

The Visitation and Advocacy Center for the 6th Judicial District



CONTENTS OF PACKET - Encompasses Court Ordered Visitation/Exchanges, DFS Visitation/Exchanges, Phone visitation, and Visitation/Exchanges by mutual agreement

Abbreviations within the orientation:

AVS - Access Visitation Supervisor
BA - Breathalyzer
CP - Custodial Parent
CO - Court Order
DFS - Department of Family Services
ED - Executive Director
FP - Foster Parent
GAL - Guardian ad Litem

NCO - No Contact Order
NCP - Non-Custodial Parent
PD - Police Department
PO - Protection Order
RO - Restraining Order
SO - Sheriff's Office
UA - Urinalysis

Orientation Packet

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PHILOSOPHY AND COMMUNICATION INFORMATION

PHILOSOPHY ____ (Initial)

The Visitation and Advocacy Center staff strive to maintain neutrality between parents. This does not mean that we will accept or condone any prior or current behavior of any family member that has been abusive or harmful. Neutrality means our staff is committed to providing a safe place for children where contact with parents involves as little conflict of loyalty as possible.

Visitation staff will convey respect for the potential importance of each parent to his/her children. Additionally, The Visitation and Advocacy Center staff believes strongly in protecting and promoting a relationship with the parent the child is most at risk to lose. Maintaining neutrality means seeing a situation from a child's perspective of wanting a loving relationship with both parents regardless of the contention between those parents and any mistake either parent may have made in the past. As long as this relationship can be conducted in a safe environment, we will support it.

The Visitation and Advocacy Center is also committed to ensuring children's rights are upheld and strive to protect the emotional and physical well-being of the children served. We ask you to respect your child(ren)'s feelings. If they do not wish to be hugged or touched, please honor their request. The Visitation and Advocacy Center will intervene if necessary to protect the rights of the child(ren). It is in your best interest as well as your child(ren) to respect their feelings.

COMMUNICATION ____ (Initial)

The Visitation and Advocacy Center's office hours are Monday through Friday 8 AM to 5 PM. **Please call during office hours with any questions or concerns.** If the person you wish to speak with is unavailable, you may leave a message, but it is up to you to call again if you do not hear from that person within one business day. If you are calling after 5 PM or on the weekend, the staff will not be able to assist you, unless your call is in regards to a visit/exchange that is happening that day.

Hours of available service are:
Monday through Friday 8 AM to 8 PM
Saturday from 8 AM to 5 PM,
Sunday from 12 PM to 8 PM.

Additionally supervised visits cannot be done on Fridays and after 5 PM on Sundays, due to several exchanges happening. Orientations will only be completed during office hours.

Most communication with the Access Visitation Supervisor is in reference to scheduling. Due to the high volume of families utilizing The Visitation and Advocacy Center, each family will be allotted 1 ½ hours within five business days to reach a solution/compromise. If at that time a solution/compromise cannot be met, then all parties would need to contact their attorney and The Visitation and Advocacy Center will resume services after a solution/compromise is found.

THE VISITATION AND ADVOCACY CENTER ACCESS PROGRAM

The mission of The Visitation and Advocacy Center is to provide quality services, including supervised visitations and monitored exchanges which promote and sustain access for children with the significant adults in their lives.

Please be fully aware that The Visitation and Advocacy Center uses video and audio monitoring and that all activities within the facility are being recorded at all times. Documentation regarding visits or exchanges, the dates, arrival times, behavior, violation of agency rules or cancellation of visits or exchanges are on file and may be provided to professional contacts, governmental agencies or the Court through a subpoena.

Wyoming State Law (W.S 43-205 & 35-20-103) mandates that any person who suspects child/vulnerable adult abuse, neglect or exploitation is required to report regardless of their profession. According to Wyoming law, everyone must report suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of a child or vulnerable adult if they have a reasonable cause to believe that it may be occurring. As abuse/neglect/exploitation has no boundaries according to sexual orientation, ethnic background, age, religion, disability, or gender, the reporting of abuse/neglect/exploitation of children is a 24-hour obligation. If you reveal to Staff member (intentionally or unintentionally) that any child has been abused/neglected/exploited, we will report it to the proper authorities.

