



County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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March 10, 2017

To: Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Chairman
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Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: Brandon T. Nichols *Brandon Nichols by ds*
Acting Director

RESPONSE TO THE SEPTEMBER 6, 2016 BOARD MOTION (ITEM NO. 16) INTRODUCED BY SUPERVISORS SHEILA KUEHL AND MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH REGARDING VISITATION

On September 6, 2016, the Board of Supervisors directed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to develop a comprehensive plan to best support children, parents, and resource families in meeting family visitation requirements. This plan is to be developed in consultation with the Association of Community Human Services Agencies, community and faith-based visitation providers, Dependency Court, labor representatives, the Children and Families Commission, County Counsel, and if necessary, the Center for Strategic Public-Private Partnerships and the plan should include the following:

- 1) Provide an analysis of the existing use of Human Services Aides (HSAs), and an assessment of possible efficiencies, as well as reorganization and/or additional staffing resources that may be needed for visitation transportation and monitoring; and explore the development of a pilot program to contract with ride-sharing services that might include trauma-informed training for drivers.
- 2) Explore the feasibility of expanding the number of family-friendly visitation sites and ways to ensure that resource families can access them.
- 3) Identify opportunities to improve parenting skills by expanding supportive visitation models. Such models may include training coaches in an approved curriculum to support parents during visits and providing comprehensive program coordination. In addition, DCFS in consultation with visitation agencies shall develop a one-page document for parents with suggestions on how to positively interact with their children's visitation, including age-appropriate topics and activities.
- 4) Ensure implementation of Family Visitation Guidelines, developed with the Juvenile Dependency Court in 2005, with an update to comport with the newly established Core Practice Model.

The Board requested a response in 90 days from the date of the Board hearing. However, in order to allow sufficient time to gain feedback from internal and external stakeholders, the Department requested an extension for the week of March 6, 2017.

Extent of the Family Visitation Issue:

In Los Angeles County, the Child Protection Hotline (CPH) receives over 200,000 calls each year leading to approximately 150,000 investigations of child abuse and neglect. As a result of investigations where it is determined that children are at serious risk of harm, approximately 7,500 children are placed in out-of-home care each year. This is an annual detention rate of approximately 5 percent. Presently, there are nearly 10,000 children receiving reunification services. Of those 10,000 children, almost 70% of them are under the age of ten, and over 40% are younger than five years of age. Each of those children are entitled to receive family visitation to promote safe return to their family.

When a removal is necessary to ensure child safety, the Department makes every effort to place children in relative homes whenever possible. In fact, over 50% of all the children placed in out-of-home care reside in the home of relatives and kin. Children ages 0 to 5 years make up the largest percentage of children placed with relatives.

Children Receiving FR Services by Age Groups and Facility Type as of December 16, 2016

Facility Type	0 - 2 Years	3 - 4 Years	5 - 9 Years	10 - 13 Years	14 - 15 Years	16 - 17 Years	18 Years & Older	Percentage by placement type	Total
Court specified home	1		1	1				.03%	3
FFA Certified Home	909	391	837	417	138	124	15	29.1%	2831
Foster Family Home	286	104	182	86	28	32	7	7.5%	725
Group Home	3		17	67	149	162	17	4.3%	415
Guardian Home		2	3	2	1	3		0.1%	11
Relative Home	1734	817	1635	858	309	270	33	58.2%	5656
Small Family Home	2	4	1					.07%	7
Sup. Independent Living Placement							13	.02%	13
Non Foster Care	27	4	6	6	2	6		.5%	51
Approximate Percentages (by age)	30.5%	13.6%	27.6%	14.8%	6.5%	6.1%	.9%		
Total	2962	1322	2682	1437	627	597	85		9712

By way of example, children removed from April to June 2015, reunified with their parents within a period of 12 months from date of removal at a rate of 35.9%, and reunified at a rate of 41% between 12 to 23 months after removal. Although the Department's performance on these measures is close to the National Standards of 40.5% and 43.6% respectively, the Department firmly believes that children can be safely reunited with their families by making

improvements to the current model of family visitation by increasing the identification of available family resources for placement and visitation, improving access to transit, providing trained "Visitation Coaches", and fully utilizing family visitation centers. By approaching meaningful family visitation as a "service", the Department can support improvements in parental capacity and decrease the time to safe reunification. National research and best practices have consistently confirmed the positive relationship between family visitation and continued attachment, which leads to timely reunification with family.

