



# Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation

The Institute for Family Violence Studies

Florida State University

## NOVEMBER EPRESS

### QUESTIONS FROM DIRECTORS

*We are applying for a grant. Will the Clearinghouse write a letter of support for us?*

Here's what we can do. The Clearinghouse can state that your program has a letter of agreement with the court, and relay information such as the number of years the program has been in existence and that your director routinely attends trainings that the Clearinghouse sponsors. We can also say things that we know about your program, such as the kinds of cases you accept, what kind of physical facility you offer, and whether you have won local prizes or awards. We are also able to mention facts about the funding (support) you receive if we have that information. Finally, we can write about the need for supervised visitation generally.

*We have a case in which the father was a client several years ago, visiting with a different child of another biological mother. Do we keep that information confidential? We are not sure if the custodial parent knows about it.*

No, such information is not confidential, because it might (but might not) have a bearing on the issue of the child or other parent's safety. Although your current staff were not working at the time of the father's last court order for visitation, after you check and validate the identity of the father (to ensure he's the same Tom Smith), you should note in the file his repeat status. If this is a dependency case, you should let the case manager know. In your report to the court, you should mention the fact that this same client was a client at a previous time. Note the name of the old case in the file as well. Remember, supervised visitation staff are often considered an extra pair of eyes and ears of the court, so be sure that the court has the information it needs. (Ultimately, the father turned out to be a different Tom Smith.)

Be sure to participate in this month's phone conference!  
Find out: how many no-shows/cancellations did programs have last year? How can they be prevented?  
Are mental health issues increasing in visits? How many critical incidents were there last year – and how does the number compare to the year before? How many cases included a client who had an arrest for a violent crime?  
Call in November 16.

# Blended Families in Supervised Visitation

by Lily McLauchlin

## Introduction

Approximately one third of all marriages in America today form step families. Despite this trend, developing healthy relationships within blended families can be challenging. By some estimates, it can take between two and five years for a blended family to establish itself. As such, supervised visitation monitors should understand the unique dynamics of blended families in order to best serve their needs.

## Objectives

This E-press will address the following:

- What a blended family is
- What impact the transition into one has on parents and children
- Ways parents can help support their new family structure

## Dynamics of Blended Families

A blended family is a family in which a new spousal relationship forms, most often through remarriage, and the children from one or both parents are joined together as one family.

The impact that transitioning into a blended family can have on all those involved should not be underestimated. Children often experience:

- moving into a new home or having others move into their home
- difficulty learning to get along and live with their step siblings
- Emotional distress resulting from these major life changes and any residual feelings related to their parent's divorce and remarriage

For these reasons, it is important to ensure children are adapting well to their new environment.





Parents are also making a transition into a new life and family dynamic. They may experience:

- Difficulty making their marriage work while also trying to join their two family units into one
- Difficulty agreeing on parenting styles and discipline
- Difficulty disciplining their new spouse's children

## Ways to help parents support their new family

1. Have parents make a list of the values they would like to teach their children.

Children need consistency, lest they may become confused and act out. Making a list of what parents want to accomplish together may help avoid some of this confusion. It will also help to establish the values of the new family unit, rather than relying on those of the previous family units.

2. Have parents discuss discipline and household rules.

With the convergence of two families, discipline and household rules should be established beforehand to avoid arguments and inconsistencies that could cause emotional distress to the children. Parents should discuss their expectations regarding discipline and rules, and compromise where needed.

3. Explain the importance of allowing the biological parent to have alone time with their child(ren).

When children have alone time with their biological parent, it can decrease the emotional distress the child may be feeling from all the changes occurring. It gives the child confidence that they belong, and ensures them that their parent is not being taken away from them by the new spouse.



4. Explain that the biological parent should be disciplining their child(ren) until the step parent and child develop a deeper relationship.

Step-parents actually form relationships faster with their step-children if they take the back seat on discipline and instead support the biological parent when they discipline their child. Children may act out if they are immediately disciplined by their step-parent.

5. Explain the importance of parents making time for themselves.

Putting energy into the couple's relationship may also improve relationships with the children, who will in turn view the parents as united. This means the parents must set aside time to discuss family problems and spend quality time together. Children in blended families who have likely experienced their parents' divorce recently may experience extra emotional turmoil if they witness conflict within their new family. Taking time out of the day to check in with one another is one way to prevent any sudden arguing in front of children.

## Conclusion

Supervised visitation monitors should be aware of the unique challenges and dynamics of blended families. They must be aware of the experiences parents and children of a blended family may be going through in order to promote healthy functioning. They have a unique opportunity to help blended families adapt by encouraging parents to communicate effectively and create a stable environment for their children.