The Visitation and Advocacy Center is committed to providing supervised visitation and exchange services for as many families in need as possible. This does not mean services here are rights that clients are entitled to receive. Services can be denied for the following reasons:
a. The Access Visitation Supervisor's belief that continued contacts pose an unacceptable risk,
b. Parent's failure to comply with the rules, c. If the child is significantly stressed by the contacts. Services can also be denied at the discretion of the Access Visitation Supervisor and/or the Executive Director for reasons other than stated above.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

GOALS _____(Initial)

The goal of this program is to allow children to have a safe, conflict free time with all of the people they care about. Therefore:

- Parents or other visiting parties will not talk about adult issues in front of their child(ren), including/but not limited to: in-depth discussions of issues surrounding custody, abuse, or criminal cases with staff, children, or any adult during a visit/exchange. It is not allowed.
- Parents or other visiting parties will not make negative/derogatory comments to the child(ren) about any adult/child who is significant to the child(ren). Excessive or harassing questioning of a child about the other parent or foster parent is not allowed.
- Visiting parents/relatives may not deny any reference made by the child about any past abuse by the parent/relative. If the child(ren) bring it up, please inform them that this is not the place to discuss it and you will get back to them. If it is a DFS case, let the child(ren) know that you will need to contact the caseworker and would discuss it with them.
- Physical discipline or threats of physical discipline are not allowed. Any acts of physical discipline or threats of physical discipline will result in the immediate termination of that visit/exchange.
- If staff detects that you may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, you will be asked to submit to a chemical test by law enforcement. If you refuse or test positive, your visit/exchange will be cancelled and/or terminated.
 - If you refuse and leave our facility, staff will immediately notify law enforcement of the suspected use.
 - We are obligated to inform your caseworker if you are in an establishment that alcohol is the primary item of sale, you have a CO that states you are not to be in or consume alcohol, and staff witnesses this we are required to report the incident.
- Promises or talk of future visits outside of The Visitation and Advocacy Center are not allowed, unless all parties have been made aware of future visits.
- Profanity of any kind is not allowed. Tobacco products and vaporizers of any kind are not allowed on The Visitation and Advocacy Center property.
- Weapons of any kind are not allowed.
- Clothing that depicts violence, profanity, substance use or nudity is not allowed.

INTAKE AND ORIENTATION _____(Initial)

1. All parties will be required to complete an intake and personal history form. **Orientations** must be completed by all parties **before** the scheduling of the initial visit/exchange. Please let us know if you have a change of address, phone number, vehicle, emergency contact, and/or email as soon as possible. We will rely on the information provided on the application unless otherwise notified.

- The Visitation and Advocacy Center must always have a current phone number on file for the visiting parties . If staff cannot reach you your services may be cancelled until we have current information on file.
- We encourage all parties to have an alternate designated to pick up or drop off their child(ren). If asked, staff will tell the CP or NCP who your alternate is. The alternate must complete an orientation as well. Parents cannot dictate who the other parent's alternate is unless legal documentation is provided.

- Please notify the AVS if another person will be bringing or picking up your child(ren) for either a visit or exchange. If they have not completed an orientation, they will not be able to transport the child(ren). **All parties must be prepared to present their I.D. upon request.**
- 3 missed orientations will result in a \$25 cashier's check being issued to The Visitation and Advocacy Center prior to scheduling another orientation. If you miss the 4th orientation The Visitation and Advocacy Center will cash the cashier's check.
- In the case of visits, additional visitors (18 years and older) must have prior authorization from the AVS and/or DFS Caseworker and complete an orientation. They will be able to attend 50% of the visits. Siblings of child(ren) would be able to attend all visits. The Visitation and Advocacy reserves the right to approve any person under the age of 18 that a parent would like to bring to the visit. In the case of DFS, approval would be needed.
- If you are UA/BA required prior to visits or exchanges you may UA/BA up to 4 hours prior to visit/exchange. The closer to the time of visit or exchange the better. Anything earlier than the 4 hours will not be accepted.