DCFS Efforts to Address Meaningful Family Visitation

Recognizing the significant relationship between meaningful visitation and timely reunification with parents, the Department has embarked on various strategies to address visitation.

- 2005: DCFS participated in a multi-disciplinary workgroup that included DCFS, the Juvenile Court, and members of the Children's Commission, who together developed the Family Visitation Guidelines, which are based on the developmental needs of the children and youth involved in the child welfare system.
- 2007: DCFS engaged service providers and the faith-based community in the development of 33 visitation centers where children and families could participate in meaningful visitation in local child-friendly environments. This effort included the implementation of visitation models that integrated trained monitors who utilized a strength-based approach. Unfortunately, this initiative has not been fully implemented county-wide with consistency due to the lack of available staff to oversee it, lack of centralized or coordinated management of visitation department-wide, and lack of Visitation Coaches.
- 2010: DCFS developed a demonstration project for a Family Visitation Center Program that focused on safe child custody exchange. The main focus of this project is to ensure that children are able to safely participate in visitation with a parent or parents when domestic violence is a factor. This project was developed after seeing an increase in the number of cases where domestic violence in the family poses ongoing risk to the child.
- 2011: DCFS collaborated with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) on a Metro Board motion to create the Youth on the Move Program, which allows current and former foster youth, over 16 years of age, to receive free annual Transit Access Passes (TAP) that can be used to visit their families. Through this present visitation effort, the Department will ensure this program continues and it expands as necessary.
- 2014: DCFS released a comprehensive visitation protocol further instructing staff to engage relatives and out-of-home care caregivers in formulating visitation plans.

When taking into consideration the number of children receiving family reunification services, the number of hours recommended in the 2005 Visitation Guidelines, and the Juvenile Courts' most common default visitation order of three hours of visitation, three times per week, per child, the Department is involved in facilitating over 4 million hours of visitation every year. Each of these visits requires approximately three hours of complex planning, traveling, scheduling, and documenting, resulting in an additional 2 million staff hours spent facilitating visits. Once arranged, visits take place at various locations and times depending upon the schedules of the youth, their parents, as well as out-of-home caregivers, resource parents, and relatives. Locations for visits include DCFS' regional offices, relative homes, visitation centers, Foster Family Agencies (FFAs), various fast-food restaurants, and public parks.

It is worth noting that in addition to facilitating visitation for families receiving reunification services, the Department also facilitates visitation for children who are in permanent placement, legal guardianship, adoption, and family maintenance case plans, as well as visits between siblings placed in separate homes.

The Use of Human Services Aides in Facilitating Meaningful Visitation

Although visitation may be facilitated by Children's Social Workers (CSWs), volunteers, relatives, and resource parents, the Department most strongly relies on the utilization of Human Services Aides (HSAs) to accomplish this important charge.

The HSA position was created in 2004, exclusively for DCFS to assist CSWs to meet the demands of their caseloads. HSAs are required to have training and/or experience in any human services field. Their duties include locating supportive services for clients, assisting clients in completing applications for various programs, coordinating meetings, supervising visits, and providing transportation for children and adult clients. Approximately 243 HSAs are assigned throughout the Department, and 86 more HSA positions are in the process of being filled.

RESPONSE TO THE BOARD

To ensure a comprehensive response to the Board, the Department formed focus groups with internal and external stakeholders represented by all eighteen DCFS Regional managers, HSAs, CSWs, Supervising Children's Social Workers (SCSWs), Medical Case Management Services (MCMS), Dependency Court managers, Contracts personnel, members of the Training Division, Children Services Administrators, Family Preservation contract monitors, Children's Commissioners, community and faith-based representatives, Association of Community Human Services Agencies, County Counsel, Dependency Court Judges, ridesharing services for minors/adults, and the labor union, among others. All of the participants had an opportunity to review and comment on this report before it was submitted to the Board.

