



EPRESS

Questions from Directors:

We have a client at our program who has a sales background, but is unemployed. She has great skills that would be of use to us in helping to promote our program. She has been a model client for over a year - no incidents, and no difficulties. Is there any problem if we hire her for the position we've advertised?

I would not advise you to hire a client. It would, in my view, be improper and a conflict of interest. In addition, treating this client differently – by making her an employee – would significantly change her relationship with the program. You could not be able to claim that you are impartial because by hiring her, you would be vouching for her. Please also note that many of those parents who have seemed to be “model clients” at other programs have suddenly created dangerous critical incidents. Any time a program asks me about special treatment for a certain client, I worry that the program has let its guard down, and become complacent. As long as any person is a client, the supervision of that person must be the same as all others. The security protocol must remain the same, unless it is changed according to a formal procedure. In short, you should find your promotional expert elsewhere. Even if this parent becomes a “former” client, you should have a rule that requires several years to pass

before that parent could even be considered for a position at your program. Parents frequently get re-referred to programs, because litigation can sometimes go on for years.

We've had a lot of training on child abuse and family violence, but I have a terrible case in which there was no violence, but the parents are just horrible to each other. The judge ordered the case to my program and it seems that the new stepparents are part of the toxic relationships. The stepfather and father are enemies, and the mother will not come into the building if she thinks the stepmother is there. We need to say something to these parents, because it seems like no one is really focused on the two kids. What should we tell them?

We will give you things to tell them, but this advice is not guaranteed to improve the situation. Unfortunately, monitored exchange doesn't improve the relationships; it just helps protect the children from some of the anger during the transition. The parents in your case sound as though they do not have appropriate boundaries. They are not protecting their children from their own emotions. That can be the core of unsuccessful co-parenting. We break down some specific advice below, so that everyone in the SV community can benefit from the information. Keep reading, and good luck!

Divorce and Children: Teaching Parents the Importance of Boundaries



Even when there has been no violence or abuse, divorce can be hard on everyone: parents, friends, children, and relatives. All involved can experience the negative impacts of divorce in different, sometimes harmful, ways. Though divorce is difficult, there are positive strategies parents can use to ensure their children's welfare, such as striving to balance the needs of the children with their own personal wants. For parents who are currently going through a divorce in which there has not been violence or abuse, it's important to provide reminders that children still need protection. Boundaries are already important in any parent-child relationship but become even more important during a divorce. Respecting boundaries will help children get through the experience as positively as possible.

Within nonviolent relationships, explain to parents that in order to respect boundaries and children's emotional needs, they should remember the following:

1) Children still need parents, married or not.

Even when a marriage dissolves, the children will likely still desire to have a relationship with both parents. Parents should be careful with the language and behaviors they use when interacting with each other. If children notice consistent patterns of anger, aggression, or distrust, they will begin to feel torn between their parents. Children should not be made to feel guilty about having a relationship with both of their parents. Poor language choices and name-calling from one parent can make children feel forced to pick sides, which is both unhealthy and emotionally abusive and can negatively impact the children's relationship with both parents. The positive effect of a lasting parental relationship on a child is more important in the long-term than the parent's ability to openly discuss feelings of anger and bitterness about the divorce in the moment.

2) Discussions about property should occur between the parents and other relevant adults.

Children do not need to see or hear any discussion of who gets the house or where the pots and pans are going. Not only does this not involve them, but it exposes them to conflict. The division of physical property is a concrete representation of the divorce and may carry more meaning to children than even the concept of divorce. Parents should be sure to make these decisions independent of the children and try to not bring them up in the presence of the children. Comments like, “That movie went to your dad, so now I need to buy a new one” or “I don’t have the right pan to make that, your mom got it” will enforce the division and may make the child feel a need to show loyalty to one parent over the other.

3) Visitation and custody agreements should be kept away from the child.