## Resources

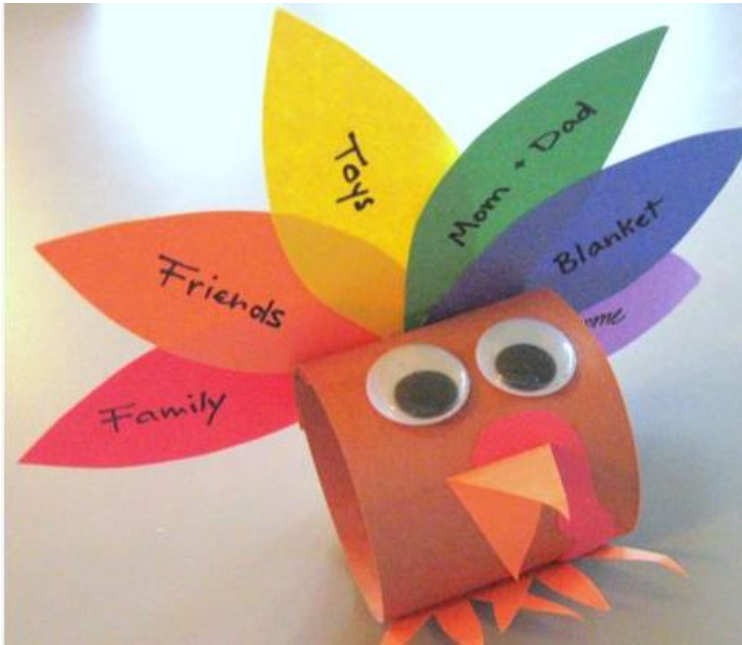
Empowering Parents Editor (2016). Blended Family? The 5 Secrets of Effective Stepparenting. *Empowering Parents*. Retrieved from <https://www.empoweringparents.com/article/blended-family-the-5-secrets-of-effective-stepparenting/>

Gonzales, Jaymes (2009). Prefamily Counseling: Working with Blended Families. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 50:2, 148-157.

McGraw, Philip (October 28, 2014). 9 Strategies For Making a Blended Family Blend. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/28/step-family-blended-family\\_n\\_6058890.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/28/step-family-blended-family_n_6058890.html)

Robinson, Holly (2016). Navigating the Challenges of Blended Families. *Parents*. Retrieved from <http://www.parents.com/parenting/divorce/blended-families/challenges-of-blended-families/>

# THANKFUL TURKEYS!



## Materials:

- Construction paper
- Toilet paper tubes
- Craft foam
- Googly eyes

## Directions:

1. Cut construction paper into 5 leaf-like shapes. Have the child write one thing he/she is thankful for on each leaf (or write it for him/her).
2. Cut cardboard tube to desired height. Have the child glue the feathers to one side of the tube.
3. Have the child glue the googly eyes onto the other side of the cardboard tube.
4. Cut the craft foam into the shape of feet, a beak, and a gobble. Have the child glue the beak and gobble beneath the eyes, and the feet to the bottom of the tube.

## SOURCE:

<https://www.parentmap.com/article/16-thanksgiving-decorations-that-kids-can-make?page=3>

# Overcoming Homework Troubles

By Samantha Matras

## Introduction

For parents, conflicts with children over homework can seem like a daily routine. However, homework “battles” often lead to arguments and vicious cycles of “nagging” parents and combative children instead of an increase in school performance and motivation to do homework.

When children avoid homework, parents may accuse them of being lazy. However, according to psychologists, this assumption can be harmful. Avoiding homework may stem from feelings of frustration, anxiousness, discouragement, or legitimate learning disabilities.

When parents and children argue over homework, it can turn into a power struggle.



In order to decrease these routine fights, parents can step away from the idea of “making children do their homework” and move towards setting limits and respecting children’s choices as ways to empower and motivate them.

## Objectives

This E-Press aims to inform service providers about:

- The consequences of parents trying to force their children to care about their homework
- Ways parents can give children more responsibility
- Ways in which parents can utilize past homework successes
- Ways parents can create environments that encourage children to complete homework

## When helping becomes destructive

Helping children with homework can be destructive and counterproductive if parents' help involves them actually *doing* their children's homework for them.



Although parent's intentions are not necessarily bad, the child may interpret their parent's help as a signal that they do not have to worry about completing their work, since their parent has already accepted that responsibility.

However, there are ways parents can relay that responsibility back to children and consequentially give children more independence and control. They may try asking:

- "Are you satisfied with how things are going?"
- "If not, what do you want to do about it?"
- "How can I be helpful to you?"

## Addressing Apathy

Children sometimes claim they "don't care" about their homework or grades. However, that statement may indicate a host of other things. It may derive from the power struggle between parents and children; "I don't care" could mean "You can't make me care."

It is extremely difficult to force someone to care. Child psychologists assert that in actuality motivation and "caring" develop best through ownership. If parents take a step back, motivation and caring is more likely to develop. A child, like any person, is more likely to be motivated to do something if she or he feels they have autonomy.

Instead of parents insisting their children should care, one psychologist suggests that parents try letting children discover what motivates them. If children choose not to do homework, they will likely suffer the consequences of that choice. Allowing children to realize the consequences of their own decisions can be a constructive learning experience for them. Then, when children do choose to complete their homework, they may see more clearly the benefit of choosing to complete their work.

