida in 2012, there were 53,341 child victims, which is an increase from 2011 (51,920 victims).
- A nationally estimated 1,640 children died from abuse and/or neglect at a rate of 2.20 children per 100,000 children in the national population for 2012.
- Roughly 70% of these fatalities are under the age of 4.

Child Physical Abuse Indicators

As service providers with these statistics in mind, observations should be made to see if there are any of the following indicators of physical abuse during supervised visitations:

- **Unexplained Injuries:** physical injuries unexplained by a physical trauma (falling off the swing, tripping on a shoe lace, etc.)
- **Changes in behavior:** increased signs of anxiety, aggression, social withdrawal or behaviors deviating from the child's norm. Sometimes there is also a marked increase in the child's overwhelming desire to please the abusing parent.
- **Reverting to early behaviors:** exhibiting behaviors typically shown in children of a younger age, i.e., thumb sucking, fear of the dark, bed wetting, language reversion ("Mommy, that" vs. "Can I have the salt please?"), crawling instead of walking, or other developmental setbacks.
- **Fear of going home:** fear or anxiety about returning home, or leaving with parents/guardians.
- **Changes in eating:** refusing to eat, overeating etc.
- **Changes in sleeping patterns:** Struggling to sleep, over sleeping.
- **Changes in school performance and attendance:** increasing absence from school or other activities and/or a decrease in academic/extracurricular performance.
- **Lack of personal care/hygiene:** appearing dirty, poor dental hygiene, etc.
- **Engaging in risk-taking behaviors:** brandishing weapons, consuming alcohol/drugs, staying out too late, etc.
- **Engaging in inappropriate sexual behaviors:** demonstrating more sexual knowledge than appropriate for child's age or engaging in inappropriate sexual



behaviors, i.e., mimicking sexual behaviors in play settings or depicting sexual activities in writing/artwork.



Although not all of these indicators will be immediately observable during a supervised visitation, service providers should still take notice of any signs that may be present. The easiest indicators for you to observe will most likely be serious changes in behavior and unexplained injuries. Unexplained injuries in particular should be addressed by service providers particularly if the following is present:

- **Multiple injuries or multiple injuries at different stages in healing** (i.e., a purple and blue bruise, a yellow and faded bruise, a fresh scrape and several scabs from older injuries).
- Though bruising is common on bony, protruding, angular parts of children's bodies, it is less common on areas such as the **inner thigh, neck, facial cheeks, buttocks, genitals, or extensive bruises over many areas**. As a supervisor, you may not see all of these areas on a child; however, in conjunction with emotional and behavioral symptoms, physical injuries may be a cause

for concern.

- **Curious burns** (cigarette burns, rope burns, obvious hot-object burns)
- **Frequent broken bones** (multiple bones, rib fractures) may also indicate physical abuse.

In your role as a visitation supervisor, knowing and recognizing the indicators of child abuse in all forms is essential for ensuring the safety of children and families.

As always, if you suspect child abuse,

DON'T WAIT! Call the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-96-ABUSE (22873) or TTY 1-800-453-5145.

For more information about the resources used in this article, please visit:

<http://www.safehorizon.org/index/what-we-do-2/child-abuse--incest-55/10-signs-of-child-abuse--neglect-305.html>

<http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/915664-overview>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/child-abuse/DS01099/DSECTION=symptoms>

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm2012.pdf>

<http://www.childhelp.org/pages/statistics>

Games to Teach Children about Money

By Jerry Kivett



Introduction:

Teaching children about money is essential to their success as adolescents and adults. While understanding money and naming coins is often taught at school, additional practice and teaching is often required for children to fully grasp the concept of money. This E-press provides activities and games that can help teach children

about money that could be done during supervised visitations or given to parents to try at home, as well as a few general ideas and tips to try.

Pay to Play:

This is a fun game that helps children identify the value of different coins or bills so that they are aware of the distinct worth of each one to eventually begin adding them together. This game can be played with children as young as five. Also, parents or service providers can be creative with the different activities and actions they choose for children to perform during the game. This allows the game to be unique, fun, and enjoyable each time it is played, while children successfully develop their understanding of money and its different values.