Custody and visitation are often the hardest parts of a divorce and can create some of the more hostile discussions. Parents should prioritize the children's wants and needs in scheduling if possible, as constant moving and switching locations is not healthy for children already in a state of change. If custody and



visitation needs to be discussed, parents should do so with the relevant adults, without children present, as this topic can lead to stress, confusion, and insecurities for them, especially with young children. Parents should be careful of how they discuss the children in terms of custody agreements as well. Comments like “We can’t go to Grandma’s, you’re with your dad that weekend” or “Talk to your

mother- she decides when I get to see you” make the child feel like property, not a loving member of the family. Children deserve to feel and understand that they are always important, regardless of where they are located or who they are placed with at that moment in time.

4) Your child’s affection is not a prize to be won or taken away from your ex-spouse.

While some parents may like to allow the other parent to play bad cop, the child’s affection is not a prize to be won. Parents should not discredit the other parent’s decisions by showering the child with gifts to win his or her loyalty. The children, though momentarily happy, will benefit more from two parents on the same page with consequences and rewards than they will from an extra stuffed animal.

When one parent does buy the child a gift, the other parent should not mock the gift or try to one-up the present by presenting one of his or her own. It may be difficult for a parent to tell the child that he or she likes the gift the other parent bought, but it’s far more difficult to repair a broken relationship down the line.

5) Talk to a counselor, not your child.

Divorce hurts. It is painful to lose someone who played such a significant role in a person's life. Parents may feel anger, hostility, and sadness towards the ex-spouse, and it may be helpful to talk to someone about these feelings to avoid an emotional explosion. Children are not mental health professionals and should not be your sounding board; be sure and talk about your emotions with a supportive friend or counselor. In order to reduce the emotional impact of the divorce on children, parents must process their feelings to ensure they maintain healthy boundaries.



6) Make sure your children have someone to talk to.

Just as parents need someone to process emotions and experiences with, children can benefit from discussing their feelings with a professional. Even with following all the above recommendations, children are going to encounter a variety of feelings during the divorce and will need someone neutral to help them process these feelings. While they may feel comfortable expressing disappointment and anger with their parents, they may also feel uncomfortable doing so, given their changing parent dynamics. Counselors specializing in play therapy, family counseling, or divorce can help children process the experience appropriately and strengthen their abilities to process future stressful situations.

Divorce has very real emotional and social consequences. While it can help end toxic relationships, parents must be very careful to maintain boundaries with their children while getting divorced. Because of the heightened emotions, shorter tempers, and array of overwhelming decisions parents will experience during divorce, parents must be certain to seek mental health assistance to help them process their emotions and experiences. Following the suggestions above

can help preserve a parent's relationship with his or her children, allowing all involved to benefit from a minimally-impactful separation.

The supervised visitation monitor can help to provide parents with resources and contacts to guide them through the process.

For more information on children and divorce, see the following:

http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/talk/help_child_divorce.html

https://www.aacap.org/aacap/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/Facts_for_Families_Pages/Children_and_Divorce_01.aspx

<http://www.parents.com/parenting/divorce/coping/helping-child-deal-with-divorce/?page=2>

New Information for SV Programs to Provide to Parents:

Healthy and Unhealthy Rewards, Punishments, and Discipline for Children

Parents at supervised visitation often must learn healthy ways to discipline their children. Staff can help build these skills. Discipline is one of the most difficult areas of parenting; the contradicting information available on the effectiveness of punishments and rewards is often more confusing than helpful. Additionally, rewarding children effectively often takes time, patience, and prior thinking which makes rewards difficult to introduce. While perhaps more time-consuming than other methods at first, effective strategies for discipline and rewards will help children blossom into mature, successful adults. Throughout this training, many forms of discipline are discussed, both positive and negative. Using these disciplinary techniques, supervised visitation providers will be better able to help parents in supervised visitation settings.

Unhealthy Rewards & Punishments

1) Food

Food shouldn't be consistently used to reward children for their behavior, as this can lead to undermining healthy eating habits taught by parents and in schools. Rewarding children with food may teach children that food, especially unhealthy treats and candy, is to be used as a reward rather than a source of nourishment and fuel for their bodies.

