








**Supervised Visitation and Neutral Exchanges
Parent Handbook
*Child Welfare Clients***



**Prevent Child Abuse Habersham
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Our Supervised Visitation/Neutral Exchange program provides a safe, healthy, and nurturing home-like environment in which children and their parents can share time together without the conflicts, stress or dangers that may have been a part of their past.

Children can benefit from safe visits or custody exchanges with their non-custodial parent even when their pasts may have included bad experiences or limited contact. Visits may assist in:






-  Decreasing the child's feelings of rejection
-  Reducing the child's fear of not seeing that parent again
-  Lessening the child's self-blame
-  Resolving of some issues the child may have with that parent
-  Continuing the very important parent /child relationship

The purpose of this handbook is to prepare you for your future orientation appointment and to provide you with information about the Supervised Visitation and Neutral Exchange Program.

What to do before your Orientation Appointment:





-  Read the parent handbook about supervised visitation.
-  Complete and sign the Intake Form.

What to expect at your Orientation Appointment:

-  You will be given a tour of the Visitation Center.
-  Policies and Procedures will be explained in more detail.
-  Program forms and releases will be explained and signed.
-  You will be given an intake screening assessment.
-  There will be time for discussion and clarification as well as any questions you may have.

Please be prepared to be at your appointment for at least one hour. If you are being dropped off, you will be allowed to call your ride towards the end of your appointment. Consultation during intake is private and **only** client listed on referral form will be included in this process. Other adults and their children may stay in waiting room.

What to bring to your Orientation Appointment:

-  Your Driver's License or a State-Issued Identification Card
-  Completed and signed Participation Agreement from Parent Handbook
-  Any questions you have about the Supervised Visitation and Neutral Exchange Program
-  The following collateral documents:
 - Copies of referral documents including court orders or agreements and endorsements
 - Criminal records and/or orders of protection
 - Probation or bail conditions
 - Assessments reports
 - Current child photos
 - Current photo identification
 - Child health information

We look forward to meeting you at your Orientation Appointment and providing your family a safe and neutral environment for supervised visits or exchanges. We have attached a frequently asked questions handout with information about supervised visits and exchanges.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Family Resource Center?

The Family Resource Center provides a safe, comfortable and neutral place where children can visit with or be escorted to their visiting parents. It is also a place where parents can take Nurturing Parenting Classes from a trained parent coach and educator.

What Is a Supervised Visit/Neutral Exchange?

The term “supervised visitation” is used to describe two basic types of services:

1. Supervision of an entire visit between a child and a noncustodial relative; and
2. Supervision or monitoring of the transfer of the child from one parent to another.

Why is time with each parent important for a child?

A child will feel that the parents love him/her. A child is given the chance to build and keep a relationship with parents. A child sees that the visiting parents are doing well and that they have not abandoned him/her. Parents can help the child develop positive self-worth and self-confidence for a greater chance to be successful in life. Parents are given the chance to provide the child with a positive role model.

What times and days of the week are visitation?

Visitation and Neutral Exchanges are individually scheduled appointments. Appointments are made during regular business hours, and are also available in the evenings and on weekends on a first-come, first-serve basis.

When will I get my first visit?

The orientation appointment will be scheduled with the visiting parents after we receive the referral. After orientation for the visiting parents, an orientation appointment will be scheduled with the residential parent. Then once both parties' orientation is completed, an appointment will be made for the child(ren) to tour the family resource center to become acquainted with our environment and to adjust to the expectations of their time with their visiting parents. Upon successful completion of these steps, the first visitation time can be scheduled.

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PROCEDURES FOR SUPERVISED VISITATION AND EXCHANGE SERVICES

MISSION

The Prevent Child Abuse Habersham Family Resource Center's mission is to support connections between children and non-custodial parents in a manner that is safe physically and emotionally for all family members while being in a neutral home-like environment. To promote positive parenting skills through the use of the Nurturing Parenting philosophy which is provided during weekly group classes that are open to the public.

VISITING PARENTS & RESIDENTIAL PARENT ORIENTATION

Appointments for each parent will be separate, but with the same goal: to help all parties feel comfortable about the services being provided and to ensure a mutual understanding of what is best for the child(ren).

-  All participants must complete an orientation before any visitation services can be scheduled.
-  All participants agree to sign all program forms and releases.
-  For identification purposes, each party is required to bring a state-issued ID.
-  Visitation Services are for the parties designated by the referring agency.
-  Additional Authorized Visitors participating in supervised visits have to be approved by the referring agency.
-  Additional Authorized Visitors and Alternate Transport Parties must complete an orientation and sign off on program forms and releases before being approved to attend visits or exchanges.





CHILD(REN) ORIENTATION

This is the time for the child(ren) to tour, ask questions, get comfortable and relieve any anxiety they may have about the supervised visitation.




PREPARING THE CHILD(REN) FOR VISITS

Help the child(ren) understand that he/she has done nothing wrong and that it is not his/her fault the family is involved in supervised visitation services.

