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National *Family*
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Best Practice for Father–Child Visits in the Child Welfare System

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Introduction

A recent focus on policies and practice related to parent/child visits in the child welfare system has increased the knowledge of the field with regard to the importance of visits, frequency of visits, planning for visits, worker skills needed for effective visits, and outcomes of visits. Most child welfare families are headed by single mothers, so visiting policies and practice have largely been targeted to mothers and their children. In the past decade, however, there has been a movement nationwide towards more father involvement in the lives of their children. As a result, the child welfare system is also developing strategies for father involvement.

The National Quality Improvement Center for Non-Resident Fathers (QIC NRF) was created by the federal Children’s Bureau in 2006 to promote meaningful engagement between the child welfare system and non-resident fathers. The QIC NRF believes that fathers should have the same opportunities as mothers to develop and maintain healthy relationships with their children. When families are involved in the child welfare system, best practice means that workers are inclusive of non-resident fathers by considering the father and his family as a potential placement resource, offering fathers services linked directly to their needs, inviting fathers to participate in the case plan, and allowing fathers frequent visits with their children. Children benefit by having both parents involved in their lives to the greatest extent possible.

The purpose of this monograph is to review the research on parent/child visits, nationwide policies for parental visits in the child welfare system, the importance of visits, best practice for parent/child visits, differences between fathers and mothers that affect visits, and recommended best practice for father-child visits. Also included are a checklist for visiting policies; activities for fathers and children, including developmentally related activities; a sample visiting plan form; and a visiting reporting form.

Please note that research, policies, and practice specific to father/child visiting have taken place only within the past few years and are in the very early stages of development. Thus, the foundation for father/child visits is based on research, policies, and practice applicable to *both* parents and that is where we begin.

Research on Parent/Child Visits

Reunifying abused and neglected children with their families is a relatively new concept. Up until the 1960s, children were maintained in long-term foster care or institutions (Hartman, 1993). As researchers began to study the long-term effects of out-of-home care on children, they found that children were “drifting” from placement to placement with no permanency. Most of the children had never been visited by their parents (Maas and Engler, 1959). A renewed interest in family ties led to a permanency planning movement that culminated with the passage of Public Law 96-272 in 1980. In effect, permanency planning was codified into law and family reunification was established in policy and practice.

Research published by Fanshel and Shinn in 1978 provided significant findings regarding the positive relationship between frequent visiting and children's personal and social adjustment while in care as well as between frequent visiting and the likelihood of children's discharge from placement. As a consequence, greater attention was given in policy and practice to visiting. For example, visiting was closely associated with reunification as stated in one of the principles of reunification developed by Maluccio, Warsh, and Pine in 1993:

A commitment to early and consistent contact between the child and family is an essential ingredient in preparing for and maintaining reunification of children with their families. Child-family contact can serve as a laboratory in which both work on the problems that may have contributed to the need for placement, and learn new, constructive ways to be together.

The use of visits increased with the passage of the federal law (Hess, 2005) and subsequent research on parent/child visits and father/child visits found:

- The likelihood of mothers reunifying with their children increased ten-fold with mother/child visits (Davis *et al.*, 1996).
- The first round (2000-2004) of the federal Child and Family Services Reviews showed a close association between parent/child visits and achieving permanency (Children's Bureau).
- The Child and Family Services Reviews indicated that the more caseworkers included mothers, the more likely they were to include fathers in assessment, services, case planning, and visits (Children's Bureau).
- A survey of caseworkers in the child welfare system showed that 30% of nonresident fathers visited their children with about 13% doing so on a regular basis (Malm, Murray, and Geen, 2006).
- A demonstration project emphasizing father-friendly practice and training for caseworkers to engage fathers indicated father/child visits peaked at six months with one-third of the fathers complying with the plan for visiting (English, Brummel, and Martens, in press).

State Policies on Parent/Child Visits

The emphasis on visits, along with supportive research, has resulted in most states adopting policies on parent/child visits. Peg Hess completed a study of state policies on visiting in 2003. She identified 30 components that should guide parent/child visits. Of the 37 states responding to a survey on visits, 75% required a written visit plan but less than 20% addressed all of the 30 identified components of visiting. A written plan for visiting is critical because research has linked a written plan to parental commitment and compliance with visiting (Proch and Howard, 1986).

The 30-item checklist of the components of visiting is in Appendix A.

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) conducted a study of visit policies and practice in child welfare agencies in 2004 through the National Data Analysis System. The CWLA study showed 80% of states (41 states) have a family visiting policy for children in out-of-home care.

Both CWLA and Hess identified frequency as a critical component of visiting policy that is linked to child well-being and achieving reunification and permanency. The combined Hess and CWLA studies indicate that 2 states have a policy of twice weekly visits, 9 states have weekly visits, 6 have biweekly visits, 10 have monthly, and the remainder have no specified time frame.

