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## **SUPERVISED VISITATION GUIDELINES**

### **ABOUT OUR SERVICES**

TCP Marriage & Family Services provides individualized supervision of parent-child contact. We coordinate a professionally trained staff who supervise visits in the community, often at one of our offices or at a designated CPS office if required by the courts. All administrative functions are handled through our main office.

Our goal in providing supervised visitation is to minimize the emotional hardship that children frequently have to endure as a result of custody litigation, while allowing them to maintain safe and positive contact with their parents and other significant relatives.

These guidelines outline basic expectations and procedures for services. Failure to comply with guidelines may result in termination of our agency's services.

*Please initial the bottom of each page and sign at the end of the document. For visits our offices, there may be passing interactions with staff or there may be other users at the same location.*

### **INITIATING SERVICES**

The first step to beginning services is for the parties to obtain a court order or written agreement for supervised visitation services. The order/agreement should detail the following information:

- **Who is to participate in the supervised visitation sessions?** If a stepparent, grandparent, siblings, or any other persons are to be involved along with the visiting parent, please name them specifically. Only persons specifically authorized by the order/agreement who have completed the intake process are allowed to be present during/at visits.
- **When are the visits expected to happen?** Supervised visits can be scheduled on weekdays and weekends based on availability. The agency will attempt to comply with specified times; however, the exact time and number of hours for visitation for each family will depend on the availability of agency staff. Alternatively, the order/agreement can provide basic days (e.g. any time on Monday, Friday afternoon, etc.), requested number of hours, and authorization for us to set the specific schedule.

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- **Where are the visits to happen?** Please note in the order or agreement (do not write it here) the parent’s exact address or other location for the visits, if you are unable to make it to one of our offices. An additional administrative fee of **\$25.00 per visit** will be added when client uses a personal location. Alternatively, the order/agreement may state we will designate the location.
- **How much of the fee for services will each side pay?** 100% to one party, 50/50 split, or other arrangements? This should include registration and other administrative fees.

To begin services all adults involved must complete the intake information. Please review the referral checklist for a list of all required documents. After all required documentation and fees are received an orientation appointment must be made to complete the intake process. Please call us during business hours and we will schedule for the next available appointment.

Children should not be present during the adult orientation as it covers information that is not appropriate for children. Once all parties have completed orientation final scheduling arrangements will be made. We are providing services to multiple cases, so proper planning is encouraged. Clients are serviced in the order we receive all completed information forms.

**FEES FOR SERVICES**

Clients are jointly responsible for all incurred, and work done in relation to this case, although the court may order a disproportionate division of fees. Payment should be made in the form of card, cash, check, or money order made out to **“TCP Marriage & Family Services”**. Returned checks will be charged a fee of **\$30.00**.

<b>Fee Schedule (calculated in 15-minute increments, with a one-hour minimum charge):</b>	
<b>Registration &amp; Orientation</b>	<b>\$ 50.00 per party</b>
<b>Administrative Activity (testimony preparation, etc.)</b>	<b>\$50.00 per hour (Must Be Paid Before Court Date)</b>
<b>Supervisor court appearance (staff)</b>	<b>\$150.00 per hour</b>
<b>Program Director court appearance</b>	<b>\$175.00 per hour</b>
<b>Supervised Visitation Services (Staff)</b>	<b>Sliding Scale Fee (Starts at \$30 per hour based on salary)</b>
<b>Supervised Visitation Services (Program Director)</b>	<b>Sliding Scale Fee (Starts at \$50 per hour based on salary)</b>
<b>Supervised Visitation (Personal Location)</b>	<b>Additional Fee \$25.00 (Plus, Supervised Visitation Fee)</b>

These fees include time scheduled for supervising visits (regardless of whether the visit occurs) as well as any administrative activity, including but not limited to meetings, correspondence, phone contact, electronic communication, and consultation with other family service providers. The minimum time requirement does not apply to telephonic appearances, which are billed in one-hour increments based on time reserved for testimony. Please contact our office **72 hours prior** to personally naming the **Program Director** to provide **Supervised Visitation Services**.

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A **\$250.00** retainer is due in advance from **each** of the parties. If one party is ordered to pay for all costs of services, the initial retainer is **\$500.00**. Payments will be charged against the retainer provided that the parties continue to fully replenish the retainer once retainer reaches **\$100.00**. Should services no longer be needed, refunds will be issued only if there is remaining retainer on account for the case, and then only up to the amount of retainer on account. Should one side fail to provide full payment issues of reimbursement may have to be addressed to the court.

Fees for court appearances or deposition are due at least one week before the scheduled appearance and are nonrefundable within a week of the scheduled appearance as we must clear time on our schedule whether the hearing occurs or not. If an appearance request is received without a minimum of one week notice the appearance fee is due immediately and there will be an additional **\$150.00** express charge. Failure to provide the fee as specified constitutes release from the requested appearance.

**PLEASE NOTE:** We encourage parents to avoid the cost of court appearances by planning ahead to have records submitted via a business records affidavit. Our staff are not forensic evaluators and will not offer opinions regarding whether parent-child contact should continue to be supervised or not, or on the subjective quality of parent-child interactions. Any feedback offered during the course of supervision relates to addressing issues related to supervision. Our primary focus in this regard is on compliance with supervision guidelines in order to insure the emotional and physical safety of the children involved.

