



# Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation Phone Conference/Webinar Agenda



Wednesday, October 20, 2021

12PM/11CT

## Discussion

1. Welcome and Announcements – Everyone is invited!
2. Check the listings on the website to ensure your program information is up to date and correct for the quarterly report. If you need to add or change anything email Lyndi Bradley at [lbradley2@fsu.edu](mailto:lbradley2@fsu.edu)
3. Time's up to enter data!
4. Program narratives are PAST DUE!
5. Questions from Directors: Tragedies Strike at Supervised Visitation Programs
6. Effects of Trauma on Parenting
7. Understanding & Addressing Sibling Rivalry
8. Supporting Custodians



**Reminder to all programs: Time's up to Enter Data!**

If you haven't already, time is up to enter data! If you need assistance with the database please contact Kelly O'Rourke, Clearinghouse Database Manager, at [kelly\\_ourourke@hotmail.com](mailto:kelly_ourourke@hotmail.com)

**Program Narratives are PAST DUE! Please have these submitted immediately! See examples online at:**

**<https://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/sites/g/files/upcbnu1886/files/All%20FL%20Program%20Narratives%202019-2020%20Final.pdf>**

## **Tragedies Strike Supervised Visitation Programs**

During the past month, there have been several incidents in Florida that I wanted to inform you of.

First, several people have told me that they have had staff members test positive for COVID-19. At one program, a staff member was hospitalized and subsequently died.

Second, a five-month-old baby who had recently visited a parent at the program recently passed away,

Third, a custodial mom in a domestic violence case was murdered by the father of her children in the presence of the children offsite.

None of these events occurred at the supervised visitation program or during visits. Still each of these events is tragic and terrible, and caused great grief to the families involved. Each case also has the potential to cause trauma and grief to the staff of the visitation programs.

I encourage lead staff to find ways to support all of the program's workforce. Sometimes programs have access to area counselors and therapists. Other times programs have funding to offer telemedicine-counseling to staff. I encourage all programs that have boards of directors or a fundraising unit to develop a fund for such emergencies, if you have not already done so.

Many directors have mentioned to me that they do not feel comfortable sharing this type of information publicly on our webinar/phone conferences. While I understand the impulse to keep this information out of public calls, I also want to ask that you share, if appropriate, the general issues with me. The work that supervised visitation providers do is vitally important. Sometimes when programs have access to what happens around the state, they can think about and do their work differently. Especially when hearing about the case of the domestic violence homicide, programs may re-assess their current protocols and safety measures, think about training issues, and re-commit themselves to vigilance in these kinds of cases.

At a minimum, I ask that you find very intentional ways to help your staff cope with the emotions that result from their secondary trauma. Sometimes they will need time off. Other times they will need referrals to counseling. Some may even recognize that they are triggered or reminded of the tragedy and ask to be assigned to cases that are very

different from the ones that ended in tragedy. For example, some staff might ask not to be assigned a domestic violence case for a period of time.

There is no way to anticipate all of the events that can happen. Still I encourage all lead staff to create emergency plans to put in place to support the health and wellbeing of all staff/volunteers/interns.

### **Clothes Trunk for Unexpected Emergencies**

In Seattle I spoke to several program directors who told me that in addition to offering a book and toy trunk for parents to use when a child has a birthday or celebrates a big holiday, they have a clothing trunk for those unexpected times when a child (or parent) needs a quick change of clothing. Here's an example I heard at the conference: A child in a dependency case was dropped off at the program for a visit with his father. The child vomited in the transporter's car, and showed up soiled at the program. Because the transporter left the program so quickly, the program staff helped the father clean up the child and put the child into clean clothing from their trunk of clean, but lightly used clothing.

Please keep in mind that the staff also pointed out that they would have directed the transporter to bring the child back to his custodians if they had realized that he was sick.

## Effects of Trauma on Parenting



Understanding the negative effects that trauma has on parenting abilities may help child welfare workers to better support parents and children.

### Trauma affects people in many ways

Below are three large scale ways it does:

#### 1. People living with a traumatized brain rely on survival tactics: fight, flight, or freeze.

- At times, these tactics are automatic responses.
- Each tactic will look differently depending on the life stage of the person; child, teenager, or adult (Kelley, 2014).

#### 2. Trauma can change the danger warning system in the brain.

- Causing people to perceive danger in safe settings. Such responses can negatively affect a person's quality of life (Kelley, 2014).