Materials:

- Coins or dollar bills of different values

Instructions:

1. First, place all of the dollar bills or coins into a bowl or pile for the child to pick from.
2. Determine specific actions for the child to complete depending on the coin picked (Ex. Standing on one foot if he/she pulls a nickel, jumping up and down if it's a penny, patting himself or herself on the head for a quarter, giant steps towards a designated finish line for a dime, etc. Be creative!)
3. Have the child choose a bill or coin from the pile randomly.
4. The child must determine the value of this bill or coin and complete the determined action a specified amount of times or for a certain period of time. (Ex. Standing on one foot for five seconds if the child chooses a nickel, or taking ten giant steps towards the finish line if he or she chose a dime.)
5. This can be repeated as many times as preferred. Also, if the child determines the value incorrectly of a coin or bill, have the child complete a different action for that coin or bill so that the child can understand and learn the value. (The action could also be backwards, for example, having to take ten steps back if the child only took five steps forwards but chose a dime.)



Money Magnets:

This next activity also teaches children to identify different coins. This game could be used to first identify coins by their names, and then later to understand their values and even how to add them. This activity can be used with children as young as four, and the difficulty of the game can be increased to be used with slightly older children. This game is also very simple and requires only a few inexpensive supplies.

Materials:

- Small self-adhesive magnets (available at most craft stores)

- At least two of each coin (Pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters)
- Any type of magnetic surface, such as a refrigerator, baking sheet, or bulletin board.

Instructions:

1. Apply magnets to the back of one of each type of coin, and then apply magnets to the front of one of each type of coin as well. (This allows children to learn how to identify coins from either side.)
2. Attach the new coin magnets to the front of the refrigerator or other surface.
3. When the child wants a snack, juice, etc. have him or her identify a specific coin before they open the refrigerator or receive the snack to “pay” for it.
4. If the child is already able to identify the different coins by name, try asking for a specific amount of money or cents to be “paid” for the snack. The child would then have to identify the coin with that value or would need to add different coins together to obtain the amount, depending on the desired difficulty. (For example, parents could begin by asking for 25 cents or 5 cents, and could increase the difficulty by then asking for amounts such as 37 cents or 42 cents.) These variations of the game help children move beyond identifying coins by name and begin to understand their value. These games also give children practice in adding the values of these coins together to obtain a specific value or price.

Other Suggestions:

As children become older, they will eventually grow out of these games, but other activities can still be done regularly to teach older children and teenagers about financial skills. Parents can use most basic financial transactions as an opportunity for learning about money skills with older children. For example, children often tag along at grocery shopping, and parents can use this activity as an opportunity to explain how to plan economic meals as well as coupons, sales, etc. in order to further develop



older children’s understanding of the value of money. This is especially important as children become teenagers and begin to have their own disposable income, which these lessons can help teach them how to manage responsibly. Some other simple activities to teach older children further lessons about money skills include:

- Teach adolescents how to write checks or balance a checkbook by allowing them to practice writing pretend checks and see their parents’ checkbooks.

- Take a trip to the bank with teenagers to help them develop an understanding of bank accounts or even help them open their own savings account.
- Explain how debit and credit cards work, especially since these concepts are often abstract for younger teenagers.
- Have older children count the change when eating at restaurants or practice calculating the tip for the server.

Previous EPress:

For more information and additional games and activities related to teaching children about money, view this article that was published in a previous EPress. This December 2012 article provides activities with coins divided by age group (four to five, six to seven, and eight to ten), and includes three activities per age group. These games begin by identifying coins at a young age through sorting games, determining their value through ordering games, and adding these values together through pretend shopping games and other activities. More detail can be found about these activities at the link to the previous E-press provided here under “A Handful of Coins Game Kit”:

<http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/december-2012-epress/>

Resources:

<http://www.whattoexpect.com/toddler/photo-gallery/teaching-kids-about-money.aspx#/slide-1>

<http://life.familyeducation.com/money-and-kids/parenting/36332.html>

Car Seat Safety Handout

By Sally Petterson

Introduction



As supervised visitation providers, you have the opportunity to give parents useful information to help keep their families safe. Car seat safety is an important but complex issue that not everyone is informed about. To help ensure child safety, you can print the following information out and share it with the parents you work with.