Based on a thorough analysis of this complex issue, DCFS is recommending a comprehensive and multifaceted plan to address visitation. Implementation of this plan will require DCFS to address the following elements, each of which are further detailed throughout this response:

- ❖ Conduct further review of the use of unmonitored vs. monitored visits and explore opportunities to allow families to safely visit without unnecessary monitoring.
 - ❖ Create a paradigm shift from monitored/observed visitation to "Visitation Coaching" to support parental capacities.
 - ❖ Search for technological solutions to facilitate the scheduling of Visitation Coaching.
 - ❖ Consider an "air traffic controller" concept in each Regional office to administer the complex logistics of visitation.
 - ❖ Increase the participation of relatives/non-related extended family members (NREFMs), service providers, and community member volunteers as "Visitation Coaches".
 - ❖ Consider the development of a Visitation Coaching curriculum, training, and Visitation Coach services through a Request For Proposal (RFP) process.
 - ❖ Explore the utilization of ridesharing transportation services via a Request For Information (RFI) process.
 - ❖ Utilize the Up-Front Family Finding process to increase opportunities for Visitation Coaching by relatives/NREFMs.
 - ❖ Enhance the use of currently established visitation centers in the various regional DCFS offices.
 - ❖ Conduct a pilot utilizing the Visitation Coaching Approach prior to a county-wide implementation.
- 1. Provide an analysis of the existing use of Human Services Aides, and an assessment of possible efficiencies, as well as reorganization and/or additional staffing resources that may be needed for visitation transportation and monitoring; and explore the development of a pilot program to contract with ride-sharing services that might include trauma-informed training for drivers.**

Currently DCFS has one HSA assigned to approximately 10-15 CSWs. Each CSW has an average of 22 children on their caseload. In regards to visitation, HSAs are currently assigned to facilitate visits based on their office assignment rather than geographical need. For example, an HSA assigned to an office on the east side of the County may travel to the Antelope Valley (AV) to facilitate a visit for a child from their own regional office, while an HSA from the AV simultaneously travels to the east side of the county to facilitate a visit for a child from their office. Given the expansive size of the county, workday traffic, and placement distances, transporting children for visitation often requires long transportation times for HSAs, children, parents, and caregivers. It is estimated that an HSA spends more than 75% of her/his working hours in activities related to visitation (scheduling, transporting, monitoring, and documenting).

Given that it takes approximately four million hours of time to facilitate visitation and the number of HSAs is limited, it is clear that to increase capacity to facilitate meaningful visitation, the Department must go beyond existing staff resources. The Department will first examine the feasibility of deploying HSAs to facilitate visitation based geographic need, rather than by office assignment. The Department will also engage and partner with stakeholders to expand the number of trained Visitation Coaches and to revitalize the use of existing visitation centers available to families. Stakeholders such as volunteers, members of the faith-based community, contracted service providers, resource families, and relatives/NREFMs are vital resources in meeting this critical need.

The Visitation Coaching Paradigm

Although the Department has engaged in improvements in the area of family visitation, during the process of this analysis, efficiencies to the present structure have been identified.

- ***Change the approach to visitation - Make visitation a service, not an event.***

The word "visit" can be defined as "going to see or spending time with someone socially." However, for a child who is removed from his/her parent(s) and involved in the child welfare system, spending time with a parent goes well beyond this conventional understanding of a "visit." Meaningful visitation after removal supports bonding, attachment, and safe parenting between parent and child.

As required by law, a child is only removed after it is determined the child is not safe under the care of his/her parent. Therefore, visiting after removal is surrounded by multiple clinical issues, such as emotional distress, guilt, shame, abandonment, and feelings of loss and helplessness.

Presently, the Department coordinates "visits" for every child who is placed in out-of-home care by coordinating a meeting time and place for the child(ren) and parent(s). The Department also provides a monitor when necessary for child safety. Under the current "Visitation Monitor/Observer" approach, there are missed opportunities to meaningfully and effectively address and coach parents through the clinical issues surrounding visitation, as well as those issues that led to the removal of the child.

To make a substantial and meaningful change in the current approach to family visitation, the Department, in partnership with the Dependency Court, the Office of Child Protection (OCP), resource families, relatives/NREFM, community stakeholders, and service providers, will need to change the current approach and treat visitation as an opportunity to provide a service called "Visitation Coaching".

Visitation Coaching will enable a family to receive additional visitation services based on the needs of the child, with the sole purpose of equipping a parent with the necessary skills and behaviors to provide the safety his/her child lacked at the time of removal. Visitation Coaching will allow an opportunity to honor the pre-existing bond and

minimize the impact of removal, while at the same time develop further appropriate parenting skills and capacity to address the areas that led to removal.

To implement this approach, it will be crucial for the Department to explore the utilization of existing visitation models, such as Parent Child Interactive Training (PCIT), Welcome Babies, and Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) in order to equip parents with the necessary skills and behavior to provide safety. Additionally, consideration for prevention program and services in local communities need to be taken into account.

