

VISITATION RESOURCE GUIDE

Supervised Family Visitation – A Parent’s Guide

Spending time with your child is very important. This booklet outlines requirements and offers suggestions to help make your visits a positive experience for you and your child.

Tips included inside to have a successful visit:

- Greeting your child
- Spending quality time with your baby or toddler
- Spending quality time with your older child
- Saying goodbye

Visitation is essential for a child’s well-being

Visitation is fundamental to permanency

Visitation is vital to a child maintaining family relationships and cultural connections



- Supervised Visitation tips
- DHS Locations
- Questions or strong feelings
- Visitation rules
- Roles & Responsibilities
- Age appropriate activities
- FAQs
- Journal

Assigned Social Service Worker (SSW):

SSW Telephone Number:

Your visit schedule (days/times):

Visitation Hotline:

DHS Office Locations:

Bakersfield

(Main Office)
100 E California Ave
Bakersfield, CA 93307
(661) 631-6000
(661) 631-6200 (TTY)

Kinship Center

(Adoptions only)
3041 Wilson Road
Bakersfield, CA 93304
(661) 868-8900

Delano

1816 Cecil Ave
Delano, CA 93215
(661) 721-5134

Lake Isabella

7050 Lake Isabella Blvd,
Suite 130
Lake Isabella, CA 93240
(760) 549-2006

Lamont

8300 Segrue Rd
Lamont, CA 93241
(661) 635-4000

Mojave

2340 Hwy 58
Mojave, CA 93501
(661) 824-7500

Ridgecrest

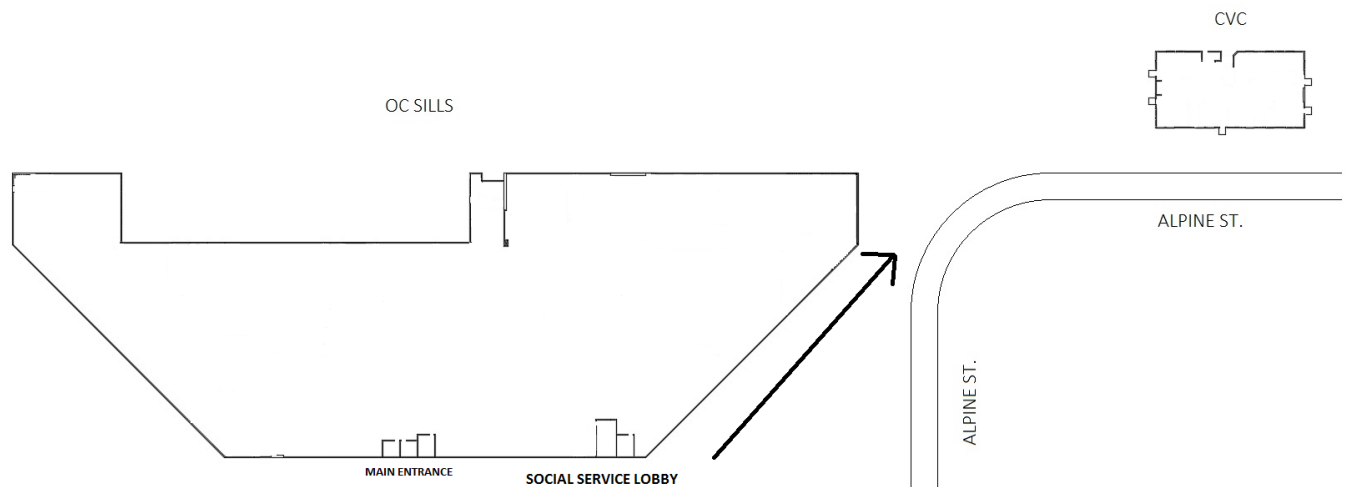
145 E Ridgecrest Blvd
Ridgecrest, CA 93555
(760) 499-5200

