This course is adapted from Introduction to Parent-Child Visits: An Essential Tool for Family Reunification, Child Information Gateway
Purpose of Visits

Meet the child’s developmental need for maintaining and enhancing relationships with family members

Reduce sense of loss due to removal

Engage parent in case planning & services

Teach parenting skills

Evaluate the parents ability to safely parent
Benefits of Visits
Benefits of Visits
Impact of Not Having Visits

- Deteriorating parent-child relationship
- Delay of final permanency decisions
- Frightening or idealized fantasies about family members
- Blaming the child welfare system for the separation
- Feeling abandoned
- Unable / unwilling to bond with adoptive parents
Outcomes Improved by Visits

Shorter placements in out-of-home care

Reunification more likely

Fewer behavior problems after returning home

Enhanced psychological well-being and developmental progress

Reassures children that parents want to see them

Healthy attachments increase resiliency
Impact on Attachment
Reactions following Visits

- Grieving is normal
- Most children have a variety of emotional reactions
- Children want to visit important people in their lives
- Parents can be motivated to work toward reunification
- Most people who grow up in foster care have contact with family as young adults
- Parents also have emotional reactions to visits
- Visits evoke emotions and concerns for everyone
Discomfort for Children

- Short-term minimal regression is not an indication that the child is traumatized by the visits.
- Do not force children to have face-to-face contact
- Be cautious labeling a visit a traumatic.
- Short successful visits are better than longer unsuccessful visits.
Important points about visits...

Help the child feel safe & hold visits in the most natural and homelike setting possible.

- Child should not be traumatized
- Children and parents may feel discomfort.
- When face-to-face is not possible, arrange phone calls, letters, e-mail, text messages.
- The child will need help handling grief, loss and adjustment to out-of-home care.
## Administrative Policies and Procedures: 16.43

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject:</th>
<th>Supervised and Unsupervised Visitation Between Child/Youth, Family and Siblings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority:</td>
<td>TCA 37-5-106, TCA 37-4-201; P.L 109-239 (Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Children in Foster Care); TCA 37-4-201-207.</td>
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<td>Application:</td>
<td>DCS Family Services</td>
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### Policy Statement:

The Department of Children’s Services is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of children in their custody. Visitation serves to maintain the parent-child relationship, reduce the child’s sense of abandonment, and preserve their sense of belonging. Visitation is fundamental to permanency.

This policy also applies to DCS custodial placements under the juvenile court jurisdiction.

### Visitation Plan Work Aid

**Supplemental to DCS Policy: 16.38 Face to Face Visitation with Dependent and Neglected and Unruly Children in DCS Custody**

The primary purpose of visitation is to maintain the parent-child relationship, reduce the child’s sense of abandonment, and preserve their sense of belonging as part of a family and community. Visitation is imperative for the child’s and parents’ well-being and is fundamental to permanency.

All custody permanency plans for a child and family will require a need for visitation. Progress on visitation can be updated as needed and should track progress as appropriate. The visitation plan should be purposeful and have a positive effect on the child’s need for safety, well-being and permanency.

The following items should be considered when creating the visitation plan action steps:

1. Expectations for all parties clearly identified making concerted efforts to work with the parents’ and child’s schedules:
Making a Visitation Plan

- Purpose
- Frequency
- Length
- Location
- Attendees
- Activities
- Supervision
- Responsibilities (rules, boundaries, who does what before, during or after the visits)
- What to have at the visits
- Long-term view
Winning Him Back
My visits proved I was worth my son’s trust

BY LYNNE MILLER

When ACS took my son away from me I felt like my world had ended.

At our first visit, I think I went into shock. My son and I spent nearly the whole visit crying all over each other.

Maybe it was the guilt I was feeling, but I felt I could see the mistrust in my son’s eyes. I didn’t know how I would be able to win back his trust.
Roles and Responsibilities
How Workers can Improve Visits

Research shows that workers impact visitation

• “Increased child welfare worker contact with parents of children in care is associated with more frequent parental visits and ultimately with a shorter time in placement”. (Beyer, 1999)

• “When child welfare workers did not encourage parents...or engage in problem solving with parents, children tended to remain in foster care 20 months or more”. (White, et al., 1996)

• “When workers schedule regular visits, parents have better attendance visits”. (Proch & Howard, 1986)
How Workers can Improve Visits

“Visits should never be used as a reward or punishment for the parent OR the child”. (Borgman, 1985; Hess & Proch, 1988)

Unless contact is court ordered both parents and child have a right to visits.

Using visits as reward or punishment gives the child the message that relationships are conditional and based on having good behaviors
First Visits

The first visit should be as early as possible, but at least within 48 hours of placement.

Delaying the visit won’t make the emotions go away.

Visits help reassure the child that things are the same.

Prepare parents and children and youth for the emotions of the first visit.
Progressive Visits

Supervised to Unsupervised

Start with supervised visits.
Change one element at a time.
Slowly increase parent responsibilities.
Move toward unsupervised visits.

Increasing Frequency & Duration

Start with 60 minute visits.
Increase to 90 minutes.
Gradually increase to overnight visits.

Back at home

Unsupervised visits should include safety plans and resources available during the visit.
Gradually lead to Trial Home Visit & reunification.
Visits and Connection Activities

- Face-to-face contact (preferred)
- Telephone conversations
- Letters
- Email
- Text messages
- Video or audio tapes
- Pictures
- Skype/Video chat
Creative Examples

- Foster Parents video and send all “firsts” of an infant/toddler
- Take pictures during visits and send to the family.
- Color pictures or do craft projects for parents to keep
- Bring artwork from school
- Have parent attend school or extracurricular functions
- Attendance at religious/spiritual events
- Participating in family or cultural activities
- Object that smells like the parent
- Add to the **LIFEBOOK!!!**
Choosing Locations that Promote Connections

What do you mean by natural and home like setting?
Don’t forget to Document!!!
Goal: Improve quality of parent/child visits

Plan/Action Steps:
2. Involve foster parents in visits.
3. Engage families in identifying one creative activity for visits.
Evaluation
Course Title: Quality Contacts: Parent-Child Visitation

Trainers: Check the Chat box

https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/training/tpd/atl/dcstrainingevaluation.html

Thank you