

SUPERVISED ACCESS VISITATION & EXCHANGE

PROGRAM OF HURON PERTH

POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

Intake Information:

1. The custodial party and visiting party will be interviewed individually by the Program Coordinator or delegate prior to using the centre. Relevant information about the child's history and each party will be requested. Arrangements for use of the centre will be discussed at this first contact.
2. **Meeting with the Coordinator:** If you wish to meet with the Program Coordinator, please call and make an appointment. All requests must be made in advance.
3. **Program Fees:** A maximum of \$25.00 per visit will be paid on or before the start of each visit. Subsidies are available.
4. If a report is requested a fee for a Summary Report of Observation notes distributed to the parties and their lawyers will be charged. The fee varies depending on the number of observations a family has had. Fees for reports are to be paid at the time the request is made, in writing, by the person requesting the report.
5. If a party cancels a scheduled visit or exchange with less than 24 hours notice or does not appear for a scheduled visit or exchange a cancellation fee of \$10.00 will be charged.
6. **Court Orders:** If a court order exists, the Coordinator must receive a copy of the order to complete the intake process. When there is a change in the court order, the Coordinator is to receive a copy of the new order when the change has occurred.
7. **Consent to Disclosure of Information:** This form is expected to be signed by both parties at intake. This consent gives the Coordinator authority to discuss all matters related to the supervised access arrangement and authorizes consent to release any reports or documents prepared by the access centre to the lawyers representing the custodial or non-custodial parties, or the lawyer representing the child or children. The Consent to Disclosure of Information is effective for three months after the last visit.
8. **Discharge Policy:** The Supervised Access Visitation & Exchange Huron Perth's discharge policy indicates that if a family has not been using the program for a three month period, they will be discharged. See safety section for more information on reasons for discharge or declining of cases.
9. Parties may call the Coordinator to have Observation notes of visits read to them if there is a concern about a visit or exchange. There is no fee for this service.

10. **Consent to Participate Form and Agreement for Service:** These forms are to be signed by both parties at intake. These forms contains both parties signatures, indicating that they are willing to participate in the program according to the policies and procedures outlined and that they have received a copy of the Policies, Procedures and Guidelines. This list of the Supervised Access Visitation& Exchange Huron Perth policies will be reviewed before signing.
11. **Change of Information:** Each party is expected to inform the Supervised Access Visitation & Exchange Huron Perth program staff if they have a new phone number or address change. If a parent forgets to give us their new phone number and staff has to cancel a visit or exchange the result will be that the party will not be informed. The party will take responsibility for not informing staff of any changes.
12. **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality means keeping in strict confidence all information obtained by the agency about a program participant. Staff members will keep in strict confidence all private or confidential information about program participants. Parents are to respect the confidentiality of all participants in the program. See the Consent to Participate form for limitations of confidentiality.

Safety

1. **No Contact:** The centre must ensure the safety of participants and staff therefore parties must not have contact with each other while on site. Only information related to childcare, visits and exchanges will be passed from one party to the other. Information relating to anything other than childcare will not be passed e.g. contact information, child support questions, etc.
2. **Assigned rooms:** The child and visiting party are assigned a visit area. Parents and children are not to be wandering to other rooms or be in the hallway.
3. **Secured Entrance:** The entrance to the access centres will be locked and parents are asked to use the buzzer.
4. **In the event of a fire at the centre:** Custodial parties are asked to use the closest exit to leave the building. Visiting parties and children will walk with staff to the fenced playground area or the parking lot and wait with Supervised Access staff.
5. **Alcohol or Substance Abuse:** There shall be no parent or visitor at the centre who is believed to be under the influence of alcohol or who shows indication of substance abuse. Suspicion regarding the impaired state of a person is sufficient reason to request that the person leave the centre's premises immediately. In such a situation visits would be cancelled. Regarding exchanges, if the centre staff/volunteer suspects that a parent has consumed alcohol or drugs on drop off, the incident will be noted. On pickup, the child(ren) would not be released to the parent if he/she is believed to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Lawyers for both parties will be notified of any suspicion of impairment during exchanges.
6. **Aggression:** The use of swearing, threats or actual verbal or physical aggression will not be tolerated and parents and visitors that do so will be requested to leave the centre. Any act of physical violence will result in termination from the program and be subject to possible criminal prosecution.

7. **Weapons:** No one is to bring any weapons or sharp objects such as pocket knives, screwdrivers, cutting knives, etc. that could be perceived as a threat to others using the centre. Individuals who attend the centre with such items will be asked to leave weapons outside of the centre in their vehicle, have the articles locked in the staff filing cabinet or the program will terminate the visit.
8. **Driver's License:** Exchange parents/parties must have a valid driver's license to transport children, however, the Supervised Access Visitation & Exchange Huron Perth is not an enforcement agency and assumes no liability.
9. **Car Seats:** Parents must have appropriate car seats/child restraints for transporting children. Once again the Supervised Access Visitation & Exchange Huron Perth is not an enforcement agency and assumes no liability.
10. **Accountability:** Policy regarding general non-compliance with policies, procedures and guidelines:
 1. Parent will be reminded of the program rules.
 2. A verbal warning will be given stating that if non-compliance continues the visit or exchange will end.
 3. If non-compliance continues, the participant will receive written warning that visits/exchanges will be terminated at the next incidence of non-compliance. The other parties and respective lawyers will receive copies of the letter.
 4. Participant is notified that visits or exchanges are suspended or terminated. The other party and respective lawyers will receive notification.