To make this Visitation Coaching approach possible, the present structure also has to be revised as follows:

- ***Family Visitation Guidelines***

Visitation Coaching will be fully implemented in conjunction with the existing Family Visitation Guidelines created in 2005, which contain recommendations regarding what types of visits are in a child's best interest based on his or her developmental needs. The guidelines address whether visits should be monitored or unmonitored depending on the safety issues; what the frequency of visits should be - more frequent visits for infants vs. teenagers; and what type of supervision may be necessary - a visit may be able to be supervised by an authorized relative, or at other times supervision may be best from DCFS staff. These guidelines need to be built into every meaningful visitation plan.

- ***Implement an "air traffic-controller" concept – CSA I***

In order to implement this visitation approach, it will be necessary to have one CSA I in each DCFS regional office solely responsible for all administrative logistics involved with visitation, including scheduling visitation; scheduling/arranging transportation for children, parents, and caregivers when necessary; managing cancellations and rescheduling visits; engaging community partners, such as faith-based community and FFAs to maximize their involvement in visitation; maintaining ongoing communication with partners who developed visitation centers; and recruiting and securing volunteers minimizing the need for additional paid staff to facilitate visitation.

Without the proper administration and coordination of this important effort, it would be challenging to produce the desired outcomes of increasing parent capacity in order to reduce a child's time in foster care, improving family well-being when children are reunified, and preventing future incidents of maltreatment after case closure.

If the Board is supportive of this reorganization and addition of CSA I staff to fully implement our Visitation Coaching plans, it is estimated the number of CSA Is will have to increase by 18 additional items. DCFS can evaluate and return with a more detailed proposal if requested.

- ***Utilization of Upfront Family Finding to support the visitation process***

As proposed by OCP, the Department intends to utilize Upfront Family Finding to increase relative placement and the overall role of family members and NREFMs in the lives of children in foster care. When a relative is not in a position to provide a home for a child, Visitation Coaching may provide an opportunity for relatives/NREFMs to continue to play an important role in the life of the children in foster care.

The air traffic controller/CSA will utilize the results of the Upfront Family Finding searches conducted at the start of a case, and will invite those relatives to become Visitation Coaches.

This effort will result in positive outcomes, such as prompt reunification and support of the family after reunification occurs. Relatives/NREFMs that become active during the visitation process are more likely to continue to be supportive to families after reunification or case closure.

- ***Include stakeholders as Visitation Coaches***

As previously stated, HSAs dedicate most of their working hours to the completion of tasks surrounding visitation. They transport, coordinate, and monitor visits. However, the amount of HSAs in each office is limited, making it imperative that the Department engage community stakeholders and providers to become a part of the visitation process as soon as a child is placed in out-of-home care.

Under the leadership of the CSA assigned to coordinate this effort, each regional office will work closely with the resource families, providers, faith based partners, community based organizations, and the Department's volunteer section to secure partners who want to become Visitation Coaches.

The interaction of community stakeholders early in the case will greatly impact reunification outcomes, it will create a strong safety net when children reunify, and will assist in forming solid community support systems for families and children when cases close, creating a prevention layer.

- ***Foster care providers and Kin support***

Resource Families are undoubtedly an invaluable resource in the success of visitation. In an effort to maximize their contributions, the Department will enlist collaboration from the Association of Community Human Services Agencies and Kinship Support agencies to continue discussing a number of strategies to most appropriately meet the visitation needs of children placed with resource families. This collaboration will foster ongoing education of their important role in visitation, involve them as professionals and colleagues, provide them with training and transportation options, and foster networking opportunities.

- ***Visitation Coaches and Training***

It is imperative to have well equipped and well trained Visitation Coaches in each DCFS regional office. Since Visitation Coaching requires more time on part of the staff, it is important to diversify the use of staff. Visitation Coaches may include CSWs, HSAs, volunteers, relative caregivers, MSW interns, resource parents, and/or service providers. Equipping them with the necessary skills to become Visitation Coaches will require significant training, modeling, and coaching.

A comprehensive multi-dimensional training curriculum for all Visitation Coaches (DCFS and non-DCFS) must include content related to trauma, including the effects of trauma on one's biological, neurobiological, and stress response systems, as well as information regarding child development, problematic parent-child dynamics, and serious psychological issues that may prevent a parent from recognizing the child's needs.

It must also include training on how to best build on the parents' strengths, how to plan visits focusing on the child's needs, and how to tailor coaching to fit the needs of the parent and children. The Visitation Coach must be knowledgeable not only about children's needs, the developmental benefits of play, family dynamics, attachment, and parenting skills, but also the variety of cognitive styles shown by parents, as well as being able to recognize cultural differences. The Visitation Coach will need to concentrate on working directly with the parents by empowering them to interact positively with their children, which should result in improved parent capacity and timely reunification.