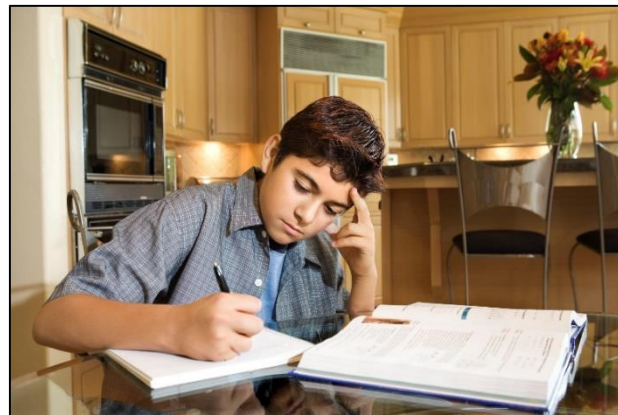


## What *can* parents do to ensure homework is complete?

When parents battle their children over homework every night, getting children to complete homework may feel like a lost cause. Parents can feel they have tried *everything*.

### Looking to the past for advice

Service providers can encourage parents to think about times in the past when their children successfully completed all of their homework. Parents can reflect on what was done differently then and what made it so successful in the past. Parents can be encouraged to listen to and believe children when they discuss what helped homework completion before with their children. This way, parents and children can work together to implement those changes again. Reflecting on past successes can encourage both parents and children by reassuring them that success is possible and very attainable.



Once parents and children realize they have already executed these positive behaviors in the past, it can encourage them to repeat them. If a person did something in the past, then they can do it again.

Service providers and parents can complete the activity below to help parents reflect on past homework successes:

- 1) Describe one time in the past when your child successfully completed homework
- 2) What was different about that time?
  - a. How did you act differently?
  - b. How did your child act differently?
  - c. How was the homework environment different?
- 3) Which differences do you think you can try to repeat the next time your child has homework?

### Have a homework plan

While parents may not be able to force their children to care, they can still influence behavior. Parents can strive to create an environment and structure that ensures the

greatest likelihood of successful homework completion. Service providers can direct parents to the tips below to help construct a positive homework environment.

<b>Tips for creating a positive homework environment</b>	
<b>Set a schedule</b>	Set aside a routine time for homework. For example, have a homework hour at 6 pm every day. After that hour, the child will be free to do as she likes, whether homework is finished or not. This ensures that at least <i>some</i> homework is completed and having a time limit helps children “see the light at the end of the tunnel.”
<b>Break time</b>	The last thing children want to do when they get home from a grueling day of constant sitting at school is more sitting and more work. Instead, allow children to have a short “relaxation” period before beginning their homework. This can help them re-energize and de-stress before they begin their work.
<b>Turn off ALL electronics</b>	ALL electronics should be turned off during homework time. Children are very observant of their parents’ behavior, so if a parent is distracted by electronics during homework time, the child may assume she or he can do the same. Moreover, being available to assist children, instead of being distracted, can help children feel supported.
<b>Use a communal space</b>	Having children work in a communal space in the house permits parents to be present and readily available to offer encouragement and assistance when needed.
<b>Give Praise</b>	Vocalize any improvement to children often. If a child sees she or he is improving and realizes this pleases their parent, they may feel encouraged to continue behaviors associated with that improvement.
<b>Praise effort not innate ability</b>	Often times children avoid homework when it is a subject with which they struggle. Overcoming that struggle through hard work ethic is difficult, and should be praised.
<b>Create a checklist</b>	Visually seeing items being “checked off” can encourage children to continue completing tasks on the list.
<b>Check- In</b>	Watch for signs of frustration and offer encouragement This may be a good time for parents to ask, “How can I help you?”
<b>Give rewards</b>	If a child is told her bedtime curfew can increase by 30 minutes if homework is completed, this may incentivize her to actually finish it. Parents can optimize motivation by first asking children how they would like to be rewarded, and making sure they are reasonable requests.

<p><b>Do not give rewards when homework is not completed</b></p>	<p>If a parent tells a child she or he can have ice cream if homework gets finished, that parent should not give the child ice cream if the homework is not completed. Doing so would decrease the effectiveness of future incentives. If children know they will get what they want regardless of homework completion, then they will be less likely to complete their work.</p>
--	---

## Conclusion

Battles over homework between parents and children may seem like a never-ending war. Despite the frequency of these disputes, they leave both parties unhappy and to parents' dismay, uncompleted homework persists. In order to decrease these "battles" and subsequently increase homework completion, parents may have to loosen their rein's and try not to assume responsibility for caring about their children's homework. While parents cannot force their children to care and or be motivated, they can actively construct environments that foster and encourage learning and personal responsibility.

