

GUIDELINES FOR SUPERVISED CHILD ACCESS

MEETING PLACE SUPERVISED CHILD ACCESS SERVICE



**NURTURING HEALTH AND HOPE IN CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND
COMMUNITY**

Meeting Place services are based on a commitment to providing safe parent-child contact in a context of respect for each individual, parents, children and staff. We expect all parents coming to Meeting Place to share this commitment. ("Parent", as used in these Guidelines, includes all adults coming to Meeting Place.)

These guidelines for supervised child contacts protect all family members receiving services. They are based on over fifteen years of experience and Commitment to making parent/child contacts and exchanges safe and positive. Please read these guidelines carefully.

1. Threats of violence and threats to break a court order are not tolerated and can result in immediate suspension of services and are grounds for termination of services. All such incidents are reviewed by our management team to determine if services will be terminated.
2. Parents must follow the requests or instructions of the supervisor during contact with children without argument. You are welcome to discuss the supervisor's decision made during a contact after the contact is over. Non-cooperation with the supervisor may result in immediately stopping the contact and is grounds for termination of services.
3. A parent may not discuss the terms of the supervised contact with a supervisor or other staff member while a child is present. If a child asks a question about the contact or about making changes in the arrangements for contact, you can remind him/her that you understand his/her feelings and that the adults are working these things out. If you are unsure about how to respond to a child you can ask the supervisor for assistance.
4. A parent may not make negative comments about the other parent to a child while at Meeting Place.
5. Confrontation between parents is not permitted at Meeting Place.
6. A parent should not discuss adult issues such as problems over child support, upcoming court hearings, restraining orders, etc. in front of a child/ren.
7. Drugs and alcohol are not permitted at Meeting Place. Our staff reserves full authority to determine "intoxication". If a non-custodial parent arrives intoxicated there will be no contact. If intoxication is determined during the contact, the contact will be terminated. If a custodial parent arrives intoxicated, staff will insure the child/ren's safe return from the site.

8. Smoking is not allowed inside the building and during parent-child contacts, including trips away from the site such as to the playground.
9. Supervised contacts at Meeting Place routinely include supervised time in the building **and** at the park adjacent to the parking lot. Supervised contacts may also occur in the local community by agreement of the parties and Meeting Place staff or by Court order
10. Only the non-custodial parent is allowed at a parent-child contact unless both parents and Meeting Place staff agree and/or the Court authorizes others (i.e., grandparents, aunts, etc.) to be present
11. Families are free to use the toys and games in the visitation rooms and to bring age-appropriate toys for their child/ren to use during parent-child contacts keeping in mind:
 - We expect parents to monitor their child/ren's use of toys, games and activity materials and to be responsible for damage.
 - **All toys, games and materials must be returned to their proper place in the room from which they were originally kept.**
 - The visitation room must be cleaned up before the non-custodial parent leaves the room.
 - Parents should closely monitor the use of small toys by very young children.
 - Children are not allowed to play with toy weapons (knives, water guns, etc.) as determined by Meeting Place staff.
12. Parents are responsible for their child/ren's behavior and are asked to keep activity and noise at a level that does not disturb others. We encourage parents to ask supervisors for help and suggestions if necessary.
13. Cellular telephones and beepers must be turned off during parent-child contacts, unless otherwise agreed to by all parties Meeting Place.
14. Meeting Place encourages the giving of appropriate gifts to children on their birthdays and other gift giving holidays. Meeting Place staff will determine the appropriateness of the kind and amounts of gifts, including money, and whether other gifts are allowed.

15. Photos, videos, or other recordings are permitted within reason unless determined otherwise by Meeting Place staff. Recordings shall not include Meeting Place staff.
16. Non-custodial parents may bring food to be eaten by their children during contacts unless otherwise determined by Meeting Place staff.
17. Only the custodial parent may administer medication to their child while at Meeting Place.

The following policies guide the operation and management of Meeting Place:

Arrival and Departure Policy

Creating and maintaining a safe, structured, and predictable setting is essential for keeping all family members safe and as relaxed as possible at Meeting Place. Having families arrive and leave in a smooth manner is very important to achieve this. It is therefore crucial you arrive and depart as scheduled.

Non-custodial parents are required to arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled contact time. For example, if your contact is scheduled for 11 AM, you must arrive by 10:45 AM. Please do not arrive more than 15 minutes before your assigned time. Non-custodial parents are required to remain at Meeting Place for at least 15 minutes after your child(ren) has left the premises. Your case manager or our administrative coordinator can answer questions about your arrival and departure times.