Visitation:

1. **Visitors:** Visitors other than the registered visiting parties will not be allowed on site during the visit unless the visitors are indicated in the court order and/or the visiting party has made arrangements with the Coordinator for them to attend and the Custodial party has consented to their attendance.
2. Parties may not question the child(ren) regarding the other party, discuss concerns regarding the other party or discuss the terms of access in the presence of the child. In order to enforce this policy, whispering will be discouraged by staff. Please see the service contract for further clarification.
3. Visiting parties are to ask staff when they wish to visit in the playground. The ability to accommodate outside play will depend on the availability of staff to supervise.
4. Visiting parties are responsible for their child(ren) during the visit. If parties cannot appropriately ensure their child(ren)'s safety or ensure that their child is behaving in a safe and appropriate manner, the Program Coordinator, Program Development Assistant or Visit Monitor have the authority to terminate the visit.
5. No one other than the non-custodial party may pick up or drop off during exchanges unless there is approval by the custodial party. The Supervised Access Visitation & Exchange Huron Perth Coordinator must be notified of any new arrangement.

Attendance and Scheduling:

1. All visits and exchanges must be arranged through the Program Coordinator.
2. **Arrival and Departure:** All parties are to arrive at and depart from the centre at precisely the prearranged times. The Custodial party and child(ren) are to arrive fifteen minutes prior to the scheduled time of the visit and the non-custodial party is to arrive at the exact scheduled time of the visit. At the end of the visit the visiting party is to leave promptly and fifteen minutes later the custodial party is to arrive and pick up the child(ren).
3. **Scheduling:** Changes in the schedule should be made with the Coordinator at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled visit or exchange. With less than 24 hours notice a \$10.00 cancellation fee will be applied.
4. **Child's Illness:** In the event of a child's illness, a make up visit may be scheduled with the Program Coordinator based on the current resources and scheduling. A doctor's note must be provided if a visit is cancelled due to a child's illness. A cancellation fee will not be charged if a doctor's note is provided.
5. **Lateness:** The Child will be required to wait fifteen minutes for a scheduled visit or exchange, after that time the custodial party will be called to pick up the child(ren) and the visit will be recorded as a, "no show". If a party continues to arrive consistently late, the access at the Supervised Access Visitation & Exchange Huron Perth program may be discontinued.
6. **Child Refusal:** The Supervised Access Visitation & Exchange Program of Huron Perth assists in the facilitation of visits but is not an enforcement agency. All children will be encouraged to participate in the program and adhere to court orders, however, no child will ever be forced to stay for an entire visit.
7. **No Shows and Cancellations:** It can be disappointing for a child when a parent does not show. If the non-custodial parent does not show up for the visit future arrangements may be made for the child(ren) to wait at home until the visiting party arrives at the centre. The Custodial party will then be called to bring the child(ren) to the program. A cancellation fee of \$10.00 will be charged if the visit is not cancelled 24 hours ahead of time, as previously noted 48 hours is preferred.

Parties are expected to call the Coordinator when canceling a visit or exchange. Failure of the visiting party to appear for three visits will result in discharge from the program. The program sets staff to family rations for safety, if there are not sufficient numbers of staff due to illness, weather, etc. the program staff may have to cancel a family visit.

Child Care

1. **Picture taking:** Visiting parties may bring still cameras to the Supervised Access Visitation & Exchange Huron Perth program unless otherwise specified in the court order. All pictures will be taken by staff to ensure the confidentiality of other program

participants is protected. Camcorders, digital cameras or other recording equipment **will not** be permitted. Staff at the Supervised Access Visitation & Exchange Huron Perth program will be taking pictures of the children with their visiting party. This picture will be on file at the centre. This will enable staff and volunteers to recognize children and their parents as they arrive.

2. **Cell Phones and Pagers:** Visiting parties will be asked to turn cell phones and pagers off and leave them with staff or locked in the office until the end of the visit as children are not to be involved in phone calls or pager messages while on site.
3. **Washroom Policy:** If a child requires assistance, the visiting party will assist the child under staff supervision unless otherwise stated in the court order.
4. **Car Seats:** Supervised Access Visitation & Exchange Huron Perth staff are not expected to check vehicles for appropriate car seats. Parties are responsible for ensuring that they have appropriate car seats and restraints.
5. **Toys:** Parties are expected to put toys away after use. No war toys will be allowed at the centre, this includes but is not limited to water guns. If a toy is damaged or broken due to misuse the visiting parent will be responsible for replacing the toy.
6. The Custodial party will be responsible for providing staff with two telephone numbers and addresses of trusted people who can be contacted in case of emergency if the custodial parent is not immediately available.
7. The Custodial party is responsible for supplying clothing, formula, bottles, or whatever else is needed for good care of a baby during a visit. A well known stuffed toy or blanket can be sent with the child to facilitate his/her emotional comfort while at the centre. In the summer months a hat and sun screen are also requested.
8. **Mealtime visits:** When visits are scheduled over mealtimes, the visiting party is responsible for supplying nutritious meals for the child(ren). Please keep in mind the Supervised Access program is a nut free environment. The Stratford location has requested that no one bring food from Tim Horton's or The Dairy Queen due to the possibility of nut contamination.
9. We request that you do not bring an ill child to the program, refer to the Health and Emergency Procedures form for guidelines. If a child is considered healthy enough to attend a visit then please ensure that the child(ren) is healthy enough to participate in the program.
10. To ensure a healthy environment for your child(ren), the Supervised Access Visitation & Exchange Huron Perth program has a no smoking policy.
11. As per Ministry policy all bags will be checked upon arrival to the Supervised Access Visitation & Exchange program.

(revised January 2007)