RESIDENTIAL PARENT

-  Maintain a positive outlook about the visitation.
-  Prepare the child(ren) for visits by using an age-appropriate method to explain about supervised visits or exchanges.
-  Bring the child(ren) to their scheduled child(ren) orientation prior to the first visit.
-  Be consistent with bringing the child(ren) to their scheduled visits. Consistency will provide the child(ren) time to form and maintain a relationship with the visiting parent.

VISITING PARENT

-  Maintain a positive outlook about the visitation. Use the time with your child(ren) to build a healthy relationship and assist the child(ren) to feel comfortable during the visit or exchange.
-  Be consistent with attending scheduled visitation with your child(ren). Showing up to the scheduled visitations will show your child(ren) that you care and love them. The time will allow you to build and maintain a relationship with your child(ren).
-  Concentrate on the present not the past - relax and have fun at the Family Resource Center. Involve everyone in choosing activities.



COACHED SUPERVISED VISITS PARKING, ENTRANCES, ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE TIMES and SIGN-IN

RESIDENTIAL PARENT





PARKING

-  Park in the Family Resource Center parking lot located at the back of the center.




ARRIVAL TIMES

-  Arrive 5 minutes before the visit is scheduled to start.
-  When returning to pick up a child(ren), arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled visit or exchange.

ENTRANCE



-  Only approved and scheduled parents and additional authorized visitors will be admitted to the Center.
-  Center doors will be locked. Use the callbox at the front door to request entrance.
-  Have your picture ID ready to show staff.
-  A staff member will respond via the audio-visual equipment and you will be asked to identify yourself.

SIGN-IN/OUT



-  Sign your name and time you arrived.
-  Sign in additional child(ren) accompanying adults into the Center or any authorized visitors.
-  After the visit ends, sign out, collect your belongings and leave the designated parking area in a timely manner.

VISITING PARENT





PARKING

-  Park in the Clarkesville City Hall parking lot which is located beside the Family Resource Center.
-  Do not wait in the parking lot before or after the visit or exchange.





ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE TIMES

-  Arrive 30 minutes before the visit is scheduled to allow time for the pre-visit coaching session.
-  Depart 30 minutes after the visit ends to allow time for the post-visit coaching session.


























ENTRANCE

-  Only approved and scheduled parents and additional authorized visitors will be admitted to the Center.
-  Center doors will be locked. Use the callbox at the front door to request entrance.
-  Have your picture ID ready to show staff.
-  A staff member will respond via the audio-visual equipment and you will be asked to identify yourself.












SIGN-IN/OUT

-  Sign your name, time you arrived, and the description of the clothing you have on.
-  Lock all personal items in locker.
-  Sign in additional child(ren) accompanying adults into the Center or any authorized visitors.
-  After your visit ends, sign out, collect your belongings from the locker and leave the designated parking area in a timely manner

RESIDENTIAL AND VISITING PARENTS EXPECTATIONS






-  The premises are tobacco free. No tobacco products or illegal substances are allowed on the premises (including parking lots).
-  No weapons of any kind are permitted on the premises even if you have a Concealed Carry License. This includes guns, knives, box cutters, etc.
-  A party is considered late or early if they arrive more than 5 minutes before or after the scheduled arrival time. If either party arrives more than 15 minutes after the scheduled visit or exchange, the visit or exchange may be cancelled.
-  If you or the child(ren) is contagious or running a fever, please don't come to the Center.
-  If you have proof of illness for missed visits/exchanges, bring it for our staff to view and note it in the record.
-  Please notify staff immediately if you have or suspect lice, bedbugs, etc. Head lice checks on child(ren) are performed by staff after the notification of treatment of lice.
-  Purses or personal bags must be checked at front reception and locked in locker by visiting parent.
-  All parties agree not to have contact with the other party (including parking areas) while involved in visits or exchanges.
-  Respect the privacy and confidentiality of other people using the Center.
-  Speak without using foul language or swearing.
-  Speak in a tone of voice loud enough for the staff to hear all conversations. The Center is monitored for inappropriate conversations and behavior and it will be documented on the visit report.
-  Speak positive about the other parent or party in front of the child(ren).
-  Set limits and boundaries for children to keep them safe and know what behavior is appropriate.
-  Focus your time and conversation on and about the child(ren) and in the present time. Do not discuss the past or future.
-  Avoid talking about adult related topics such as court, counseling, etc. with the child(ren).
-  Avoid questioning the child(ren) about personal information about the other parent or how the visit went.
-  Ask staff to communicate questions, activity information, etc. with the other parent instead of sending information or questions through the child(ren).
-  Spare clothing for child(ren) in case of soiling, and infant formula is to be provided by residential parent.
-  Diapers and wipes are the responsibility of the visiting parent.
-  For safety purposes, leave all pets at home.
-  Unless otherwise prohibited, the visiting parent may take photographs or use cell phone for pictures during the initial 5 minutes of each visit.
-  Be respectful of staff - no personal comments to or about staff or volunteers. Avoid engaging staff in nonemergency conversations.
-  It is your responsibility to keep the Center informed of any address and telephone changes.
-  Significant case information is only discussed with the parties ordered to the Center.
-  Observation notes will be provided to clients at subsequent visits for their records and to the courts as needed.
- The Visitation Center will provide each parent/party with a monthly visitation schedule that will follow the guidelines by the referring agency and/or specific Court ordered modifications.
- Child(ren)'s Birthday visitation will need to be requested a month in advance. The Center will not automatically put it on the visitation schedule.
- If you believe there is an error with scheduling please let a staff or monitor know immediately so corrections can be made.