## References

- Barish, K. (2012, Sep 5). *Battles over homework: Advice for parents*. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/pride-and-joy/201209/battles-over-homework-advice-parents>
- Child development institute. *Tips for helping kids and teens with homework and study habits*. Retrieved from <https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/learning/tips-for-helping-kids-and-teens-with-homework-and-study-habits/>
- Lehman, J. *Homework hell? Part I: How to turn it around*. Retrieved from <https://www.empoweringparents.com/article/homework-hell-part-i-how-to-turn-it-around/>
- Morin, A. *7 tips for improving your child's homework and study skills*. Retrieved from <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/learning-at-home/homework-study-skills/7-tips-for-improving-your-childs-homework-and-study-skills#slide-3>
- Pincus, D. *7 ways to stop the parent-child power struggle over homework*. Retrieved from <https://www.empoweringparents.com/article/7-ways-to-stop-the-parent-child-power-struggle-over-homework/>
- Pincus, D. *The homework battle: How to get children to do homework*. Retrieved from <https://www.empoweringparents.com/article/the-homework-battle-how-to-get-children-to-do-homework/>

## Part Two

# Child Sexual Abuse

It can be very difficult to discuss child sexual abuse, but it is essential for supervised visitation staff to learn about the issue to help protect children. Child sexual abuse cases have many complex dynamics and the Clearinghouse will publish an updated Child Sexual Abuse Referrals Manual in 2018. The content of the new manual will explore all parts of child sexual abuse and will include topics such as human trafficking, best practices for working with sexual abuse cases, and juvenile sexual offenders. Provided in this chapter is a brief overview of child sexual abuse dynamics that all monitors should know.

### Overview of Child Sexual Abuse

Much like physical abuse, the effects of child sexual abuse can have severe and long-lasting effects on children and families. The specific ways in which children respond to sexual abuse, as well as the long term consequences, are in many ways both similar to and unique in comparison to physical abuse. Because of the numerous differences between physical and sexual abuse, it is important to discuss this topic separately and in depth. Visitation monitors should have a deep understanding of both definitions of abuse, as well as the differences that exist between the two.

One important difference between physical and sexual abuse is the concept of a perpetrator's willfulness; one does not accidentally sexually abuse a child, nor does it occur as a result of an inability to control one's temper. When sexual abuse occurs, it is a willful act by a perpetrator.

According to Florida Chapter 39, sexual abuse can refer to any one or more of the following acts:

#### Did You Know?

More than 90% of juvenile sexual abuse victims know their abuser in some way.



- Any penetration, however slight, of the vagina or anal opening of one person by the penis of another person, whether or not there is the emission of semen.
- Any sexual contact between the genitals or anal opening of one person and the mouth or tongue of another person.
- Any intrusion by one person into the genitals or anal opening of another person, including the use of any object for this purpose, except that this does not include any act intended for a valid medical purpose.
- The intentional touching of the genitals or other intimate parts, including the breasts, genital area, groin, inner thighs, and buttocks, or the clothing covering them, of either the child or the perpetrator, except that this does not include:
  - Any act which may reasonably be construed to be a normal caregiver responsibility, any interaction with, or affection for a child, or;
  - Any act intended for a valid medical purpose.
- The intentional masturbation of the perpetrator's genitals in the presence of a child.
- The intentional exposure of the perpetrator's genitals in the presence of a child, or any other sexual act intentionally perpetrated in the presence of a child, if such exposure or sexual act is for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification, aggression, degradation, or other similar purpose.
- The sexual exploitation of a child, which includes the act of a child offering to engage in or engaging in prostitution, provided that the child is not under arrest or is not being prosecuted in a delinquency or criminal proceeding for a violation of any offense in chapter 796 based on such behavior; or allowing, encouraging, or forcing a child to:
  - Solicit for or engage in prostitution
  - Engage in a sexual performance, as defined by chapter 827
  - Participate in the trade of human trafficking as provided in s. 787.06.

Abusers do not always use physical force, instead they may use play, deception, threats, or other forms of coercion to engage children and maintain silence.

<b>Sexual Exploitation Definitions</b>		
Term	FL Statute	Definition
Performance	827.071(1)(b)	Any play, motion picture, photograph or dance or other visual representation exhibited before an audience
Sexual Performance	827.071(1)(h)	Any performance or part thereof which includes sexual conduct by a child less than 18 years of age.
Human Trafficking	787.06(2)(d)	Transporting, soliciting, recruiting, harboring, providing, enticing, maintaining, or obtaining another person for the purpose of exploitation of that person
	787.06(3)(g)	When a person who knowingly, or in reckless disregard of the facts, engages in, or attempts to engage in, or benefits financially by receiving anything of value from participation in a venture that has subjected a person to human trafficking.

The conceptualization of sexual abuse may be complex and the following table will help to illustrate the different acts that are sexual abuse.