Problems with Rewarding with Food:

- Leads to children over consuming unhealthy foods, such as candy or dessert
- Gives children the message that unhealthy foods are more valuable than other foods
- Interferes with a child's natural ability to regulate his or her eating, as he or she is taught to eat outside of the response to hunger
- Encourages children to eat when they are not hungry to reward themselves
- May motivate emotional eating, as children begin to associate unhealthy foods with positive emotions
 - Children may begin to crave a sweet every time they feel positive emotions
 - Children may also start to desire foods as a way to cope with negative emotions
- Contributes to poor health, including diabetes, hypertension, childhood obesity, and cavities

Withholding Food:

Parents should never take away food as a punishment for children. Children need the nutritional benefits from the food in order to survive and thrive. Withholding food is seen as neglect by many schools and institutions.

Forcing to Eat Food:

While some parents may force children to finish their plates of food or eat vegetables as a punishment for bad behavior, this punishment teaches children to

associate healthy foods with a consequence and continue eating after they are full.

2) PE, Recess, or Outdoor Time

Punishments should never be linked to taking away recess or physical education classes because this reduces children's already scarce opportunities for physical activity. Physical activity and outdoor experiences help to foster children's athletic abilities, new brain activity, and social connections with other children. Childhood obesity is often attributed to the limited amount of time children spend exercising during and after school hours. On the other hand, forcing children to do physical activity, such as running laps or push-ups, as a punishment can cause them to dislike these activities and encourage them to avoid them in the future.

3) Physical Punishment

Many parents use physical punishment or spanking but are unaware of the negative effects it can have on children and on a parent's ability to continue disciplining the child. There are alternatives which we discuss in the healthy alternatives section.

Problems with Spanking:

- It does not teach children how to behave appropriately or teach positive skills.
- It models aggression, which can lead to children acting violently.
- Spanking has been shown to lose effectiveness over time, as kids will start to decide the misbehavior is worth it.
- Spanking is not effective with teenagers in many cases, leading to a lack of appropriate discipline strategies if previously dependent on spanking for discipline.
- It can lead to physical abuse, as lines between spanking and physical abuse are easily blurred, especially when parental anger becomes involved. It can also lead to emotional trauma for the child experiencing it.
- It can cause children to view their parents as negative influences in their lives, rather than positive role models.

Healthy Alternatives for Rewards and Punishments

There are healthy alternatives for rewarding and disciplining children. When a child misbehaves, many parents can quickly fall to anger and frustration as a means for coping with the situation but there are methods of dealing with misbehavior that can allow for children to change and grow in their actions, while remaining a calm, rational adult figure.

Ways to Effectively Reward & Discipline Children:

- Be consistent.
- Build a healthy relationship with your child.
- Use rewards frequently.
- Make consequences time-sensitive.
- Give rewards and consequences immediately.
- Use consequences as a teaching tool.
- Give consequences sparingly.
- Avoid reacting in the heat of the moment or when angry.
- Avoid nagging, criticism, sarcasm, threats, labeling, teasing and shouting.
- Show concern and empathy for your child, even when they lose control.
- Model appropriate ways to express feelings.
- Listen to the child's ideas and concerns to come up with a mutually acceptable, feasible solution.

Social Rewards

Social rewards include attention, praise, or thanks. They are small acts that show children that they are important, appreciated, and worthy of attention. Social rewards can be incredibly valued by a child and these simple behaviors will help to shape the child's actions. Social rewards will help to reinforce positive behaviors the child has, as well as grow the parent-child relationship.

- Examples: nods, smiles, verbal praise, pat on shoulder

Recognition

Recognition involves rewarding children with a physical gift of some sort to show that their behavior was appreciated and noticed. This acts very similarly to social rewards, but the physical gift can be more rewarding for some children than simple praise or nods. The reward will also remain for longer and can continue to be a reminder of the positive reaction a child can earn if he or she behaves properly.

- Examples: trophy, plaque, ribbon, certificate, or affirming sticker

Time Out

Time outs teach children to take themselves out of situations that could potentially lead to negative effects and how to calm themselves down on their own. It also provides them with a calm, positive way to learn behavior skills.

- Effective between the ages of 3 and 12
- Removes child from all reinforcements that may encourage misbehavior, such as adult attention
- Teaches children how to manage their emotions in a positive way
- Ultimate goal is for children to learn the skill of removing themselves from potentially negative situations, which is useful throughout their lives.

