

**THE PEORIA AND TAZEWELL COUNTY VISITATION
CENTER
BOOK OF STANDARDS**

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MISSION STATEMENT

To provide a safe, conflict free access for children to both parents through the programs of supervised visitation, neutral exchange, and parent education. An unbiased, objective and balanced environment will be maintained while providing services at the Center.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions clarify terms used in these standards

1. Child refers to a minor, between the ages of birth and eighteen.
2. Client is a child or parent or authorized person to whom services are rendered. See also child, custodial parent, and non-custodial parent.
3. Critical incident is an occurrence involving a client that threatens the safety or results in the injury of a participant and or/that requires the intervention of a third party such as child protection services or the police.
4. Custodial parent is a biological or adoptive parent or guardian that has temporary or permanent physical custody of a child.
5. Family violence is any form of physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, or economic abuse inflicted on any person in a household by a family or household member.
6. Neutral/Neutrality as used in the context of supervised visitation means maintaining an unbiased, objective and balanced environment, and when providing the service, not taking a position between the parents in providing the service. Providing service in a neutral manner is intended to ensure respect for all individuals in their capacity as parents and to protect children who are attempting to remain in contact with their parents. Being neutral does not mean providers disregard behaviors such as abuse or violence of any kind.
7. Non-custodial parent refers to a biological parent or other adult who has contact with a child through supervised visitation or neutral exchange.
8. On-site supervision refers to a supervision of parent/child contact at a facility that is under the control of the provider.
9. Recommendation is the drawing of conclusions and statement of a professional opinion concerning future visitation arrangements and/or child custody determination.
10. Safety is protection from danger or risk of physical, psychological or emotional injury.
11. Supervised visitation is parent/child contact overseen by a third party.
12. Neutral exchange is the supervision of the transfer of child/children from the custodial to the noncustodial parent at the start of the parent/child contact and back to the custodial parent at the end of the contact.

13. Family Specialist is a professional who monitors supervised visits and/or provides neutral exchange services.
14. Courthouse Liaison is a professional designated by the courts to be the go between for the courts and the Visitation Center. This person also screens clients for the Center and has the right to terminate clients from the Center.
15. Coordinator is a professional trained to oversee the supervised visitation/neutral exchange program.
16. Clinical Coordinator is a professional trained to oversee all of the staff of the Center and to report to the Courthouse Liaison regarding the progression of the clients at assigned intervals.

SUPERVISED VISITATION PROVIDERS

1. The Visitation Center will provide the services for which the staff has been trained, including supervised visitation, neutral exchange and co-parenting education.
2. The scope of the services and limitations as such will be explained to the client's at the Intake process and as needed while services are ongoing.
3. No employee of the Center will be financially dependent on any client or any of the client's family.
4. No employee of the Center will be involved in an intimate relationship with any client or any of the client's family.
5. Ongoing educational in-services will be provided to the staff as needed at bi-monthly staff meetings. Also, the Clinical Coordinator will meet with other Visitation Center's in the state on a quarterly basis.

ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS

1. The Financial records will be maintained by the Court Administrator.
2. The Courthouse Liaison will maintain the personnel records of the staff at the courthouse in a locked filing cabinet.
3. The Clinical Coordinator will review the status of all open cases to monitor client compliance with the service, preparation for court review dates, and follow up on outstanding issues.
4. The Courthouse Liaison will work with the Visitation Center to consider the status of the case, any needed changes to the court order, or whether participation in the service will continue or terminate. Information about how to take a matter back to court will be provided to clients by the Courthouse Liaison.

PROGRAM SERVICES

1. Only those services for which the Visitation Center staff is trained will be provided to clients of the Center.
2. The nature of the services provided will be disclosed to the parents at the Intake process.
3. Referrals will be provided to parents regarding client issues that are outside the scope of the provider's services.