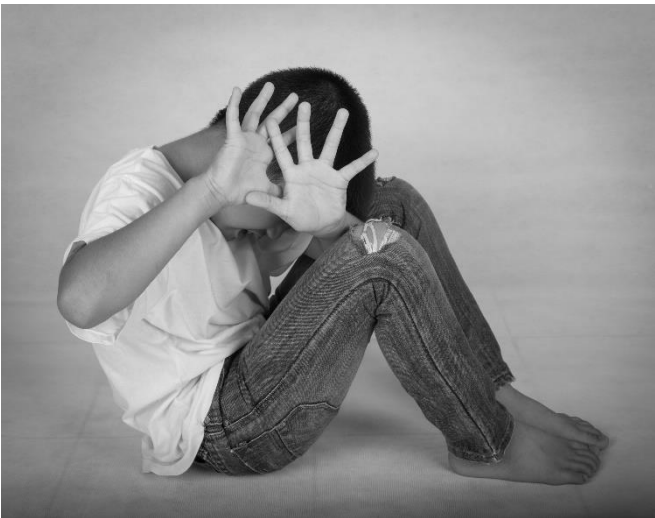
<b>Understanding Child Sexual Abuse Dynamics</b>		
Type	Definition	Example
Touching	Any fondling of sexual organs, sexual contact between genitals or penetration by genitals, digits, or other object.	Sexual intercourse of any kind (oral, anal, vaginal)
Non-touching	Exposing of the perpetrators genitals to the child, voyeurism, or exposing the child to explicit sexual material, such as pornography.	Masturbating in front of the child, or exhibition
Sexual Exploitation	Soliciting a child for the purposes of prostitution, or using the child to film, photograph, or model pornography.	Lending a child out to be used for sexual gratification by another.

## Impact of Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is a traumatic experience and can have a lasting impact on the life of a child well into his or her adult life. Abuse can result in immediate symptoms, but also has long term physical, emotional, and psychological effects. The following section will focus on understanding the multifaceted impact of childhood sexual abuse on child victims.

### Signs and Symptoms

Identifying the signs and symptoms of child sexual abuse is important for monitors because in some cases, symptoms and signs can be very subtle and monitors should



always be on high alert to protect children in visitation. There may be cases that are referred to programs as a result of sexual abuse findings and monitors should be aware of the dynamics that might be present during visitation. In other cases, there may not be pre-existing reports of abuse, and a child could be victimized while participating in supervised visitation. It is the responsibility of every visitation monitor to be aware of, notice, and report any inappropriate, re-victimizing, or alarming behaviors that take place during visitation.

There are patterns of behavior in children that can be identified as common (developmentally appropriate) and uncommon (red flags) in supervised visitation. It is important for supervised visitation providers to know the types of uncommon behaviors that should be considered red flags.

Children who have been abused may begin to exhibit any of these behaviors again during or after visitation.

### IMPORTANT

It is important to note that any number of events could be potential triggers for children who have been abused. These could be as simple as being in the presence of the abuser or the smell of their clothes.

## Common and Uncommon Sexual Behavior

<i>Common (may be developmentally appropriate)</i>	<i>Uncommon (red flags)</i>
<b>Preschool (0 to 5 years)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual language relating to differences in body parts, bathroom talk, pregnancy, and birth</li> <li>• Self-fondling at home and in public</li> <li>• Showing and looking at private parts with other children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions of sexual acts</li> <li>• Sexual contact experiences with other children</li> <li>• Masturbation unresponsive to redirection or limits</li> <li>• Inserting objects into genital opening</li> </ul>
<b>School Age (6 to 12 years)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions about menstruation, pregnancy, and sexual behavior</li> <li>• Experimenting with same-age children, including kissing, fondling, exhibition, and role-play</li> <li>• Masturbation at home or other private places</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions of explicit sexual acts</li> <li>• Asking adults or peers to participate in explicit sexual acts</li> <li>• Masturbating in public or excessively in private to the point of bleeding</li> </ul>
<b>Adolescence (13 to 16 years)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions about decision-making, social relationships, and sexual customs</li> <li>• Masturbating in private</li> <li>• Experimenting between adolescents of the same age, including open mouth kissing, fondling, and body rubbing</li> <li>• </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual interest in much younger children</li> <li>• Aggression in touching other genitals</li> <li>• Asking adults to participate in explicit sexual acts</li> <li>• The use of force, aggression, or drugs to obtain compliance</li> </ul>

## Best Practices

For visitation programs accepting referrals of cases involving child sexual abuse, there are specific visit rules that must be followed in order to protect the children involved. These rules should be already established and understood by all parties. In fact, they should be part of the visitation program agreement so that they are transparent. Monitors and program directors are responsible for ensuring all rules are followed.

**Know and understand all allegations.** Prior to facilitating visits in any sexual abuse case, monitors should know what abuse has been alleged. Knowing what has



previously happened is important when monitors are preparing for visits. It allows them to know what to look for during parent-child interaction. Monitors should review case files relevant to the abuse, and always document behavior that might be reason for concern. In addition, monitors should always consult with the supervisor or program director about parental or child behavior that raises concerns.



**Ratio of staff to visiting families.** In some programs, monitors may supervise more than one visit at a time. In sexual abuse cases, it is crucial to have one visit monitor for each visiting family. If the family is large, monitors should consider using more than one monitor to ensure that all family members are supervised adequately. This is important because it allows monitors to focus on one family, reducing distractions while remaining in the room at all times. It is crucial for monitors to be able to see and hear all interactions between parent and child. Upholding this ratio will help children feel protected, the visiting parent become aware of the close monitoring, and for the court system to know that the child is being adequately protected.