How to Effectively Use Time Out:

Establish an effective time out area: Find a place that is free of distractions and has no access to attention from others. For small children, a room where they can move around works best, but for older children a chair, steps, or a hallway may be used.

Identify behaviors that lead to time out: Clearly determine which behaviors will lead to a time out for the child, allowing them to avoid them if they wish to avoid time out. Explain to a child what they have done wrong in specifics.

Determine time out length: Time out times should vary based on the child's age. A common rule is to make it one minute per year of age, so that a 4 year old would have a 4 minute long time out. Also, do not start the time until the child is quiet.

This will help the child to know crying and screaming will only prolong his or her time out.

Plan for resistance: Children will not always be willing to comply with time out rules. If a child does not successfully complete the time out, parents should take away a *privilege* for 24 hours to encourage the child to complete his or her time out in the future.

Practice your skills: Effectively using time outs take practice and time to develop the skills as a parent and the habits in children. Parents should be patient and continue to be firm in the time out rules and eventually success will come.

Have a time out object: Having an object such as Play-Doh for children to hold during time out can help them process their feelings and reduces temptation for time out defiance.

Privileges

Giving and taking away privileges can be effective ways to reward and discipline children of all ages. Privileges are extras that the child can earn through good behavior. When behaviors don't warrant the extra privilege, parents should take it away.

- Examples: going first in a game or line, helping an adult, having extra time to do a favorite activity like read or play outside

Guidelines:

- A privilege should be something the child cares about.
- It should be specific to the child. (Not all children care about the same things.)
- If taking one electronic, take all of them. (Taking a child's cell phone is irrelevant if they can communicate with friends through their computer.)
- Make it a logical consequence if possible to increase the child's understanding and memory of the discipline. For example, if a child does not come home on time from hanging with their friends, taking away the ability to visit with friends for a certain amount of time would be a logical consequence.
- Explain potential consequences ahead of time. For example, if a child is acting up at the grocery store, a parent could tell him or her, "If you don't

follow instructions in the store today, you won't be able to ride your bike tonight." This allows the child the opportunity to choose to be good.

- Set a time limit for the consequence and stick to the limit.
- Don't take away too many privileges or this discipline strategy can become a source of anger for the child, rather than a source of learning.

There are many ways to develop privileges children will look forward to and act well for. Parents can keep a box of special toys, computer games, or art supplies that can only be used on special occasions as privileges for behaving well. Parents can also set up a system where a child can earn points for his or her positive behaviors, such as helping with chores or being nice to their siblings. These points can then be exchanged for rewards such as movie tickets, gift certificates, and coupons to bowling alleys or skating rinks. Other privileges can include local trips to the library, zoo or other outing, a play date with a friend, and school supplies. Be creative around what the child would be most excited for and is most accessible for the parent.

Taking away privileges can be a healthy disciplinary strategy, especially for older children. For younger children, take away their favorite toy for up to 24 hours, as for older children and teenagers, taking away electronics or the right to leave the house unsupervised would be more appropriate privileges to remove. In order to make this discipline strategy the most effective, state specifically how the child can earn back the privilege and at what point in time.

Ignoring Misbehavior

For simple, mild misbehavior, especially with young children, the best solution is often to ignore the child for a few moments. If a child is throwing a temper tantrum or whining excessively, ignoring these behaviors can help indicate to the child that they will not be rewarded with attention for acting in those ways. As soon as the behavior stops, return attention and praise to the child to show the different reactions he or she receives based on the different actions. This works best with parents who use social rewards frequently with their children, as the children will want the positive attention and praise they are used to receiving

when they behave well. Ignoring is only effective if children trust the parents and there is a healthy relationship.

Teaching New Skills

Parents should take the time to teach children how to problem solve, compromise, and calm themselves down, among other positive social skills. Showing children the correct way to act, through in-depth explanations and examples, will allow them to understand how they are supposed to act. This enables children to have the choice in if they want to follow these skills or misbehave. Many parents skip this step, which leads to children misbehaving more frequently, as they are unsure exactly how they are supposed to behave and have not practiced these essential skills.