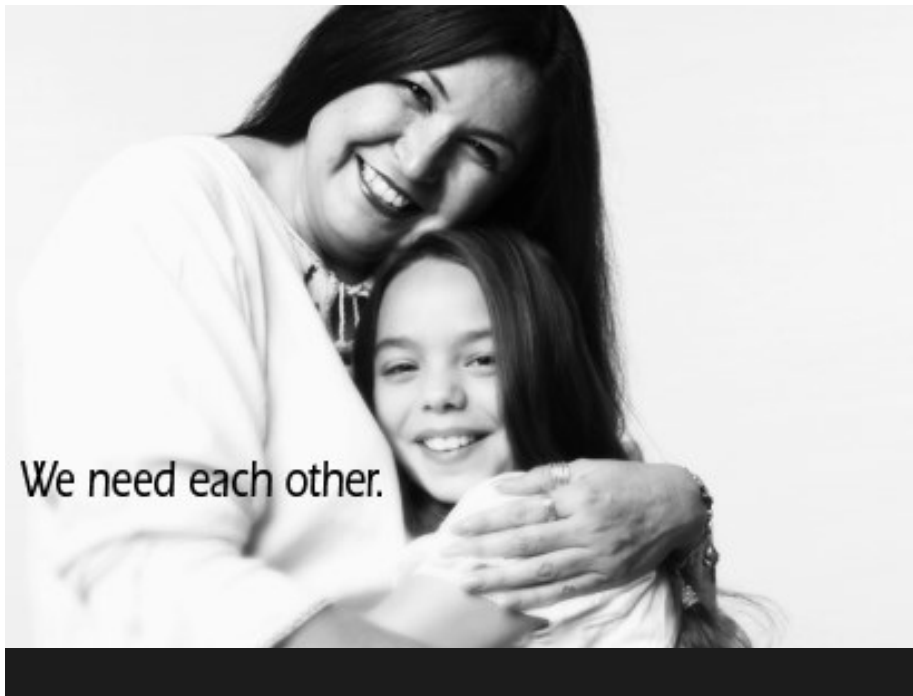
Shafter

115 Central Valley Hwy
Shafter, CA 93263
(661) 746-8300

Taft

119 North 10th Street
Taft, CA 93268
(661) 763-0200





What is supervised visitation?

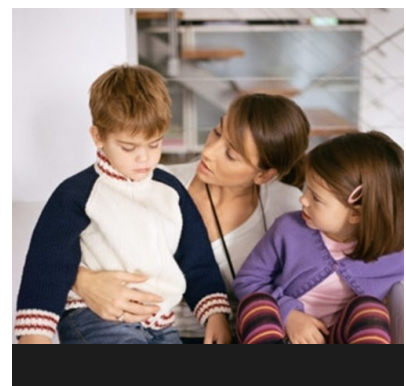
Based on issues of protection and safety, a judge may decide that in order for a child to have contact with a parent, a neutral third person must be present during any visitation. This type of third-person visitation arrangement is called **supervised visitation**. The Department of Human Services arranges visits that are easy on the child and the parents, keeping the child's safety a priority. Visitation is an important part of a family's case plan and may contribute to a timely reunification.

During a supervised visit, the parent will not be left alone with the child. A social worker or aide will be present at all times and the visit will take place at a Department of Human Services office or approved location. DHS social workers and aides are there to ensure the safety and well-being of your child before, during, and after the visit. They will explain the policies and procedures to parents as well as observe and document both physical and verbal interactions during the visit.

Questions or Strong Feelings

Sometimes children have questions or express strong feelings during a visit. Children may express anger or sadness. Encourage communication by accepting your child's feelings – and use a calm, interested tone of voice when responding. This helps your child build trust and increases problem solving abilities. If your child says, "You make me sad/angry," you may try replying, "I'm sorry you're feeling that way." It may be difficult to acknowledge your child's feelings, but it is necessary to do so. Children may ask about when they will be going home, or when a parent is getting a house. It is important to answer these questions without making any promises.