## **LOGISTICS OF SUPERVISED VISITATION**

If the order/agreement designates that the custodial person may select another competent adult to deliver or pick up the child any alternate transporting person must also complete the intake process in advance of any exchange they participate in.

The agency is not able to provide transportation to children or families. Families are responsible to find their own transportation. All visit arrangements (date, time, location, transportation arrangements, etc.) must be coordinated in advance via email or phone contact and received by our office **no later 48 hours before the scheduled supervised visitation session.** The person being supervised will need to arrive at the designated location at least 10 minutes prior to the start of the scheduled visit and remain at that location until the start of the visit. The party being supervised must not have any contact with the children until the supervisor arrives. Any transporting person will immediately depart after the exchange and can wait in designated reception area.

## **CANCELLATIONS AND MISSED VISITS**

Unless fees are otherwise specifically addressed in the court order/agreement the canceling party will incur the **FULL FEE of the session if they fail to notify the agency of a cancellation no later than 24 hours prior to the visit.** If both sides fail to show for a visit, each side will be responsible for their portion of the full fee. Likewise, if a visit is cancelled due to noncompliance on the part of one or both parents the noncompliant person(s) will incur the **FULL FEE** of the session.

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**Child Illness Exception:** If the canceling party notifies the agency at least **2 hours in advance** that they are canceling the visit due to the child being ill and they provide the agency with **written notification from a physician within 48 hours after the visit**, they will not be held responsible for the cost of the supervised visitation session. The note must contain a statement from the physician specifically stating that the **“visitation should not occur”**. A statement such as **“the child should not attend school or day care”** will not suffice.

If it is decided, you will not be using supervised visitation services any further, you must notify the agency. **Do not depend on the courts, your attorney or the other party to do so.** If there is a scheduled visit that does not occur because the parties have not notified the agency of a change in the court order/agreement it will be treated like a canceled visit as noted above.

## **INTERACTION DURING SUPERVISED VISITS**

Parties are expected to take care of and be responsible for managing the children's behavior during visits. Parties are expected to set limits and discipline appropriately when needed, however physical discipline of any type (spanking, "swatting," pinching, or any other type of corporal punishment) is not allowed.

Children who are potty trained will use the restroom privately **without the visiting party**. If a child is in diapers or pull-ups the supervisor will remain with the visiting party during changes. **All contact between the visiting party and children must remain supervised and may be videotaped if required by the court.**

Parties are expected to interact with the children in a positive and supportive manner. Any communication or behavior that is emotionally or physically threatening to the child is not permitted. **Profanity, derogatory comments, or comments that paint the other parties in a negative light are not permitted.**

Discussion of the litigation, the current legal situation, or issues involving the court with the child or other adults is not permitted. This includes any discussion of potential future issues that are not currently authorized by the court, such as "when this is all over," or "if you get to live with me..."

**All conversations between the parties and the children must be audible to the person supervising the visit. Conversations between the child and the parties must be in English unless a staff member is available who is multilingual.**

**Interrogation of the child is not permitted.** What behavior constitutes interrogation is left to the discretion of the supervisor but includes using the child to gather information about the custodial party and/or leading the conversation in such a manner that encourages the child to reveal such information. Conversations should be natural and directed by the children's interests. Conversations should focus on the here and now rather than the future possibilities.

**Children are not to be physically examined or inspected during supervised visitation.**

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**Threats of physical violence will not be tolerated.** All parties must conduct themselves in a manner that clearly demonstrates that the wellbeing of the child is their highest priority.

The supervising staff will determine appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and conversation with the children. **Parties are to comply with the limits set by the staff without complaint, comment, or further explanation during the visit.** Parties may contact the agency during business hours after the visit if they have questions regarding staff directives.

**Please turn off all communication tools (e-mail, Skype, cel & smart phones, etc.) or place them in “airplane” mode at the start of the supervised visit.** Visiting parents can text, email, or check messages after the visit. If parents demonstrate they would rather text or talk on the phone than interact with the children visits will be terminated. Children are not allowed to talk on the phone or interact with others online (including online gaming) during visits as it is not possible to properly supervise such interactions. Access to the Internet will be at the supervisor's discretion. All communication programs such as Skype, instant messaging, and email must be logged off before the child is allowed to access the computer or other Internet-capable device. The supervisor must always be able to see all Internet activity or **online access will be terminated by the supervisor.**

The agency will allow only the exchange of the children and the items for the children. Neither the visitation site nor the children should be used to pass messages, exchange items, or serve the other party or the agency. **The only exception to this is that messages regarding medication for the children will be allowed provided the message contains no other content.** All other messages or information should be handled through the mail, attorneys, or other methods that do not involve the visitation time.