Logical Consequences

Giving logical consequences to misbehavior can be a positive, helpful way to discipline children, especially teenagers. It involves giving consequences that are understandably related to the misbehavior. For example, if the child was messing around on the computer and not doing his or her work like he or she was supposed to, the consequence could be that he or she does not get to use the computer. This is directly related to the misbehavior and will help him or her to remember the consequence for longer.

Natural Consequences

Sometimes life has consequences set up for the child already, such as in the school setting. Many parents fret over their child receiving consequences at school, as they want their child to seem well-behaved, but sometimes the child needs to learn the true consequences of his or her actions without parental help. An example of this would be if a child refuses to do his or her homework, the consequence would simply be that the school makes the child stay late to complete it the next day. While parents should not allow all consequences to be on the school system, sometimes it is the most effective way for children to learn a lesson.

Age Matters!

All children react differently to the unique types of disciplinary tactics and reward systems that have been described. Take time to try new tactics with the child and allow for his or her reactions to help determine which rewards and disciplines work best. This is particularly important with age, as the child grows, develops, and changes, so will reactions to different types of discipline.

How to Discipline by Age

- 1. Learn about the child's development**, including what to expect from a child at different ages. For example, expecting a toddler to sit through a two hour dinner at a restaurant is not a reasonable expectation and regardless of the discipline used, may not be feasible for the child.
- 2. Establish rules that are age appropriate**, including bedtimes. Remember that all children develop differently, so look at the child's specific development as well.
- 3. There is a need for different rules for different children.** While the younger children may not like to have harsher restrictions, this is important because younger children need more restrictions developmentally. Parents should explain to them that at their older sibling's age, they will have later bedtimes as well. Fair does not always mean equal.
- 4. Adjust the rules and discipline techniques used as the child grows.** Children are continually changing and if their rules are not, they will no longer be effective for that child. Rules and techniques should slowly change with the child's development, not whenever a parent feels like it or too quickly, such as only after a week.
- 5. Take cues from the child.** For example, if the child continues to hit his or her sibling, even after taking away the toy first used to hit the sibling, this child may need a different, more effective and specific consequence.
- 6. Explain all rules and changes to rules completely to the child.** This gives children the opportunity to understand the rules and to ask questions about the

changes before a time of misbehavior in which they may not readily be able to focus on the changes at hand, but will just be upset they are in trouble.

Toddlers

1. Time Out: This strategy only works if the parent-child relationship is supportive and happy. If a child receives praise and positive attention from a parent regularly, he or she will be upset to have time away from the parent and away from his or her surroundings. Take time to explain why the child is in time out. Younger children may require an entire time out room if they need to move around or cannot sit still.

2. Take away privileges: When the discipline is directly related to the misbehavior at hand, toddlers are most likely to understand and truly receive the discipline. For example, if a child throws a toy, play time should end there. This will help the child remember what exactly happens when he or she misbehaves.

3. Remove the child from the situation: If a child continues to misbehave after being warned with a stern no or a time out, remove the child from the situation. Take the child away from the playground, house, or other location that the misbehavior is occurring. This is a good discipline for children of this age, as he or she can start to understand what will occur if he or she misbehaves.

School-Aged Children

1. Explain discipline in detail with school-aged children: This is an age in which children are incredibly curious and questioning. If they do not understand their discipline, it will not be effective for them.

2. Time Out: Use time outs less often with school-aged children for it to remain most effective. Parents should never use it in a way that embarrasses or harasses them around friends, as they may begin to resent it. Parents should continue to use it in a positive, explained manner. Time out has been shown to be effective until age 12, but consider the child at hand, as some children may outgrow this discipline method earlier.

3. Withholding Rewards: Children of this age love gaining positive rewards and approval from people.

Teenagers

1. Problem-solve discipline problems with teenagers: There is often an easy solution to a problem that can be solved through communication with the teenager.