Take advantage of this special time with your child. Be sure to talk to your social worker if you have questions or concerns about your visits.



Visitation Rules

Visits are for the benefit of you and your child. The DHS worker will assist in making your visit safe and focused on your child's needs.

Arrive on time

- It is important to your child, and to the next family on the schedule, for parents to arrive on time.
- The visit will not occur if the parents are more than 15 minutes late. Arriving more than 15 minutes late is considered as a failure to attend.

Before the visit

- A visit may be terminated if anyone present is under the influence of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs.
- Weapons, or anything that can be used as a weapon, are not allowed at visits.
- Prior approval from the social worker is required when bringing anyone with you to the visit.
- Prior approval from the social worker is required when bringing gifts. If your child has a birthday or other special celebration coming up, contact your social worker ahead of time. A background check will be conducted on all adults who attend visits.

During the visit

- All parties must be within the DHS worker's hearing and sight distance at all times.
- The court case cannot be discussed in the child's presence.
- Negative talk about anyone, including the child, child's siblings, other parent, judge, caregiver, or DHS worker is not allowed.
- This is your time to be with your child. This is not the time to discuss your case plan with your worker. If you'd like to talk to your worker about your case plan, do so prior to, or after your scheduled visit.
- Use polite language. Avoid swear words or name calling.
- Do not use the child or DHS worker to communicate to other parent.
- In supervised visitation, all verbal communication must be understood by the DHS worker; whispering, passing notes, or using hand signals is not allowed.
- If your child seems uncomfortable with physical contact such as tickling, hugging, kissing, or holding, please stop immediately. You may discuss your child's reaction with your worker.
- It is important for you to manage your child's behavior during the visit. Positive forms of discipline are to be used if discipline is needed. Redirecting your child or brief time outs are recommended. If you want more parenting help, see your worker to review available services.
- Observation of your interaction/participation will be used at court hearings and recommendations will be written into court reports.
- Dress appropriately. Wear clothing that does not reveal undergarments or show areas that should be covered.

Roles and Responsibilities for Supervised Visitation/Family Time

Note: It is important for follow County Policy and Procedure. The following are some suggestions that may help you in engaging parents, caregivers and children about the visitation and family time plan.

	Before Visit	During Visit	After Visit
Child's Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about any rules/ expectations you (parent) do not understand. Follow all the rules. • Find items to bring. • Ensure transportation is arranged. • Call as soon as possible if visit must be cancelled or you will be late. • Ask for help on how to handle your and the child's emotions that commonly occur during visits. • Call your SSW and obtain permission to bring others prior to visit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the visit rules. Come prepared. Come on time. Bring only approved items for the visit. • Give child 100% of your attention. • No drugs or alcohol use at visit and do not come to visit intoxicated/ under the influence. • If you are having a mental health crisis ask for visit to be postponed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen for feedback and ask questions about how to improve. • State concerns to SSW. • Provide suggestions for next visit. • Take care of yourself – visits can be very emotional. • Talk to a friend, SW, or therapist to debrief visit.
Social worker or person Responsible to develop Visitation/ family time plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place child in a home that is close and will support visits and family connections. • Place sibling together or ensure they have frequent visits. • Tell parent(s) of expectations and rules. • Help parent(s) prepare what to say to child, what to bring, what activities are allowed/expected. • Do not expect that parent(s) knows how to perform parenting tasks and assume parent(s) will feel "unnatural" during visit – PREPARE the parent(s) to succeed. • Explain to child purpose of visit, safety rules, how long it will last, and returning to caregiver following visit. Practice what s/ he may want to say to parent(s). • Arrange transportation and location. • Do not use visits as a reward or punishment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Supervisor of visit responsibilities if you are also doing that task. • Make visits per court orders a priority so that they occur. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow through with consequences to parents who break rules. • Do not use visits as rewards or punishment. • Give the child's parent(s) feedback on their interactions, behaviors, parenting skills or other issues. Communicate in a strength based manner. • Use Progressive Visit Planning to increase or decrease an item in the visit in order to meet the child's needs and to determine parenting skills. • Call and check with child and/or caregiver to see how the child is reacting to visits. • Ask everyone about how to improve the visits.

