

A Successful Personal Parenting Time



For The Primary Residential Parent: Supervised Parenting Time can also be a challenge for you. Typically you have been taking care of your child(ren)'s everyday needs and have a routine for yourself and your family. Supervised Parenting Time can sometimes feel like one more responsibility. Of course you also have concerns and questions about this parenting time and how it will affect your child(ren). You have it within your control to set your child(ren) up for success when they have a Supervised Parenting Time with their other parent.

Guidelines to Help You and Your Child(ren)

- If your child(ren) and/or you are being seen by (or have in the past been seen by) a counselor or therapist, you should contact them in advance regarding Supervised Parenting Time. If your legal case has a Guardian ad Litem or if you have legal counsel, you should also contact them in advance regarding Supervised Parenting Time.
- Follow the schedule for your child(ren)'s Supervised Parenting Time with the other parent. Only cancel for emergencies. If you cancel the visit, be willing to schedule a make-up time.
- Arrive on time.
- Prepare your child(ren) for the parenting time. For young child(ren) mark parenting time days on a calendar. Make sure older child(ren) know in advance when the parenting time is going to happen, rather than springing it on them at the last minute. Help gather toys and belongings for the parenting time.
- Be positive. Demonstrate to your child(ren) through your words and actions that you want them to have this time with the other parent. Reassure your child(ren) that you support him or her in having a pleasant visit.
- Don't talk about the divorce, or issues of the litigation, the other parent, or court actions with your child(ren) or in their presence or ear shot.
- Do everything you can to keep your child(ren) out of conflict that may exist between you and the other parent, or other relatives.

- Don't criticize or badmouth the other parent or their relatives or the Supervised Parenting Time. No matter what.
- If having your child(ren) see the other parent is a problem for you, don't ignore your feelings. Talk with a therapist, a friend, a professional from your church, synagogue, temple, or mosque, or someone who can be supportive and objective. However, make sure not to violate any Court orders regarding the privacy of certain information. Consult with your attorney before communicating with others regarding problems you or your child(ren) are experiencing.
- After the parenting time, don't pump your child(ren) for information about what went on. Accept the things that they tell you, on their own time schedule. Be a good listener. If you hear things that concern you, contact A Family Connection's Director or Assistant Director to discuss your concerns.
- Watch your nonverbal language. Sometimes a simple expression on your face can speak volumes to your child(ren) about your lack of support of the parent or the parenting time.
- Avoid discussing the litigation or terms of the parenting time with your child(ren).
- Avoid making your child(ren) a messenger to the other party.
- Say brief and positive good-byes to your child(ren) when leaving your child with the Supervisor for the other parent's Parenting Time to begin. When you arrive to pick up your child(ren) do not discuss the details of the Parenting Time that just took place with the child or the Supervisor.
- Follow to the letter the rules set forth by your Court orders, the requirements from A Family Connection, and instruction from the Supervisor.

Preparing Your Child(ren) For Personal Supervised Parenting Time

- If your child(ren) and/or you are being seen by (or have in the past been seen by) a counselor or therapist, you should contact them in advance for assistance in preparing the child(ren) for the Supervised Parenting Time. If your legal case has the appointment of a Guardian ad Litem or if you have legal counsel, you should also contact them in advance for assistance in preparing the child(ren) for the Supervised Parenting Time.
- You can start by explaining A Family Connection's Personal Supervised Parenting Time process and answering their questions. You might tell them where and when you'll drop them off, where they'll go afterwards, where their other parent will be, and when you'll pick them up.
- You can tell them the Supervisor's name and explain what the Supervisor's role will be during the visit.
- Trust your own judgment about your child(ren). You'll know how much information to provide, how to say it in a way that they'll understand, and what their concerns might be. Prior to communicating with your child(ren) regarding the parenting time, consult with your attorney or the Guardian ad Litem about any restrictions that exist regarding communications with your child(ren).
- If necessary, an orientation can be scheduled prior to the first Personal Supervised Parenting Time, which can be very reassuring to your child(ren). At the orientation, your child(ren) can be told where they'll be dropped off, where they'll visit, and what toys and activities may be there. They'll also get a chance to meet the Director or Assistant Director and the Supervisor.
- Part of your preparation should be listening to your child(ren) talk about their ideas and concerns and answering their questions, to the extent permitted by the Court's orders. It is important to support their positive feelings, and to get them independent assistance if they have negative feelings.

- Try to make the parenting time seem like a regular family activity, and explain that other children spend parenting time with their parents in this manner as well.
- Help them plan activities or think about what items they might bring with them to the parenting time.
- If they haven't seen the other parent in a while, it might be helpful for them to see a photo of their other parent.
- Some children really look forward to parenting time. It is important to try to stay positive, even if you don't feel that way.
- If your child(ren) has concerns or fears about the parenting time, talk to him/her about their options and let them know that the Supervisor at their parenting time is there to help. For example, if your child(ren) is afraid that the other parent will get mad and start yelling at him/her, you can explain how the Supervisor might take a break or end the Parenting Time for that day. The Supervisor might also arrange for a code word for your child(ren) to use if they need a break or want to talk with the Supervisor.

When a Child is Resistant

- If your child(ren) and/or you are being seen by (or have in the past been seen by) a counselor or therapist, you should contact them if you believe there is or may be resistance from your child(ren) to participate with Supervised Parenting Time. If your legal case has a Guardian ad Litem or if you have legal counsel, you should also contact them if you believe there is or may be resistance from your child(ren) to participate with Supervised Parenting Time.
- If permitted by the Court, answer your child(ren)'s questions by trying to be positive and encouraging. For example, you might say, "Ms. ... (the Supervisor) will be there the whole time. I think you should give it a try." If questions or concerns persist, contact the child(ren)'s Guardian ad Litem, and therapist or counselor.
- You should talk with the Director or Assistant Director about your child(ren)'s concerns and work with them to come up with a plan that supports your child(ren). Find out A Family Connection's policy when children don't want to visit and how the Supervisor is trained to approach these situations.
- You might be worried about your child(ren), thinking that even if the Supervisor keeps them physically safe, the Parenting Time with their other parent may hurt them emotionally. A Family Connection's Supervisors have been trained to watch for this concern in every case. Have the child's Guardian ad Litem and counselor or therapist give your child(ren) age appropriate options, such as, "You can talk with the Supervisor about the Parenting Time or ask them for a break if you want one." If there are no restrictions by Court order, you may give your child(ren) age appropriate options, such as this.
- Make sure your child(ren) know they can always count on you for support. If you're in litigation, keep in mind that your child(ren)'s other parent might try to argue that the child(ren) don't want to go to his/her supervised parenting time because you are "turning your child(ren) against them" or "trying to alienate them from the child(ren)."
- Keep in mind that A Family Connection's staff are not the reason for why there may be conflict in your family. Just like you, they are looking out for your child(ren) and following court orders.