The Importance of Parent/Child Visits

Hess and Proch (1993) portray visits as the heart of reunification. They define visits as “face-to-face contact between children and family members” which should be supplemented by correspondence, phone calls, and, when limited contact is available, video or audio tapes.

According to Hess and Proch, parent/child visits are important because:

- Visiting maintains family relationships: only if relationships are maintained will the family be reunited.
- Visiting empowers and informs parents: during visits, parents are reassured about their ability to act as parents and to provide at least some care for their children. Visits also allow parents to identify strengths and weaknesses as parents. Visiting provides both parents and children an opportunity to practice new behaviors and skills.
- Visiting enhances children’s well being: the trauma of a child’s separation from the parent and feelings of abandonment are decreased, and the improved psychological health of the child enhances the child’s developmental progress.
- Visiting provides a transition to home: by observing family interactions during visits, caseworkers can identify issues that must be resolved prior to reunification, determine the family’s progress, address the timing and sequence for returning children, and identify issues that must continue to be addressed following reunification.

Frequency of Parent/Child Visits

If visits between parents and children are important, that begs the question: How frequently should visits occur?

If an attachment bond is to be maintained between parents and their children in dependency (out-of-home placement) cases, a one-month visitation time frame is not advised. Because physical proximity is the key goal of the attachment system for infants and toddlers, and availability is the goal for other children, how could children of any age possibly maintain an affectional or attachment bond with a parent he or she visits every 30 days, with no contact? (Kuehnle and Ellis, 2002).

With frequency an important component of visits, what are the results of more frequent parent/child visits?

- Children in out-of-home care who were visited frequently (weekly or biweekly) exhibited fewer behavior problems than children who were visited less frequently (monthly or not at all). Children with more frequent visits also showed less anxiety and depression (Cantos and Gries, 1997).
- Children in foster care whose parents visited at least weekly rated their parents as normal or healthy. Children with no visits rated their parents as problematic (Kufeldt and Armstrong, 1995).

- Children in foster care who were visited frequently by their parents were more likely to have higher well-being ratings and adjustment to placement than children who were less frequently or never visited (Borgman, 1985).
- Frequent visiting increases the chances that reunifications will last (Farmer, 1996).
- More frequent parental visits are linked with shorter stays in placement for children. (Mech, 1985)

The most comprehensive guide to visiting in the child welfare system comes from the Olmsted County Child and Family Services agency in Minnesota. The *Visitation/Family Access Guidelines* booklet recommends that family access to the child be unlimited and start as soon as possible. *Daily* visits are encouraged between parents and children with a minimum of two-three visits per week.

Based on the research and guidelines presented thus far, we now have a foundation for best practice guidelines in parent/child visits.

Best Practice for Child Welfare Workers in Parent/Child Visits

The child welfare worker is the key person to ensure adequate and successful parent/child visits. The first task for the worker is to develop a visiting plan that includes:

- Frequency, length, location of visits, supervision, and planned activities
- Who may participate in visits
- Arrangements for transportation
- Input from the child (based on age), family, and foster parents
- A visiting schedule that meets the family's needs

Best practice for parent/child visits requires that the worker:

- Schedule the first visit within 48 hours of the placement of the child.
- Schedule 2–3 visits per week for infants and toddlers and at least weekly visits for older-age children.
- Prepare children, parents, and foster parents for visits.
- Conduct visits in the family home whenever possible.
- Identify activities that allow parents to demonstrate increased knowledge and skills .
- Assess the family's progress and amend the visiting plan as needed .
- Provide or arrange for supervision of visits with the goal of decreasing supervision over time.
- Provide training to foster parents and support staff that promotes visiting as an integral part of reunification, prepares the foster parents for the child's reaction to the visit, and encourages the foster parents to mentor the parents.

- Ensure that length of visits includes the following steps to successful reunifications: unsupervised visits in the parents' home, overnight visits, visits lasting several days, extended visits (one week or longer).
 - Request feedback from all involved with the visits and document the results.
 - Assess the need for professional growth and development in the area of visiting.
- (Adapted from Hess, 1999)

The Importance of Fathers

Having established best practice for parent/child visits, we now turn to the specific issue of father/child visits. The foundation for father/child visits is based on the importance of fathers in their children's lives. There is a growing body of research in this area; the limited discussion here begins with a critical premise: fathers have direct impact on the well-being of children (Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006). In their discussion of *The Importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children*, Rosenberg and Wilcox provide insight into the importance of involved fathers to children in the areas of:

- Emotional well-being: children with involved fathers are more emotionally secure, confident, and by school age boys have fewer behavioral problems and girls have higher self-esteem
- Education: children with involved fathers show higher levels of academic readiness when entering school and in adolescence have better verbal skills, intellectual functioning, and academic achievement
- Child welfare system: involved fathers reduce the likelihood of a child being abused or neglected. Non-resident fathers can be a resource to the child when workers make the effort to identify, locate, and contact fathers to invite them to participate in case planning, placement resource, and visits with their children.

