

Intro to Visit Coaching

Bring on the Toys

Engaging Families with Positive Interactions

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Objectives

- To introduce the importance of visit coaching as a tool to improve parenting skills and to address areas of concern for infants and toddlers
- To present the uses of a visitation bag to aid in positive interactions
- To describe assessments, monitoring, and visit planning
- To explain visit coaching as an aid to reestablishing the p/c relationship with substance abusing parents

Purpose

- To allow children to preserve relationships with people who are important to them
- Presenting experiences of being together to be able to determine for themselves if reunification is possible
- Empowering parents, focusing on their strengths, and building their capacity to meet their children's needs
- Educating parents about the importance of early relationships and development of their child
- Ensuring that their child receives appropriate developmental screenings
- Connecting families to services in their community that will help them work through their court issues

Benefits of visit coaching

- Many parents don't know how to perform daily care giving routines; how to play with or comfort their child, respond to nonverbal clues, and/or special medical/ developmental needs
- Promotes healthy attachment, reduces negative effects of separation
- Enhances parents motivation to change
- Helps parents gain confidence
- Provides valuable information to the court

Unless the court finds substantial evidence to believe that visitation or supervised visitation would place the child's life, health or safety at risk, the parent should be allowed to visit his or her child.

Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, Safety and Stability for Foster Children, The Policy Context.

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During Visitations

➤ Encourage:

Ages 0-5 Bonding/Child Development

Ages 4-5 Pre-school/Kindergarten readiness


MAKE IT PARENT FRIENDLY



Positive Parent Practices

- Observe and listen to your parents
- Build a rapport
 - talk to parents about the child
 - gather info, ie. Doctor visits, medical issues, allergies, food likes/dislikes, daily routines, bedtime, etc.
- Bring Pictures of the child to share with the parent
- Parenting Skills – focus on p/c interactions
- Looks for the positives-build on no matter how small
- Visitation House

Tools for Effective Visitation

- Resource folder
 - Developmental Milestones
 - Recognizing Delays
 - Guidelines for Preschool/Kinder readiness
 - Visitation Bag
 - Visitation Timeline
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Visitation Timeline

- Welcome & Play 15 min.
- Bonding/Sensory 5 min.
- Snack 15 min.
- Clean up/Diaper change 5 min.
- Story time/Cuddling 10 min.
- Goodbye <5 min.

Developmentally Appropriate Activities

- Should occur in a variety of contexts (feeding, playing, bathing, diapering, soothing, putting to bed, medical appointments, etc.)
- Planned along a continuum of increasingly challenging and stressful situations to help the parent build a positive relationship with the child and develop confidence and competence in parenting

Infancy (0-2)

Developmental Tasks/Related Activities

- Develop primary attachment/Meet basic needs (feeding, changing, holding, soothing cuddling)
- Develop object permanence/Play peek a Boo games
- Basic motor development (sit, reach, stand, crawl, walk)/help standing, walking, etc., play “come to me” games
- Word recognition/Name objects, read picture books
- Exploration of environment/Encouragement, take walks, play together with colorful, noisy moving items

Toddler (2-4)

Developmental Tasks/Related Activities

- Develop impulse control/Make and enforce rules
- Language development/Read simple stories; play rhyming games, word games
- Imitation, fantasy play/"Pretend" play, imitative play, assist in big movement activities (tricycle, dancing, hopping, etc.)
- Small motor coordination/Draw together, sorting, stringing beads
- Develop basic sense of time/Discuss visits and visit activities in terms of "after breakfast", after snack, etc.
- Identify and Assist preferences/Allow choices with clothes, foods

Ways to be Interactive and Positive


- Visitation/Diaper Bag: Contains age appropriate items (Homemade, Discount stores), floor mat (blanket, tablecloth)
- Encourage parents to bring their own visitation bag –help plan list



Let's look at some ideas for a visitation bag.



