

Family Ties of the Lowcountry, LLC

Parent Training and Support Services

Supervised Visitation Services

P.O. Box 274, Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464

Telephone: 843.478.9560

E-mail: Linda@FamilyTiesSC.com

www.FamilyTiesSC.com

SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

At Family Ties, our goal is to provide reputable, professional supervised visitation services to families in our community that are consistent and time-sensitive, held in relaxed and comfortable settings, with the least amount of interference. Supervisors at Family Ties are compassionate and respectful, thorough and conscientious, and devoutly child-focused. At the same time, they also have the background and training to effectively monitor questionable situations, keeping the child's safety the paramount concern.

Supervised visitation is an opportunity for children to spend time with their families in the presence of a trained, neutral observer. In an effort to ensure the best outcome of supervised visits and the well-being of children, there are certain basic guidelines that must be agreed upon. Our guidelines are based on the national standards for best practice for the provision of supervised visitation. They are as follows:

GENERAL STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR SUPERVISION:

I. Initiation of Service:

- a. An initial interview with the custodial and non-custodial parties will be conducted over the phone or in person. Case history will be obtained; concerns will be addressed; and requests will be discussed. If appropriate, requests will be incorporated into the provision of services.
- b. If supervised visitation is ordered by the courts or is part of a treatment plan, a copy of the court order and/or treatment plan is requested. Directives from court orders and treatment plans will be followed.
- c. If an Order of Protection or Restraining Order has been issued, a copy of the order should be on file at Family Ties.
- d. An information sheet will be completed and remain on file with Family Ties. Information needed includes: contact information; names and birthdates of children; any health concerns; scheduling and contact preferences; and names/contact info for professionals involved with case.
- e. A release of information form will need to be signed and on file with Family Ties so that staff and other professionals involved in the case can be updated on supervision process.
- f. Supervision Guidelines should be signed by the custodial and visiting parties and on file at Family Ties.
- g. A copy of the driver's licenses for the custodial and visiting parties should be on file.
- h. A trained professional supervisor will be assigned to provide supervision services.

II. Scheduling of Visits:

- a. Family Ties will coordinate the scheduling of visits unless other arrangements have been made. Scheduling should not be arranged through the child.

Family Ties of the Lowcountry, LLC

- b. A week's notice to request a visit is preferred. Planning ahead will ensure preferences are accommodated.
- c. Please give 24 hours-notice if you must cancel a visit. We all understand that emergencies happen. That reason will be documented. If no cancellation notice is submitted or reasonable explanation given, a \$50.00 cancellation fee will be charged to the party who cancelled. The party cancelling visit may be responsible for reimbursing the Supervisor's fees for the scheduled visit time as well.
- d. Visits may be refused, canceled or terminated when the terms of these guidelines for service are violated or if Supervisor determines that it is not in the best interest of the child and/or others involved with visitation services. Fees will not be refunded if visit is ended early for any reason. If Supervisor has to pay for transportation for any reason, the parent responsible for this additional expense will also be responsible for reimbursement.
- e. Phone calls to Family Ties' supervisors/staff should be limited to scheduling or discussing visit concerns. Family Ties does not offer legal or therapeutic advice. Calls should last no more than 15 minutes (except for initial interview.) I understand that anything over that will be billed at \$15/30 minutes.

III. Visit Specifics:

- a. Supervisors are considered Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse. They are required to make a report if they receive any information that gives them reason to believe a child has been or may be abused or neglected.
- b. Sight and Sound Supervision Services will be provided unless directed otherwise in the court order. Sight and Sound Supervision means that the Supervisor has to be in a position to see and hear everything that transpires between child and visiting party. Visit may be terminated if this protocol is not followed by visiting party.
- c. Discussion about the court case, attorneys, legal processes or attempted visits will not be allowed.
- d. Alcohol or drug consumption during visit or prior to visiting with child will not be allowed.
- e. Profanity, abusive language, physical aggression, or acts of intimidation will not be permitted. Weapons, including toy weapons, are not permitted. No corporal punishment is permitted.
- f. Supervisors will ride in automobiles with children and the visiting parties. Please refrain from texting or e-mailing while driving. When not in automobile, visiting party will give car keys to Supervisor to hold. If Supervisor drives, additional mileage will accrue and shall be reimbursed at the rate set by the state of South Carolina.
- g. If a child comes to the Supervisor with a concern, the Supervisor will talk/interview child alone and take statement. It will not be discounted nor inflated. Supervisor will then determine if intervention is necessary.
- h. If there are sexual abuse allegations or past convictions of sexual abuse, additional safety practices may be implemented. These may include restrictions of physical contact with the child such as lap sitting, hair combing, stroking, hand holding, prolonged hugging, wrestling, tickling, horse-playing, changing diapers, or accompanying the child to the bathroom. These additional safety precautions will only be implemented at the direction of a court order or agreement between legal/mental health professionals.

Family Ties of the Lowcountry, LLC

- i. Family Ties should be notified prior to beginning of visit if there is a change in who will be present during exchanges when child is being dropped off or picked up. Supervisor will ask for photo identification before releasing the child to an unknown person.
- j. The fee for service is payable at the beginning of each visit. Parties are asked to bring the exact amount in the form of cash, check, or money order made payable to Family Ties. A credit card payment may be made through our web site www.FamilyTiesSC.com as well, as long as it is done before the visit occurs. If a check is returned for any reason, future payments must be made in cash. Before another visit is scheduled, responsible party will reimburse Family Ties for the returned check as well as pay for bank returned check fees. Mileage shall be an additional charge and will accrue according to the rate established by the state of South Carolina. Visiting party will be responsible for paying for any fees for Supervisor, such as entrance fees to parks, movies, meals, etc. The fee for holiday visits will be higher.
- k. A brief email will be sent to the Guardian ad Litem and/or attorneys following the supervised visit. Basic details including date and time of visit, parties attending visit, if the court order directives were followed and if there were any critical incidences to report. More detailed reports or affidavits may be requested with notice and a fee.

