

VISITS: PLANNED, PURPOSEFUL AND PROGRESSIVE

Rose Wentz
Rose@WentzTraining.com
206 579-8615



FEDERAL LAWS

- Adoption and Safe Families Act
 - Visits are an indicator that the ASFA reviews have shown to improve the outcomes for children
 - Permanency
 - Safety
 - Well-Being
- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008.
 - Sibling visits, connections with tribe, relatives, school
- Visits have been legally defined as required to meet Reasonable/Active Efforts

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

Definition of Visits

- All types of visits (birth parents, siblings, extended families, even pets)
- All types of contacts (face to face, phone, letters) and
- All levels of supervision
 - Unsupervised
 - Observed/Monitored
 - Supervised
 - Therapeutic

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

Children are more resilient when they have multiple healthy connections. Resiliency is the key to surviving trauma.

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

The primary purpose of Visits is...

- A. **To meet the child's developmental and attachment needs**

Secondary Purposes of visits are...

- A. To assess a parent's ability to safely parent their child
- B. To determine the final permanency plan

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

GOAL OF EACH VISIT

- The visit allows the child to be safe and is held in the most natural and home-like location possible.
- Children and parents may feel *discomfort* before, during or after a visit. A child should not be traumatized by visits.
- Help the child handle grief, loss, and adjustment to foster care
- *In some cases, connection activities that do not require face to face contact may be necessary to ensure the child's safety.*

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

RESEARCH

- Visits are associated with shorter placements and higher rates of reunification.
- Worker contact with parents increases their participation in visits.
- Worker encouragement of parent and non-office locations increase parental attendance.
- Child's reactions are the NORM.
- Regularly scheduled visits increase parental attendance.

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

RESEARCH

- Visits cause parents, caregivers and workers to face their issues and thereby adults often have reactions to them.
- Be sure adult reactions/conflicts do not interfere with visits.
- It is rare that having NO contact with a parent is in the best interest of a child.
- Children will have contact with parents even after adoption or years of separation.

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

MINIMUM BEST PRACTICES

- Written visit plans in the case records and court orders - they are an essential part of the case plan
- Include all parties in the planning
 - Parents
 - Child
 - Caregivers
- Visits should encourage normal, healthy parent child interactions
- Create consistency in day, time, location, activities
- Begin within 48 hours of initial placement
- Are regular--case carrying worker must observe at least one visit per month

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

MINIMUM BEST PRACTICES

- Location: Whenever possible the visit occurs where the child is (caregiver home's, school, relative's home, community location) so the child's daily life is not disrupted and the child is comfortable.
 - Agency visit rooms are usually the last choice
- Occur at least once a week
- Are at least one hour in length
- Sibling visits must occur in addition to parent visits.

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

FOUR STEPS TO DEVELOPING A PLANNED, PURPOSEFUL AND PROGRESSIVE VISIT PLAN

1. Child Development and Parenting Skills
2. Type of Maltreatment
 - Level of Supervision
3. Time in Care (Concurrent Planning)
 - Initial Placement
 - Reasonable Efforts
 - Final Permanency Decision
 - Post Permanency
4. Other Factors
 - Addiction, domestic violence, mental illness, incarcerated or hospitalized parents, special needs of parent or child

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

ELEMENTS OF A VISIT PLAN

- Purpose
- Frequency
- Length
- Location
- Who attends
- Activities
- Supervision
- Responsibilities
- What to have at the visits

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

PROGRESSIVE VISITS

- Visits usually start as supervised visits with many restrictions on location, activities, etc.
- When the parent and child are successfully interacting during visits, the plan should allow for ONE element to be changed at a time.
- Slowly increase the parent's responsibility and move toward unsupervised visits, in the parent's home, while safely testing the parent's ability.
- One change allows for accurate assessment of success or failure.
- When there is a failure or repeated problems, go back to more supervised or structured visit to determine what will make the visit more successful. Try to only change one element at a time even when there has been a problem.

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

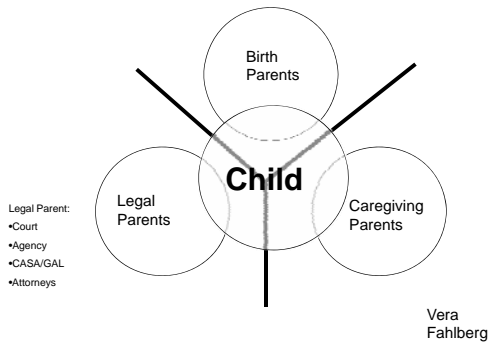
- ⦿ Visits are NEVER to be used as a reward or punishment for the parent or the child.
 - Research shows that doing this does not lead to parents attending treatment.
 - Children will get the message that relationships are based on having good behaviors and thereby are conditional.
- ⦿ This includes things like the following:
 - If you are clean and sober, then you get to have a visit.
 - If you follow the rules of the house, you get to have a visit.
 - When you complete your treatment, you will get to have more visits.
 - If you make your husband move out of the house, then you can have unsupervised visits.
- ⦿ Visit plans are based on behaviors AT the visit!