Parent Visitation Assessment

- Easy way to report observations
 - Use after each visit
 - Court reports
 - Tracks progress
 - Becomes part of the case file
 - Reference when preparing for trial
 - Works for any parent/child visit
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Observations

- SEE – List parenting behaviors observed
- LIKE – List parenting behaviors liked
- ADD – List parenting behaviors that could be added
- CHANGE – List parenting behaviors that could be changed
- PLAN – Use info to plan actions/activities

Preschool/Kindergarten Readiness

- Early Head Start/Head Start
- Readiness guidelines for Pre K/Kindergarten
- Preschool Program for Children w/Disabilities (PPCD)

Be An Educational Advocate

- Bridge between parties with everyone focused on education
- Advocate for special education (504 Plan, ARD's, IEP's)
- Find resources (schools, CASA, DFPS, etc)

Be the Health Advocate

- Know your child's needs
- Contact all health providers
- Foster children are particularly vulnerable
- Mental Health (starting/monitoring medications)
- Hygiene

Empowering Families through Visit Planning

- Tailored to circumstances and needs of each family and reason for removal
- Developed in consultation with parent/foster parent
- Based upon thorough assessment of family, including an child's needs and parent's ability to respond to those needs (CANS)
- Reviewed/Updated frequently
- Specify frequency, length, participants, location, if/how supervised, expected behavior of parents, planned activities
- Is this plan moving the court closer to achieving the permanency goal?

Sample Visit Plan

Children's Needs During Visit	The Coach Will Help Parent
6 Week Old To be happy to be close to parent To feel part of a family w/parents and 2 brothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Have some visits alone with baby getting to know what she enjoys; spend time imitating baby's faces, talking to baby, trying to lengthen amount of time baby can keep attention on parent➤ Teach siblings special things to do w/sister➤ Plan music activity/snack that all can enjoy together
2 yr. old To feel his parent likes him To have a lot of attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Find one thing to praise each visit➤ Have some visits alone, practicing giving attention/praise to see what prevents his grumpiness
4 yr. old To lead play with toys and games	Spend part of visit on floor playing, holding, talking to baby while also moving from child to child with play that fits their different levels

The Visit Coach helps the parent stand in their child's shoes and realize the many needs the child has that must be met at visits. Planning with the parent is purposeful so the parent is in charge of the visits and does self assessments of each visit. Planning visits around the specific needs of the child, is the key to helping parents understand their child's needs. Without a needs driven visit plan, coaching can become only instruction on parenting techniques which is less likely to be lasting.

Parents with Substance Abuse Issues

- Caseworker or counselor to discuss expectations, parameters, and purpose of visits
- Discuss relapse prevention to address difficult underlying issues visits may present
- Studies find that substance abusing mothers have more difficulty with attaching to their infants (less eye contact, affectionate touch, and focus less attention on child)
- Past/current substance abuse patterns need to be examined
- Assessment of parents' awareness of the effect on the infant/toddler
- Is parent willing to enter treatment?
- Does parent have a support system?
- Continued assessments needed to ensure the safety of the child

Celebrate Success

- When Monkeys Run the Zoo, Parenting Pointers 0-6 years by Dianne Warren
- Plan a “Fun Day” with family, friends, support staff ie. Gymboree, park, zoo

Resources

- Marty Beyers, Visit Coaching, Building on Family Strengths to Meet Children's Needs
- Pathways.org (activities as babies grow) www.zerotothree.org
- www.littletexans.org
- www.childdevelopmentinfo.com
- Texas ECI website: www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis
- www.infantsee.org
- www.babyhearing.org
- www.lifestagesinc.com
- www.visionandlearning.org
- www.cdc.gov
- Pediatric checklist: www.massgeneral.org
- Helping Traumatized Children Learn, Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative
- Crittendon Children's Center (MO): Head Start-Trauma Smart program
- Touchpoints, T. Berry Brazelton