#### 3. Traumatic experience/s weigh heavily on the person, making it difficult for them to focus and value positive memories or interactions (Kelley, 2014).

## How Can Trauma Affect Parenting?

The following charts explore the various ways trauma influences parenting: Behavior, Cognition, Dissociate, Functionality, Economic Impact, and Long-term Effects.

### Behavior

- 1. Parents who experienced adverse traumatic events (ACE) during childhood are more likely to experience higher levels of frustration, irritation, and emotional outbursts when parenting.**
  - Their children are also more likely to face behavioral health problems (Schickedanz et al., 2018).
- 2. Parental ACE counts pose an intergenerational behavioral health risk for children to experience their parents' ACEs (Schickedanz et al., 2018).**
  - Maternal ACEs hold a stronger association with their children's behavioral issues in contrast to paternal ACEs.
- 3. Traumatic events during childhood negatively impact a parent's child-rearing abilities.**
  - Their children were more likely to experience behavioral health difficulties such as hyperactivity, emotional disturbances, or mood fluctuations.

### Cognition

Experiencing traumatic events can make it difficult for parents to express, clarify, or manage their emotions. Parent's affected cognition may create an unstable emotional environment for their children (Peterson, 2018).

### Functionality

A parent who has experienced a traumatic event may struggle in making the necessary life decisions needed while parenting. For instance, if a parent had a traumatic experience in a doctor's office, they may be unwilling to take their children to the doctor's office (Schickedanz, 2018).

### **Dissociate**

**During stressful situations, parents may disconnect from the situation to decrease their anxiety.**

- Dissociation can lead to an emotional disconnect between parents and children, negatively affecting the overall child-rearing experience (Peterson, 2018).

### **Economic Impact**

- 1. Trauma affects parents financially; parents may require mental health care or hospitalizations and may experience unemployment.**
- 2. Trauma may also cause “intangible losses” for parents “intangible losses” such as anxiety, sadness, PTSD, and an overall decrease in their quality of life.**
  - Negatively affecting the parent’s ability to provide financial security for their child (Mock & Araj, 2010).

### **Long-term Health Effects**

Parents with past exposure to traumatic events may develop chronic illnesses such as heart disease, anxiety, cancer, or depression which may negatively affect their parenting abilities. Chronic illnesses not only affect parent’s abilities to raise their children but also affects their relationships (Mock, & Araj, 2010).

## Common Unhealthy Strategies Used to Regulate Negative Emotions

Below are common unhealthy ways adults with a history of trauma regulate their negative emotions:

- **Dissociation:** The disconnection from situations or normal mental processes.
  - **Example: Daydreaming or “getting lost” in a movie or book**
- **Avoidance:** The actions people take to avoid something to reduce anxiety associated with the social situation.
  - **Example: Procrastination, rumination, or passive-aggressiveness**
- **Psychoactive Medication:** A drug that alters how the brain works, causing changes in mood, perception, behavior, or feelings.
  - **Example: Tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, amphetamines, cocaine, and heroin**
- **Alcohol or drug use/abuse:** Engaging in substantial and frequent drinking/drug habits.
- **Dangerous Behavior:** Engaging in behaviors that present a clear danger to physical harm to oneself or others.
  - **Example: Substance use, unprotected sexual activity, gang affiliations, fighting, or illegal activities.**
- **Working too much**
- **Volatile Behaviors/Emotions:** Rapid and unexpected changes in individual's behaviors or emotions.
- **Withstanding: resisting a situation, event, or individual.**

(Berthelot et al., 2018) (Veteran Affairs, 2007)



## **Trauma Effects on Pregnancy and Parenting**

This section illustrates the varying ways trauma affects women during/post pregnancy:

- Women are significantly more likely to face high-risk pregnancies.
- Women face a higher risk of intimate partner violence.
- During pregnancy, women are at risk of higher levels of anxiety, depression, and symptoms of PTSD.
- Women's ability to bond with the newborn child suffers.
- Women face higher risks of experiencing postpartum depression.

(Berthelot et al., 2018; Muzik, 2016)

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# Understanding & Addressing Sibling Rivalry



## Introduction

Sibling bonds have the potential to teach children about navigating interpersonal relationships, compromising, trust and emotional intimacy, which they can carry into adulthood. In homes where there is more than one child, arguments are often inevitable. However, when simple disagreements develop into sibling rivalries, it can leave children and parents feeling fatigued, hurt and helpless. Sibling rivalries strain relationships between siblings as well as between children and parents. It's important for parents to understand what causes sibling rivalry, what are some skills to address it when it comes up and how to prevent it in the future.