Roles and Responsibilities for Supervised Visitation/Family Time

	Before Visit	During Visit	After Visit
Child's Out of Home Caregiver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare child for visit given the type of visit; talk about visit, how to handle emotions and the safety plan. • Pack clothes, food, medicine, comfort item or other items needed for visit. • Say positive things to the child about visit and his or her parents. • Transport child to visit. • Give information to SW and parent about child: anything that might affect the visit, i.e. school, illness, behaviors. • Support contact with siblings and others. • Visits should never be talked about as a reward or punishment for a child's behavior. • Believe that family connections are essential for a child's health development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model or teach parenting skills to the child's parent. • Supervise or monitor visits – see supervisor of visits for more details. • Help with transitions at beginning and the end of visits, especially if the child is emotionally attached to you or the child does not remember the family members who will be at the visit. • Be willing to meet with the child's parent(s) before and after the visit. Avoid "handing off" the child to a third party in order that you not meet the parent(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport child back to your home. • Have routine that will comfort child, allow for emotions to be safely expressed. • Discuss "abnormal" reactions the child has • to visits with the child's caseworker. • Document visits if you supervised visit or it occurred in your home. • Take care of yourself, the child, and your family given your emotions.
Child/Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell adults what you prefer regarding visits; location, frequency, who attends, activities, safety. • Ask any questions you have about the visits • Tell adults if you are having feelings you cannot handle, are afraid, or need information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have fun. • Be on time. • Follow the rules that have been set in place. • Ask for visit to end if you feel unsafe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell adults if you have any questions, feelings, reactions, or concerns about the visit. • Tell adults what you think would make the visits better.

Roles and Responsibilities for Supervised Visitation/Family Time

	Before Visit	During Visit	After Visit
Supervisor of the Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be willing and able to put child’s best interest first. • Complete any training required to be a visit supervisor, especially for conducting high level of supervision for violent or unsafe parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End visit if parent violates rules or if child indicates his/ her safety is at risk. Enforce all the rules of the visit (location, activities, people attending). • Ensure all 3 phases of a visit occur (saying hello, the activities, saying goodbye) during the allotted time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide immediate feedback to parent, positive or negative – do this out of hearing of the child. • Document visit timely and send to appropriate people. • Call social worker or caregiver soon after the visit if there is a special need of the child or parent(s) that should be addressed immediately. • If approved, check with older children, out of hearing from the child’s parent(s), as to the child’s questions, reactions, or assessment of the visit. • May be required to testify in court.
Transporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be on time. • Safe driving and car seats. • Listen to child during the ride. • Provide reassurance. • Report any concerns immediately to social worker. • May be asked to provide information from caregiver to SW or child’s parent(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Supervisor of visit responsibilities if you are also doing that task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be on time. • Safe driving and car seats. • Listen to child during the ride. • Provide reassurance. • Report any concerns immediately to social worker. • May be asked to provide information to caregiver.

Adapted from Minnesota Department of Human Services Child Safety and Permanency Division. (2009) Child and family visitation: a practice guide to support lasting reunification and preserving family connections for children in foster care. <http://www.ourkids.us/SiteCollectionDocuments/Handbooks/Visitation%20Minnesota's%20Guide.pdf> retrieved 2/26/2014

Suggestions for successful visits

Greeting your child

- ◆ Wait for your child to approach you if he or she is acting shy
- ◆ Smile, hug your child
- ◆ Tell your child you are happy to see him or her

Spending time with your baby

- ◆ Hold and soothe your baby
- ◆ Feed your baby if it's time to do so
- ◆ Burp and change your baby when needed, and before your visit ends
- ◆ Talk to your baby
- ◆ Look for your baby's new skills and growth changes