SCHEDULING _____(Initial)

2. The AVS will schedule visit/exchanges. Court ordered times and each party's requests will be accommodated as closely as possible. Our goal is to set up a permanent and consistent schedule. Once your times have been scheduled, they are your times until services are no longer needed or both parties agree to any changes. However, The Visitation and Advocacy does reserve the right to alter the schedule as needed.

COURT ORDERS _____(Initial)

3. When cases are court-ordered, copies of the order must be provided during the orientation. If court orders have been updated, please make sure that The Visitation and Advocacy has the most updated version and that we have been notified of any changes in the documents within one week of the changes.

4. The Access Visitation/Exchange program works only through the cooperation of both parties. When a visitation/exchange is court ordered it is imperative for this cooperation to exist in order for us to provide these services. When mutual cooperation cannot be reached, the AVS may provide the courts with recorded documentation showing efforts, or lack thereof, of the parties to maintain the integrity and intent of the court orders. It is the responsibility of each party to ensure that they are following any court order currently in place. When visitation/exchange disputes occur, our agency will abide by the current court order copy on file.

RECORDS _____(Initial)

5. There are significant expenses associated with providing our visitation/exchange services and fees will be charged:

- If parents do not have an attorney who can subpoena our records, parents may request a:
 - Client Tracking Sheet - that reports the dates and times of all the scheduled visits/exchanges, arrival times of parents, any cancellation or no shows of each parent and reasons for cancellations. There is a \$15.00 per hour charge.
 - The NCP may request copies of their visits whether it is the monitor form or a visit burned to disc. There is a \$1.00 per page charge for the forms and \$20.00 per disc. Any requests for a visit burned to disc, copies of monitor forms, case notes regarding correspondence with visiting parent, or client tracking sheets,

require a minimum of 10 days' notice to prepare the items. Any correspondence with the CP will need to be subpoenaed.

- The CP will need to subpoena all records (Monitor forms, visits burned to disc, and any correspondence with the NCP.) They may request copies of their own correspondence. Same charges and days to prepare it apply.

DOCUMENTATION _____(Initial)

6. Staff will not transfer messages between parties except to coordinate visitation/exchanges. For any other communication between the parents, you must fill out a Parent Communication Form and the subject must only relate to the child(ren). The use of neutral language is required. Inflammatory messages will not be exchanged. Staff will read it before it is handed to the other parent. If staff determines that it is not appropriate, they will ask you to rewrite it before giving it to the other party. If you would like a copy of this documentation, you will be charged \$1 for each copy. Be aware that The Visitation and Advocacy makes copies of any documentation that you bring in that pertains to the child(ren) and retains these copies in your file. The Visitation and Advocacy Center will not pass any mail or other communication between parties.

- The Visitation and Advocacy also documents any phone calls between the CP, NCP, GAL, DFS, and attorneys that pertain to your case.

INCLEMENT WEATHER AND CLOSINGS _____(Initial)

7. All visitations/exchanges will take place at The Visitation and Advocacy Center unless we are closed due to the weather, meetings, or a holiday. In the event of The Visitation and Advocacy Center being closed visits will either be canceled by The Visitation and Advocacy Center or re-scheduled. Exchanges may take place at the Police Department, Sheriff's Department or another neutral location agreed upon by both parties. The Visitation and Advocacy Center will make every effort to notify clients as soon as possible of a closing but this cannot always happen. Also, if school is closed due to the weather, The Visitation and Advocacy Center will be as well. You may need to call the office several times due to the volume of calls coming in from parents trying to verify visits. A closure notice will be posted on the front door in case parents miss a message. In the event of a tornado, The Visitation and Advocacy Center reserves the right to cancel any visit/exchange for the safety of everyone involved.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE _____(Initial)

8. Please arrive punctually at the arranged times. It is important that each party arrive at the designated time. **DO NOT BE EARLY. DO NOT BE LATE.**

