Resource Parent Handbook

Family Time: Visitation Between Parent and Child

Embracing New Language

CFSA is committed to utilizing language that is person-centered and intentional. When it comes to the time birth parents and their children to spend time together, this is more than visitation. Therefore, CFSA now refers to visitation as Family Time. The focus of Family Time is not solely for the birth parents and their children to see each other, but an opportunity for birth parents to demonstrate new learning from the supports they are receiving from various service providers and the family social worker.

It is also a time for the family to maintain meaningful connections. Family Time is open to the birth parent(s) and, in some cases, open to other supportive adults in the child's life. Attendance at Family Time for other supportive adults must be approved by either the family's social worker or the court depending on the situation.

Family Time is meant for the birth parents and their children to have time together that is uninterrupted.

Family Time Policy

CFSA's https://cfsa.dc.gov/publication/program-visitationFamily Time policy requires social workers to include resource parents in the development of the Family Time plan, whenever possible. Your input is especially important because the children living in your home depends on your active support for maintaining the bond with their birth parents.

If you agree, the social worker may suggest visits in your home. Visits may also occur in a child's relative's home, the parents' home, or in the community. If there are safety concerns, visits will take place at the Agency.

Scheduling the parent/child visits is the responsibility of the social worker. However, as the case progresses, you and the social worker may agree that visits can be scheduled between you and the birth parents, depending on whether you and the birth parents have established mutual trust and respect.

A resource parent's supervision of Family Time can help build trust and promote progress for the family.

Once agreed that you will supervise Family Time,

the social worker or the RPSW will discuss expectations, including some of the following steps:

1. **Confirm with the social worker or the RPSW that the identified location is safe for the parents and child to visit.** Feel free to suggest an outdoor activity that encourages physical activity or just encourage a location outside of your home, such as a park.

2. **Prepare the child for the visit.** Even if the child in your home is an infant, you can use a caring tone of voice to let the little one know that she or he will be visiting with mother, father, or both. For older children, give sufficient notice, e.g., gentle reminders two days in a row (versus the day of the scheduled visit).

3. **Prepare for a child and parent's reactions before, during, and after visits.** Ask the child's social worker or your assigned RPSW for tips on managing or calming complex behaviors if you observe or experience concerns during visitation.

4. **Ensure that all interactions are supportive for younger children and for older youth.** For younger children, support from birth parents includes a lot of focused attention, healthy interactions, nurturing, and physical affection. For older youth, visitation with birth parents can be more challenging. Most older youth have established opinions about who, what, when, where, how, and why. Again, share your observations and ask for guidance from the social worker to RPSW whenever necessary.

5. **Note any improvement of parenting skills.** Consider when the birth parents might be ready for unsupervised visits. Share progress with the social work team!

But wait! There's more!

Remember!

1. Family Time is a legal and moral right, not a reward for good behavior.
2. Family Time should take place as often as possible.
3. Children, siblings, and birth parents need to experience safe, respectful, and nurturing behaviors and communications during visits.
4. If you are supervising the Family Time, the social worker will discuss your focused but *informal* assessment of behavioral progress for parents and for children.