2. Natural consequences: Many parents get upset over teenagers desiring to go against the rules in trivial situations, but in some cases, parents should allow for teenagers to learn the reasons behind rules on their own. For example, if a 17 year old wants to go out into the cold without a jacket, let him. If he is cold, he will learn to wear one the next time and will from now on, understand why his parents wanted him to wear a jacket. Another example is a teenager who refuses to follow her bedtime might learn her lesson by being allowed to choose her own bedtime as long as she gets to school on time. The first few nights she may stay up late, but eventually she will become tired and most likely chose a bedtime that allows for enough sleep on her own.

3. Remove privileges when necessary: Removing electronics or the ability to leave the house unattended usually are effective ways to discipline teenagers. Parents should state exactly how and when the privileges can be earned back for it to be effective.

Discipline and rewarding children can change a child's behaviors in a drastically positive way. The effort and time it takes to employ the above strategies in a child's life are worth the multitude of benefits that follow. Effective discipline can also greatly decrease misbehaviors, stressful interactions between children and parents, and the overall negativity that comes along with a child that often misbehaves or who feels attacked and embarrassed by their parents' chosen method of discipline. Supervised visitation providers can learn these methods and help the many families they serve to learn positive ways of discipline. This knowledge can effectively change the family's dynamic to a positive, loving, and supportive family environment.

Life After Supervised Visitation: Five Strategies to Build Parenting Skills

Though a family's time in supervised visitation will end, a parent's relationship with his or her children is constantly growing and can always be improved! After supervised visitation is over, parenting may seem overwhelming and impossible. Almost all parents feel this way at some point. Below are some practical tips for parents in building and maintaining a strong relationship with their children after supervised visitation. Though there is no gold standard when it comes to successful parenting tactics, the steps below provide an excellent foundation for continuing to develop parenting skills.

Remember, there is no way to be a perfect parent, but there are a million ways to be a good one!

Active Listening

When parents listen to what their children have to say, it helps build their confidence and develops their trust in the parents. When children know they are being heard, they may feel more comfortable expressing thoughts and feelings, as they know parents will do their best to understand. Active listening involves:



- Maintaining eye contact
- Using “affirming phrases” such as “Wow!” or, “That sounds wonderful!” to indicate interest
- Re-stating and summarizing to demonstrate understanding
- Monitoring body language to be open and inviting

Active listening can take many forms, depending on the conversation and personal preferences. For example:

- *Daughter (yelling, arms crossed and stamping feet):* “It’s just not fair! I wanted to get that brand-new doll and you wouldn’t let me have it! You’re the worst dad in the world!”
Dad (at daughter’s eye level, arms at side, leaned-in towards daughter, with a soft tone of voice): “You really wanted that doll, and you’re upset you couldn’t have it. You feel like it was unfair. Maybe when we get home, you and I can work together to come up with some chores you could do around the house to help you earn the brand-new doll.”

By keeping a soft tone of voice and re-phrasing his daughter’s frustrations, the dad shows his daughter he was listening and cares about what she said. Additionally, his body language was very welcoming and may help to prevent his daughter’s anger from turning into a temper tantrum.

Calming Down

Often, in the heat of the moment, frustration overtakes level-headed thinking and results in parents and children saying things they quickly regret. It’s natural and tempting to get caught up in a disagreement; however, most emotionally-charged explosions turn out negatively for everyone involved.

When parents find themselves in situations like this, they should give themselves a few seconds to decompress and readdress the situation when emotions are under control. This may take several minutes the first few times but will slowly begin to take less and less time as parents master emotion regulation. Physically distancing oneself from the argument may also help; taking a few steps away, turning around, or leaving the room (if possible) are all excellent tools to help give oneself physical distance. For example:

- A mother and her teenage daughter are having a disagreement about curfew. Both begin speaking louder and louder and the daughter’s body language begins to shift. Before things turn physical, the mom stops and

pauses. She states, “I’m going to take a minute before things get out of hand,” and walks out of the room. After several minutes, she returns to the room and is able to have a calm discussion with her daughter. The daughter has also calmed down, and the two are able to reach an agreement.