- In the case of exchanges, the parent who is bringing the child(ren) must arrive 10 minutes early and stay 10 minutes after the child(ren) are picked up. The parent who is picking up the child(ren) must arrive at the exact designated time.
- If there is a PO, RO, or a NCO, the parent who it pertains to will always arrive 10 minutes early no matter if they are picking up or dropping off the child(ren) and stay 10 minutes after the designated time. This will include any alternate helping the party who the PO, RO, or NCO pertains to.
- In an exchange situation, if you are ten minutes or later for an exchange, and do not contact The Visitation and Advocacy Center, the exchange will be cancelled, regardless of whether you are to give or receive the child(ren). In the case of a CP missing an exchange that would return the child back to his/her custody, the NCP would be required to take the child(ren) back home with him/her until another exchange can be arranged.
- If you require a ride to The Visitation and Advocacy Center, you will inform your ride that they must drive away while you are in the building. No one may wait for you outside or in the vicinity of The Visitation and Advocacy Center. No one is to remain in the parking area or surrounding areas of The Visitation and Advocacy Center at any time before, during, or after a visit or exchange, attempt to follow or harass anyone associated with The Visitation and Advocacy Center. This is in effect with visitation as well. (If we can see you or you can see our building you are too close)

- In the case of visits, the parent who is visiting must always arrive 10 minutes early. The party bringing the child(ren) will always arrive at the designated time.
- If the NCP is late for a visit, the CP may decide to cancel at the designated time, or they may choose to wait an additional 10 minutes after the scheduled start time.
- CP/FP are required to accompany their child(ren) into the building to verify visit arrangements.
- All parties will be released by staff at the correct time. At no time is any parent or child to leave the visit or exchange room without notification by staff. There is a 10-minute waiting period after the child(ren) depart The Visitation and Advocacy Center until the visiting parent is release.

PHONE VISITS _____(Initial)

9. The Visitation and Advocacy Center does provide phone visits for families on a case by case determination. All parties wishing to do phone visits through The Visitation and Advocacy Center will be required to complete an orientation prior to the calls taking place.
- The party that is calling into the visit will need to call at the scheduled time. The Visitation and Advocacy Center will not call anyone.
 - Phone visits are limited to 15 minutes per visit with no more than one call per week.
 - If the child and/or children are not engaged in the phone call taking place staff will try and redirect 2 times then let the visiting party know and end the phone call.
 - Staff may be in the room to monitor phone calls.
 - All phone visits will be done over speaker phone.

CANCELLATION POLICY _____(Initial)

10. If cancellation of a visit/exchange is necessary, you must call within 24 hours, unless it is an emergency. If two visits/exchanges in a row are cancelled without justifiable reason, or just not shown up for, visits/exchanges will be taken off the schedule until the cancelling parent meets with the AVS to explain the reasons for the cancellation/no-shows. The AVS will determine if the reasons for missed visits/exchanges are justifiable.
- If your visits/exchanges are taken off the schedule there is no guarantee that those same designated times will be available when you are put back on the schedule.
 - FP are not allowed to cancel visits/exchanges. FP must contact the DFS Caseworker or on-call after hours so that arrangements may be made for transportation of child(ren) or to allow DFS to approve the cancellation of the scheduled visit/exchange.
 - After 3 suspensions, you will be permanently removed and unable to utilize the VAC.

ILLNESS _____(Initial)

11. For the welfare of staff, all children who visit/exchange and their families, **PLEASE** do not bring sick children for visits/exchanges. If they are sick or contagious (especially if there is a fever over 99.8 degrees, vomiting, severe diarrhea, or any other contagious illnesses), please call and cancel. This includes adults as well who are visiting/exchanging.
- If it is an exchange family with a sick child(ren) and the receiving parent would still like to have their child, you may exchange outside of The Visitation and Advocacy Center.