## Objectives

- Define sibling rivalry
- Identify factors that contribute to sibling rivalry
- Acquire skills for mitigating sibling rivalry
- Implement preventative measures to avoid sibling rivalry in the future
- Learn what parents and caregivers can do to improve siblings' relationships

## What is sibling rivalry?

While most children experience some degree of disagreement or squabbling, sibling rivalries can be more severe than simple arguments. Sibling rivalries can encompass a variety of behaviors - with the following being some of the most common:

- name-calling,
- blaming,
- poking,
- stealing things,
- lying,
- challenging a belief,
- arguing,
- simply looking at each other,
- tattling,



- breaking something that belongs to the other one,
- hitting,
- throwing something at the other one,
- hiding something that is important to the other one.

## Emotional regulation in children

Small children lack the emotional regulation that older kids and adults have. This means it is more difficult for them to calmly communicate their needs, discern the cause of negative feelings or take on another's perspective. This lack of emotional regulation leads children to crying, yelling, having a tantrum or hitting when they cannot express what they need or feel. Older children can also struggle with impulsivity, regulating strong emotions, confusing frustration with anger as well as seeing others' perspective.

## Factors that contribute to sibling rivalry

Constant close proximity with others can result in varying levels of friction, therefore it is imperative that parents understand what factors contribute to their children's rivalry. The first step in effectively addressing a problem is to understand why it is happening.

**Birth order** - The birth order of children has a big impact on them as well as their relationships with their siblings. Studies have shown that different birth orders carry their own characteristics, response patterns, and needs.

- **1st born tend to be more task oriented as well as identify closely with the decision making parent.**
- **2nd born/middle children tend to identify more with the emotional and expressive parent.**
- **3rd born tend to relate to pairs within the family; for instance, two parents or two siblings.**
- **Youngest are more attentive in maintaining harmony within the family**



**Family ambiance** - Parenting styles and family dynamics inform the ambiance for a home. Parenting styles exist on a continuum - some parents choose a very strict and harsh approach to parenting while others parent in a more permissive and neglectful manner.

On one end of the spectrum there are STRICT and RIGID parents, who employ an overly harsh parenting style which often involves severe discipline or corporal punishment -> this parenting style results in children being more prone to fighting with sibling because that is the behavior that is modeled.

At the other end of the parenting spectrum there are PERMISSIVE and NEGLECTFUL parents. These parents have little involvement in their children's daily lives or emotional wellbeing. Children living in this environment don't get enough attention and lack structure, boundaries, and rules -> This parenting style leads to children fighting to get attention from their parents.

Parents should aim to institute a parenting style that falls between the previous two. Parents should:

- Respect individual needs
- Treat children as unique individuals
- Encourage cooperation instead of competition
- Encourage connection between family members

**Space between siblings** - Children who are close in age have more access to one another, thus resulting in more fights. Larger age gaps between siblings results in fewer fights because they usually spend less time together, share less, have different interests and are involved in fewer activities together.

**Different temperaments** - Children who are considered to be "easy" tend to be treated better than children who are considered "challenging." If parents treat children differently it will cause competition between the children as they struggle for their parent's attention and affection.

**Gender** - Oftentimes in families with multiple children who have differing genders, parents might show favoritism toward one gender. This increases the likelihood of children seeing their siblings as competition and conflicts arise.

**Physical influences** - Situational factors such as hunger, fatigue, or illness, can affect children's behavior. Additionally, if children share a room or live in a small home, friction comes up.

**Transitions** - Sibling strife can intensify during times of transition, for example a new baby, parents' divorce or a moving.

