

**Tuscarawas County Job & Family Services
Children Services Policy**

FAMILY VISITATION

PARENT HANDBOOK

**TUSCARAWAS COUNTY JOB & FAMILY SERVICES
VISITATION POLICY AND PARENT HANDBOOK**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Policy and Purpose of Visitation.....1

What Happens During Visitation.....2

Family Visitation Rules3

Who May Visit? Who may Observe?6

Visitation Planning.....7

What Are Agency Staff Looking For?.....8

Answering the Questions9

Snack and Activity Ideas10

Signature Page11

VISITATION POLICY AND HANDBOOK

POLICY

Visits between children and their parents are scheduled as soon as possible after children come into agency custody.

THE PURPOSE OF VISITATION

Visitation is the time which parents and children learn to be together again. It is our hope that you, as parents, will begin to understand the purpose that visitation serves in meeting case plan goals to reconnect your family.

Visits will be held in the least restrictive setting that can promote parent-child interaction and provide protection for the child. Visitations are subject to orders of the juvenile court.

The purposes of visitation:

- To let your children know that you, as a parent, still love them, haven't forgotten or abandoned them, and nothing bad has happened to you.
- To help determine your family's needs.
- To work on being a healthy family:
 - a family in which it is okay to say how you feel;
 - where feelings are shown without people getting hurt;
 - people are loved, valued and cared for, with each person's needs being met;
 - a clean and safe place to live, food to eat, clothes to wear;
 - where children go to school, and each person's medical needs are taken care of
- To show your caseworker how you can parent your children.
- To help you improve your parenting skills. TCJFS staff will let you know what skills you do well and what areas of parenting you need to work on.
- To ease separation/loss issues.

VISITATION POLICY AND HANDBOOK

WHAT HAPPENS DURING VISITATION?

- You arrive 10 minutes early.
- You greet your child—a hug or kiss from mom or dad lets your child know you are glad to see him/her.
- You may bring a nutritious snack to enjoy with your child. The monitor or your caseworker will discuss what you are required to provide. All items are to be brought in a clear bag provided by your Worker or Family Service Aide. Clear totes can also be used.
- Your visitation time is limited, so spend your time with your family. It is not a time to chat with staff, other families, or to discuss your case plan with your caseworker. Make an appointment with your caseworker to do that.
- Clean up your visitation area and get ready to leave during the last 5-10 minutes of your visit.
- End your visit by assuring your child that you will be here for your next visitation.

VISITATION POLICY AND HANDBOOK

FAMILY VISITATION RULES

- **Visitation rooms are equipped with a video/audio monitoring system. Whispering is not permitted.** The monitors must be able to hear all conversation during your visit. Visits may be video taped with your written permission or per court order.
- **Be On Time For Your Visits.** Arrive early so you are prepared for the visit to start on time. If you are more than 15 minutes late, **your visit may be cancelled. If you will be late due to unusual or emergency circumstances, call the agency as soon as possible.**
- **Being late for your visits, or not showing, could mean cancellation of future visits or imposing a requirement that you must call to verify you will be attending before your child will be transported.** If you “no show” for 3 visits, your visits **will** be suspended. If you repeatedly cancel your visits, your visits **may** be suspended.
- **Please call the agency if you are unable to attend your visitation. The number is 330-308-7746 or 330-308-7792. Please ask to speak directly to the visitation monitor or, if unavailable, the caseworker or supervisor.** This will enable the monitor to contact the Foster Parent to cancel the visit and lessen any emotional distress for your child. Your visit will not be rescheduled if you cancel it.
- **Positive drug screens may result in suspension of your visitation.**
- **Agency visits are cancelled when inclement weather closes the school district in which your child resides. When the New Philadelphia school district is closed, all agency visits are cancelled.** If possible and within one week of the date that the visit was cancelled, the agency will attempt to provide you with a make-up visit. The decision to schedule a make-up visit will be made at the sole discretion of the Social Service supervisor primarily responsible for the case. The decision will be made based upon availability of a visitation room, agency staff, and the ability of the parent(s) to accommodate a make-up visit. No make-up visit will be scheduled if it would require a child to miss school.
- Cards, letters, and gifts must be shown to the monitor before the child(ren) receive them and must be prior approved by your caseworker.
- You are expected to bring items to meet your child’s needs during your visitation time. This would include appropriate food and drink, diapers, wipes, change of clothing, and age-appropriate games and activities.
- Talk to people the way you want to be talked to . . . using words that treat people with kindness and respect. **Foul language of any kind will not be tolerated, and your visit will be ended and will not be made up.**