Custodial parents are required to arrive at the exact time of the contact. For example, if your child's contact is scheduled for 11 AM you must arrive right at 11 AM. It is very important not to arrive earlier than scheduled because it creates a risk that you will meet your child/ren's other parent who is scheduled to arrive first. If you find yourself in the area too early, please drive or walk around until your scheduled arrival time. Custodial parents are asked to leave Meeting Place in a timely manner following the supervised contact.

Lateness Policy

A parent is considered late (or early) if he/she arrives more than five minutes after (or before) the time scheduled. If either parent is late or early in coming to Meeting Place, it creates a problem. A non-custodial parent who arrives late runs the risk of potentially violating a restraining order, if one is in effect, and also of putting children in the middle of a conflict. A custodial parent who arrives late runs the risk of interfering with their child/ren's time with their other parent, and of giving the child/ren the message that this time with the other parent is unimportant. A custodial parent who arrives early creates the risk of meeting the other parent and putting children in the middle of a conflict.

For the Non-custodial Parent:

The first time a non-custodial parent is late for any reason, the visitation supervisor will speak with the parent about it, and one of the senior staff will review the incident at the end of the parent-child contact. The late parent is reminded of the guidelines and consequences.

The second time a non-custodial parent is late, the next parent-child contact may be canceled and instead, at the scheduled contact time, the parent will meet with staff to address the problem and find solutions. The parent may be charged the regular fee for this meeting. Guidelines and consequences are again reviewed. If it seems probable the lateness will stop, services are continued.

If lateness continues as a problem, Meeting Place may discontinue services. The family will be referred back to the Court or other referring agency, with an explanation of why services ended. If the custodial parent believes that Meeting Place services should continue, the staff will review the situation and then meet with the non-custodial parent. The non-custodial parent is charged the usual parent-child contact fee for this meeting. Unless there is a compelling reason to continue services and an exceptional reason for the lateness, services are discontinued.

For the Custodial Parent:

The first time a custodial parent is late for any reason, the supervisor will speak with the parent about it, and one of the senior staff will also review the incident at the end of the parent-child contact. The parent is reminded of the guidelines and consequences.

The second time a custodial parent is late the parent may be required to meet with staff to address the problem and find solutions. The parent may be charged the regular parent-child contact fee for this meeting. Guidelines and consequences are again reviewed. If it seems probable that the lateness will stop, services continue.

If lateness continues to be a problem, the parent will again be required to meet with staff to discuss the problem and possible solutions. Staff will consider adding make-up time to replace the contact time lost because of lateness, and/or terminating services.

Observation Notes Policy

Observation Notes are completed for all (on and off-site) supervised parent-child contacts. Observation Notes are meant to give the reader some limited concrete information about parent-child contacts and a general feel of each parent-child contact. These notes are detailed, non-judgmental and factual. However, they are not meant to be an actual transcript of the entire contact. They are not considered confidential and are available to parents, their attorneys, the Court, and other professionals. Parents can only read these notes at Meeting Place and must complete an Observation Note Request

before copies of original notes are provided for reading. A written request is also requested for copies prepared for attorneys.

Fee Payment Policy

Fees are due the day of the contact prior to the beginning of the visit. If a parent misses more than one payment, services are suspended and may resume when the outstanding balance is paid. Frequent non-payment can result in termination of services.

Fees for preparing and sending Observation Notes to attorneys and the Court when preparing for a hearing are due with the written request for notes.

Cancellation and Rescheduling Policy

If you are going to miss a scheduled parent-child contact, please call our administrative coordinator at (617) 354-2275 Ext. 145 as much in advance as possible and leave a message if you get an answering service.

A parent who fails to come to a scheduled contact without notifying Meeting Place at least 24 hours before the start of the scheduled visit will be responsible for paying the full visitation fee, regardless of who is normally responsible for the fee. The fee for late cancellation due to illness can be waived with a doctor's letter. Frequent late cancellations are reported to the Court.

It is particularly difficult to reschedule contacts that occur regularly every week and, in general, changes to regularly scheduled contacts are discouraged. However, if a regular contact must be changed due to a specific reason like a child's special event or vacation, we will accept advance requests to reschedule it. If both parties can agree to a date AND the Meeting Place schedule allows it, the contact can occur at the rescheduled time. If a contact cannot be rescheduled within one month, it will not be rescheduled.

Court Appearances of Meeting Place Personnel Policy

To make the best use of limited resources, Meeting Place tries to minimize the need for our staff to appear in Court. In almost every case our written Observation Notes provide the most complete and useful information to the Court.

Meeting Place personnel only appear in court for exceptional situations. When required to appear in Court they are compensated at the same hourly rate for the work they usually perform. Compensation includes the time spent to prepare depositions and for travel and waiting. The parent requesting the court appearance is responsible for the cost, unless it is otherwise agreed on by the parents or ordered by the Court.