Car Seat Safety

Over 70% of child safety restraints, such as car seats, are installed incorrectly. That's nearly 3 out of every 4 seats! Are you confident that your car seat is installed right? Even if you are, it is a smart idea to get it checked out by a Child Passenger Safety Technician (CPST), who is a trained and certified individual that can teach you how to safely install your child's car seat. To find a CPST near you, go to <http://www.seatcheck.org/>.

What to Avoid When Using Car Seats to Promote Safety

The following table contains information on the dangers of used car seats.

Used Car Seats
Unless you know the entire history of a car seat, never use a second-hand car seat. If a car seat has ever been in a car accident, it has probably been damaged somehow by the forces of the crash and is no longer safe for use. Also, car seats expire after about 6 years from the date they were manufactured.
The only times a car seat may continue to be used after a car accident would be if the crash was minor. A crash is considered minor if ALL these criteria are met: <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ The vehicle was able to be driven away from the crash site✓ The door closest to the car seat was not damaged✓ None of the passengers had any injuries from the crash✓ The air bags did not deploy (if the vehicle has air bags)✓ You cannot see any damage to the car seat

Second, it is important to read the car seat manual. While the manual might look intimidating, much of the information included applies to certain vehicles and certain age ranges of children; therefore, it will not take as much time to read as you might think. **Your child's safety should be your priority, so it is worth the investment of time to read the manual as it will tell you everything you need to know about correctly installing car seats.**

One of the most common and dangerous mistakes is to change a child from rear-facing to forward-facing too soon.

- Rear-facing car seats are the most safe (**more than 500% safer!**)
- Rear-facing seats are recommended until a child is at a **minimum** of 2 years old, regardless of height or weight
 - BUT it is recommended to continue rear-facing until 4 years old.

This is because children's spines are not stable enough to avoid serious injury until early childhood.

- Keep in mind that the next level of car seat gives a minimum height and weight requirement, but that does not mean if your child meets the minimum that they are safest in that seat. Rather, **children should remain in their car seats until they outgrow them** before moving up to forward-facing or booster seats.



Here are 10 common mistakes and helpful tips:

1. **Using accessories that did not come with the seat or were not made by the seat manufacturer to use with that specific seat-** Accessories are not put through safety and crash testing, so they cannot be guaranteed to be safe in a crash. Because of this, using them often voids the warranty of the car seat, so if you are involved in a car accident, insurance will not pay for a replacement seat.

2. **Not having the seat straps in the correct position or tightened enough-** To know if the straps are just right while your child is buckled into the seat, try the Pinch Test: see if you can pinch the strap between your fingers at the child's shoulder. If you can't, it's correctly installed. If you can, it needs to be tightened further. Also, if a strap is twisted, it does not provide the same safety standards in the event of an accident, so take the time to make sure the straps are straightened out. Make sure that the chest clip is not down on the child's stomach, but is on the chest at armpit level. Any lower and it may not keep the shoulder straps from shrugging off in a crash. For rear-facing seats, the straps should come out of the



seat **at or below the shoulders**, then over the front of the body, while in forward-facing the straps should come out of the seat **at or above the shoulders**.

3. Using “fluff” such as bulky winter coats or blankets in the car seat

It may seem like you tightened the straps as much as they are able to be over a winter coat or blanket, but try taking all the bulk off your child and re-buckle them into the seat without adjusting it. You will notice that the buckles are incredibly loose, and you may even have enough space to put your fist underneath one.

→ Is this really such a big deal since they’ll have so much padding on that will take up that space? Yes, it is. Why?

→ **When an accident happens, all the air in that bulk will be compressed by the force of the crash, making it as if there was no coat or blanket there at all.** This means that the child is effectively sitting in a too loose car seat and may slip right out of the seat.