**Family circumstance** - All families are different but there are some circumstances that increase the likelihood of sibling rivalry. These circumstances include:

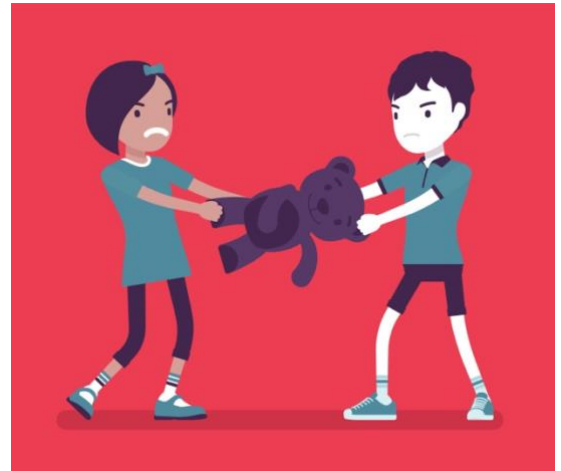
- Family's socio-economic status
- Which parents works and when
- Who spends the most time with the children
- Who the children see as being "in charge"
- Parents' relationship
- Where children live

**Age** - Sibling dynamics and rivalries change as children themselves change and grow. Parents should understand their children's developmental abilities in order to understand what they need and how to respond to conflict when it comes up.

**Preschoolers:** Often when children are younger parents have to intervene more often. Younger children have less emotional regulation, are less capable of expressing their emotions and have a harder time understanding others perspectives.

**Older "school age" children:** During this stage of children's lives, parents have to intervene less because children are learning about rules and fairness and are able to better express their needs.

**High school and beyond:** By this point children have developed emotional regulation, an adult conscious, communication skills and conflict resolution techniques. While parent intervention is minimal at this stage, parents should keep in mind that they are responsible for teaching children communication skills and conflict resolution techniques when they are younger.



### **How parents can respond to sibling rivalry.**

The following sections explore ways parents can respond to altercations between siblings:

When responding to sibling rivalries, parents need to consider what their children need at that moment. The best way to effectively intervene to conflict is to first consider if the children need:

- Attention or respect
- Outside help to stop the fighting
- Protection from getting hurt
- Ways to communicate needs
- Time to work it out by themselves
- Guidance to process conflicts
- Ways to prevent conflicts next time
- Ways to make amends
- Ways to empathize
- Ways to forgive and reconnect with the initiator

### What parents can do to exasperate or diffuse sibling rivalries

The following chart elaborates on how parents' reactions affect children's ability to resolve sibling rivalry positively.

<b>Mistakes parents often make</b>	<b>How parents diffuse sibling rivalries</b>
<p><b>Rescue</b> - when parents intervene in every single conflict, they are not letting children learn how to resolve conflict on their own or communicate effectively to get what they want. Of course, whenever there is danger of harm or injury, a parent Must intervene.</p>	<p><b>Offer individual attention</b> - parents should find ways to connect with each child individually, find unique ways to show affection to them and show interest in each child's hobbies, passions and abilities.</p>
<p><b>Choose sides</b> - when parents choose a side and label one child as being "right" and the other as being "wrong," they are invalidating the child's feelings and perspective which can build resentment for the parent and their sibling.</p>	<p><b>Build family connection</b> - parents should schedule family meetings, dinners or events to build family connection and set the foundation for family communication, boundaries and agreement.</p>
<p><b>Compare and label</b> - when parents label children ("smart one," "cool one" etc.) they draw comparison between the siblings which can lead to bitterness, resentment, or insecurity.</p>	<p><b>Practice self-control</b> - children mirror the behaviors they see, thus parents should assess how they react to sibling fights, or disagreements as well as how they themselves resolve conflict around the house.</p>

### **“Green to red light”**

The following information provides a guideline for parents to follow that may help them determine when to intervene during sibling altercations:

<b>Green Light</b> Normal Bickering, minor name calling. <b>Parent’s Role</b> -- Stay out of it.	<b>Yellow Light</b> Volume of altercation begins to go up, nasty name calling, mild physical contact, and threats of danger. <b>Parent’s Role</b> -- Recognize anger and reflect on the children’s viewpoint.
<b>Orange Light</b> More serious potential danger, half play/half real fight. <b>Parent’s Role</b> -- Firmly stop the interaction, ask “Is it play or real?”, review rules, and help in conflict resolution.	<b>Red Light</b> Dangerous situations, emotional or physical harm is about to or has happened. <b>Parental Role</b> -- Firmly stop and separate the children. If a child is hurt, attend to their needs first, review rules, and impose a consequence if needed.

(Center for Parenting Education, n.d.)

### **Rules**

By establishing family rules within the home, parents may be better able to manage and address sibling rivalry. Establishing rules is not only an effective preventative strategy but also helps clarify expectations for children and their behavior. Parents can reference these rules when discussing with their children how they should behave towards their siblings. These rules should be tailored to the family’s needs and should reflect the children’s dynamic with their siblings. Below are a few areas to address when making family rules:

- Managing conflicts and anger
  - “No hitting, use words to express what you are upset about.”



