

Welcome to the CENTRE COUNTY CHILD ACCESS CENTER



This project was supported by Safe Havens Grant No. 2008-CW-AX-K003 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

SUPERVISED VISITATION PARENT INFORMATION

Our mission is to promote the physical and emotional security of children and their families and provide a safe and supportive environment for monitored custody exchanges and supervised visitation.

We are committed to enhancing the safety of parent and child victims of family violence in an atmosphere that fosters safe and healthy interactions between children and their parents.

The guidelines that follow are provided to enable us to work together to ensure your safety needs are met and that your visits go smoothly.

Hours of Operation:

The Child Access Center provides supervised visitation:

- Tuesday and Thursday between 4:00 pm and 8:00 pm
- Wednesdays between 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm
- Saturdays between 9:00 am and 1:00 pm

Holidays:

The Child Access Center may be open on select holidays based on available resources. A listing of select holidays will be provided to families as available. Families will be notified in advance when the Child Access Center can provide for any additional holiday visits.

Frequency and Length of Visits:

Visits will be scheduled according to the court order not to exceed two hours per week. If visits are not ordered by the court, the Child Access Center staff will make determinations on visit lengths based on parent input, the age of the child and other relevant factors. Visit times will be set by the Child Access Center after taking into account the schedules and needs of both parents and the Child Access Center.

Persons Included in the Visit:

Visitations are limited to the “primary parties”. Guests may be considered, but must be granted prior approval. Request for additional guests must be submitted in writing at least 48 hours in advance. The request for visitation guests must include the name of the requested guest, his/her relationship to the child/children and the reason for the request. The Child Access Center will make the final decision on the approval/denial of all guests. Any person excluded from visitation in the court order will NOT be permitted to participate in the visit. No more than two guests will be approved for a given visit (“primary party plus two (2) guests). In the event that guests are denied due to limited space, the Child Access Center will look into rescheduling the visit if both parties agree and alternate times are available.

Guests are required to present a valid photo identification card to be copied and kept on file at the Child Access Center. Guests are also expected to follow the guidelines and directives of the visitation monitor. Please note: The parent is responsible for his/her guest’s behavior. Failure by any visitation participant (parent or guest) to comply with the policies of the Child Access Center and/or the guidelines and directives of the visitation monitor will result in the termination of the visit.

Program Fee:

There will be a one-time intake fee for all monitored exchanges and supervised visitation services. This fee is non-refundable. Should services be terminated, this fee will be re-assessed should services be reinstated.

Safety:

Safety is our first priority. All of our policies, procedures and protocol have been designed to address the unique safety concerns of adult and child survivors of family violence or the potential for violence.

The Child Access Center provides a secure, comfortable, and child-friendly place where children can continue a positive relationship with both of their parents.

All staff and volunteers have received appropriate clearances and completed required training.

The program is designed so that parents have no on-site contact. You will be assigned to use one of the two entrances to the Child Access Center. To ensure no contact you must park in the designated area and use the door that is assigned to you for all visits.

Only parents or other parties listed on the court order are permitted to pick up or drop off children. In the event of an emergency or ongoing scheduling issue parents should contact the Child Access Center to discuss options. If a person other than the parent or other party listed on the court order should arrive to pick up or drop off children without prior consent, services will be cancelled. If someone other than the parent is picking up or dropping off the children the other parent will be informed.

Arrival times are staggered. We will work with both parents to identify possible visit times. We will do our best to accommodate your schedule and set a time that best meets the needs of each parent and the Child Access Center. Once a time has been agreed upon, your visits will continue to occur at that specified time.

NO WEAPONS are allowed on the premises.

All Child Access Center staff are mandated child abuse reporters. We are required by law to report any suspected child abuse or mistreatment to the proper authorities.

If there is any question regarding the safety of children and/or adults or security risks that need additional assistance, future visits may be refused.

Supervision:

A trained visit monitor is present throughout the entire visit. There is NO unsupervised time permitted at the Child Access Center. Additional monitors and/or interpreters may also be present as needed.

When necessary, a staff member will accompany small children to the bathroom. Parents are expected to both provide and change diapers (as needed) during visitation times.

Internal Video System:

For security purposes, all visits will be camera-monitored on our internal video system.

Cell Phones and/or Cameras:

No cameras or cell phones are permitted in the visitation room. If you would like a photo taken during the visit, the staff will take the picture with your camera or cell phone and return it to you after the visit has ended.

Videotaping and/or Recording Devices:

NO videotaping or recording devices of any kind are allowed in the visitation room at any time.

Food:

Food is permitted during visits. We do ask that you inform us ahead of time if you plan to prepare any food during your visit. A microwave (no oven) and refrigerator are available for food preparation.

Gifts:

Gift exchanges will be permitted at the discretion of the Program Director after a family has established a regular visitation pattern. Gifts must be easily transportable. Gifts must be brought to the Child Access Center unwrapped for staff approval. Gifts that have not been approved will be returned to the visiting parent.

Purpose of Visits:

We are committed to promoting the emotional and physical safety of children and their parents by providing a safe and supportive environment that fosters safe and healthy interactions between children and their parents. We do not provide reports to the courts or make assessments regarding parenting skills, etc.

Children's Refusal:

The Child Access Center staff will not force a child to visit. If a child is resistant, the staff will make every effort to understand why, negotiate for an adjusted visit, and attempt to comfort the child. However, if the child still refuses and/or is visibly upset, the visit will be

cancelled and the reason(s) noted in the client file. If a child is visibly frightened or inconsolable for three consecutive visits, we retain the right to suspend or end services.