EXPECTATIONS DURING SUPERVISED VISITS

-  Notify staff if you need to leave the room during the visit.
-  Parents must request to use the kitchen for meals in advance of the visit. The type of food preparation must be simple. Parents are expected to clean and put away any equipment that is used as well as clean countertops, tables, etc.
-  Visiting parents are responsible for bringing any snacks or ingredients for meals and must abide by any dietary restrictions for each child. No red drinks are allowed in the Center.
-  Prior approval is needed for any item you would like to bring to the visit. Appropriate days for gifts are holidays and special occasions like a birthday. Give gift cards as gifts instead of cash. Gifts must be brought in unwrapped. Cards have to be unsealed and are read by staff.
-  Use a non-physical method of discipline. Don't threaten or use spanking or hitting as a form of discipline.
-  Staff will advise you when there are 10 minutes left in the visit. This is the time for you and your child(ren) to begin clean-up of the visit room.
-  Parents, wipe down the table and chairs used during the visit with cleaning supplies located in the rooms.
-  You may accompany a child(ren) to the restroom to assist them as long as the door stays open and the monitor can observe both parent and child(ren). Diaper changes are your responsibility and must be observed by staff or monitor. Staff will inform parents if they are not permitted to assist the child(ren) in the restroom.
-  If you are approved to use the back yard during a visit you must remain within the boundaries of the fence and a monitor will be present at all times.
-  Unless otherwise prohibited in a court order, children's clothing can be changed during a visit if soiling occurs, but only if the extra clothing is provided by the residential parent.
-  If Habersham County activates the weather sirens to indicate threatening weather, everyone in the Family Resource Center will be escorted to the basement (a designated shelter). Children will not be permitted to leave the Center with visiting adults. All will seek shelter in basement of Family Resource Center. Staff will not answer the door or the telephone until it is determined the threat has ended. Please seek shelter from severe weather

TERMINATION OF A VISIT

Your visit or exchange may be terminated:

-  If you arrive suspected to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs,
-  If you make any threat of violence before, during or after the visit,
-  If you bring a weapon or anything considered to be a weapon (example: knife, box cutter, etc.) to the Center. This includes individuals with Concealed Carry Licenses.
-  If the Center's procedures are not being followed.
-  If staff determines it is in the best interest of the child(ren).

CHILD REFUSAL

Family Resource Center will not force children to visit if they refuse to participate in the visitations. Staff will attempt to encourage participation. If a child refuses to visit with the visiting party after 3 attempts on different occasions and it raises concern that continuation of services may become detrimental to the child's safety and emotional well-being, services will be suspended pending resolution of the issue.

SCHEDULING VISITS, CANCELLATIONS AND NO SHOWS

Before any visit is considered 'scheduled', each party must confirm their availability for the date and time of each visit with the center. A visit cannot be cancelled until notification has been made with the Center. It is each parent's responsibility to ensure that new visits have been requested or cancellations reported through the Center.

We have a number of paid staff and volunteers who generously donate their time to supervise visits and when cancellations occur, this affects our overall functioning. If for any reason you are unable to bring the child(ren) or attend the visit with your child(ren), it is your responsibility to notify Family Resource Center by calling 706-778-3100 no less than **48 hours** before the visit. Each party must confirm mutually agreed upon cancellations to Family Resource Center.

If a visit or exchange is not cancelled at least **24 hours** in advance, it will be documented as a late cancellation. Reasons for cancellations are noted by staff and documented for the courts in a Case Report. Family Resource Center does not supply the other parent with the reasons for cancellation due to the level of conflict and concerns that arise. A participant's case plan and goal of reunification is partially dependent upon keeping scheduled visits at the Family Resource Center.

We make every effort to maintain consistency with visitation. This process goes best when children can trust that they will be able to visit with their parent every time they are scheduled. 'No shows' will be documented in the Case Report. Three 'no shows' in a period of six months by either party may result in termination of services.

RECORDS OF VISITS

Reports are completed for each visit, and provided to the client at the subsequent visit. These reports are compiled with factual information about what occurred during the visit. The highlights of these reports are compiled and sent to the agencies representing the parties upon request. To ensure this information is received in a timely manner, provide staff with a lead time of 10 business days prior to court date.

SUSPENSION/TERMINATION OF SERVICES

Clients who are unable or unwilling to abide by program guidelines will be redirected or reminded by staff and may receive a follow up in writing. Non-compliance with any rule or challenging the authority of staff may lead to termination of Family Resource Center services. When the Center terminates services, we may inform each parent in writing of the reason for termination of services or provide written notice to the court and/or referring source stating the reason for the termination and we will close the case file.

The Visitation Center staff may have to ask you to agree to additional procedures to keep everyone in the Center safe.