Differences Between Fathers and Mothers that Inform Father/Child Visits

Are there any differences between mother/child visits and father/child visits? Let's begin with some differences between males and females/fathers and mothers in communication and in parenting styles that may affect visits:

- Men are more task oriented, less likely to ask for help, have more difficulty in expressing feelings, are more apt to shout when angry, and less likely to talk about relationships than are women
- Fathers use a stern voice and fewer words when correcting children
- Fathers engage in more active and rougher play with children than do mothers
- Fathers allow children more freedom and opportunity to explore than mothers
- Fathers place more maturity and autonomy demands on sons than on daughters
(National Family Preservation Network, *Advanced Fatherhood Training Curriculum*)

What are the implications of these differences in communication and parenting styles related to father/child visits in the child welfare system? Could differences in male/female styles of

communication be exacerbated in tense situations? If so, then a mostly-female child welfare system workforce interacting with confused, angry fathers whose children have been removed presents a potential barrier to a good working relationship. The QIC NRF recommends that a male worker have the first contact with the father. If that is not feasible, then female workers need to be trained on how to approach fathers and how to respond to male methods of communication including hostility, anger, and difficulty with expressing feelings and concerns. The more that workers understand fathers' methods of communicating and parenting, the faster they will establish a working relationship with the father to facilitate case planning and father/child visits.

Based on the parenting style of fathers, visits between fathers and children should emphasize the following:

- Fathers should spend considerable time with their children playing and having fun. Fathers teach children how to explore the world while also helping children learn how to keep aggressive impulses in check.
- Fathers should maintain the active, physical style of fathering even as their children age. Active pursuits such as hiking are far more valuable than spending time in passive activities such as watching television.
- Physical activities can be combined with productive activities such as household repairs, raking the back yard, or washing the car. These shared activities promote a sense of responsibility and significance in children that is, in turn, linked to greater self-esteem, academic and occupational achievement, psychological well-being, and civic engagement later in life.
- Fathers' involvement in educational activities such as reading to their children or meeting with the teacher have a greater effect on children's academic success than mothers' involvement.
- Fathers' involvement with sons is critical in the transition from boyhood to manhood.
(Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006).

A suggested list of activities for father/child visits is included in Appendix B.

Two charts of developmentally related visit activities are in Appendix C and Appendix D.

What Fathers Say That Informs Father/Child Visits

In 2004 researchers in Kentucky sent out a survey to all fathers involved in the child welfare system. Over 300 fathers responded with a slight majority expressing satisfaction with their contact with the caseworker, invitation to attend meetings regarding their children, perception of being treated politely and professionally by staff, and a conclusion that their children were helped by the agency. A majority of fathers responded negatively to questions about services offered to their family, referring others to the agency for assistance, seeking help in the future from the agency, and receiving services that helped them become better fathers. Earlier comparison surveys involving mostly mothers found satisfaction rates of 80% suggesting that there is a lot of room for improvement in working with fathers.

Fathers also reported on referrals to services and receiving those services. While over 80% of fathers were referred for visits with the child, only 42% actually had visits. About 40% of fathers would have liked a referral to a father support group but only 9% of the fathers were referred to a group (6% attended). Researchers noted that mailing addresses were available for only 16% of fathers and that barriers to receiving services resulted in low follow-through rates for fathers.

The researchers made a number of recommendations that resulted in changes for fathers involved in the Kentucky child welfare system, and these changes included a state information Web site, an annual fatherhood conference, training on father involvement, increased efforts to locate fathers, efforts to improve father parenting, and efforts to involve paternal relatives in placement decisions (Huebner *et al*, 2008).

Other studies confirm the room for improvement in working with fathers involved in the child welfare system. In one study of 286 children's experiences in foster care, for children with a permanency goal of reunification no visits of children's fathers were provided for 85.2% of the fathers during the year prior to June 1, 2005 (Hess 2006). In another study of 251 children's experiences, for the 150 foster children where visiting was applicable, 75.3% of the fathers and children did not visit once during the 18-month period under review (Hess 2003).

Best Practice in Father/Child Visits

All of the research findings, surveys, policies, and practice reviewed thus far provide a framework for best practice in non-resident father/child visits.

