

# ***The Family Support & Visitation Center***

**239 West Main Street  
Lancaster, Ohio 43130  
Phone: (740) 681-7243  
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## **OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

**The mission of the Family Support and Visitation Center is to support children and families who have been affected by divorce, separation, abuse, neglect or domestic violence. Through education and provision of a safe, comfortable environment, our focus is to promote family engagement and healthy, meaningful adult/child relationships.**

## WELCOME TO THE FAMILY SUPPORT AND VISITATION CENTER

As a member of the Family Support and Visitation Center family, you have certain rights afforded to you as well as certain responsibilities expected of you. This booklet will provide you with important information concerning your rights and responsibilities, as well as general information about the Family Support and Visitation Center. Please read this information carefully. Should you have any questions, feel free to address them with the Center's staff members.

### HOUSE RULES \*

#### **The following information is the Condition for Participation in the Supervised Visitation Program.**

1. Families shall complete an orientation before the time of initial visit/exchange to acquaint them with the Family Support and Visitation Center. All necessary forms and releases must be signed before any visitation/exchange can take place.
2. Families must park and enter the building in the designated area as instructed. Families using the Visitation Center may not wait in the parking lot before, during or after a visit/exchange.
3. Families are expected to arrive on time for the start and end of the visit/exchange. Visits/exchanges may be cancelled if a family member is more than twenty (20) minutes late. Do not arrive early for a visit/exchange. Arrival and departure times of the non-residential and residential parent/party will be at different times.
4. Families shall sign-in upon arrival and sign-out upon departure. The residential/custodial party is encouraged to check with the Visitation Center after drop-off for supervised visitation/exchange to be sure that the visit/exchange took place. If the visit/exchange did not take place, the residential/custodial party will be required to return to the Visitation Center immediately to pick up the child(ren).
5. If either party is canceling scheduled parenting time or a scheduled monitored exchange, contact with the Visitation Center must be made at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance. If twenty-four (24) hour notice is not given, you will be required to pay \$20.00 per hour for each hour security was scheduled for your parenting time or exchange. Any waiver of this fee is subject to the discretion of the Director.
6. If you cancel any three (3) visits/exchanges, you may be terminated from the Visitation Center services.

7. If you "No Show" for two (2) visits/exchanges you may be terminated from the Visitation Center services.
8. Parenting time is for the parents and the child(ren) designated at the time of the original intake. Additional persons wishing to visit or participate in exchanges for visitation must obtain prior approval. \*\*\*It is our policy to follow all court documentation in regards to who attends visits. Additionally, we will seek approval from the residential party if visitors, other than those designated, are requested.
9. The Family Support and Visitation Center must be notified in advance of each visit of any additional persons wishing to visit.
10. When you arrive, if the staff suspects that alcohol or other drugs influence your behavior, the visit/exchange will be cancelled. Notification will be sent to the Court, Child Protective Services and/or other appropriate agencies.
11. Residential and non-residential parents agree that they (and if applicable, approved visitors) will remain separate, physically and visually, so that contact between them does not occur, unless there has been a specific agreement between the parties and the Visitation Center that contact may occur.
12. Fighting, harassment of any kind, loitering or confrontation with any staff member, child or adult in the vicinity of the Family Support and Visitation Center, will result in immediate visitation/exchange termination. Notification to the Courts and/or other appropriate agencies will follow.
13. Family members may not make any threat of violence or threaten to break any Court Order during supervised visits and exchanges, including the transitions before and after the visits or during exchanges.
14. Possession of a weapon will result in immediate termination of your visit/exchange and will jeopardize your ability to use the Family Support and Visitation Center in the future. Security has the right to search for weapons or other dangerous items.
15. The staff of the Family Support and Visitation Center may end a visit at any time if:
  - a. the rules of the Center are not being followed;
  - b. a family member or a child is violent, disruptive or disrespectful to others in the Center; or
  - c. it is in the best interest of the child(ren).