**Language requirements.** It is important for the monitor to have a fluent understanding of the language that the child and visiting parent will be using to communicate. If there is a need for sign-language interpreters or translation services, they should be scheduled and planned ahead of time. Language should be discussed during intake, and if the parent or child begins to use a language that is not understood by the monitor, an intervention should be made and a translator used

**Physical contact.** Due to the nature of child sexual abuse cases, it is important for physical contact to be closely monitored between parent and child. In addition, visiting parents should be aware that there will be restrictions on the physical contact between parent and child during visits to protect the child from victimization and the parent from false allegations of abuse.

- Physical contact should be brief and should only be, if at all, initiated by the child. However, any physical contact which appears inappropriate or sexualized must be stopped by staff immediately, even if the child does not appear distressed.

Children who do not view their abuse as negative may initiate physical contact and not realize the inappropriate nature of their physical contact and staff should be aware of this dynamic.

- No objects – furniture, office equipment, toys, etc. – should block the view of the visit monitor.
- The following types of physical contact should be prohibited:
  - Tickling
  - Lap-sitting
  - Wrestling
  - Prolonged hugging or kissing
  - Kissing on any area below the face
  - Stroking
  - Hand holding
  - Hair combing
  - Changing diapers or clothes

These restrictions rule reduce the possibility of sexual abuse or physical abuse occurring during visits and of misinterpretations of parent-child contact. In addition, the following behaviors should also be avoided:

- Whispering
- Passing notes
- Hand signals or body signals
- Photographing the child
- Audiotaping or videotaping the child
- Exchanging gifts, money, or cards
- Physical games (i.e. hiding toys or gifts in pockets, requiring child to touch toys or dolls)



This reduces the possibility of verbal threats, minimizes triggering events for the child, and enhances staff control of the environment. Monitors should always be wary of unfamiliar behavior between the parent and the child and should make an effort to stop any communication that is not easily understood by others outside of the parent-child relationship. Secrets, private games between the parent and child, and other behavior that is unfamiliar to a monitor should trigger an intervention and re-direction. Whenever a monitor intervenes in a visit, the intervention should be recorded in the case notes.

**Prohibitions on items brought to visits.** Parents, custodial or visiting, should avoid bringing any items to the visit including:

- Toys, dolls, games, books
- Written material
- Food
- Additional clothing
- Photos
- Drinks
- Music
- Tapes
- Jewelry
- Pets (except service animals)
- Household items

## IMPORTANT OFF-SITE VISITS

As part of the Clearinghouse's recommendations for child sexual abuse cases, off-site visits should **NEVER** occur for cases of child sexual abuse.

This reduces the possibility of a perpetrator bringing to the visit covert or overt reminders of the child's abusive experience. It also reduces the opportunity for the perpetrator to bribe the child or influence his or her testimony

**Toilet rules and restrictions.** Programs should have written rules relating to the use of toilet facilities during visits, and parents and children should be made aware of these rules prior to the first visit.

- Children **MUST** use the toilets on their own, or if a child is not old enough to use the toilet on his or her own, he or she should be accompanied by staff only. Parents may not accompany their children to the toilet in sexual abuse cases.
- Children may not accompany their siblings or other children to the bathroom in these cases.
- Babies who wear diapers or training pants should be changed by staff in a room separate from the visiting parent.

These precautions reduce the possibility of physical or sexual abuse incidents during visits or the misinterpretation of visiting parent's behavior during toileting.



**Avoid discussion about abuse.** Parents should never be permitted to blame, tease, or scold the child about alleged abuse. Further, monitors should not allow parents to discuss alleged or confirmed abuse with children during visitation.

Monitors should be mindful that additional precautions or rules may need to address specific dynamics in each case. Monitors should discuss sexual abuse cases with program directors to develop a case plan and rules for each case supervised in the agency. The most important safety precaution in sexual abuse cases is for monitors is to be continuously observant and to intervene in and record any suspicious behavior during visitation.

## **Statutory Requirements**

Florida Statutes 753.05 specifically refer to rules regarding supervised visitation in cases of child sexual abuse:

### **Referrals Involving Child Sexual Abuse**

- In order to accept referrals involving child sexual abuse, a visitation program must have an agreement with court and current affidavit of compliance on file. Additionally, the chief judge of the circuit in which the program is located must affirm that the program has agreed to comply with the minimum standards mentioned in 753.04.
- The program must also have a written an agreement with the court and with the department that contains policies specifically related to child sexual abuse that include provisions for the following:
  - Staff who supervises visits must have specific training on child sexual abuse by the clearinghouse and that training must be documented in personnel files
  - The program must have protocols on how to obtain background material on the family prior to starting services
  - The program can only accept referrals for which the staff already has background material, training, and security in place to safely monitor visits
  - The program cannot accept referrals when staff lacks the education, training, background material, and the security necessary to ensure safety of the child.
  - The program must cease visits if the child appears to be traumatized by the visits or when the visitor engages in inappropriate behavior or violates the program rules.

## REMINDER

Every program that accepts child sexual abuse referrals must have an agreement with the Department of Children and Families on file.



