

Parent Tip Sheet

Successful Parent Child Visits

Your participation in regular visits with your child helps you and your child maintain your bond and connection during the time your child is not living with you. Participating in regular and positive visits is the best way to work toward your child coming home (reunification).



“Visits will allow you to preserve and strengthen your bond while you are separated. It can soothe children’s fears and worries by showing them that you care about them and can be counted on to be there for them. Visiting demonstrates that you are committed to your child.” Child Welfare Information Gateway, (2016).
Reunification: Bringing your children home from foster care. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau.

Visit Plan

- You will be part of creating a visit plan during a shared planning meeting to make sure you can see your child while he/she is placed out of your care.
- The visit plan will have the following:
 1. Where the visits can happen (this could include your home).
 2. Who can be at visits.
 3. How many times you can visit.

4. How long each visit will be.
 5. Level of supervision. This is based on safety and managing any risks during visits.
 - a. Unsupervised: you get to visit with no one checking in with you except when your child is picked up or dropped off.
 - b. Monitored: Someone checks in with you from time to time while you visit.
 - c. Supervised: Someone is with you all the time while you visit.
- Visit plans can be updated at any time when circumstances change.
 - Visit plans should be talked about at monthly visits with your caseworker.
 - If you do not have a visitation plan or have not had a shared planning meeting to create a visit plan, talk to your attorney, your caseworker, or your caseworkers’ supervisor.

How can you help?

- Talk to your caseworker about what you need to help you with visits:
 - When you are available to visit and any changes in your schedule
 - If you need help with transportation
 - If you need help to buy snacks, diapers, or other items for visits.
- Talk to your caseworker about how visits are going when you meet monthly.
- Give your caseworker the names of relatives or family friends who can help with visits. They have to be able to pass a background and child abuse and neglect check.
- Work with your caseworker to come up with what to say when your child asks when they are coming home or how the case is going.

Making the most of your visits:

- Arrive on time and try not to miss any visits. Call as soon as you know if you are going to be late or need to miss a visit. If you miss three visits and your visits are supervised or monitored by an agency, another referral will need to be sent and that agency could refuse to work with you.
- Bring things to do. Toys, games, balls, puzzles, books, movies, and other activities. Plan an activity or draw or color pictures together. You can also help your child with homework. If you need help purchasing these items, talk with your caseworker.
- Use the time to spend as a family. Give your child your full attention during the visit. Encourage them to tell you about things that have happened at school.
- Try to stay positive. This is a difficult time for you and your children and they will look to you for how they should feel or behave. When children ask when they can come home or how the case is going remember what you and your caseworker agreed on as a response.
- Allow your child to express their feelings. It's normal for children to feel angry or scared. Use your visits to reassure your child that you love them. Younger children may struggle with the transition to a visit. Give your child the time he/she needs to get comfortable with the situation and interact with you. It's okay to ask for help from the caseworker before and after the visit. Visits are a good time for you to strengthen your parenting skills.
- Talk to your caseworker about getting to know the foster parents/ caregivers. Ask your caseworker about attending any upcoming doctor's appointments or parent-teacher conferences. Having contact and a good relationship with

your child's foster parents/caregivers can make the time apart easier on you and your child. You can ask the foster parent/caregiver how your child is doing, what new skills your child has learned; what new foods they like; or how they like their school, activities, and friends. You can provide a visit notebook that travels with your child so that you can inform the foster parent about your visits and information about your child and the foster parent can also contribute to the notebook as well.

- Help children say goodbye or "see you soon." Let your child know 10 minutes before the visit is over that you must leave so they can prepare to say goodbye. Help them pick-up games or toys and gather up their belongings. Reassure your child that you'll see them again as soon as you can.
- Keep in touch between visits. Ask your caseworker and the foster parents/relative caregivers about the best ways to let your children know you're thinking of them while you are apart. These might include scheduled phone calls, letters, or email.

Child Welfare Information Gateway, (2016). Reunification: Bringing your children home from foster care. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.

Rescheduling:

If you need to reschedule a visit, notify the caseworker and the person monitoring or supervising, and transporting at least twenty-four hours before the visit.

Talk to your caseworker about changes in your treatment or work schedule, or transportation issues.

Remember:

- If substance abuse is an issue for you, come to visits sober. If you appear intoxicated, a visitation supervisor may end your visit that day.
- Do not spank or use other forms of physical discipline during visits.
- Do not bring weapons of any kind to the visits.
- Do not swear or use other inappropriate language during visits.
- Get approval from your caseworker before bringing other people to the visits.
- Saying goodbye may be difficult for you. Consider doing something to take care of yourself after a visit. Consider writing in a journal, going for a walk, going to a meeting, talking to a trusted friend, or something else that will help you cope with a difficult situation.