Best practice begins from the top down. Agency administrators must:

- Conduct a father-friendly assessment of the child welfare agency to determine current policies, practice, and perceptions regarding fathers
- Take steps to make the agency father-friendly: provide male-oriented decorations and reading material, hire male staff, and establish flexible working hours for staff to in order to accommodate fathers' work schedules
- Provide training to child welfare workers on different styles of communication and parenting of fathers and mothers; the importance of father involvement, including visits, in the child's life; and skill-building in working with fathers
- Establish policies that provide mothers and fathers with equal opportunities in all areas including case planning, services, visits, and placement
- Require that fathers be identified, located, and contacted when the case is opened. Locator services need to be available for workers to use as a resource, and supervisors need to ensure that case records reflect the same contact information for fathers as for mothers
- Provide male staff to make the initial contact with fathers
- Set standards for father/child visits that include a written plan with frequency, length, location, and supervision of visits and planned activities

- Coordinate with other agencies, including courts, legal advocates, service providers, and visiting centers to ensure that fathers are included in case planning and visits
- Work with local fatherhood support groups on a referral process that effectively connects fathers to support groups

For the child welfare worker, best practice for non-resident father/child visits includes:

- Participate in every opportunity for training on father involvement and skill-building in working with fathers
- Determine to provide fathers with equal opportunities to mothers in all areas including case planning, services, visits, and placement
- Identify, locate, and contact the father as quickly as possible after the case is opened
- Female and male workers should partner to the greatest extent possible when working with fathers
- Allow fathers to express anger and dissatisfaction without becoming defensive or judgmental
- Appeal to fathers to be involved with their child based on the child's well-being; separate fathering from the father's relationship with the mother
- Explain to fathers the agency's commitment to involving fathers and providing fathers with the same opportunities as mothers
- Share information with fathers on the importance of visiting and frequency of visits
- Schedule father/child visits based on the child's age and increase visiting frequency as the father/child relationship develops
- Provide the father with suggested activities for the visit, including learning opportunities for the child; allow for physical play and roughhousing during visits
- Refer fathers to local fatherhood support groups and follow up to make sure that fathers get connected to the support group
- Debrief visits with fathers and address fathers' concerns
- Document all contacts with fathers and the fathers' family in the case record

A Visiting Plan Form and Visiting Reporting Form are included in Appendix E.

Visiting Programs

While child welfare workers are key to managing successful father and child visits, an increasing number of child welfare agencies purchase visiting services from contracted agencies. The National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning has established a database of agencies that arrange family visiting services for children in foster care. The database includes 104 programs in 37 states. Almost all of the programs provide on-site visiting space and supervision; about 40% provide therapeutic, facilitated, or coached visits; one-third provide transportation for the child, and about one-fourth of the programs provide

supervised or coached visits at a parent's home or relative's home. Visiting programs can assist the worker in achieving positive and frequent contacts between fathers and children.

Special Issues—Domestic Violence and Child Support

Domestic Violence

In Connecticut domestic violence was identified as the top safety factor in child protection investigations in 8% to 9% of cases. In 2006 the Department of Children and Families funded the Domestic Violence Consultation Initiative to place 13 domestic violence consultants in all area offices statewide. The client for these consultants is the social work staff. The consultants help the social work staff identify the impact of domestic violence on children, develop plans to intervene with the perpetrator, and provide supportive services.

Since its inception, the consultants have provided training to over 700 social work staff and 400 community provider staff and have engaged in over 4,500 consultations. The result is a *decrease* in the removal rate of children where domestic violence is a factor. The indication is that social workers have increased capacity to assess risk and safety while developing plans to allow children to be safely maintained at home. The following is a comment from one of the local offices:

We always thought that removing the batterer reduced risk—now we are thinking about how removing the batterer may be increasing the batterer's power.

And, from a domestic violence consultant:

In the beginning, any worker who met with me met because they were forced to by their supervisor. Now workers come of their own volition. One worker in particular...now brings every case with domestic violence to me. She keeps asking if certain things she said/asked a client were okay and tells me she wants to learn about the best way to do DV cases. I'd say she does the (investigation) protocol better than anyone and is still asking for help.

Not all families can stay together in cases involving domestic violence. However, the Connecticut child welfare agency is leading the way by providing domestic violence experts to assist caseworkers in identifying services and procedures to help fathers develop healthier relationships with their children.

Child Support

The child welfare and child support systems are increasingly cooperating in locating fathers. The downside is that child support enforcement can be economically punitive to men with low incomes (Curran, 2003). In the past, payment of child support has been linked to allowing the father to have visits with his child(ren). It appears that child support payments and father/child visits have now been delinked as no policy could be found that connects them. In fact, some state policies specifically prohibit using parent/child visits as a reward or punishment.

Collaboration

Father/child visits will be successful only if there is collaboration within and across all the

systems involved. In the child welfare system, father/child visits are dependent on policies, procedures, and resources established by administrators (top-down) as well as caseworker commitment, training, and best practice in implementing father/child visits (bottom-up). Other systems that are involved include the courts, attorneys, legal advocates, foster parents, service providers, visiting programs, child support enforcement, and domestic violence programs.

Some court systems have developed model visiting policies. The Polk County District Court in Des Moines, Iowa, under the leadership of Judge Constance Cohen, developed comprehensive visiting guidelines from a number of sources including those referenced in this monograph.