The Department respectfully requests that this Board allow the Department an opportunity to explore an option to contract (via a RFP) with existing service providers located throughout the County, including faith-based partners, and foster care providers, especially FFAs since they provide placements for almost 30% of the children placed in out-of-home care (second only to relative placements) to form part of the Visitation Coaching cohort. The Department also seeks to explore the possibility for Visitation Coach training be developed and provided by these service providers.

- ***Transportation for youth, parents, and caregivers***

Although the Department issues bus passes, tokens, and gas reimbursement to parents, transportation continues to be a barrier to visitation. Parents suffer challenges such as lack of reliable transportation; limited financial resources to pay for transportation; long distances to children's placements or visitation sites; sibling sets that are placed in multiple separate placements; and Los Angeles traffic, which results in long travel times.

The Department believes that some of these transportation barriers may be addressed through the utilization of ridesharing services like Uber, Lyft, HopSkipDrive, See Jane

Go, or other available transportation services. These types of services may assist children and adults to have more convenient and reliable travel to family visits.

In assessing the feasibility of utilizing these types of services, the Department has learned that some of these vendors employ and allow only drivers who pass a multilayered criminal background check to be permitted to transport youth, some employ only women drivers, and some vendors provide trauma-informed training to all of their drivers. These safeguards are particularly important when transporting children since the clinical issues that surround visitation may be present during the ride to and from visitation.

If these ridesharing options become available, the Department aims for these transportation options to be accessible to relatives, and/or any other caregivers including Foster Family Agencies in order to assist court ordered visitation in an effort to promote timely family reunification.

The Department will explore the option to contract some of these transportation services via a Request For Information (RFI), and we are seeking your support during this exploration.

- ***Develop technology to support logistics***

The number of children requiring visitation varies by office. This number may range from almost 2,000 children in a DCFS regional office like Wateridge, to 350 children in a DCFS regional office like El Monte. Scheduling visits is a complex process, which includes among other tasks, coordinating schedules of children, parent, care providers and visitation monitor; identifying visitation locations; and providing or ensuring transportation for all of the involved participants. This requires a significant amount of logistics, even in an office with a lower number of children in care.

In search of technology solutions, DCFS is participating in #HackFosterCareLA, a two-day event that will take place in April 2017, which aims to engage and educate Los Angeles' technology sector about issues confronting the child welfare system. The mission of #HackFosterCareLA is to support the sharing of available data to improve outcomes in the foster care system.

- ***Pilot Program***

The Department has selected the Pasadena regional office to pilot the Visitation Coaching approach, which will include the utilization of family-friendly visitation sites, improved transportation options, and Visitation Coaches. This pilot will allow an opportunity to learn and adapt as necessary before full implementation in other regional offices.

The Pasadena office was selected because for the past twelve years the office has had a strong relationship with All Saints Church, a faith-based partner, with a ministry called

the Foster Care Project (ASFCP), which has multiple programs serving foster children and youth. Since February 2013, the Pasadena office and ASFCP have had a family visitation program using Coach Monitors in special visitation sites. The Coach Monitors provide structure through a strength-based team approach to visitation, which is strongly aligned with Core Practice Model values.

Given the logistics involved with this pilot, the Department is respectfully requesting 120 days to gather all necessary resources to commence the pilot and to consider the site of a second pilot which may have less existing resources.

During the process of this pilot, the Department will learn which components of the model can be duplicated, and which components may not. It is the intent of the Department to avoid creating a "one size fits all model". Instead, the Department will take into consideration specific needs of the children, families, communities, culture, and regional operations, in creating this Visitation Coaching service.

2. Explore the feasibility of expanding the number of family-friendly visitation sites and ways to ensure that resource families can access them

During the process of this analysis, the Department became aware that the existing 33 visitation sites are not being utilized to full capacity due to barriers that regional offices face, such as limited amount of HSAs, lack of coordination, limited availability of monitors/coaches at the visitation sites, and limited transportation. The Department would like an opportunity to use the existing sites to capacity before expanding the number of new visitation sites.