- Family values
  - “We treat one another with respect.”
- Parent’s role when there is conflict
  - “If I get involved, I may affect the outcome.”
- Physical or property damage
  - “Whoever caused the physical injury or property damage must take responsibility.”
- Personal possessions and boundaries
  - “We don’t take or use someone else’s things without asking for permission.”
- Tattling
  - “No *tattling* to get someone in trouble, but you can *tell* to help someone else get out of trouble.”

(Center for Parenting Education, n.d.)

### **Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution is an invaluable tool to teach children from a young age to enable their cognitive processing and understanding during conflict. When children are young, parents must walk children through the entire process after a conflict has occurred. Later, children will be able to identify, understand, and resolve their own conflicts between their siblings and others on their own.

It is important to note that conflict resolution is composed of a process in which each child will have to express their viewpoints and be willing to listen to the other child’s point of view, brainstorm a number of possible solutions that work for each of them, identify the best solution, and implement the chosen solution.

Learning conflict resolution is a useful skill for children since it supports children in navigating through relationships with their siblings, peers, and is useful throughout life. Conflict resolution also provides children with a sense of autonomy and independence since being capable to identify issues and come up with solutions to issues without fighting. It is important to note that children must be calm enough to engage in dialogue before engaging in any form of problem exploration. If the children are not calm, calling a time-out until they are calm may be beneficial.

(Center for Parenting Education, n.d.)

### **“The Plan”**

The following chart identifies steps to implement with children to guide them through conflict resolution.

1. Enter the room where the children are fighting slowly and quietly.	2. Stand without saying a word.	3. Take action, modeling calm and patience. For instance, turn off the television or separate the children who are fighting.
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4. Describe what is going on. For instance, “I see two children who both want the control remote.”	5. Explain the importance of establishing a “plan” and encourage them as well as guide them through the conflict resolution process.
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(Center for Parenting Education, n.d.)

### **How parents can help children get along**

While children tend to build their sibling dynamic by themselves, there are some techniques parents can implement to help them foster a strong and healthy relationship. Below are some techniques parents can use to minimize sibling rivalry, avoid conflict and help children get along.

1. Treat children as individuals and celebrate their unique qualities.
2. Don't show favoritism or compare your children to one another (favorably or unfavorably).
3. Stay calm and objective - don't get involved in children's arguments.
4. Prioritize needs rather than fairness when making decisions - parents should strive for equity not fairness.

5. Consider your family values and make a list of rules and expectations children should follow.

6. Don't look for someone to blame or punish rather let them work out who was "right" or "wrong."

7. Don't act as a referee when fights happen if you don't know the full story - this teaches children that if they fight you will give them attention, regardless of the reason.



8. Don't get into long discussions about what happens, this only teaches children that through fighting they can get your undivided attention for long periods of time.

9. Encourage communication and apathy to help children understand their feelings, communicate them, and understand others' perspectives.

10. Teach children how to problem solve by encouraging them to find equitable and creative solutions to their conflicts.

11. Be conscious of developmental stages because younger children don't possess some of the skills necessary to avoid conflict.

12. Don't force children to be friends - parents should focus on enforcing respect between siblings; friendship can come later in their relationship.

13. Don't allow children to play parents against each other. This can be avoided by having private and open discussion with your co-parent about the children' fighting and come up with solutions together.

14. Find outside help if necessary.

### **Additional consideration for parents**

#### ➤ When one sibling is disabled

Different considerations must be implemented when one child in the family has a disability, especially if the child requires more support and guidance from the parents than the other children. Increased attention and support on the disabled child can manifest resentment within the non-disabled children. Non-disabled siblings express receiving “surface level attention” from parents and parents not being fully aware or alert of their needs. To lessen sibling rivalry and tension in families with a disabled child, parents must remember all children deserve quality time with parents. Quality time does not have to be lengthy, however, children must have parent’s undivided attention. For instance, maybe taking a short walk, having a chat before bed with the child, or having lunch at a special restaurant.