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

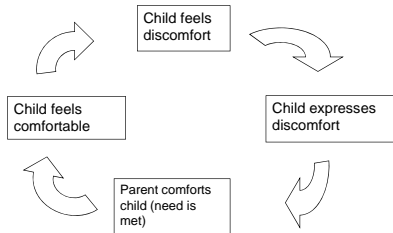
ATTACHMENT AND BONDING

- ⦿ All visits should plan to have attachment and bonding activities occur during the visit.
- ⦿ Some parents need to be coached on how to do this.

The Three Roles of Parenting



ATTACHMENT AND BONDING



Children are capable of having multiple attachments and more resilient when they have multiple healthy attachments

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

TYPES OF MALTREATMENT - STEP TWO

- The second purpose of visits is to provide the parents with an opportunity to learn new parenting skills or demonstrate safe parenting skills. - REASONABLE/ACTIVE EFFORTS Legal requirements
- Skills can be taught during visits or be learned from service providers, family or community.
- Visits are one of the few ways of assessing the parent's FUTURE protective capacities.
- The case plan must state the minimum sufficient level of care.
- Visit activities at first stay away from anything that is similar to the maltreatment and slowly moves towards the activities and situations that could trigger unsafe parenting.

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

THERAPEUTIC VISITS

Professional conducts visit to address clinical needs or teach specific parenting skills

- Sex abuse and extreme forms of other abuse
- Parent who is rejecting the child
- Child who has extreme fear of parent
- Teaching medical or therapeutic care of child

Have agreed upon community definitions for the levels of supervision.

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

SUPERVISED VISITS

Trained person is within sight and sound of child at all times.
Is able to intervene BEFORE the child is harmed.

If the parent . . .

- Is abusive during visits
- Shows inappropriate behaviors
- Has not started treatment

When child is . . .

- *Afraid* of parent

Supervision to Teach Parenting skills
OR
Supervision to Assess Parenting Skills
OR
Safety Supervision

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

WHO CAN SUPERVISE A VISIT?

Teaching/coaching visits:

- Caregivers
- Relatives
- Social worker - agency
- Trained Visit supervisors

Assessment Visits:

- Social worker - agency
- Trained supervisor of visit
- A person who can do therapeutic visits

Safety Supervision:

- All of the above and many people in the child's or family's life or professional staff. Willingness and ability to provide safety is essential. Authority to stop a visit early if problems occur that cannot be immediately remedied.

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

OBSERVED/MONITORED VISITS

An objective party is involved or location provides protection.

- Parent consistently met standards during supervised visits
- Parent in treatment but has not completed his/her program
- Child expressing *discomfort* about being left alone

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

UNSUPERVISED VISITS

No formal observation is needed

- Parent has consistently met standards during observed visits
- Parent has made progress in treatment program and/or has a tested relapse plan
- Child has a **safety plan** that has been tested
- Unplanned drop-ins might occur

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

MAINTAIN SUPERVISED VISITS UNTIL . . .

- There is a safety and relapse plan in place, and
 - On supervised visits the parent demonstrates safe parenting and good interactions with the child, and
 - On supervised visits "normal" daily stresses have occurred, especially ones that may be triggers, and the parent has reacted appropriately.
- For high risk cases supervision is the LAST element to be changed in high risk cases. Change all the other elements first to determine if the parent can really maintain safe parenting before you lower the level of supervision.

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

<p>MIX OF VISITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In a given week a parent might have a mix of visits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A visit at the child's school to talk to the teacher about school progress (observed by teacher) ▪ Attending the child's ballgame and watching from the stands (observed by coach or no formal supervision) ▪ Attends Sunday church service with grandparent and has time with parent with other adults present (supervised by grandparent) ▪ Teaching visit with parent and child regarding how to discipline the child (therapeutic) ▪ Nightly phone calls by child from foster home (supervised or not by foster parent) 	<small>National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections</small>
--	---