Another area requiring collaboration in father/child visits is the role of foster parents. The New Mexico child welfare agency has a promising practice titled Ice Breaker. Within two days of the child's placement in out-of-home care, a facilitator schedules a meeting between the birth parents and foster parents. The facilitator guides the discussion and keeps the focus on the child's needs. Parents can provide information about the child's likes and dislikes, special needs, favorite toys, bedtime routines, etc. The foster parents provide information about their family and routines. Early feedback on the Ice Breaker program is very positive with children making a better adjustment when information is shared between the birth parents and foster parents. A foster father can use the Ice Breaker model to reach out to the child's father.

Summary

Best practice for father/child visits is in its infancy. However, there is well-established best practice for parent/child visits that provides a solid foundation for father/child visits. Workers need training on the different styles of communication and parenting of fathers and of mothers and need training for skill-building in working with fathers. It's critical that workers identify, locate, and contact fathers as quickly as possible and provide fathers with the same opportunities as mothers in case planning and visits with children. Fathers' visits with children should incorporate learning activities with physical activities. Fathers should be referred to support groups and provided with appropriate services that overcome barriers to developing a healthy relationship with their children.

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Appendix A

Checklist of Content Areas Currently Addressed in Policies Regarding Visiting of Children in Care by Family Members and Others

Included in state's policy?	Specific guidance given?	Content Area
_____	_____	The purpose of visiting
_____	_____	Written visit plans for parents, children, siblings
_____	_____	When a plan for visiting must be developed
_____	_____	Process of development of visiting plans
_____	_____	Content of visiting plans
_____	_____	Review and revision of visiting plans
_____	_____	Documentation of visiting
_____	_____	Who may participate in visits
_____	_____	Frequency of visits
_____	_____	Responsibilities regarding visits
_____	_____	Case manager/caseworker responsibilities
_____	_____	Parental responsibilities
_____	_____	Sanctions when parents do not visit as planned
_____	_____	Foster parent responsibilities
_____	_____	Right to contact: protections and limitations
_____	_____	Circumstances in which visits may be limited or terminated
_____	_____	Procedures for changing visit plans
_____	_____	Use of visits to reward or punish
_____	_____	Procedure for appeal if a parent disagrees with plan
_____	_____	Where visits should or may occur
_____	_____	When visits should or may occur
_____	_____	How soon after placement children, parents and siblings should visit
_____	_____	Whether visits are supervised and by whom
_____	_____	Visiting activities
_____	_____	Visit duration
_____	_____	Visiting in specific situations
_____	_____	When a parent is incarcerated
_____	_____	When a parent is in an institution
_____	_____	Domestic violence
_____	_____	Sexual abuse
_____	_____	Termination of parental rights

Peg Hess, in Visiting Between Children in Care and Their Families: A Look At Current Policy. New York: The National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning.

Appendix B

Activities for Fathers and Their Children

Encourage the child and father to do activities that cost little or nothing. This prevents the child from viewing the father as only a “gift-giver” and reduces friction between the father and the mother (the mother often has less income). In surveys, children frequently say they want to spend more time with their fathers, just “hanging out.” The best and most memorable activities are often the simplest: teaching a child to ride a bike, raking leaves, washing the car, watching the father shave, taking a walk, cooking a meal together, singing a favorite tune, enjoying a sunset.

Activities for Fathers and Children Who Have Little or No Face-to-Face Contact

- E-mail
- Exchange photographs
- Read to the child on tape while child looks at the book
- Make things to send to each other
- Exchange videotapes of events the child or father is involved in, the child at school, or the father at work
- Find and share information about a topic of mutual interest

Activities for Fathers and Children Who Have Face-to-Face Contact

- Read to the child, listen to the child read, take the child to the library
- Attend a church service
- Go for walks, go for a drive
- Visit local landmarks, historical places, museums, ancestral homes of family members
- Tour local industries
- Plant/harvest from a community garden or go to the local farmer’s market
- Look at tools at the hardware store
- Attend county fairs, rodeos, auto racing events
- Have a game night
- Build something together
- Toss a ball or Frisbee
- Attend a play or musical production
- Go grocery shopping
- Cook
- Do a craft
- Go to a playground

From the Basic Fatherhood Training Curriculum Training & Resource Guide, National Family Preservation Network

Appendix C



40 Developmental Assets® for Early Childhood (ages 3 to 5)

Search Institute® has identified the following building blocks of healthy development—known as **Developmental Assets**®—that help young children grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.