State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott  
Governor

Secretary

### AGREEMENT FOR SUPERVISED VISITATION PROGRAMS

Pursuant to s.39.0139 and s.753.05, F.S., this Letter of Agreement outlines specific requirements in the provision of supervised visitation services administered by the (Name): \_\_\_\_\_ Supervised Visitation Program in accordance with the agreement on file with the \_\_\_\_\_ Judicial Circuit.

***The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) agrees:***

1. To acknowledge the authority of the staff of the above-named Supervised Visitation Program to accept or decline referrals. Programs shall decline to accept a case for which they cannot reasonably ensure the safety of all clients, program staff and volunteers, for reasons including, but not necessarily limited to the following:
  - a. The volatile nature of the case or client;
  - b. Inadequate training of program staff and/or volunteers;
  - c. Inadequate facility security;
  - d. Insufficient resources;
  - e. Insufficient case background information;
  - f. Conflict of interest.

***The (Name): \_\_\_\_\_ Supervised Visitation Program agrees that:***

1. The program has an agreement with the court and a current affidavit of compliance on file with the chief judge of the \_\_\_\_\_ Judicial Circuit affirming that the program has agreed to comply with the minimum standards contained in the administrative order issued by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on November 18, 1999.
2. The program will ensure that all program staff monitoring supervised visitation and other contact will have previously received special training in the dynamics of child sexual abuse provided through the Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation; same training will be clearly documented in staff personnel files.
3. The program will have protocols established for obtaining background information on the family/case, prior to the initiation of supervised visitation services.
4. The program will accept only those referrals for which staff members have the requisite case background information, training, and security in place to safely monitor visitation and other contact.

1317 Winewood Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

5. The program will decline referrals of child sexual abuse cases when staff lacks the necessary training or education, when background information has not been received, or when lack of security may enable revictimization of the child.

6. The program will establish and train staff on procedures for staff to follow when supervising visitation and other contact, particularly in cases involving child sexual abuse.

7. The program will develop and follow policies for the handling and reporting of critical incidents.

8. The program will develop and enforce rules for appropriate interaction between the child(ren) and the parent(s)/individual(s) visiting during supervised visitation and other contact.

9. The program will suspend visits and subsequently notify the court in cases when the child appears to be traumatized by the visits, or when the parent/individual visiting or having other contact with the child engages in inappropriate behavior or otherwise violates program rules.

---

(DCF Representative Signature and Title)

---

(Date)

---

(Supervised Visitation Program Director Signature)

---

(Date)

For more extensive training on child sexual abuse, see the Clearinghouse's current training manual at <http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/clearinghouse/manuals-and-materials/>. A new Child Sexual Abuse Referrals Manual will be made available online in 2018. Topics to be included in this new training will include:

- The Impact of Child Sexual Abuse
- Human Trafficking
- Juvenile Sexual Offenders
- System Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- Best Practices for Assessing Referrals
- Best Practices for Visits

## Reporting Child Abuse

If, at any point during or following visitation, a monitor suspects or is made aware that a child has been abused or neglected by parents, caregivers, or any other adult in their life, they are mandated to report it to the Florida Department of Children and Families.

### Information Needed for Report

When reporting abuse or neglect, it is necessary to gather relevant information which includes:

- Who is involved
- What happened
- When/Where it happened
- Extent of injuries
- What the victim disclosed
- Name, date of birth (or approximate age), race, and gender for all adults and children involved
- Addresses for all involved, including location at the time of report
- Relationship of the alleged abuse to their victim

### 3 Ways to Report:

**Call**  
**1-800-96-ABUSE (22873)**

**Fax**  
**1-800-914-0004**

**Online**  
**<https://reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us/>**

## Definition of Abuse

The Florida Abuse Hotline will accept a report only when:

1. There is reasonable cause to suspect that a **child** (any born, unmarried person less than 18 years of age who has not been emancipated by order of the court)
2. Who can be **located in Florida**, or is temporarily out of the state but is expected to return in the immediate future,
3. Has been **harmed** or is believed to be **threatened with harm**
4. From a **person responsible for the care of the child** (such as a parent, legal custodian, adult household member, another adult, or another child who has taken responsibility for the child).



## False Reporting

Any persons who make a report in good faith are immune from any civil or criminal liability. Any person who knowingly and willfully makes a false report has committed a felony in the third degree and are subject to up to 5 years in prison, five years of probation, and a \$5,000 fine.

False reports are those reports that are not true and are maliciously made for the purpose of:

- Harassing, embarrassing, or harming another person;
- Personal financial gain for the reporting person;
- Acquiring custody of a child;
- Personal benefit for the reporting person in any other private dispute involving the child.

*Failure to report known or suspected child abuse is now a third-degree felony offense.*



## Quiz

1. Which of the following is *not* required to report abuse?
  - A. Name, age, race, and gender of all involved
  - B. Location or address
  - C. Physical evidence or proof
  - D. A confession from a caregiver
2. TRUE or FALSE: Adults who were abused as children have an increased likelihood of abusing their own children.
3. What is one of the first signs that a child has been hurt, and may indicate physical abuse?
  - A. Bruising
  - B. Fractures
  - C. Burns
  - D. Cuts
4. Which of the following is considered to be a protective factor that universally reduces the likelihood violence will occur in a family?
  - A. Knowledge of children's developmental stages
  - B. Nurturing and attachment
  - C. Parental resilience
  - D. All of the above
5. TRUE or FALSE: Everyone has similar reactions to child abuse.