Redirecting a Visit:

Visitation staff may interrupt or intervene during a visit if at any time a child's physical or emotional wellbeing may be at risk. Guidance and feedback will be given to the parent to redirect behavior and conversations that may be inappropriate. If inappropriate behaviors and/or conversations continue after no more than three interruptions or interventions, interventions may be recorded in the visitation log. Any incidents involving serious safety concerns will be recorded in the visitation log immediately. Please see Intervention Guidelines for further information.

Ending a Visit Early:

We are here to provide the time, place, and opportunity for parents and children to experience a safe and positive visit experience. If the staff feels that a child's physical or emotional safety or wellbeing is at risk a visit may be terminated. If safety concerns continue in future visits services may be terminated. When a visit is terminated by a staff member, subsequent visits will not be scheduled until the visiting parent has met with the Program Director to review the guidelines and address the concerns that led to the decision to end the visit.

Termination of Services:

Services may be terminated for reasons including, but not limited to:

- There is an on-going safety risk for any or all parties
- Continuous violation of guidelines, policies and procedures of the Child Access Center
- There is a pattern of uncooperative behaviors

If the decision is made to terminate visitation services, both parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The reason(s) for the termination will be included in the letter and a copy will be sent to the judge as appropriate.

Record Keeping:

The Child Access Center has chosen to limit our record keeping to dates and times of visits, no-shows, cancellations and safety incidents. We are not parent evaluators. We are here to provide a safe and enjoyable place for parents and their children to visit.

All safety incidents that occur will be documented on a Critical Incident Form and placed in your file.

Cancellations:

Please call the Child Access Center 72 hours prior to your scheduled visit if you are unable to participate in your visit. Please be prepared to provide a reasonable explanation for the cancellation. In case of an emergency or unexpected event (sudden illness, etc.) please contact the Child Access Center as soon as possible. If these provisions are not met a cancellation will be recorded.

The Child Access Center can be reached at (814) 548-0034.

Communication:

Communication is important to all of us. We seek to provide consistent, stress free, clear and comfortable visits.

We ask that you keep all important contact information up to date. All identifying information will be kept confidential in a separate locked file for each parent.

Parent Communication Forms are available for either parent to provide important medical information to the other parent, if needed, before and/or after visits. We ask that you use these forms to write down the information you wish to share.

Respect:

We make every effort to create and maintain a respectful environment to ensure the safety and security of everyone at the Child Access Center. Parents and children can expect to be treated with respect by the staff and volunteers at the Child Access Center. We ask that parents and children also show respect towards the Child Access Center staff, volunteers and property.

Please be on time and keep your exchange schedule. Children are very disappointed when parents are late for visits, cancel or do not show up.

We expect parents to be sober and civil while at the Child Access Center.

Frequent cancellations and/or late arrivals could result in the termination of your privilege of using the Child Access Center for exchanges.

Emergencies:

Emergencies may arise. We follow the posted procedures in the event of an emergency.

In the event of severe weather, please check one of the following locations for closing information for the Centre County Child Access Center:

- Child Access Center voicemail message
 - toll free at 1-877-258-0076
 - (814) 548-0034
- <http://www.wearecentralpa.com> closings and cancellation information
- WTAJ local television channel 10
- Local radio 95.3 FM

Grievances:

As already mentioned, the Child Access Center seeks to treat everyone with respect. We want to hear your concerns and respond to them. If for any reason you feel that you have not received proper information or treatment, or are dissatisfied in any way, we ask that you speak to the Program Director. If you are not satisfied with his/her response, please provide a written statement of your concerns. A member of the Coordinating Committee will review your grievance and contact you within one week of receipt of your written statement.

Orientation:

Before services may begin both parents must pay the intake fee and participate in orientation. Please bring the following with you to orientation:

- Photo identification
- Current court or custody orders, current PFAs, any additional relevant paperwork
- Completed Parent Information Packet

During orientation you can expect to meet some of the Child Access Center staff, tour the facility, review policies and procedures, discuss safety concerns and get answers to any of your questions.

Child Orientation:

Before services begin all children participating in visits ages one year and older must participate in an age appropriate, child specific, child directed orientation with staff. The purpose of this orientation is to familiarize the child to the place, personnel and purpose of the visit. A safety and communication plan will be established addressing the child's/children's personal comfort and safety during all visits. Visits will not be scheduled until orientation is completed by both parents and the child/children one year of age and older.

Contact Information:

The Child Access Center is located at 310 North Allegheny Street in Bellefonte, PA. We are located in the former Bellefonte Family Resource Center. You can contact the Child Access Center by phone at (814) 548-0034; toll free at 1-877-258-0076 or (814) 360-2155 and by email at cccac.program@gmail.com.

Confidentiality:

Information obtained by the Child Access Center is confidential; however, under the following circumstances information will be released:

- Records requested in writing by a law enforcement agency, probation and parole department or Children and Youth Services during the course of an investigation
- All staff, interns and volunteers are mandated reporters and are required to report suspected child abuse to the Program Director. All staff, interns and volunteers are required to report any threat to the person or property of others to the Program Director. The Program Director will report child abuse or credible threats to the person or property of others to the appropriate authorities
- Records ordered by the court

Identifying information (address, phone number, etc.) is confidential and will not be shared with the other parent.

Parents have access to the exchange logs kept by the Child Access Center. Requests for these logs must be made in writing. Once the written request is received, the logs will be given to you within 72 hours. A copy will also be provided to the other parent.

I have completed the Parent Information Packet and discussed safety needs.

I have received a copy of the Welcome Packet which includes the guidelines and expectations for using the Child Access Center for Supervised Visits.

I have reviewed, discussed and understand these guidelines and expectations.

My signature below indicates that I agree to comply with these guidelines and that non-compliance could result in the suspension or termination of my services.

I also understand that any changes in these guidelines and/or expectations will be provided to me.

Parent Signature

Date

Program Director Signature

Date