Spending time with your child

- ◆ Help your child select a game or toy
- ◆ Be sensitive to your child's needs – if your child is not interested in the current activity, ask, "What else would you like to do?"
- ◆ Encourage your child with statements such as, "I'm proud of you," "You are taking turns nicely," "You did a good job."
- ◆ Avoid talking about adult problems. Children need to be free from worry about parents' issues.
- ◆ Bring a healthy snack or meal for your child if it is meal or snack time
- ◆ Provide positive guidance if your child needs to be redirected or needs help sharing

Saying goodbye

- ◆ Be brief, don't prolong saying, "goodbye."
- ◆ Help your child prepare for the end of the visit
- ◆ Clean and put away the toys with your child
- ◆ Smile, hug your child
- ◆ Help your child feel better by being supportive of the DHS worker, foster parent, or relative caregiver taking care of your child. At the end of the visit, you may say, "Have a good time with _____"





Age appropriate activities

Newborn to 2 years

Sing, play patty-cake, roll a ball, visual toys, noisy toys. Encourage motor skills and physical touch by holding and consoling. Note: Some children born premature or with drugs/alcohol in their systems are sensitive to sounds, color and touch. Talk to your social worker about your child's special needs and responses.

Age 2-4 years

Color (markers should be non-toxic and water soluble), put together simple puzzles, read picture books, sing, play with blocks and ride-on toys

Age 4-6 years

Read, color with big chalk and markers, play board games, practice writing, roll or toss a large ball

Age 6-8 years

Play board and card games, color with big chalk and markers, do homework, read

Age 8-10 years

Read, do arts & crafts, play board and card games, action figures and dolls, do homework, ask about daily activities

Age 10-12 years

Talk, read, do craft projects and homework

Age 12-14 years

Discuss sports, social events, fashion and the "mall," read, do homework, do craft projects

Age 14-16 years

Talk about school, do homework, play board and card games, discuss sports, social events, fashion, read

Age 16-18 years

This is a good age for parents and youth to plan activities together

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

Q: What can and can't I talk about with my kids?

A: Talk about what kids like to talk about, not about the case. This is very important. Kids need as much stability as possible during this time. Being removed from you is already difficult for them. Trying to tell them about the case and the complex problems you are trying to resolve will only add to that difficulty.

Saying you will have them returned to you by a certain time is not fair to your child if this promise does not come true. Stay away from making any promises during this time. Talk about the case one-on-one with your social worker away from your children. Do not unload your problems on the children. Also, stay away from questioning them about whom they are placed with or where they are placed. If they talk about the case or their placements on their own, don't draw more out of them but gently redirect them to something else that kids like to talk about or like to do. Talk positive about other family members. Putting down other people will only add to your child/children's trauma. Talk about kid things, like what is going on in school or projects they have completed. **Do not talk about your case with your child, if you do, the Social Worker may redirect your conversation.** If your child asks you a question regarding your case plan and your progress, answer honestly and then move on to another topic. The visit is a time to be with your child, enjoy the time you have, focus on them and make it a positive experience for your child. Also, those observing the visitation must be able to see and hear, so avoid whispering during the visitation. If whispering occurs you will be asked not to do so.

Q: What should we do during the visits?

A: Play games. Help your children with homework. Give them lots of praise and look for what kids are doing right. It is encouraged that you play with your children and no other families or friends that happen to be at the department/park area. This is a time set aside for you and your children to spend together so enjoy this time.

Q: What may I bring to the visitation for my children?

A: It is ok to bring food and drink. The Department of Human Services asks that you and your family please clean up afterwards. If there is a problem with messes, you may be asked not to bring food or drink in the future. Please leave the rooms the way you found them.

It is okay to bring toys, coloring books, crayons, books, and other toys to play with your children. Age appropriate toys and foods are highly encouraged and recommended. For example, please do not bring candy, soda or spicy foods for an infant. Any items will need to be prescreened and approved by monitor.

