

# WINDOW Visitation Center

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## General Policies and Conditions for Participation May 2009

WINDOW Visitation Center will treat all participants with respect and honesty. We will have an attitude that is non-judgmental and objective during all times and toward all participants. While the visitation center is located within the victim services building and is part of W.I.N.D.O.W., Inc., visitation facilitators are employees of the visitation center only. Facilitators do not perform victim advocacy. Facilitators are not told or given background information about the family unless it is part of a public record and/or pertains to ensuring the safety of the child(ren) and/or the visitation facilitator.

WINDOW Visitation Center does not assess parenting ability or do parenting skills training/coaching. We are here to allow parents a safe environment to maintain healthy relationships with their children and opportunities to continue their important role as parent. We expect both parents to model appropriate adult behavior when their children are present and to parent to the best of their ability.

WINDOW Visitation Center can, at any time, discontinue services. We have the right to decline referrals for any reason.

WINDOW Visitation Center is required to report all alleged or observed occurrences of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The visitation facilitator is a mandated reporter and will report if necessary.

Office hours for the visitation center are Monday-Friday 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. We can be reached at 320-384-6638. While visitations can occur evenings and weekends, you will likely not be able to reach staff if calling after business hours so please plan accordingly if you need to cancel or change your appointment.

- 1) Parties shall arrive punctually at the arranged times for the start and end of visits.
- 2) Custodial parent shall drop off and pick up the child(ren) at the assigned time of the visitation.
- 3) The visiting parent must arrive at the center no later than 5 minutes prior to the assigned time of the visitation and will remain at the center 5

minutes after the children have been picked up from the center. This is to ensure that neither parent has any contact whatsoever with the other.

- 4) When emergencies arise, please contact the provider immediately. The provider will communicate with both parties to reschedule the visit. The time and date must be agreed upon by both parties and the provider. If the custodial or non-custodial parent creates a routine of canceling and/or rescheduling visitation, fees may be assessed and this will be reported to the courts or appropriate agencies. If cancellations occur multiple times because of illness, the provider may ask for verification from a licensed health care provider.
- 5) If either parent fails to arrive for the scheduled visit or arrives more than 15 minutes late, WINDOW may terminate the visit at the discretion of the director. If the custodial parent is late dropping the child(ren) off for the visit, the visit will be extended for that amount of time. If the visiting parent is late, the length of the visit will not be extended and the visit will end at the scheduled time.
- 6) Both parents must agree that they will remain separate physically and visually so that contact between them does not occur unless there has been a specific agreement between the parties and the provider that contact may occur provided that such contact will not violate a court order.
- 7) No other visitors shall be allowed unless it is agreed upon by the custodial parent and the provider. The provider will need the visitor's full name and address for safety purposes. There shall be no contact between the visitor and the custodial parent. The visitor will be made aware of the rules of the center.
- 8) A program participant may not follow or harass any other program participant before or after a scheduled visit.
- 9) No weapons of any kind can be brought to the visitation center at any time. Staff has the right to search for weapons.
- 10) Neither parent will use illegal substances or alcohol before or during the supervised visit. Visits will be terminated immediately if staff suspects drug or alcohol use and alternative safe transportation for the child(ren) will be arranged if necessary.
- 11) Neither parent may make any threat of violence or threaten to breach any court order during a supervised visit. This includes the transitions before and after the visit.

- 12) No adult may physically discipline or threaten to physically discipline a child during visitation.
- 13) Neither parent may ask the child(ren) or WINDOW staff to deliver support payments, legal documents or any type of message verbally or in writing to the other parent.
- 14) Parents may not make negative comments about the other parent, the other parent's partner, friends or family members to the child or within the child's hearing. Questioning your child about the other parent is not permitted. Topics that are adult in nature are not to be discussed with the children at any time. For instance, details about divorce/custody proceeding, details about visitation, etc. It is in your child's best interest to spend stress free, quality time with you. The facilitator will intervene if necessary. The procedure for handling this issue is detailed in (15).