16. No derogatory remarks about either parent/guardian will be tolerated. Questioning your child about his/her residential family members, residence, court cases, counseling etc., will result in immediate intervention by the Visitation Monitor.
17. Whispering and low tone talking, during supervised visits or monitored exchanges will not be allowed.
18. Court cases may not be discussed at the visit or exchange with the child (ren) or the Visitation Monitor. Visiting parties cannot make promises about future visitation arrangements, plans or changes in custody.
19. There will be NO exchange of any material that has not been approved by the center staff before the visit/exchange. For example, no notes or cards will pass and no money will be exchanged between parents. Only items/gifts related to the child (ren) will be exchanged.
20. There will be no audiotaping, television or video games during visits.
21. Cell phones are not permitted to be used during supervised visits.
22. Visiting parties are permitted to bring food, gifts, monetary gifts & take pictures, unless otherwise specified by a court order.
23. If a Visitation Monitor feels the level of supervision needs to increase or decrease, they will suggest this to all parties involved (residential and non-residential party, attorneys, children services and GAL's). If agreed upon by all parties, the necessary changes will be made.
24. No person may physically discipline (spank) or threaten to physically discipline a child(ren) during supervised visitation/exchanges. Visitation Center Staff are mandated to report any suspected child abuse or neglect.
25. There will be no smoking or pets allowed at the Family Support and Visitation Center.
26. Written records of observation during supervised visits/exchanges will be maintained by the Family Support and Visitation Center, and reports will be submitted to the Courts and/or other designated parties, upon receipt of a subpoena.
27. Individuals are expected to inform the Center of any changes in their address and phone number. It is also the individual's responsibility to

inform the Center of any changes in their court order that effect visits and/or exchanges.

28. It is the individual's responsibility to contact their Visitation Monitor to arrange exchanges and/or visits for holidays or special occasions.
29. The Visitation Monitor may suggest enhanced visitation services or discontinuance of such services, at their discretion.
30. Infractions of the guidelines will be noted in the customer files. A pattern of violations may result in termination of the services. Notification will be sent to the appropriate parties.
31. Visits/Exchanges will be canceled if your child has a contagious disease. (Including but not limited to fever, vomiting, diarrhea, impetigo, flu, pink eye, chicken pox, ringworm, lice and/or any other contagious illness). Visits may be canceled at the Visitation Center's Staff discretion. In some cases, a doctor's excuse will be required to resume to visitation.
32. During bad weather, please listen to the local radio station for closure information. Please be aware that during a Level 3 emergency, the agency will be closed and transportation will be unavailable. If the agency is going to close during the current business day, a staff member will contact you via telephone to cancel your parenting time.
33. If you are required to pay a fee for our services (which will be determined during orientation) it will be due upon arrival for your supervised visit/monitored exchange.

*\* **NOTE:** The House Rules are set up for use by our program to assure that services are delivered in an efficient and safe manner.*

## **CUSTOMERS' RIGHTS**

- You have the right to be fully informed of your rights and responsibilities as a Family Support and Visitation Center customer.
- You have the right to be informed, in advance, of any changes in the Family Support and Visitation Center's rules.
- You have the right to participate in the development of your plan of visitation, unless other restrictions apply.
- You have the right to privacy and to confidentiality of your records. The Family Support and Visitation Center will only release information required by law or when authorized by you.

- You have the right to review your records, however, copies of records will not be released unless mandated by the Court system.
- You have the right to be treated with respect, courtesy and consideration. Please reciprocate that treatment.
- You have the right to voice complaints, suggest changes, and know about the disposition of said complaints and suggestions.
- You have the right to be listened to and taken seriously.
- You have the right to set boundaries for your child(ren) in accordance with the Family Support and Visitation Center rules.
- You have the right to be informed in advance of the reason(s) for discontinuance of service provision and to be involved in planning for the consequences of that event.
- You have the right not to be discriminated against in the provision of service on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, age, sexual orientation, physical or mental handicap, developmental disability, HIV infection, AIDS related complex or AIDS, or inability to pay.

### **CUSTOMERS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

- You have the responsibility to know and to follow the Family Support and Visitation Center rules at all times during your visit. Additional copies of "House Rules" are available upon request.
- You have the responsibility to know and to abide by all Court Orders pertaining to your case.
- You have the responsibility to treat the Visitation Center staff with the same respect, courtesy and consideration that you expect to receive.
- You have the responsibility to help create a safe and comfortable environment for your child(ren)'s visit.
- It is your responsibility to notify the Family Support and Visitation Center's staff of changes in your contact information (address, home/work phone numbers, pagers) in a reasonable amount of time.
- You have the responsibility to protect the privacy of others who are also customers of the Family Support and Visitation Center in the same way that you would want your privacy protected.

- You have the responsibility to report all grievances in writing so they may be addressed by the Family Support and Visitation Center staff.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### ***What is the Family Support and Visitation Center?***

The Family Support and Visitation Center is a government social service agency that offers families a comfortable, homelike atmosphere in which a safe, structured, neutral alternative to unsupervised visits can be provided.