**Answers: 1. C, 2. True, 3. A, 4. D, 5. False**

## Online Resources

- 1. Child Welfare Information Gateway.** *www.childwelfare.gov.* Provides resources on many topics concerning child welfare, and includes best practices, fact sheets, and other publications that visitation monitors and programs can utilize.
- 2. Healthy Children.** *www.healthychildren.org.* American Academy of Pediatrics website providing parenting advice and resources for every stage of development. Topics range from prenatal care to parenting teenagers and young adults.
- 3. Florida Abuse Hotline.** *www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline.* Additional information about reporting child abuse, including an online reporting portal.
- 4. NPR.** <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/03/02/387007941/take-the-ace-quiz-and-learn-what-it-does-and-doesnt-mean>. At this site parents can take the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Quiz to learn more about childhood trauma, increased health risks and resilience.

## References

- A. E., & Holden, G. W. (1998). The co-occurrence of spouse and physical child abuse: A review and appraisal. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 12, 578–599.
- Administration for Children and Families. (n.d.). The six protective factors. US Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth/factors.cfm>
- Appel, Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association. Liem, J. H., & Boudewyn, A. C. (1999). Contextualizing the effects of childhood sexual abuse on adult self-and social functioning: An attachment theory perspective. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 23(11), 1141-1157.
- American Humane Association. *Stop Child Abuse*. Retrieved from <http://www.americanhumane.org/children/stop-child-abuse/>
- American Psychological Association. (2010). Stress in America 2010 report. Retrieved from: <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/national-report.pdf>
- Ceballo, R. & McLoyd, V., C. (2002). Social support and parenting in poor, dangerous neighborhoods. *Child Development*, 73(4), 1310-1321.
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Child maltreatment: Risk and protective factors. Retrieved from: [www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/riskprotectivefactors.html](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/riskprotectivefactors.html)
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2013, July). *Long-Term Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect*. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/long-term-consequences/>
- Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2013, July). *What is Child Abuse and Neglect? Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms*. Retrieved from <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/whatiscan/>
- Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Ormrod, R. & Hamby, S.L. (2009). Violence, abuse and crime exposure in a national sample of children and youth. *Pediatrics*, 124, 1411-1423.
- Florida Department of Education. *Just for Parents Community*. Retrieved from <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/family-community/activities-programs/just-for-parents-community/index.shtml>
- Florida Network of Youth and Family Services. Retrieved from <http://www.floridanetwork.org/Responsive/index.php>
- Giardino, A. P. (2015, May 14). *Physical child abuse*. Retrieved from <http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/915664-overview>
- Hardy, F. & Darlington, Y. (2008). What parents value from formal support services in the context of identified child abuse. *Child & Family Social Work*, 13, 252-261.

- Healthy Place. *Signs of Child Physical Abuse*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthyplace.com/abuse/child-physical-abuse/signs-of-child-physical-abuse/>
- Help Guide. *Child Abuse and Neglect*. Retrieved from <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect.htm>
- Massachusetts Department of Health and Human Services. *Warning Signs for Child Abuse or Neglect*. Retrieved from <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dcf/child-abuse-neglect/warning-signs.html>
- Mayo Clinic. *Child abuse*. Retrieved from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/child-abuse/basics/risk-factors/con-20033789>
- Mayo Clinic. *Risk Factors*. Retrieved from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/child-abuse/basics/risk-factors/con-20033789>
- McDonald R., Jouriles E. N., Ramisetty-Mikler S., Caetano R, Green C. E. (2006). Estimating the number of American children living in partner-violent families. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 20(1): 137-142. National Association of Social Workers. (Last accessed June 3, 2013).
- Preventing Child Abuse Within Youth- Serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures. US Department of Health and Human Services (2007). <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/PreventingChildSexualAbuse-a.pdf>
- Salisbury E.J., Henning K., Holdford R. (2009) Fathering by partner-abusive men: attitudes on children's exposure to interparental conflict and risk factors for child abuse. *Child Maltreatment*, Aug. 14(3):232-42. doi: 10.1177/1077559509338407.
- Teens Health. *Bruises*. Retrieved from <http://kidshealth.org/en/teens/bruises.html>
- Tennison Center for Children. *Child Abuse in America*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthyplace.com/abuse/child-physical-abuse/signs-of-child-physical-abuse/>
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (2009, October). *Child Physical Abuse Fact Sheet*. Los Angeles, CA & Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2010). *The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act*. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/capta2010.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Child maltreatment 2013*. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/cm2012.pdf>
- United States Department of Health and Human Services (2013). Preventing child maltreatment and promoting well-being: A network for action. 2013 Resource Guide. Retrieved from: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/guide2013/guide.pdf>