#### ➤ When one sibling is gifted

Different children, including gifted children, have varying talents and abilities across different areas. Parents should be open when discussing this within the family, doing so will encourage children to develop appropriate expectations for themselves and their siblings. Furthermore, parents should emphasize to children:

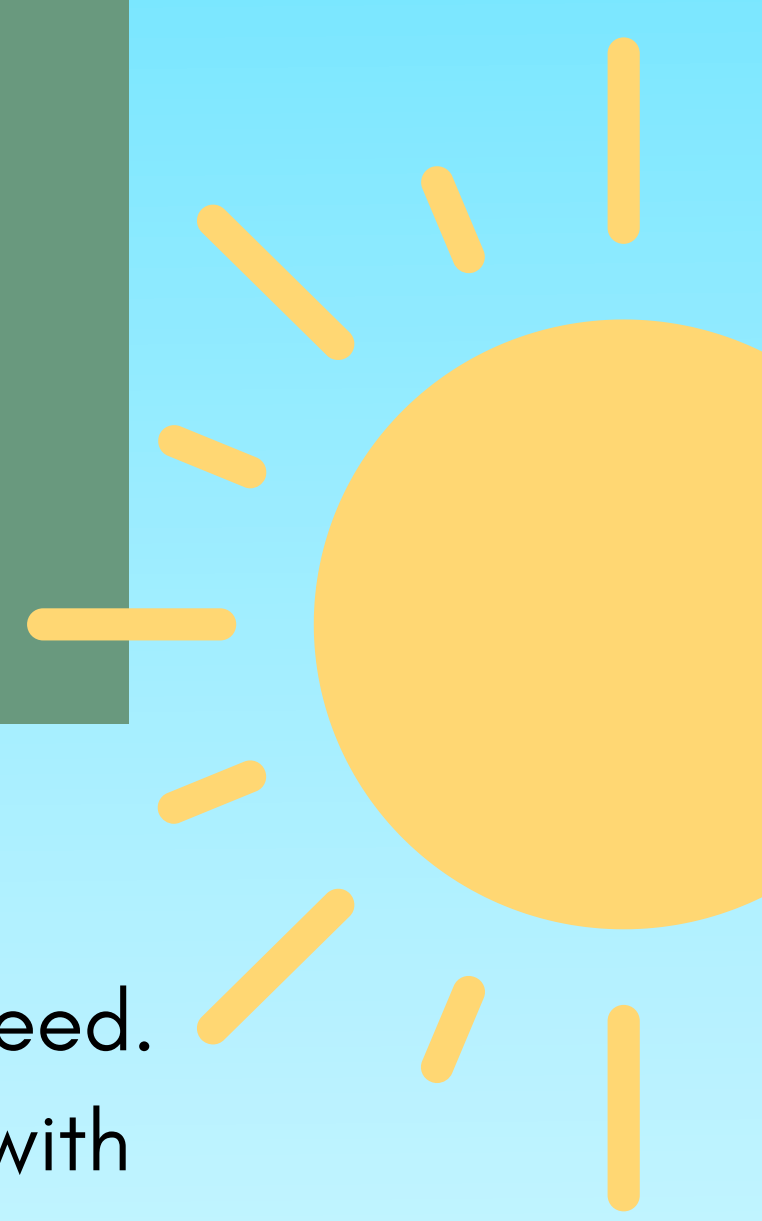
1. Don’t expect to be great in everything
2. Recognize and develop the areas of strength unique to each child.
3. Its ok to recognize personal weaknesses, however making fun of other’s weaknesses should not be acceptable within the family.

All in all, acceptance and honesty are beneficial tools when managing sibling rivalry and children’s comparison between their abilities and weaknesses.

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# 6 Ways to Support **CUSTODIAL PARENTS**



1. Remember that the custodial parent may be struggling too.
2. At intake, ask about the resources that the custodian might need.
3. Start with "How's it going?" "Let's see if we can connect you with some resources."
4. Acknowledge that raising a child can be challenging, but comes with great rewards.

5. Encourage the parent to use self-care.

6. Focus on the positives: recognize any strengths you see.  
For example:

- Strong relationship with the child ("I see that Franklin loves you and trusts you.")
- Appropriate parenting skills ("I like how you gave Maria two options for games to play.")
- Ability to calm the child ("I like how you asked Davy to take a deep breath.")
- Ability to re-direct the child ("I liked how you re-directed Tania to play with toys when she insisted on more candy.")
- Ability to focus on the child's needs ("I really liked how you listened when Molly explained that she doesn't like thunderstorms.")



Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation  
Institute for Family Violence Studies  
Florida State University