**Gifts may be given to children; however, gifts should be new, in original (sealed) factory packaging.** Nothing should be given to the child at any time with the understanding that it is theirs "when they go home" with the visiting party or that the gift is otherwise not freely given. Gifts should be moderate in cost, reasonable in number and size, and age appropriate. The number of gifts and sizes of the gifts are restricted to what the children can easily carry in one trip to the other party's vehicle. **The agency reserves the right to inspect any items brought by the delivering party or any item from the visiting party prior to presentation to the children.**

**Parties are not to place their hands on the children in any way the staff deems inappropriate. Unless limited by the court, parties may have appropriate contact with the child. The parties are to ensure the children do not inappropriately expose themselves during the visitation. If parties encourage the children to assume inappropriate poses the visit may be terminated.**

## **INTERACTION WITH SUPERVISING STAFF**

The supervisor is present to observe and record the behaviors of and interactions between the adults and children. Supervisors may interact when necessary at their own discretion. Neither party should initiate involvement of the supervisor in conversation or activities. Parties are not to ask personal questions of the staff, nor are they to offer food or other gifts to staff. Bartering between parties and the staff is strictly prohibited.

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**Parties are not to involve the staff in discussion disparaging the other parties, providing personal information regarding themselves or the other parties, getting staff to try to "take sides," or discussing their opinion of the court's orders.** This includes any discussion regarding the case, ongoing litigation, concerns, complaints, or anything related to the other party. These issues need to be addressed in writing to the agency at times other than during scheduled services. Outside of notifications to the supervisor of immediate issues occurring on the day of a supervised visit all case related communication should be directed to the administrative office.

**All supervisors are required by law to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect. This includes physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and physical neglect. Staff will also contact the appropriate authorities if there is harassment, threats, or physical contact during exchanges.**

## **OTHER GUIDELINES**

The agency clocks determine the correct time concerning appointments, services, lateness, and cancellations.

The agency has the right to terminate individual sessions and suspend or cease future services for any reason deemed necessary, including:

- If ongoing contact appears too stressful or traumatic for the child;
- Agency determines that it can't effectively address safety or other issues involved in the case;
- The case places an undue demand on the agency's resources;
- A party harasses or threatens staff or other parties;
- One or both parties fail to comply with guidelines for service

The children and the parties should be dressed in appropriate and unrevealing clothing. Children wearing skirts or dresses should have shorts on under their dress.

There is no smoking, alcohol use, or other substance use allowed at any time during supervised visitation.

Parents are not allowed to carry weapons of any sort during supervised visitation. Parents should secure any weapons in the home so that they are not accessible during supervised visitation. Weapons include, but are not limited to, guns, knives, tools, pepper spray, mace, explosives, fireworks, acids, chemicals, or any other similar object.

Unless a court has prohibited specific interactions during a visit or a licensed health professional provides written documentation regarding a potential emotional or psychological threat to a child from specific interactions, parent-child interaction that falls within the agency guidelines will be permitted. This may include the visiting parent and children watching movies or playing games that the custodial parent may not always approve of, as long as such activity is age appropriate.

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## QUESTIONS AND COMMUNICATION WITH OUR OFFICE

During the orientation process there will be time set aside to respond to any questions that you might have. Please make sure that you have read these guidelines carefully and that if you have any questions you ask them at that time. Feel free to contact us by phone or email. In person meetings require an appointment.

We are glad to schedule additional time following the orientation to discuss questions or case related issues. If you have a complaint regarding agency policies or staff conduct, please contact the Program Director within 48 hours of learning of the issue. If you have a complaint regarding the court order, please contact your attorney.

Fees for administrative activities are charged as noted above. Staff will occasionally make courtesy calls (at no charge) to parties or their attorneys, however these contacts are intended to be minimal. Any case requiring more extensive contact with parties or attorneys will also be charged for time spent interacting outside of the scheduled visitation, including detailing any noncompliance issues.

## RECORDS REQUESTS

Copies of records will be provided to parties in response to written requests. Information regarding supervised visits will be provided to agents working for the court, such as psychologists or social workers involved in a social study or *amicus* attorneys. A Release of Information form must be signed prior to any release of records to a third party. Disclaimer for released records: information released is based on staff observations. When providing supervised visitation, we do not provide evaluations of the families who use our services or make recommendations about future arrangements for parent-child access.

The observations are of parent-child contacts that have occurred in a structured and protected setting. No prediction is intended about how contacts between the same parent(s) and child(ren) might occur in a less protected setting and without supervision. Care should be exercised by the users of these observations in making such predictions.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

The most important guideline to remember is that parties are expected to comply with directives from the supervisor during visits. Although parties may not understand why an instruction is given or agree with the instruction they are given, the time to address questions and concerns is not during the time assigned for supervised visitation. These guidelines are not meant to be all encompassing. Additional arrangements or modifications may be appropriate based on changing case specifics.

**MY SIGNATURE BELOW INDICATES I UNDERSTAND THESE GUIDELINES AND AGREE TO FOLLOW THEM. I UNDERSTAND THAT IF I DO NOT COMPLY WITH THESE GUIDELINES SUPERVISED VISITS MAY BE SUSPENDED OR TERMINATED AND NOTICE OF SUCH MAY BE PROVIDED TO THE COURT.**

**Date:**

**Print Name:**

**Signature:**