If you have a cell phone, please do not use it during the visitation. We suggest that you not take or place any phone calls during your visitation time. It is okay to play games on the phone or to let your child hear a new ring tone. However, visitation is primarily set up for the parents to have interactions with their children.

Please take smoking breaks before or after the visitations. We do not want you to take time out of your visitation with your children to smoke. This time has been set aside for you to visit, specially, with your children. Additionally, please shop for items before the visit. Children may take clothing, shoes and toys home with them to their foster homes/relative placements. Please limit the number of items.

Q: What are those supervising the visit specifically looking for?

A: Those supervising visitations are looking at the quality of visit, and measuring the bond and interaction (both positive and negative) between parents and children. And, if you are applying what you are learning from your classes that you are required to take; such as, parenting.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

Q: Why do we have visitation?

A: Visits are held to maintain family relationships, reassure the children and family, assess reunification potential, and to provide a learning/intervention tool.

Q: What happens if I am upset during a visitation?

A: The visit will not occur if the parent cannot regain control. If any bizarre or unusual behavior/statements are displayed, you may be asked to leave. It is also in the best interest of your child to help them feel safe and secure.

Q: Does CPS staff have the authority to end my visits?

A: Yes. If an incident arises that may harm the child, emotionally, physically, sexually, and/or psychologically, you may be asked to leave the visitations and the visit will be terminated for that day. Future visits may also end if this type of behavior continues.

If you persist in talking about topics that are inappropriate or conflict with the purpose of the visit and you refuse to change the topic of discussion, you may be asked to leave.

Q: Can a relative attend the visits with me?

A: Our job in the visits is to measure, maintain and increase the bond between you and your children during this difficult time. To do this, we need to conduct the visits mainly between you and your children. For this reason, other family members may attend at approved times but the majority of the visits need to happen between you and your children. Also, before having another family member attend a visit a background check of that family members must be completed.

Q: What happens if I bring unauthorized visitor/visitors to the scheduled visits?

A: The visitor/visitors will be asked to leave the visitation. Please consult with the assigned Social Worker at least 48 hours before the day of the visit if the visitor may attend the visit or not.

Q: What happens if I am late for a visit?

A: Our policy is to wait approximately 15 minutes after the scheduled visitation time and if you don't show up, the visit will be missed. The visit will not be made up. It is very important to be on time for your visits. Your children look forward to seeing you.

If you miss a visit, please do not assume that you will get a visit at the same time the following week. Please contact with the Social Worker to arrange the next visit. If you miss three visits in a row, then your visitation will be postponed until you meet with SSW and new visitation arrangements are made. You must contact your Social Worker so that a visit can be scheduled.

Q: My rehabilitation center says that my children can live with me after 90 days of being sober. Is this the same for CPS?

A: No. Sober-living environments often require 90 days of sobriety before they consider allowing your children to come back into your home. However, the Kern County Department of Human Services, CPS, may require six months or more.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

Q: What about drug testing?

A: You may be asked at any time to test even if you are on the call-in system. Random testing means you can be asked to test anytime. This includes prior to or after visitation and can mean at any time or day.

You may be given a drug referral to go and test at the National Toxicology lab . You may need the referral itself and also the green sheet to test as well as proper identification. **It is your responsibility to go to the National Toxicology lab and test.** Please discuss any issues with your social worker if you cannot go. If you miss a test it will, most likely, be a presumptive positive. Do not miss any drug tests!!

If you are under the influence of a controlled substance and/or alcohol, you will be asked to leave the visitation. The visit will be cancelled and it will not be made up. Department of Human Services encourages you to bring in your prescription and over the counter medication so that your social worker can see them and document the prescription on your behalf.

Q: What if I have a concern or issue about my children?

A: Speak with your assigned social worker. This must be done away from the children either before or after the visitation. Making a face to face appointment with your social worker is encouraged.

Q: What about bus passes or help in other areas?