External Assets	Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Family support—Parent(s) and/or primary caregiver(s) provide the child with high levels of consistent and predictable love, physical care, and positive attention in ways that are responsive to the child's individuality. Positive family communication—Parent(s) and/or primary caregiver(s) express themselves positively and respectfully, engaging young children in conversations that invite their input. Other adult relationships—With the family's support, the child experiences consistent, caring relationships with adults outside the family. Caring neighbors—The child's network of relationships includes neighbors who provide emotional support and a sense of belonging. Caring climate in child-care and educational settings—Caregivers and teachers create environments that are nurturing, accepting, encouraging, and secure. Parent involvement in child care and education—Parent(s), caregivers, and teachers together create a consistent and supportive approach to fostering the child's successful growth. 	
	Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Community cherishes and values young children—Children are welcomed and included throughout community life. Children seen as resources—The community demonstrates that children are valuable resources by investing in a child-rearing system of family support and high-quality activities and resources to meet children's physical, social, and emotional needs. Service to others—The child has opportunities to perform simple but meaningful and caring actions for others. Safety—Parent(s), caregivers, teachers, neighbors, and the community take action to ensure children's health and safety. 	
	Boundaries & Expectations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Family boundaries—The family provides consistent supervision for the child and maintains reasonable guidelines for behavior that the child can understand and achieve. Boundaries in child-care and educational settings—Caregivers and educators use positive approaches to discipline and natural consequences to encourage self-regulation and acceptable behavior. Neighborhood boundaries—Neighbors encourage the child in positive, acceptable behavior, as well as intervene in negative behavior in a supportive, nonthreatening way. Adult role models—Parent(s), caregivers, and other adults model self-control, social skills, engagement in learning, and healthy lifestyles. Positive peer relationships—Parent(s) and caregivers seek to provide opportunities for the child to interact positively with other children. Positive expectations—Parent(s), caregivers, and teachers encourage and support the child in behaving appropriately, undertaking challenging tasks, and performing activities to the best of her or his abilities. 	
	Constructive Use of Time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Play and creative activities—The child has daily opportunities to play in ways that allow self-expression, physical activity, and interaction with others. Out-of-home and community programs—The child experiences well-designed programs led by competent, caring adults in well-maintained settings. Religious community—The child participates in age-appropriate religious activities and caring relationships that nurture her or his spiritual development. Time at home—The child spends most of her or his time at home participating in family activities and playing constructively, with parent(s) guiding TV and electronic game use. 	
	Internal Assets	Commitment to Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Motivation to mastery—The child responds to new experiences with curiosity and energy, resulting in the pleasure of mastering new learning and skills. Engagement in learning experiences—The child fully participates in a variety of activities that offer opportunities for learning. Home-program connection—The child experiences security, consistency, and connections between home and out-of-home care programs and learning activities. Bonding to programs—The child forms meaningful connections with out-of-home care and educational programs. Early literacy—The child enjoys a variety of pre-reading activities, including adults reading to her or him daily, looking at and handling books, playing with a variety of media, and showing interest in pictures, letters, and numbers.
		Positive Values	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Caring—The child begins to show empathy, understanding, and awareness of others' feelings. Equality and social justice—The child begins to show concern for people who are excluded from play and other activities or not treated fairly because they are different. Integrity—The child begins to express her or his views appropriately and to stand up for a growing sense of what is fair and right. Honesty—The child begins to understand the difference between truth and lies, and is truthful to the extent of her or his understanding. Responsibility—The child begins to follow through on simple tasks to take care of her- or himself and to help others. Self-regulation—The child increasingly can identify, regulate, and control her- or his behaviors in healthy ways, using adult support constructively in particularly stressful situations.
		Social Competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Planning and decision making—The child begins to plan for the immediate future, choosing from among several options and trying to solve problems. Interpersonal skills—The child cooperates, shares, plays harmoniously, and comforts others in distress. Cultural awareness and sensitivity—The child begins to learn about her or his own cultural identity and to show acceptance of people who are racially, physically, culturally, or ethnically different from her or him. Resistance skills—The child begins to sense danger accurately, to seek help from trusted adults, and to resist pressure from peers to participate in unacceptable or risky behavior. Peaceful conflict resolution—The child begins to compromise and resolve conflicts without using physical aggression or hurtful language.
		Positive Identity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Personal power—The child can make choices that give a sense of having some influence over things that happen in her or his life. Self-esteem—The child likes her- or himself and has a growing sense of being valued by others. Sense of purpose—The child anticipates new opportunities, experiences, and milestones in growing up. Positive view of personal future—The child finds the world interesting and enjoyable, and feels that he or she has a positive place in it.

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40 Developmental Assets® for Middle Childhood

Search Institute® has identified the following building blocks of healthy development—known as **Developmental Assets®**—that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.