### ***How are families referred to the Family Support and Visitation Center?***

Families are referred to the Family Support and Visitation Center in a variety of ways. Referrals may be made by anyone including but not limited to social workers, courts, CASAs/GALs, child welfare workers, attorneys, clergy, mental health professionals, or individuals.

### ***What is parenting time or supervised visitation?***

Parenting time or supervised visitation is the provision and maintenance of a safe, neutral setting in which the contact between a child(ren) and an adult (usually a parent) can be monitored by personnel able to protect the rights of the child(ren).

### ***What is "enhanced visitation"***

"Enhanced visitation" is the utilization of "teachable moments" to assist individuals in strengthening their parenting abilities in order to promote a safe and healthy parent/child relationship.

### ***What are "monitored exchanges"?***

"Monitored exchanges" are for parents who are not required to have supervision while visiting their children but need to be able to make the exchange without interacting with the other parent. The exchanges are monitored by a Visitation Supervisor.

### ***What are the grounds for termination of parenting time at the Family Support and Visitation Center?***

Parenting time may be terminated at the discretion of the Visitation Center's staff if the customer does not adhere to the policies set by the Visitation Center, or if the child's, another customer's, or the staff members' safety are jeopardized.

## **WHY IS PARENTING TIME SO IMPORTANT?**

- The child is able to maintain a relationship with the non-custodial parent.
- The child sees that the non-custodial parent still loves him/her and wants to visit with the child.
- The visits allow a connection to remain between the non-custodial parent and the child so that the child does not feel abandoned.
- The visits allow the child to see that the visiting parent is okay, so that the child does not worry about the non-custodial parent's well being.
- The visits allow the child to be with his/her visiting parent in a safe and comfortable atmosphere, which can be helpful to the child's well being.
- The visits allow the child to slowly come to terms with the separation or divorce of his/her parents, which can help in the healing process.

## **HELPFUL HINTS IN PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR VISITATION**

- It is important that your child understands that he/she has done nothing wrong and that it is not his/her fault that the supervised visitation must occur.
- Assist your child in becoming acquainted with the surroundings at the Family Support and Visitation Center so that he/she is comfortable with the atmosphere before visitation begins. It is important that your child knows that the staff at the Visitation Center is always available for him/her during the visit.
- Try to maintain a positive outlook about the visitation yourself. Children are very impressionable and they can sense how their parents are feeling. If they feel that you are comfortable with visitation, they may be more apt to be positive about the visitation themselves.
- Depending on the age of your child, it may be useful to explain to him/her the purpose of the supervised visitation and the safety arrangements. This way, your child can feel informed and feel as though they have some control in the situation.

## **SECURITY POLICY AT THE FAMILY SUPPORT AND VISITATION CENTER**

- The safety of children, adults and supervisors, is a precondition of our providing services. The welfare of your child is of utmost importance.
- The Family Support and Visitation Center cannot guarantee the safety of its inhabitants, but precautions have been taken in order to provide the highest security possible to all who are involved with the Family Support and Visitation Center.
- Proper identification must be shown by all parties to gain admittance to the facility.
- "Drops-Ins" will not be admitted.
- Security will be provided during visitation and exchange hours as needed.
- The Family Support and Visitation Center may decline a referral request if it is determined that the staff is not trained to provide a requested service or if there are security risks which the Visitation Center cannot appropriately manage. The Visitation Center will notify the referring agency as to the reason for declining the referral.
- The residential and non-residential parents' arrival and departure times are staggered so as to avoid any possible incidences.

## **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

If you have a complaint or concern, please put it in writing with as much detail as you can and direct it to the Family Support and Visitation Center Director, who will attempt to address the problem. Be sure to include your suggestions on how the problem can be solved/avoided in the future.

If a satisfactory resolution is not reached, the customer must present the complaint in writing to the Director of Fairfield County Job and Family Services. The complaint must be dated and signed and should include the date/time, description and names of individuals involved in the situation.

The Director of Job and Family Services shall meet with the customer within five (5) working days of receipt of the written complaint. The Director shall attempt to achieve satisfactory resolution of the complaint with five (5) working days of the initial meeting with the customer. All resolutions will be presented to the customer in writing.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Sue Schmitter-Motta, Director

Family Support and Visitation Center  
239 W. Main St.  
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Michael Orlando, Director  
Fairfield County Job and Family Services  
239 W. Main Street  
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