★ The best way to keep this from happening is to dress your child in one or two tight-fitting layers, buckle them in the seat with the straps snug, then place the coat over them so that they can put their arms in the sleeves and still keep warm by wearing it backwards. When using a blanket, never put it under the straps, but you can tuck it around the child after they are already strapped in. ★

4. **Putting an infant carrier on top of a shopping cart-** Everyone does it, so it must be safe, right? Wrong. The top of a shopping cart is one of the least safe places to put your child. There are no restraints keeping it in place, and many children have been injured by shopping carts toppling over. Other unsafe places to put an infant carrier: any seat with an active airbag, any seat without an adult seat belt (lap and shoulder belt), in a seating position not recommended by the vehicle manual, or on top of a table, car, or other surface that is not a vehicle seat.
5. **Checking the seat on a plane-** No matter how much you pad it or how careful the handlers promise to be, you never know what will happen to your car seat once it leaves your hands. If it is dropped or tossed around, the damage may not

be visible, but it is definitely there. You no longer know the seat's history, so you no longer know if it is safe to put your child in. The safest way to travel with a car seat is to use it on the airplane and have your child sit in it as they would in a normal vehicle. This ensures he or she is safe while on the plane in the event of turbulence or a crash, as well as in a vehicle when you get to where you are traveling.

6. **Using a lap-only belt with a booster seat-** Both high-backed booster seats and backless booster seats must always be used with a lap and shoulder belt. Using a lap-only belt is actually more unsafe for a child than having no booster seat at all. Booster seats are meant to bring a child up to the correct position for seat belts to safely restrain the child over the tops of his or her thighs and across the middle of the chest.

7. Installing the seat too loosely	8. Washing the harness straps
<p>You should not be able to move a car seat more than an inch to either side, otherwise it is too loose. Also, make sure that if you have a seat that converts from rear-facing to forward-facing, you use the correct belt path. Consult the manual if there is any confusion about this.</p>	<p>Never fully immerse or saturate car seat straps, including putting them in the washing machine, because this can make the material stretch out, weakening it and making it no longer safe in a crash. You can wipe the straps with a damp cloth if they become messy.</p>
9. Installing the car seat at an incorrect angle for your child	10. Bracing a rear-facing car seat by allowing it to press up against the driver's or passenger's seat
<p>Rear-facing car seats often have angle adjustments to ensure your child's head does not flop forward. Consult the manual to correctly position your child.</p>	<p>Most cars have advanced air bags that only work correctly if nothing is touching the seat.</p>

Ultimately, the safest place for your child to be is in a correctly installed car seat that fits their height and weight requirements, fits in your vehicle, and is used properly every time you drive.

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Handout to Celebrate Supervised Visitation Month

As supervised visitation providers, you may find that many in the community are unaware of what supervised visitation entails. Some people only come to find out what supervised visitation is when they are referred to a program as a client! May is Supervised Visitation Month, which provides the perfect opportunity for providers to raise awareness about their programs to their communities. Start planning now!

The symbol of Supervised Visitation Month is an orange ribbon. Orange beautifully embodies the work providers do, signifying safety, as orange is an eye-catching color that draws attention.

Activities Programs Can Do to Celebrate

- Supervised visitation programs can write a letter to their local newspaper editor discussing what the program consists of and how it contributes to the community. Letters can also be written to local magazines or online communications to spread the word.
- Programs can hold an open house for local residents to come and check out how supervised visitation works. Local leaders can be invited to become more aware of the program and therefore better able to unify the community and share about supervised visitation with others.
- Set up a TV or radio interview to promote supervised visitation and teach the hosts and community about the work you do.
- Contact local businesses to donate an ad about your program in various local and online publications.





- May is a great time for fundraisers, and Supervised Visitation Month is the perfect time to come up with creative ways to raise funds! Some ideas include:
 - ✂ Set up a 5k to benefit the program.
 - ✂ Connect with other local organizations and put on a street carnival with a bounce house, music, and food. Each group can set up a booth, an entry fee can be charged, and games can be played for donations to the organizations.
 - ✂ Set up a silent auction, with goodies donated by individuals and local organizations.
 - ✂ Partner with a local restaurant to promote a certain night where a percentage of each check will be automatically donated to your program. This is a win-win, as both organizations will benefit!
 - ✂ Organize a community rummage sale, where the proceeds will be donated to the supervised visitation program.

Many of these strategies involve partnering with other organizations, which raises awareness for both groups and can be a great way for the community to get involved with multiple causes!