CLIENT RECORDS

A File will be created for each family. The file will include:

1. Intake information, including: a form that allows the client to protect their personal information from the other party.
2. Data information, including: race, sex, marital status, occupation and income level.
3. Signed copies of the Rules of the Center (signed by both parents)
4. Copies of the court orders, the original and any subsequent orders relating to the visits/exchanges.
5. Copies of both parents driver's license/i.d. card.
6. All supervised visit observation forms, and/or exchange forms, which include: Client identifier, who brought the child to the parent/child contact, who supervised the visit/exchange, any additional authorized observers, the date, time and duration of the visit/exchange, the level of participation by the parent/child in the visit/exchange, an account of critical incidents and an account of the ending of or temporary suspension of the parent/child contact. An overall summary of the visit will also be included in the form.
7. The staff of the Center will not disclose any personal information to the clients of the Center.

All files will be kept in locked filing cabinets. Closed cases will also be kept in locked filing cabinets. When the Visitation Center is closed, the offices where the files are located will be kept locked.

Personnel files of the employees of the Visitation Center will be kept in locked filing cabinets at the Peoria County Courthouse Court Administration Office.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The general policy for safety includes:

1. All staff must review the file of the clients that they are going to be monitoring prior to observing visits.

2. The Specialist will meet with the Coordinator prior to observing the visit to review the case and discuss any issues.
3. If the Specialist feels there is a safety issue at any time they are to alert the Coordinator to the issue immediately.
4. The Specialist will carry an intercom phone with them while observing visits.
5. The coordinator will check in with the Specialists periodically while they are observing visits.
6. The staff is to call 911 if the client has escalated beyond normal reasoning ability or exhibits any threatening behavior.
7. Custodial and Non-custodial parents will be kept in separate areas of the building at all times during their interactions at the Center unless otherwise agreed upon by the courts.
8. If unforeseen contact between the parties does occur, the staff will review the Rules of the Center and the court orders with the parties.
9. The Court Liaison will run a criminal background check on all new parents coming to the Visitation Center.

STAFF TO CLIENT RATIO

If more than two children are present in a supervised visit, the Coordinator may assign two Specialists to monitor said visit.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Any critical incident that occurs will be documented during the visit and will be verbally explained to the Coordinator by the Specialist. The Coordinator will then discuss said incident with the Custodial parent. The Coordinator will also provide a written report of the incident to the Courthouse Liaison.

PROVIDER RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CHILD

1. The Visitation Center's responsibility for the child is such that: No child will be left unattended with a Non-custodial parent during supervised visits. The Visitation Center staff is responsible for the safety of the child during the transition of the child between the parents.
2. Children must not be left unattended with a Non-custodial parent at any time during a Supervised Visitation.
3. Decisions concerning conditions of parent/child contact not covered by the court order or agreement of the custodial and noncustodial parents must be referred back to the Courthouse Liaison or their attorney for determination.

FEES

The services of the Visitation Center are free to the clients of the Center.

STAFF

Hiring/screening of staff

1. A criminal background check will be done on all staff prior to hiring by the Courthouse Liaison.
2. All staff must provide a current resume to be kept in their personnel file.
3. All staff must meet the minimum qualification of having a B.A. or B.S. in a field relevant to social service, including but not limited to, sociology, criminal justice, psychology, health or education.

TRAINING OF STAFF

The Clinical Coordinator will be responsible for training of staff. The training will include but is not limited to:

1. Shadowing another trained Family Specialist observing a visit.
2. Co-monitoring a visit with another Family Specialist.
3. Being observed by the Coordinator while independently observing a visit.
4. Being trained on all necessary paperwork by the Coordinator.

REFERRALS

All referrals to the Center will be screened by the Courthouse Liaison to determine eligibility for services at the Visitation Center. Clients are only eligible to participate in the Center's services if they are granted a court order. The Courthouse Liaison has the right to decline referrals to the Center.

INTAKE AND ORIENTATION

INTAKE

1. The Courthouse Liaison will screen the client's for the intake procedure.
2. The Rules of the Center and the Intake paperwork will be completed on the first day of the transition. The Coordinator will meet with each parent separately while they complete the paperwork.
3. The Coordinator will discuss the reason for the referral with each parent separately during the intake process.
4. The parent's will fill out paperwork at the intake process that includes data about medical conditions.
5. The Rules of the Center will be reviewed with each parent separately at the intake. The Rules include a general Release of Information to the courthouse.

6. The Rules of the Center will be signed by each parent separately and witnessed by the Coordinator.

ORIENTATION

1. The Liaison will provide information to the parents about the location and phone numbers of the Visitation Center prior to the first transition date.
2. If the client requests, the Visitation Center will provide a tour of the Center prior to the first transition.

