

Visitation Matters

Fostering connections, building a sense of hope, and achieving permanency

Introducing the Newsletter



To Child Welfare Staff,

The Child Welfare Visitation Workgroup would like to introduce a new publication, "Visitation Matters," that will be provided to Child Welfare Staff who lead, supervise, and/or deliver Foster Care Services. It will be delivered quarterly via email, stored on the Unite Site, and stored on SharePoint Site for access at any time.

What is the Child Welfare Visitation Workgroup?

The Child Welfare Visitation Workgroup was formed to develop strategies for increasing and improving caseworker, parent-child, and sibling visitation and to meet the targets set by the Michelle H. Settlement Agreement. This workgroup is comprised of state, regional, and county leadership from across the state including: a Regional Director, a County Director, an IFCCS Supervisor, Foster Care Supervisors, Foster Care Case Managers, Human Services Program Coordinators, a Regional Foster Family Licensing and Support Program Coordinator, and State Office support staff and was chartered by the Deputy Director of Child Welfare Services.

Purpose of "Visitation Matters" Practice Tips

In the drafting of visitation strategies, the Visitation Workgroup discovered that many of the strategies that worked were not policy driven, but were best practices and innovative ideas developed by counties that led to effective management of, and planning for, visitation. To share these ideas with everyone, we needed clear consistent communication that could be accessed at any time. These tips are designed for you to share what has worked for others in achieving timely, consistent, and effective visitation.

Your role

- **All Child Welfare Leadership with a role in delivering Foster Care Services:** please forward the practice tips quarterly per the email chain below and share how it relates to our mission, vision, and goals for the children and families we serve. The email chain goes as follows:
 - Regional Directors to County Directors
 - County Directors to Program Coordinators and Deputy Directors
 - Program Coordinators to Supervisors
 - Supervisors to Case Managers
- **Supervisors-** please share these tips with your case managers in your ongoing meetings. Use the discussion questions with your staff and give them an opportunity to ask questions, express concerns, and generate other strategies for achieving timely, consistent, and effective visitation.
- **Case Managers-** review the tips, utilize them, and give us your feedback and success stories. We want to hear from you, so we can share the good news, make adjustments to our tips, and share additional practices that work.

Accessing Practice Tips:

- SharePoint (Unite Site)
- One Voice

To provide feedback on the Tips please contact:

Tina Syrax tina.syrax@dss.sc.gov

Paula Richardson paula.richardson@dss.sc.gov

Nikita Harrison nikita.harrison@dss.sc.gov

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Why Visitation Matters

Imagine that you were separated from your family. Would you be worried about them? Would you be scared they didn't want you anymore? Would you think you did something wrong?

How soon, and how often, would you want to see your family?

A young child's trust, love, and identification are based on uninterrupted, day-to-day relationships.

For a child to develop normally, he or she must have a continuing stable human relationship. Each child must be attached to at least one nurturing adult.

Separation can affect the connections that a child has formed with parents, siblings, and other family members.



Studies show that regular, quality visitation leads to quicker reunification of families with less chance of later disruption and reentry into foster care.

Even when reunification is not the goal, visitation can reduce the time in foster care and shorten the time to permanency. It can help the family members understand and accept alternative permanency plans. It can help children transition to their forever home.

The sibling bond is very important and, in some cases, stronger than the parent-child bond. This is particularly true in dysfunctional families. Therefore, if children aren't placed with their siblings, they need to visit with them regularly.

Other significant people in the children's lives, especially previous custodians or caregivers, may also have very meaningful relationships with the child and can be the child's most stable relationship.

Visitation Matters is a publication of the DSS Visitation Workgroup- a group of region, county and state staff working together foster a sense of hope for children.

"Visitation is essential to child well-being and fundamental to permanency."

Minnesota Dept of Human Services

Child and Family Practice Guide

Resources:

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connection

www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcp/info_services/family-child-visiting.html

Child Welfare Information Gateway

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/permanency/reunification/parents/visiting/>

Child and Family Visitation: A Practice Guide to Support Lasting Reunification and Preserving Family Connections for Children in Foster Care

Minnesota Dept of Human Services

The goal of visitation is to maintain the parent-child relationship and other family attachments, and to reduce the sense of loss and abandonment which children face in placement.

Through visitation, you have the power to...

- Keep hope alive for the child and parent and help motivate parents to change
- Ease the pain and trauma of separation and loss for both the child and family and reduce anxiety and fears they may be having.
- Promote healthy attachment and reduce the negative effects of separation.
- Establish and/or strengthen the parent-child relationship.
- Help parents gain confidence in their strengths and abilities to care for their child.
- Assess caregiver needs, coach parents and model for them positive parenting skills, and allow parents to practice and demonstrate new behaviors and skills.
- Help children have shorter stays in foster care.

Discussion

- What would you be worried about if you were separated from your family? As a child? As a parent or caregiver?
- If you were a parent and your children were placed separately, what would you be worried about and how would you react? How would it affect your children?
- How often would you want to see your loved ones if you were separated from them? What would you like a visit to look like?
- What are strategies you will implement today to increase visitation for the children on your caseload and improve the quality of the those visits?

