



Department of

**Children's Services**

# Quality Contacts: Parent/Child Visitation

A Webinar Series

# Overview



# 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



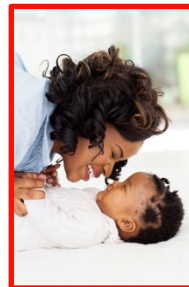
Fewer behavior problems after returning home



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.

# Policy, Laws and COA Standards



State of Tennessee  
Department of Children's Services

## Administrative Policies and Procedures: 16.43

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Supervised and Unsupervised Visitation Between Child/Youth, Family and Siblings</b>
<b>Authority:</b>	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.
<b>Standards:</b>	DCS Practice Model Standards – 6-510C, 12-400, 12-401, 12-402, and 12-403.
<b>Application:</b>	DCS Family Serv

### Policy Statement:

The Department of Children's Services... custody of DCS and their families is... orders, policy directives, and the ind... differently, visitation shall be no less... This policy also applies to DCS cust... jurisdictional placements under the I



Tennessee Department of Children's Services

### 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 record regarding 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

CASE FILE NO.

**CHILD**

1. CHILD NAME

**MOTHER**

5. FACILITY NAME

8

# Setting Expectations



BY AND FOR PARENTS IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

## 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





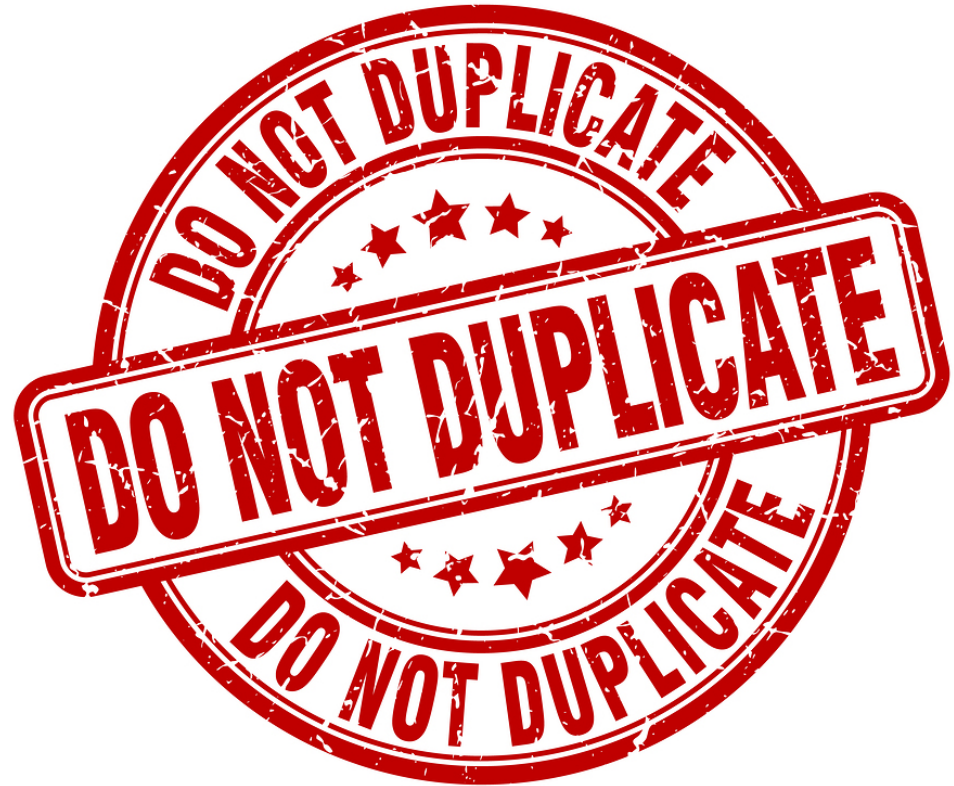
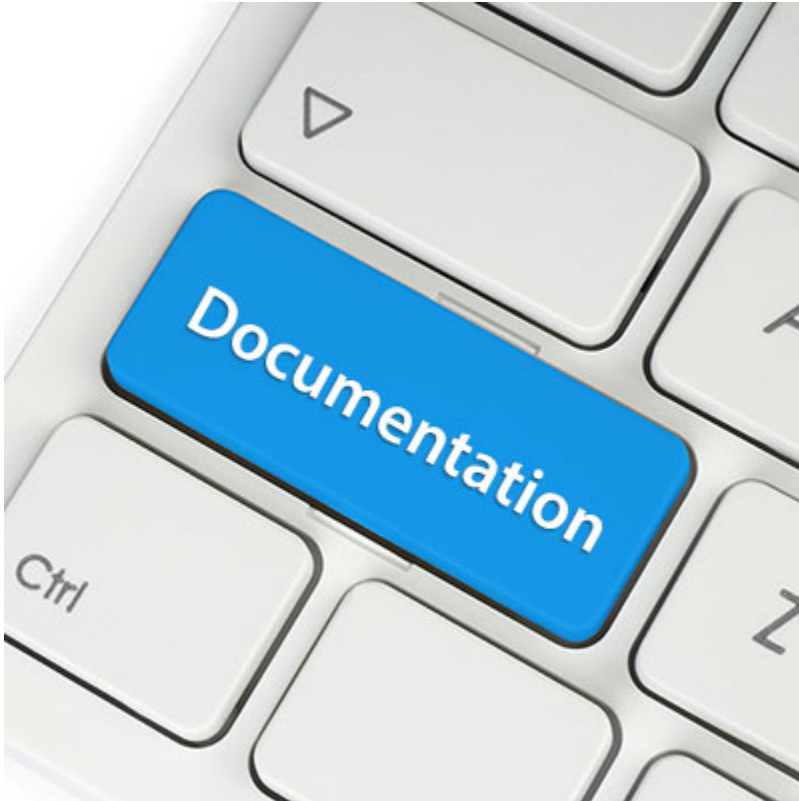
# Creative Examples

- 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!!!





A woman with long brown hair, wearing a blue and white striped sleeveless shirt, is smiling and pointing her right index finger towards the camera. She is standing next to a whiteboard. In her left hand, she holds a blue marker. The whiteboard contains handwritten text in blue ink.

*Goal: Improve quality  
of parent/child visits*

*Plan/Action Steps:*

- 1. Better prepare children and youth for visits.*
- 2. Involve foster parents in visits.*
- 3. Engage families in identifying one creative activity for visits.*

**Update your Small Test of Change**

# 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>

The logo for Tennessee, featuring the letters "TN" in white, serif font on a red square background. A small "TM" trademark symbol is located at the bottom right of the red square.

TN

Thank you