A: Social workers are assigned to monitor your progress and also to assist you in completing your case plan. They may have advice, give you options and referrals to agencies that they can share with you to help you complete the court ordered requirements. For example, your social worker can provide you not only a bus pass if you need one, but a food bank referral as well. Your social worker is there to help you succeed in your case plan, while keeping your children safe and healthy.

Q: Should I discipline during a visit?

A: Yes! We want you to demonstrate the parenting skills you have and have acquired during a visit. Please use age appropriate discipline techniques like time-outs and positive redirection.





My Reflections: Eat, Play, Love by Anonymous

How do you plan visits with your child(ren)? What planning could you do?

What activities do you and your child(ren) enjoy doing together? What might you enjoy?

What is a basic routine that you could get into?

How do you – or how could you – say goodbye in a positive way?

My Visit Journal – Eat, Play, Love by Anonymous

Goal: Look over your children’s needs that you identified last week. What activities can you do this week to help you connect with your child(ren)? What’s a routine that could make visits more positive?

Reflection: What planning did you do before your visit? What impact did your planning have on the visits?

Did you follow the routine and do the activities you planned? How did it go?

What’s something you did during your visit that you feel proud of?

My Visit and Family Time Journal

Directions: Pick three or four questions and write a response. As you reflect on your answers, plan for your next visit using the next page.

<p>What is something you did during your visit you feel proud of?</p>	<p>What activities do you plan to do for your next visit and family time?</p>
<p>Was there anything you would have like to have done differently? Why?</p>	<p>What activities will help you stay connected to your child(ren)?</p>
<p>What help do you feel you need to improve your visits and family time?</p>	<p>What is positive about your relationship with the foster parent or caregiver of your child(ren)?</p>
<p>What concerns do you have about answering questions the foster parent or your child have for you?</p>	<p>Did you talk to your child(ren) as you had planned to? How did it go?</p>

My Visit Journal Checklist: Eat, Play, Love by Anonymous

Please use this checklist below to keep track of the steps you are taking to improve your visits. Use the “comments” section to make notes about your experiences.

Did I...	Comments
Attend my visit	
Arrive on time	
Plan activities	
Bring toys	
Bring a snack	
Greet my child(ren)’s foster parent	
Keep anger/frustration out of my visit	
Focus only on my child(ren)	
<p>Did I respond to my child(ren)’s needs...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * for me to be trustworthy * to follow a routine * to have fun together * to eat together * to feel safe with the foster parent * to talk about experiences in foster care * to say goodbye in a positive way 	

Progressive Visitation



	Supervised	Relaxed/intermittent	Unsupervised	Guided Visitation
Safety Assessment	There is a high level of concern for the child's physical or emotional safety.	There is a low or moderate level of concern for the child's safety.	There are minimal safety concerns.	Any safety level.
Supervision Level	Child may not be out of the presence of the monitor and parent(s) cannot be alone with their child.	Monitor is present for most of or a portion of the visit. Monitor conducts periodic safety checks. Parent may be alone with child, if monitor ensures certain conditions are met.	No monitor is present during the visit. SSW may make unannounced contact with family during visit. Parent(s) can be alone with child, up to overnight.	Monitor is present for the entire visit.
Location	DHS or approved, secure location.	DHS or approved location. (Can include parent's home, park, restaurant, or other community setting.)	Parent's home, or other location determined by SSW, parent, and child's caregiver to avoid schedule conflicts.	Designated location for Guided Visitation (Child Guidance Clinic).
Monitor's Role	Manage and ensure safety concerns, ensure safety of all parties. May include parent coaching and education, but primary role is protection of the child.	Provide some supervision and support to family. Will intervene as necessary to provide feedback to parents and preserve safety. SSW/HSA/designee may monitor more than one visit at the same time.	No monitor. Parent, SSW and caretakers would communicate and provide feedback/exchange information about visit.	Offer parent education, coaching and support, with the goal of improving parenting practices.