VISITATION POLICY AND HANDBOOK

- Refrain from talking about adult topics or issues with your child(ren). Examples of topics to avoid would include case information and gossip.
- Non-violent behavior is expected from all visitors. Weapons (guns, knives, arrows, or any other item that may be used as weapons) are not permitted on agency property.
- Agency staff has the authority to stop a visit because of inappropriate behavior, ill health of the child or parents, or other circumstances threatening a child's well-being. These visits will not be rescheduled.
- When visitors have a highly contagious communicable condition, such as lice, scabies, or the flu, or exhibit symptoms such as nits, high fever, or vomiting, the agency will cancel all visits until the visitor's condition is cleared with a written statement from a physician or nurse practitioner.
- **Smoking is not permitted** during visits held at the agency.
- Show respect for property. Put away toys that you use. Clean up your visiting area and any mess you make. All meals, snacks, and drinks must be served at the table. Children should not be permitted to play with any type of food or candy.
- **No cell phones are permitted in agency visits.** Please leave your cell phone in the car or with the monitor. NOTE: it will be turned off. You may bring a camera to take pictures, or one will be provided.
- **All visitors are to be sober**--not under the influence of any drug or alcohol. You may be asked to submit to a drug screen if there is any concern from staff. If staff suspect that you or other approved visitors are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the visit will be cancelled.
- No pets are to be brought to visitation. (Exceptions may be made with prior approval when the weather is nice and visits are held on the playground. You are responsible for waste removal.)
- If a restroom break is needed during the visit, you must ask the monitor, who will escort you and your children per agency policy. Walk quietly in the hallways, as other people are working. **Visitors/children cannot leave the visitation area without being escorted.**
- You must supervise your child at all times to ensure his/her safety.
- You may not leave the visit without the room monitor to accompany you.
- Inform agency staff immediately of any concern or problem that you have about your child or any accident/injury that may occur during visitation.

VISITATION POLICY AND HANDBOOK

- Please consider the weather conditions when dressing for your visitation. For safety reasons, all persons must wear shoes and shirts. Appropriate attire must be worn at all times when visiting your children. Clothing that is suggestive or does not appropriately cover your body is not to be worn. Clothing and shoes that are conducive to visiting with your children are to be worn. Do not wear high heels, halter tops, short shorts, suggestive clothing, clothing that reveals any undergarments such as low-cut jeans, or clothing with vulgar or inappropriate language. The first time there is concern with your dress, agency staff will address the same with you verbally. Subsequent instances of the same may result in agency staff ending your visit, and the same will not be made up.
- **No physical discipline is to be used during a visit.**
- **There is to be no whispering or note passing during the visit.** The monitor needs to be able to hear what is being said at all times for everyone's safety.
- Threats of any kind, either direct or indirect, are not appropriate and will not be tolerated. Any time the agency becomes aware of a client or associated person making threats of any type of harm against agency staff, children, or any other professional, or the security of agency facilities, immediate action will be taken. This may include, but is not limited to, contacting law enforcement, petitioning the court to suspend visitation, and the agency refusing to allow the individual making the threat onto agency property.

VISITATION POLICY AND HANDBOOK

WHO MAY VISIT?

1. Parents and Primary Caretakers.
2. Unless specifically court ordered, the Worker and/or Supervisor will determine “who” can visit.
3. Others may visit during the last 15 minutes of the visit and under the following conditions:
 - The Worker and/or Supervisor have been given prior notice of at least 24 hours; and
 - The parent(s) approve the visitors; and
 - The Worker and/or Supervisor approve the visitors.

WHO MAY OBSERVE?

Therapists, attorneys, Guardians ad Litem, and other professionals related to the case may observe a visit with Worker/Supervisor approval or per order of the Court. They may observe your visit at any time.

VISITATION POLICY AND HANDBOOK

VISITATION PLANNING

In the past, many parents have come to their parent/child visitations with nothing planned to do. They would sit and watch their children play, but little interaction took place. The children would get tired of having nothing to do, and behavior problems would arise. Parents then would become upset.