MEDICATION _____(Initial)

12. Parents are not allowed to bring non-prescribed medication to the visits. When passing medication from one parent to the other, each parent will be required to sign and date the medication form that is available. Staff will sign off on it as well for documentation purposes. Medication will only be exchanged when both parties are in the building. All medication information related to the child must be in writing. Prescription medicines must be in the original bottle or box, there must be a pharmacy label and anything needed to administer the medicine to the child must be supplied.

CARE ITEMS _____(Initial)

13. Unless otherwise ordered by the court, **The Visitation and Advocacy Center will not mediate issues concerning the care items of your child(ren). As the visiting parent you are required to provide adequate care items for your child(ren) while they are in your care. As a reminder, children's clothing, toys, etc, belong to the child and not to either parent.**

Please be aware if you bring your child(ren) inappropriately dressed for the weather and we deem this to be detrimental to your child(ren), it will be documented and we are required to report to DFS.

- As a visiting parent, you are responsible for the care of your child(ren) during the visit. Staff will not be able to assist with child care.
- The visiting parent must provide adequate care items for the visit period. This includes diapers, wipes, bottles, formula, food, etc. If you cannot provide these things, please speak to The Visitation and Advocacy Center about your situation prior to your visit.
- Please plan to provide a snack when visiting here at The Visitation and Advocacy Center no matter the time, kids are always hungry no matter the time.
- If a visit is taking place during mealtime, the visiting parent is required to provide that meal. Homemade meals are preferred. Healthy snacks and beverages are encouraged for any visit.

- Breakfast is 8:00am- 9:00am
- Lunch is 11:00am- 1:00pm
- Dinner is 5:00- 7:00pm

ITEMS _____(Initial)

14. All items brought to a visit must be in a clear bag. However, if you do not have one The Visitation and Advocacy Center will provide you with a clear tote that you may bring into the visitation room. The Visitation and Advocacy Center does look through all items you bring into a visit and documents those items. You will be required to leave your personal bag up front throughout the duration of your visit or leave it in your vehicle. The Visitation and Advocacy Center will not be responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged belongings.

GIFT GIVING _____(Initial)

15. While providing for your child's basic needs is encouraged, excessive gift giving is restricted. All gifts, including money must be approved by the staff prior to each visit. Any item brought into a visit that is a "gift" must go home with the child.

- CP/FP may not refuse to have their child(ren) receive gifts according to the guidelines established by The Visitation and Advocacy Center.

COMMUNICATION DURING VISITATION/EXCHANGES _____(Initial)

16. All communication in the visit/exchange room must be clearly heard and understood by the staff. No whispering or note passing is allowed, The TV/radio must be kept at a reasonable volume. Staff may come in and ask you to turn the TV/radio down so that you may be heard.

- Cell phones will not be used, unless you are taking pictures, during your visit. If staff suspects that you are using it for other purposes, they will ask you to turn it off or leave it in your vehicle. Cameras are allowed throughout the visits, be sure to let staff know. If you would like to play music off of your phones, please let staff know.
- Visiting parents may request to speak to the CP/FP. Staff will ask the CP/FP if they wish to speak to the visiting parent. The visiting parent must stay in the room and staff will bring the CP/FP into the room if they agree to speak to the visiting parent.

ACTIVITIES _____(Initial)

17. The Visitation and Advocacy Center has backpacks filled with age appropriate toys as well as books, movies, and games that may be checked out at any time. There are folders in each

room for you to look through to be able to check out the movies, games, and/or backpacks. Visiting parents may bring their own activities to the visits as long as they are of a non-violent nature (G, PG, PG-13.) PG-13 movies will only be approved if all children are at least 13 years old. The Visitation and Advocacy Center reserves the right to approve or deny any items brought to a visit.

ROOMS _____(Initial)

18. Visiting parents are required to clean the visitation rooms before they leave. You must sweep, mop, vacuum, wash, dry, and put away any dishes. It is encouraged to have your child(ren) help with this process. Please leave the room as clean, if not cleaner than when you arrived.

- All windows and blinds must be kept closed unless approved by staff.