IV. Specific Information for Custodial Parent/relative:

- a. Custodial party agrees to ensure both current contact and emergency back-up numbers are on file. If an emergency happens and the visit is terminated, someone will need to pick-up the child from the Supervisor. If family cannot be reached, DSS will be contacted.
- b. If your child needs medication during visits, written consent from the custodial party is required, giving permission to the visiting party to administer the medication. These arrangements are to be made prior to the visit.
- c. Custodial party is responsible for alerting Family Ties of medical, physical and psychological conditions/issues with child. Supervisor should be made aware of any allergies or diet restrictions.
- d. The custodial party is requested to supply clothing, bottles, formula or whatever else is needed for good care of the child during the visit. A well loved stuffed toy, blanket or game can be sent with the child to facilitate his/her emotional comfort while visiting.
- e. Custodial party will not send information to the visiting party via the child.
- f. If child is resistant to upcoming visit, Family Ties should be notified. If child reports problems about visit when he/she returns home, Family Ties should be notified immediately.

V. Specific Information for Visiting Parent/relative as well as for any Guest:

- a. Family Ties should be notified in advance about the activities planned for the visit, when possible, so the child and Supervisor can prepare ahead of time.
- b. Family Ties should be notified in advance about any other parties who will be at visit.
- c. Conversations should remain focused on the present so that the child experiences a calm and pleasurable visit. References to past events and future plans should be avoided in discussions with the child. (Past events may have caused stress/trauma and no one knows what will happen in the future.)
- d. If child initiates conversations about the future, visiting party should redirect the questions to appropriate, current topics. If you need help redirecting conversations, ask Supervisor for assistance.

Family Ties of the Lowcountry, LLC

- e. Physical contact with the child should be invited, but not demanded or coerced.
- f. Visiting parties are not to be alone with the child or engage in whispered conversations.
- g. Visiting parties will not make disparaging comments about the other party - or his or her relatives, friends or loved ones.
- h. Visiting parties are not to ask child for information about the other party's household, friends, income or activities.
- i. Visiting parties will not send information to the custodial party via the child.
- j. Visiting parties are not to discuss adult issues or personal problems. No promises should be made.
- k. Visiting party will not send information to the custodial party via the child.
- l. Visits in private homes will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Unless specifically ordered by the court.

VI. Therapeutic Supervision:

Our Therapeutic Supervised Visitation Program provides specialized and intensive services to families who need to strengthen or repair their relationship with their children. This includes, but is not limited to, families involved in high-risk custody and visitation cases; to children who are resistant to visit with a parent; and to children who are estranged from a parent and need reintroduction. The therapeutic process varies from family to family and is designed to be flexible around each family's needs. Family Ties has a licensed mental health professional available to provide parent/child therapy as well as therapeutic supervised visitation. A written report can be prepared if needed. Supervised visitation is intended to be a temporary remedy with most parents moving toward less restrictive or unsupervised visits whenever possible.

VII. General Information:

- a. Family Ties' Supervisors will protect the confidentiality of the children and parents who receive program services to the extent required by law. Supervisors must refrain from discussing individual cases except with professionals involved in the case or by Order of the Court.
- b. Location and contact information for families dealing with domestic violence and/or restraining orders will be protected.
- c. Personal information is confidential and cannot be released without written and informed consent, except when required by legislation or directed by the courts. Examples of such exceptions may include reporting suspicion of child abuse or a child in need of protection to the Department of Social Services; informing someone in a position of authority if a client is in imminent danger of harming themselves or others; or providing information as directed by the courts through subpoena, search warrant or other legal order.
- d. Family Ties' Supervisors understand that neutrality is an important part of supervised visitation as it entails impartiality and lack of bias. Key issues related to neutrality are that Supervisors treat all parties respectfully, and are not aligned financially, emotionally or legally with either party. Neutrality requires that class bias, race bias, and occupational bias are avoided. Neutrality does not preclude making referrals to community resources or offering parental support guidance to enhance the adult-child relationship.
- e. Parties agree to hold Linda Toporek and her designees harmless from any claims arising out of supervised visits. Visits may be audio-taped for post-note taking accuracy. Tape will be erased once visit notes are written. Permission to opt out is offered.

Family Ties of the Lowcountry, LLC

- f. Evaluations are not provided for families being supervised. Recommendations for future custody and visitation with children are not provided. However, suggestions on how to improve visits may be provided.
- g. All documentation, including visit notes and/or reports, are summaries of observations only and are not intended to provide a basis for evaluation of any participant. These observations have been made in a monitored setting and should not function as evidentiary to any prediction of future interactions outside of this environment. An affidavit for court can be prepared for an additional fee. Since we do not make recommendations, court testimony should not be necessary. If I request or require Linda Toporek or a supervisor with Family Ties to be deposed or to testify, be joined as a party to an action or challenged through the court process, I shall pay all attorney's fees and costs related to the matter at least five days prior to the deposition or hearing. If the Guardian ad Litem or the Judge requests or requires Linda Toporek or supervisor with Family Ties to be deposed or testify, be joined as a party to an action or be challenged through the Court process, I shall pay my pro rata share for all attorney's fees and costs related to the matter at least five days prior to the deposition or hearing. Fees for court/deposition/affidavit preparation are \$50/hour. Fees for court/deposition testimony are \$300 plus mileage and parking.

I have read the **GUIDELINES FOR SUPERVISION SERVICES** and I agree to comply. I understand failure to comply may result in immediate withdrawal of the service being offered.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Printed Name