CONDITIONS FOR PARENT/CHILD CONTACT

1. No one will be allowed to participate in the supervised visits unless they are named on the court order.
2. The non-custodial parent may bring toys, food, and gifts for the child to the visit. The Family Specialist will document anything that is brought to each visit.
3. The non-custodial parent may photograph/videotape the child unless it is specified otherwise on the court order.
4. The non-custodial parent is allowed to have cell-phones/pagers during visits unless otherwise specified by the court order. The Specialist will document phone calls/pages and what was said.
5. The court will provide an interpreter if one is needed due to language barriers between the parent and the child.

INTERVENTIONS IN ENDING A VISIT

1. If the Non-Custodial parent is inappropriate in words or actions during a visit, the Specialist is to redirect the parent. If the Specialist has redirected with no success, the Coordinator shall address the matter with the parent. If the parent continues to be inappropriate, the Coordinator has the right to end the visit immediately.
2. If at any time the staff of the Center suspect alcohol or drug use, the visit or exchange will be cancelled. Both parties will be informed of the reason for the termination of the visit/exchange.
3. The staff of the Center reserves the right to separate the parent/child for a short time during the visit if the child is obviously distressed. During this separation, the Specialist will stay with the child while the Coordinator addresses the visiting parent's inappropriate behavior towards the child and asks the parent to redirect this behavior for the rest of the visit.

PROVIDER FUNCTIONS FOLLOWING VISITS

1. Feedback to the custodial parent will be provided by the Specialist after the visit and will include information on any critical incident that occurred during the visit.

The Specialist will also inform the parent of any injury that occurred during the visit.

2. The Specialist will notify the Coordinator immediately after the visit ends of any pertinent issues regarding the visit, including inappropriate behavior by the non-custodial parent that was redirected during the visit by the Specialist.
3. The Coordinator will address any issues from the visit with the non-custodial parent, including giving feedback on any inappropriate behavior or conversation that took place during the visit. The Coordinator will provide positive feedback when appropriate

TERMINATION OF SERVICES

The Liaison has the right to terminate clients of the Center after discussion with the Clinical Coordinator regarding issues causing the need for termination, including safety and absentee issues. The Clinical Coordinator will be required to provide a summary of the reason for termination of a client to the Liaison, who will provide any necessary documentation to the presiding Judge.

REFUSAL OF CHILD TO VISIT

1. If a child refuses to participate in a visit, the Coordinator will separate the child from the custodial parent while the court order is reviewed with the custodial parent. The Coordinator will document whether or not it appears that there is undue influence by the custodial parent of the child not to participate in the visit.
2. The Specialist who is assigned to the visit will talk to the child prior to the visit and attempt to make the child more comfortable with the situation.
3. Options will be offered to the child, including being in the visitation room but not participating in direct contact in any way with the visiting parent.
4. The situation will be discussed with the Non-Custodial parent and they will be directed to not force conversation or physical closeness with the child until the child agrees to participate in this manner.
5. If a child refuses to visit with the Non-Custodial parent in such a way or for such a period of time that it raises concerns that continuation of services may be detrimental to the child's safety and emotional well-being, then the Coordinator will request that the Judge suspend services pending resolution of the issue.

CHILD SEX ABUSE

1. An annual training will be done for the staff of the Center by Innerstrength, the area sexual abuse/assault program, on recognizing signs of sexual abuse in children.
2. The contact between the visiting parent and the child will be supervised continually one-on-one so that all verbal communication is heard and all physical contact is observed.
3. Any suspected sexual abuse will be reported to DCFS.

PARTNER ABUSE

1. All clients of the Center are scheduled to arrive and leave fifteen minutes apart from each other as an inherent safety precaution.
2. No notes will be transferred between parties where Orders of Protection are in place unless initiated by the party that sought the OP.
3. All staff will be trained in domestic violence awareness by the Clinical Coordinator, who has been trained in Domestic Violence. The Coordinator will partner with the local Domestic Violence program, Womenstrength, as needed.
4. Information regarding the local Domestic Violence program will be made readily available to any client that exhibits signs of abuse or requests said information.