One way to help alleviate this is for you to come to visits with activities planned for your family. A visit plan.

Why plan your visits?

1. It provides structure for the child, makes him/her feel safe and secure, and minimizes behavior problems.
2. It gives you a plan to follow so you can enjoy the visit and make the most of your time together.
3. It gives you a chance to practice skills while doing the everyday things you do at home—eating, playing, homework, etc.
4. It helps you develop a routine.

SAMPLE VISITATION PLANS

Plan A (1 hour visit)

2:00-2:10	Children arrive, are greeted by you, get settled in the room.
2:10-2:25	Eat a snack.
2:25-2:35	Read a story.
2:35-2:45	Play a game.
2:45-2:55	Do homework or spend one-on-one time with the children.
2:55-3:00	Clean up and get ready to leave.

Plan B (2 hour visit)

2:00-2:10	Children arrive, are greeted by you, and begin talking about how their day has been.
2:10-2:30	Activity time—play a short game.
2:30-3:00	Snack time—eat a small meal or a snack.
3:00-3:20	Quiet time—read, do homework
3:20-3:45	Activity time—play another game.
3:45-4:00	Clean up and get ready to go.

VISITATION POLICY AND HANDBOOK

WHAT AGENCY STAFF ARE LOOKING AT DURING YOUR VISITATION

- Are you showing up for every visit?
- Are you coming to the visits on time?
- How are you when you come to the visit? i.e., positive or negative
- How is the child when he/she comes to the visit? i.e., excited, reluctant, happy, fearful
- What does the family do together?
- Are you able to pay attention to the child? (Show attention to all children.)
- What do you bring for the child to eat?
- Do you set limits with the child?
- Does the child listen to rules or instructions?
- How do you handle the situation when a child does not listen?
- Have you planned activities during the visit?
- What parenting skill do you use?
- What new skill might make the visitation better?
- Do you accept direction/redirection from the monitor?
- What does the family need to do differently before the child can go home?

The above is a list of some examples of what your caseworker may be looking for during your visits. This list does not cover every possible item. We do hope that it gives you a better understanding of how important your visits are in the goal for reunification.

VISITATION POLICY AND HANDBOOK

ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS

“When will my child come home?” is a question parent often ask

The best answer is, “When you have completed your case plan **AND** are able to **SHOW** the agency and the court how your life has changed, and when you are **DEMONSTRATING** new parenting techniques that will help assure the safety and well-being of your child.”

Family visits are a place where you can **SHOW** the staff what you have learned in parenting classes, in treatment programs, or in counseling by using what you have learned with your child.

“When will I come home?” is a question children ask their parents

The most honest answer you can give your child is, “I am working very hard on the things I have to do.”

Promising a time for the child to come home only creates false hope and makes your child sad and/or angry when that day passes and he/she isn't home. The best thing to do is to reassure your child that you are doing what needs to be done.

Some things that you **should** do and talk about:

- Make this a positive time with your child.
- Ask about your child's school and other fun activities.
- Let your child know it is okay to like the people who are taking care of him/her.
- Assure your child you love him/her.
- Save your personal problems and questions about your case for your worker or supervisor. Do not make your child worry about you.
- Leave the visiting area when your visit is over. Long good-byes can be painful for everyone.
- Remember, you are the adult, and the success of your visit depends on you.

VISITATION POLICY AND HANDBOOK

IDEAS

Snacks

- Cheese and Crackers
- Fruit
- Dry cereal
- Peanut butter and jelly sandwich
- Juice or milk
- Raisins
- Pretzels

Activities

- Read a book to your child
- Let an older child read a book to you
- Tell your child a story
- Make a puzzle together
- Play a board game together
- Play cards
- Talk about school
- Work on homework
- Color or Draw
- Make a craft

Special celebrations, i.e., birthdays, holidays, must be arranged in advance. Gifts should only be brought on special occasions.



David Haverfield, Director



Effective Date

VISITATION POLICY AND HANDBOOK

Agency retains this section and files it in the "verification" section of the family file.

Your signature below indicates that this Visitation Handbook/Policy has been reviewed with you, and you are being given a copy this date.

Parent/Caretaker

Date

Caseworker/FSA

Date

- Original Case Record
- Copy Parent/Caretaker