<p>OVER SUPERVISION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many connection activities and visits do not need supervision ● Others besides social workers can be trained to supervise or observe visits ● If child voices or demonstrates fear of visits LISTEN to the child <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Find out what is causing the fear or reactions ▪ Address the cause ▪ Have someone the child trusts supervise the visit and slowly change the level of supervision ▪ A child who cannot have face to face contact with a parent should be in therapy ● LISTEN to a child who wants visits - even when the parent has not started treatment 	<small>National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections</small>
--	---

<p>INITIAL PLACEMENT - RECOMMENDATIONS FIRST DAY TO 30 DAYS IN CARE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do a visit ASAP--no later than 48 hours ● Placement should not feel like a punishment ● Expect reactions ● Confirm that each other is OK ● Bring child's belongings ● Supervised ● In family home ● Don't forget fathers, sibling, and others to whom child may have an emotional attachment 	<small>National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections</small>
--	---

**REASONABLE EFFORTS -
RECOMMENDATIONS
2 MONTHS TO 12 MONTHS**

- Child placed with Resource Family - relationship between families
- Teaching and demonstrating parenting skills - based on type of abuse
- Decreasing supervision
- Increasing length and parenting responsibility
- Behavior/reactions should be decreasing
- Change ONE item at a time
- Observation and feedback from Social Worker - 2X monthly

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

**FINAL PERMANENCY DECISION--
RECOMMENDATIONS
12 TO 15 MONTHS**

- Overnight if reunification is likely
- Limiting if adoption/guardianship
- Connections NEVER stop
- Reactions to permanent plan may occur
- Relationship between families so connections can continue
- Avoid "Good-bye" visits when children will not be reunited
- Maintain connections with siblings, friends, school, ethnic group, religion

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

**POST PERMANENCY
RECOMMENDATIONS
FROM PP THROUGH LIFE**

- Child want us to help them maintain connections
- Children will look for lost family--and often move in with family when they are located
- Siblings is most critical group to maintain connections if not living together
- Right to know family and history
- Help the adults handle being uncomfortable
- Life books
- Complete information in case record and with child's legal family

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE VISITS

- All Families have a culture
- Children cannot be raised in a culturally neutral manner
- Ask the family about their culture and family values
- There are many different and successful ways to raise a child
- What is something that can be done by a parent on a visit to teach a child their family's culture?
- What would you suggest for the case?

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

DV- RECOMMENDATIONS

- Visits between children and parents are scheduled separately for each parent of the children.
- Separate visits occur for at least six months.
- An assessment is made at a joint staffing regarding the parents' readiness for joint visits with the children.
- Assessing the parents' readiness for joint visits includes...
 - Discussion with the children, if age appropriate.
 - Domestic violence must be a special category in *progressive visits* with its own considerations.
 - Relatives and caregivers cannot supervise visits during the first six months of the visits.
 - A safety plan must be developed that includes the parent's pattern of controlling behaviors and entitled attitudes.

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED AND HOSPITALIZED PARENTS

- These children have the need and right to visit their parents.
- Visits should not be limited, restricted or non-existent *just* because of the parent's living situation.
- Children need to maintain and/or resolve their relationship with this parent, even if the parent will be in prison for years or may never be able to live with the child.
- Children can have non-traumatizing visits at jails. Not having visits can traumatize a child.

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

HOW TO HAVE A SAFE VISIT WITH ADDICTED PARENTS

- Have a visit plan that specifically addresses what is allowed and not allowed.
 - List behaviors that are unsafe or not allowed
 - State the process of what will occur if parent violates visit rules
 - Safety plan - response to problems
 - Relapse plan
 - resources for the addicted parent to call for help at any time
 - resources for an older child to call for help if the parent is not providing safe care
 - family and community members who regularly check on the well-being of the parent and child

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

ADDICTION

- *The level of supervision is related to safety and NOT to the progress of drug treatment!*
- Parents who are sober and/or have completed drug treatment but who cannot maintain safe parenting during visits should NOT be allowed to have their visits progress towards reunification.
- Recovery can occur without formal addiction treatment.
- Parents who have not completed treatment but consistently maintain sobriety should not be denied a chance to reunify.
- Drug tests do not predict a parent's ability to be safe on a visit.

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

Evidence Based Practices

1. Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
2. The Incredible Years
3. Triple P-Positive Parenting Program
4. Motivational Interviewing (MI)
5. Trauma Focused-Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)

<http://www.cachildwelfareclearinghouse.org/>

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections

Visit Resources

- National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections www.nrcfc.org
- CA Clearinghouse on Evidence Based Practices <http://www.cachildwelfareclearinghouse.org/>
- Information Gateway – www.childwelfare.gov

Closing

- Thank you for your dedication to children and families

Remember to first
develop visit plans
based on what the
child wants and needs.