Positive Talk

It’s easy to get bogged down in the negatives. A son forgot to put his shoes in his room; he left the door open with the air conditioner running; the dog’s water bowl is still empty and he has yet to pick up his dirty clothes. Without thinking, it’s easy to slip straight into a laundry list of everything this son did wrong today. These laundry lists can quickly turn to arguments and result in negative consequences for everyone.

Instead, parents should take a minute to think about some positive things the son has done. Maybe he got an A on his writing assignment, hung up his jacket on his way in, and said excuse me when he had a question. Positive talk involves reinforcing these behaviors, such as:



“Thank you for hanging up your jacket today. You did a great job!”

“I appreciate you saying excuse me. It makes you sound so polite!”

“I am so proud of you! You did a great job at school today!”

Engaging in positive talk can help build a parent’s tolerance as well. After laying a positive foundation, parents can make requests such as, “I really appreciate you hanging up your jacket. Could you please put your shoes up too?” When a child feels appreciated, he or she is more likely to respond to requests positively and quickly.

Consistency

Children thrive when they understand routines. When they know what to expect, they are better able to adjust their behavior to meet expectations. When giving consequences and rewards, remember to be consistent! If possible, parents should post a chart reviewing consequences and rewards to help their children remember what to expect in certain situations. These charts should explain the rules and what happens when a child does well and/or makes bad choices.

- For example: When a child brings home a good report card, he or she should receive the same reward for the same grades- whether the reward is a high five, a gold star sticker, or a trip to the zoo. Similarly, children should receive the same consequence for the same behavior. If the child chooses not to do his or her chore, he or she loses a privilege, each time receiving the same type of consequence for the same negative behavior.

Consistency also reduces false, empty consequences or consequences that don't match the behavior.

- If a parent consistently provides rewards and consequences, he or she is less likely to search for consequences and rewards in the moment. A child not doing the dishes results in loss of the TV for one night, as opposed to a parent angrily stating, "You're never going to watch TV ever again!"

Similarly, the routine helps reduce consequences and rewards that don't match the behavior.

- When parents are consistent with consequences, their children forgetting to pick up their toys may result in the temporary loss of a toy or another consequence matching the behavior. Without the consistency, this behavior could result in all the toys going in the garbage because the parent is following a routine, rather than reacting emotionally.

Consistently implementing rewards and consequences helps children better understand the impact of their behavior, reducing confusion and bad choices. Consistency is essential for minimizing frustration for parents and reducing

negative behaviors. It's important to remember consistency takes time! Children will not understand the routine the first few times; parents should give them a month of consistency before expecting some understanding.



Self-Care

Parenting is the hardest job in the world. It requires 24/7 support and attention and is often incredibly frustrating. The difficulties of being a parent are only magnified when the parent is feeling sick, stressed-out, or overwhelmed. A sick, stressed-out, on-edge parent is rarely a good parent. Self-care is absolutely essential for being the best parent possible and involves taking care of oneself in addition to the children.

Going to annual medical appointments, eating well, and exercising can help keep parents physically healthy, but mental health is just as important in parenting. Parents should take time every day to do whatever it is they like doing best, whether it is listening to music, reading a book, going for a walk, or painting. If parents don't know what it is they like to do best- tell them to explore!

While parenting requires a large amount of attention, using a social support network is important, in addition to taking time for oneself. If a parent is not happy, the children won't be happy either. When a family finishes supervised visitation, they should try to utilize all the resources provided. Friends, family

members, and community services can provide wonderful support to help parents be the best they can be.

Administrative Guidance

Community Collaboration and Supervised Visitation Programs: The Importance of Principle 4

“All supervised visitation and monitored exchange programs shall operate within a coordinated community network of groups and agencies that seek to address common family problems.”

Supervised visitation programs “do not exist in a vacuum,” according to the 2008 Recommendations of the Supervised Visitation Standards Committee, and should not work independently. Nearly all of the families visiting supervised visitation programs are in need of a wide variety of services. In order to best help children, supervised visitation centers must be familiar with resources available in their community to support parents and help them succeed after visitation. Research shows community collaboration helps with the following:

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Improving Performance
- Standardizing service systems

Supervised visitation programs are in a unique position to offer families support in many different areas. As principle four suggests, community collaboration is essential in helping to support families and create success after visitation ends. Networking with local organizations, exploring community resources, and working with partners can all help the children and families involved in supervised visitation build their support systems. Collaboration, improved communication, improved performance, and standardization are all wonderful benefits of principle four and can improve all supervised visitation programs.