PET POLICY _____(Initial)

19. Pets may be brought to the visits but not to every visit. They must be on a leash when not in the visit room. They are not allowed on the furniture. Families must vacuum and wipe down furniture at the end of the visit. Any pet waste must be immediately picked up and disposed of.

CIVIL MATTERS _____(Initial)

20. The Visitation and Advocacy Center is a neutral and safe place for children. For this reason, The Visitation and Advocacy Center strives to not allow arrests, warrants served, or law enforcement actions on The Visitation and Advocacy Center property. These incidents may be traumatic for child(ren) to witness; therefore, The Visitation and Advocacy Center seeks to minimize these negative law enforcement contacts. Please be advised any client that knowingly participates in having the police, sheriff's office, or a representative of an attorney serve another client on The Visitation and Advocacy Center property, this will result in the immediate suspension of services until the client completes another orientation. If at said time it occurs again, services will be terminated.

CAR SEATS _____(Initial)

21. Transporting parties will be responsible for meeting child safety restraint laws as mandated by the State of Wyoming (Wyoming state Statute 31-5-1303(a)). Staff will not be responsible for ensuring that there is a car seat or that it is installed properly, it is solely the responsibility of the transporting party.

SUSPENSION AND/OR TERMINATION _____(Initial)

22. Any threatening behavior towards any adult or child associated with The Visitation and Advocacy Center (this includes over the phone), depending on the situation, may result in the suspension and/or termination of service:

- You will receive 3 verbal warnings from the AVS/ED which will be documented.
- 2 written warnings
- Suspension of services
 - Visitation -- 1st suspension = 1 week without a visit, 2nd suspension = 2 weeks without a visit.
 - Exchanges -- 1st suspension = one exchange at The Visitation and Advocacy Center, 2nd suspension = two exchanges at The Visitation and Advocacy Center.

THE VISITATION AND ADVOCACY CENTER FINAL AGREEMENT

I have read, understood, initialed and agreed to abide by all policies and procedures. I realize any violation of these rules may result in the cancellation of visit/exchanges and possible termination of services provided by The Visitation and Advocacy Center.

I understand and agree that all information regarding The Visitation and Advocacy Center clients, their families or their situations will not be discussed with anyone and this policy is in place to protect the safety and privacy of the clients and staff. I agree to keep confidential any information that I gain about other families through my interactions at The Visitation and Advocacy Center.

Additionally, personal details such as an address, phone number, place of employment, or health status will not be revealed to the other parent, unless permission is granted from that party. The Visitation and Advocacy Center will confirm to a parent, attorney, or DFS Caseworker if a parent has completed an orientation through The Visitation and Advocacy Center.

Any information divulged during my orientation is confidential. After this time if there is information I do not want shared with the other parent, it is my responsibility to keep that information to myself. Staff will only allow the concealment of information at a reasonable level.

I know and understand that The Visitation and Advocacy Center for the Sixth Judicial District, its employees, agents, and volunteers are not liable for any damages, property loss, personal injuries, or other claims or causes of action, which may arise as a result of any service offered or provided by The Visitation and Advocacy Center. Further, I agree to hold The Visitation and Advocacy Center for the Sixth Judicial District, its employees, agents, and volunteers harmless for any actions taken to protect the health and safety of my child(ren), or for making any report or statement to any court, Department of Family Services, or any governmental or referring agency. I have fully read this disclaimer and understand what this release means and entails.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

It is the policy and practices of The Visitation and Advocacy Center for the Sixth Judicial District to provide quality service delivered to community clients without regard to race, color, religion, creed, national origin or ancestry, disability, veteran status or gender or any other factor prohibited by federal, state or local laws. Any person who believes that they or any minor child in their care have been treated in a way contrary to this policy should immediately notify The Visitation and Advocacy Center Executive Director for resolution. In instances where clients feel the issue has not been resolved to their satisfaction the grievance will be elevated to the president of the board of directors for consideration, investigation and resolution.

I have received a copy of The Visitation and Advocacy Center policy of non-discrimination and confidentiality policy.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____