Further examples of inappropriate behavior or actions by either parent are expanded to include: threatening to hurt the other parent or children; threatening to kidnap the children; stalking the other parent and/or children upon arriving/departing from the center; testing or violating program rules; requesting "special privileges" outside of program procedures (either written or customary); making suicide threats; speaking negatively about the other parent's parenting style, schedule or lifestyle; accusing the other parent of unfounded abuse or neglect and/or encouraging children to make false reports to program staff.

Visiting parents may also not intimidate children to reveal their current living arrangement, phone numbers, schools, etc.; deny or minimize abusive behavior; blame the other parent or visitation center for having to use the service; whisper to their children to avoid having the facilitator hear statements, comments and questions.

WINDOW Visitation Center can provide parents with information and help in assuring that the children have safe, comfortable, and satisfying visits. Following our rules and guidelines is the first key to this. Custodial parents should be positive and encourage their children to enjoy their visit. After the visit, they should be willing to listen if the children want to talk about the visit, but should never press the child for information. The visiting parent should come prepared to have a good time within the limits set by the center. Children are looking for demonstrations of love and acceptance; the other factors are not as important to them.

Remember, this is about the children and their needs. It may require some sacrifices on the part of both parents. Do not let minor inconveniences, irritations and adult problems interfere with your child's right and need to have time and attention from all of the people they care about. You will probably not have any difficulty if you can truly think about

your child's time with his/her other parent from their point of view instead of your own.

- 15) The visitation facilitator has the right to determine what is and what is not appropriate in behavior, words or actions. If the facilitator feels that a parent is behaving inappropriately, the parent will be told that they are being inappropriate. The parent must immediately stop the activity without argument. The parent will have an opportunity to speak with the facilitator after the visit to discuss the issue. If the parent chooses to continue the activity or argue with the facilitator, the visit will be terminated immediately. Law enforcement will be called if necessary.
- 16) Visiting parents are allowed to photograph or make video recordings of their child(ren) unless it is determined that this is not in the child's best interest.
- 17) Written records by the visitation facilitator will be maintained. If all Policies and Conditions for Participation as stated here are followed, documentation will state "Parent's name had visitation with child(ren)'s name(s) on this date at this time". Violations by either parent of these General Policies and Conditions for Participation will be documented with specific details about the event. At intake both parents will be asked to sign an authorization for the release of information. Impressions of the visit will be recorded by the facilitator at the request of either parent.
- 18) FEES. Both parents are responsible for payment unless a judge has ordered one parent to pay the entire fee. The fees charged by the provider are \$40 per hour (\$20 per hour per parent). Fees must be paid before the start of the visit unless other arrangements have been made with the director. If fees are not paid, this will result in the suspension or termination of services.
- 19) Parents are responsible for the care of their children at the visitation center. This includes picking up games and toys at the end of the visit, discipline of the child(ren), and attending to their needs and requests. The visitation facilitator will assist a parent who is obviously having difficulty with their child(ren) by offering suggestions. Visitation facilitators will generally not interfere with your parenting unless they believe your child(ren) is in danger of being harmed emotionally or physically or a topic is being discussed that is off limits. The visitation facilitator is there to observe the visiting parent's interactions with the child(ren), not care for your child(ren) or converse with you.
- 20) Visiting parents are encouraged to plan activities to do with your children such as bringing along board games and art projects. For older children, preparing a meal together is also a great activity. WINDOW has full

kitchen facilities available for families who would enjoy having a meal or snack together. Visiting parents must bring their own food and clean up the kitchen afterward. Videos and video games may be allowed depending on the length of the visit.

- 21) WINDOW Visitation Center is not responsible for accidents or injury to children or parents. WINDOW is also not responsible for lost or stolen property.
- 22) WINDOW reserves the right to amend these policies and conditions at anytime. Current participants will be made aware of significant changes.

WINDOW Visitation Center is a member of the National and Minnesota Chapter of the Supervised Visitation Network. Through this membership, WINDOW voluntarily agrees to abide by the *SVN Standards for Supervised Visitation Practice* located at: [www.svnetwork.net/Standards.html](http://www.svnetwork.net/Standards.html)