



NYS Citizens' Coalition for Children, Inc.
410 East Upland Road • Ithaca, New York 14850
(607) 272-0034 • www.nysccc.org

Advocating for Creative Visiting Plans
From: The Center for Family Representation

Though the following was written with attorneys in mind, it contains some very helpful tips that foster parents and caseworkers can use to improve the effectiveness of visitation arrangements.

- Ask parents whose children have entered care about the places they used to go to with their children and whether they would like to continue to see their children in these places; discuss the places in which they would like to visit their children.
- Ask if there are people they could identify who could host visits for the family, such as a relative who may not be a foster care resource, or a family friend; Ask the agency (and/or the court to direct) that a visiting host be explored. (Remember that resource issues are very real for the contract agencies attempting to comply with the guidelines; once a potential host has SCR clearance and the worker observes perhaps one or two visits, the worker can then be relieved of facilitating the visit and it will not be as burdensome for the agency to comply with the guidelines)
- Ask the agency (and/or the court to direct) that any persons identified by the parents who can either host a visit or assist with transportation to more frequent visits be included in the 72 hour, 30 day and subsequent conferences; if necessary to get the other parties to agree to a visiting host, ask the person identified as a potential host to address the judge and assure the court that the s/he will be able to guarantee the child's safety;
- Discuss with agencies the possibility of visits taking place in parks, libraries, churches, etc.;
- Discuss with parents the activities they believe would enhance visits;
- Discuss with parents upcoming events where they desire to be present, or where their presence would facilitate reunification: i.e., doctor's visits, school performances, graduations, birthday celebrations, early intervention appointments, etc.;
- Draft orders which clearly outline an agency's responsibilities to facilitate visiting, i.e., "agency shall pay transportation costs," and orders that require agencies to review visiting plans periodically and report to the court on progress in visiting;
- Draft orders which make clear that the agency has discretion to reduce supervision and increase the frequency of visits between court appearances;
- Ask that caseworkers be specific in articulating the reasons for supervision and ask specific questions about the level of supervision needed; use the guidelines to inform these discussions; direct questions on the record to the issues of comfort and privacy;
- Talk with foster parents and other caretakers about their ideas for more frequent and meaningful visits.

Reprinted with permission from: The Center for Family Representation, 175 Remsen Street, 8th Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201, Ph: 718/637-6583; Fax: 718/237-0686