Collaboration

Families in supervised visitation programs often need a wide variety of services and working with one issue may not totally overcome the obstacles the family faces. For example, parental guidance may be helpful during visitation for a mother dealing with addiction issues, but she will also need resources to help with her addictions. Collaborating with community service agencies can help your supervised visitation program better serve all the needs of the families served and prepare them for success when visitation is complete.

Case Example

28 year old Josh is a recovering alcoholic participating in supervised visitation with his young children, ages 7 and 10. While Josh is making a lot of progress in his relationship with his children, he is having trouble locating stable housing. He's currently staying at the local shelter and is working to find a full-time job and safe housing.

In order to help Josh and his family, the supervised visitation program could:

- Connect Josh with local employment agencies or resource centers and social service professionals.
- Provide Josh with information about affordable housing programs in the area.
- Build partnerships in the community and collaborate to know how to best help Josh and help the family's growth.

Communication

Often, social service providers get so caught up in their own individual work that they have trouble communicating their successes, failures, and questions with co-workers and local agencies. New trends, service gaps, successes, and areas for improvement noticed by supervised visitation programs could be extremely helpful to other community agencies, if communicated. If supervised visitation programs believe in the importance of principle four and community

collaboration, they can help to build a network of social service agencies in their community, dedicated to working together to help local families.

Case Example

Molly, a supervised visitation monitor, notices a large number of children coming to supervised visitation with shoes that don't fit, or were worn out. Although it is winter, children continue coming to visitation without the necessary socks and shoes for winter weather. She voices her concerns to her supervisor. Together, they contact the local nonprofit providing shoes and socks to children in schools, among other services.

Because the supervised visitation program above was open to communicating with community agencies, they were able to go above and beyond for the families in their program.

Improving Performance

Ultimately, supervised visitation programs aim to provide “safe and respectful” visitation services and to “coordinate these services within each community.” In order to do this, programs must perform well, with each employee dedicated to the mission of protecting and helping children and families. When supervised visitation programs work with community agencies, they are better able to provide services to families and are better able to fulfill their mission.

Case Example

Supervised visitation program XYZ always felt they were providing a great service to families in their community but did not work with fellow community agencies. They often saw families returning to their service and saw many of their children removed from their biological parents. Frustrated with this pattern, the program's director decided to collaborate with community agencies to help provide a wider variety of services and connections to children and their parents. Within a year, the program began noticing fewer repeat clients and received word of many success stories from past program participants. Community collaboration helped the program XYZ better serve the families in their area.

Standardization of Services

For many families involved with supervised visitation, life has been predominantly inconsistent and turbulent. Often, families may not trust social service professionals because of past negative experiences and may resist getting involved with community agencies as they're not sure what to expect or how they will benefit from the help. When community agencies work together, each agency is accountable to both their clients and their fellow community partners. When families and clients know what to expect each time they access a service, they are more likely to continue accessing the service. Similarly, when community agencies see a partner agency as reliable and responsible, they are more likely to use their services.

In the busy world of supervised visitation programs, community collaboration may get pushed aside as the daily challenges of visitation take priority, but because of the endless benefits supervised visitation, programs should continue working to improve their networks of community partners and collaborate with fellow agencies as they work to serve families in need.

For more information on the benefits of community collaboration, see:

[http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/wp-](http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Final_Report_to_Legislature.pdf)

[content/uploads/2012/02/Final Report to Legislature.pdf](http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Final_Report_to_Legislature.pdf)

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03643107.2011.614531#.U3JdlvldWz4>

<http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=21ExV0lQOXIC&oi=fnd&pg=PR3&dq=community+collaboration+social+services&ots=gQlh-wwcWQ&sig=KfAOdE4Xuo3h6su6mwKvrCGO81U#v=onepage&q=community%20collaboration%20social%20services&f=false>