The Department will revitalize the use of visitation centers by use of the proposed "air traffic controller". DCFS will:

- ❖ Work closer with the community partners that developed visitation centers;
- ❖ Coordinate visitation to take place at the visitation centers;
- ❖ Designate Visitation Coaches to specific visitation centers (as needed);
- ❖ Ensure that all regional offices and Medical Case Management Services (MCMS) are informed of available visitation centers and how to best access them; and
- ❖ Increase the use of transportation options for parents, children, and relatives to conduct visitation in the visitation centers instead of public places.

3. Identify opportunities to improve parenting skills by expanding supportive visitation models. Such models may include training coaches in an approved curriculum to support parents during visits and providing comprehensive program coordination. In addition, DCFS, in consultation with visitation agencies, shall develop a one-page document for parents with suggestions on how to positively interact with their children's visitation, including age-appropriate topics and activities.

In responding to Item 1, the Department identified changing the current approach to arranging monitored/observed "visits" for children and their parents to creating Visitation Coaching as a "service" as the number one priority. This shift to a Visitation Coaching model will be made with the intent of supporting and improving parent capacity, while concentrating on the needs and safety of the children.

The Visitation Coaching Approach is based on the goals of providing a service that is focused on preparing, supporting, coaching, and empowering a parent to meet the needs of the child. The attached one-page document is reflective of such values.

4. Ensure implementation of Family Visitation Guidelines, developed with the Juvenile Dependency Court in 2005, with an update to comport with the newly established Core Practice Model.

The Family Visitation Guidelines continue to be the foundation to approaching visitation. These guidelines will be implemented with the augmented resources and in collaboration with Dependency Court, OCP, service providers, resource parents, stakeholders, and in conjunction with a clinically-informed orientation of Visitation Coaching focusing on empowering the parent to meet the child's needs. The Department engaged the training section to develop strategies to address the need to update the Family Visitation Guidelines to mirror Core Practice Model expectations in regards of family visitation.

The Department is confident that the Visitation Coaching Approach will result in improved outcomes for children and families in the areas of child safety, permanency, and well-being.

Our next update will be provided in 120 days. If you have any questions, please contact me at (213) 351-5600 or via email at BNichols@dcfs.lacounty.gov, or your staff may contact Aldo Marin, Board Liaison, at (213) 351-5530.

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Attachment

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Chief Executive Officer
Commission for Children and Families
Office of Child Protection

Visitation Tips for Parents



Success Is Up To YOU

If you are participating in visits with your children it is very important that you do all you can to have a good visitation experience. Visits with your children keep your family bonds strong. Consistent visits will help you strengthen your relationship with your children, so try to make it to every visit.

Children Spell Love “T-I-M-E”

Visits are your chance to connect with your children. During this time your children need you more than ever. Out-of-home placement even with relatives can be confusing and stressful for all ages of children. They may ask questions that you think they should already know. This is likely a result of emotional reactions to separation, uncertainty and feelings of loss.

Suggestions for positive visits

- **Prepare answers for your children:** Think of the questions that your children will ask and prepare your answers (e.g., Why is this happening? When can I come home? Do you still love me?). Your children are seeking reassurance they are not responsible and that you are working on solutions. Provide developmentally appropriate responses which are positive avoid definite promises. Your answers are likely to change as the situation progresses. Remember they may ask you the same questions over and over. Your answers can reassure them and helps reduce their anxiety.
- **Plan your visit activities and share with your children:** When you tell them what will be done during your visit it gives children a sense of routine and security. Plan a beginning, middle, and end and let them know what part of the visit you're in. During the end of the visit ask them what they would like to do during the next visit. Give them a loving but short goodbye. Do hug your children and tell them you will see them next time. Say goodbye, and then leave. This will help reduce your children's anxiety about your leaving and reassure them there will be a next time. Here's a link for "50 Activities that are Perfect for Toddlers": <http://handsonaswegrow.com/50-toddler-activities/>
- **Reading with your children:** Reading with younger children and going over appropriate current news stories or other information with older children is a good way to bond and interact. The physical closeness you have with your children when reading, helping with homework, looking at pictures, or pointing things out in books, magazines or electronic devices keeps bonds strong. Below is a link for "Literacy activities for children": http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/activities_to_promote_literacy.html
- **Encourage their stories and provide positive loving support:** Ask your children how things are going and take the time to listen to what they say. They need you to demonstrate they come first. Tell them you love and miss them. Praise and encourage your children for things they are doing well. Focus on the here and now moments with your children during the visit. Relax and enjoy your time with your children.



There are many more activities, tips and ideas you can consider using. Your Social Worker will also help you with more suggestions about positive activities appropriate for your children.