External Assets	Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Family support—Family life provides high levels of love and support. Positive family communication—Parent(s) and child communicate positively. Child feels comfortable seeking advice and counsel from parent(s). Other adult relationships—Child receives support from adults other than her or his parent(s). Caring neighborhood—Child experiences caring neighbors. Caring school climate—Relationships with teachers and peers provide a caring, encouraging environment. Parent involvement in schooling—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the child succeed in school. 	
	Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Community values youth—Child feels valued and appreciated by adults in the community. Children as resources—Child is included in decisions at home and in the community. Service to others—Child has opportunities to help others in the community. Safety—Child feels safe at home, at school, and in her or her neighborhood. 	
	Boundaries & Expectations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Family boundaries—Family has clear and consistent rules and consequences and monitors the child's whereabouts. School boundaries—School provides clear rules and consequences. Neighborhood boundaries—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring the child's behavior. Adult role models—Parent(s) and other adults in the child's family, as well as nonfamily adults, model positive, responsible behavior. Positive peer influence—Child's closest friends model positive, responsible behavior. High expectations—Parent(s) and teachers expect the child to do her or his best at school and in other activities. 	
	Constructive Use of Time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Creative activities—Child participates in music, art, drama, or creative writing two or more times per week. Child programs—Child participates two or more times per week in cocurricular school activities or structured community programs for children. Religious community—Child attends religious programs or services one or more times per week. Time at home—Child spends some time most days both in high-quality interaction with parents and doing things at home other than watching TV or playing video games. 	
	Internal Assets	Commitment to Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Achievement Motivation—Child is motivated and strives to do well in school. Learning Engagement—Child is responsive, attentive, and actively engaged in learning at school and enjoys participating in learning activities outside of school. Homework—Child usually hands in homework on time. Bonding to school—Child cares about teachers and other adults at school. Reading for Pleasure—Child enjoys and engages in reading for fun most days of the week.
		Positive Values	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Caring—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to help other people. Equality and social justice—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to speak up for equal rights for all people. Integrity—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to stand up for one's beliefs. Honesty—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to tell the truth. Responsibility—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to accept personal responsibility for behavior. Healthy Lifestyle—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to have good health habits and an understanding of healthy sexuality.
		Social Competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Planning and decision making—Child thinks about decisions and is usually happy with results of her or his decisions. Interpersonal Competence—Child cares about and is affected by other people's feelings, enjoys making friends, and when frustrated or angry, tries to calm her- or himself. Cultural Competence—Child knows and is comfortable with people of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds and with her or his own cultural identity. Resistance skills—Child can stay away from people who are likely to get her or him in trouble and is able to say no to doing wrong or dangerous things. Peaceful conflict resolution—Child seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
		Positive Identity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Personal power—Child feels he or she has some influence over things that happen in her or his life. Self-esteem—Child likes and is proud to be the person that he or she is. Sense of purpose—Child sometimes thinks about what life means and whether there is a purpose for her or his life. Positive view of personal future—Child is optimistic about her or his personal future.

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40 Developmental Assets[®] for Adolescents (ages 12-18)

Search Institute[®] has identified the following building blocks of healthy development—known as Developmental Assets[®]—that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.



External Assets	Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family support—Family life provides high levels of love and support. 2. Positive family communication—Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents. 3. Other adult relationships—Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults. 4. Caring neighborhood—Young person experiences caring neighbors. 5. Caring school climate—School provides a caring, encouraging environment. 6. Parent involvement in schooling—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school. 	
	Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Community values youth—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth. 8. Youth as resources—Young people are given useful roles in the community. 9. Service to others—Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week. 10. Safety—Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood. 	
	Boundaries & Expectations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Family boundaries—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts. 12. School boundaries—School provides clear rules and consequences. 13. Neighborhood boundaries—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior. 14. Adult role models—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. 15. Positive peer influence—Young person's best friends model responsible behavior. 16. High expectations—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well. 	
	Constructive Use of Time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Creative activities—Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts. 18. Youth programs—Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community. 19. Religious community—Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution. 20. Time at home—Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week. 	
	Internal Assets	Commitment to Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Achievement Motivation—Young person is motivated to do well in school. 22. School Engagement—Young person is actively engaged in learning. 23. Homework—Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day. 24. Bonding to school—Young person cares about her or his school. 25. Reading for Pleasure—Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
		Positive Values	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 26. Caring—Young person places high value on helping other people. 27. Equality and social justice—Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty. 28. Integrity—Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs. 29. Honesty—Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy." 30. Responsibility—Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility. 31. Restraint—Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
		Social Competencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 32. Planning and decision making—Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices. 33. Interpersonal Competence—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. 34. Cultural Competence—Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds. 35. Resistance skills—Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. 36. Peaceful conflict resolution—Young person seeks to resolve conflicts nonviolently.
		Positive Identity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 37. Personal power—Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me." 38. Self-esteem—Young person reports having a high self-esteem. 39. Sense of purpose—Young person reports that "my life has a purpose." 40. Positive view of personal future—Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

Appendix D

Developmentally Related Visit Activities

Age	Developmental Tasks	Developmentally Related Visit Activities
Infancy (0–2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop primary attachment • Develop object permanence • Basic motor development (sit, reach, crawl, stand, walk) • Word recognition • Begin exploration and mastery of the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet basic needs (feeding, cuddling, bathing, protecting) • Play peek-a-boo games • Help with standing, walking, etc., by holding hand; play "come to me" games • Name objects, repeat name games, read to child • Encourage exploration; childproof home; take walks; play together with colorful noisy moving items
Toddler (2–4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop impulse control • Language development • Imitation, fantasy play • Large motor coordination (run, climb, dance) • Small motor coordination • Develop basic sense of time • Identify and assert preferences, sense of self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make and consistently enforce appropriate rules • Talk together; read simple stories; play word games • Play "let's pretend" games; encourage imitative play by doing things together such as "clean house," "go to store" • Play together at park; assist in learning to ride tricycle; dance together to music • Draw and color together; string beads together • Discuss visits and visit activities in terms of "after lunch," "before supper," etc. • Allow choices in foods eaten, activities, clothes worn
Pre-school/Early School (5–7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender identification • Continuing development of conscience • Develop ability to solve problems • Learn cause–effect relationships • Task completion and order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be open to discuss boy–girl physical differences • Be open to discuss child's perception of gender roles; read book about heroines and heroes together • Make and enforce rules; discuss consequences of behavior • Encourage choices; discuss problems together • Point out cause–effect and logical consequences of actions • Plan activities with beginning, middle, end (e.g., prepare to bake, make cake, clean up) • Play simple games such as Candyland, Go Fish
School-age (8–12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School entry and adjustment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop for school supplies and clothes together; provide birth certificate, medical record for school entry; go with child to visit school prior to first day; talk with child about school experiences; attend

Age	Developmental Tasks	Developmentally Related Visit Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill development (school, sports, special interests) • Peer group development and team play • Development of self awareness • Preparation for puberty 	<p>school activities and conferences with teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help with homework; practice sports together; demonstrate support of child's special interests, such as help with collections; attend school conferences and activities; work on household, yard tasks together • Involve peers in visits; attend team activities with child (child's team or observe team together) • Talk with child about own feelings and about child's feelings • Discuss physical changes expected; answer questions openly
Early Adolescence (13–16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cope with physical changes • Develop abstract thinking • Development of relationship skills • Become more independent of parents • Changes in peer group associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information re: physical changes; be positive about and help with personal appearance, such as teaching about shaving, make-up • Plan for and discuss future; discuss "what if?" • Be open discussing relationships, problems with friends; set clear expectations • Help learn to drive; assist in finding part-time job and handling money; support school completion • Transport to peer activities; include peers in visits
Late Adolescence (17–22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation from family • Develop life goals, rework identity • Develop intimate relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage independence through helping find apartment, apply for jobs, think through choices; tolerate mixed feelings about separation • Be open to discuss options, "think things through" together; share own experiences as young adult, both successes and mistakes • Be open to discuss feelings, problems, and plans

Drawn from Peg McCartt Hess, and Kathleen Ohman Proch, Family Visiting In Out-of-Home Care. A Guide to Practice (Washington, D.C.: CWLA, 1988) and from Gail Folaron, "Preparing Children for Family Reunification," in Reconnection: Program, Practice, and Training in Family Reunification—Conference Proceedings, edited by B.A. Pine, R. Krieger, and A.N. Maluccio (West Hartford, CT: Center for the Study of Social Welfare, University of Connecticut School of Social Work, 1990) in Teaching Family Reunification: A Sourcebook, R. Walsh, A. Maluccio, and W. Pine, Child Welfare League of America, Washington, D.C, 1994. Used by permission of CWLA.

Appendix E

Visiting for Fathers/Children

Family

Father's Name: _____

Child(ren)'s Name(s): _____

Frequency

_____ times per week

List days/times for visit(s):

Once per week

Every other week

Once per month

Other: (list) _____

Length

One hour

All day

Two hours

Overnight

Half-day (3–4 hours)

Other: (list) _____

Location

Father's home

Visiting center

Relative's home

Other: (list) _____

Foster parents' home

Supervisor

Visits unsupervised

Visits supervised by: _____

Transportation

Activities

Phone Calls/E-mail

List days/times permitted:

Adapted from Peg Hess, Visitation: Promoting Positive Visitation Practices for Children and Their Families Through Leadership, Teamwork, and Collaboration

Visiting Reporting Form for Fathers/Children

Family

Father's Name: _____

Child(ren)'s Name(s): _____

Person Completing This Report

Name/Title: _____

Visit Being Reported

Date/Time: _____

Location: _____

Supervisor

Visits unsupervised

Visits supervised by: _____

Activities

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Any Significant Issues Occurring During Visit

Summary of Current Father/Child Relationship:

Recommended Goals/Activities for Future Visits

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Adapted from Peg Hess, Visitation: Promoting Positive Visitation Practices for Children and Their Families Through Leadership, Teamwork, and Collaboration