

Audio Conference Training

Domestic Violence and Supervised Visitation Training Series

DOCUMENTATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORD-KEEPING IN SUPERVISED VISITATION CENTERS

November 4, 11 & 18, 2009 ❖ 4:00 - 5:15 PM Eastern Time

Documentation, confidentiality and record keeping practices in supervised visitation centers can be complicated and laden with potential risks to the safety of battered women and their children. This training series will offer critical points of examination that communities can use to shape policies and protocols to best account for the unique nature of domestic violence, and best protect victims of battering and their children.

Part 1: Documentation Dilemmas

November 4, 2009

In this training session we'll dig into the dilemmas and challenges that arise around documentation practices for supervised visitation centers. We will explore what documentation practices can potentially increase harm to survivors of battering and their children, and what changes centers can make in their documentation practices to minimize potential harm and maximize protection for victim

Trainer: Jane M. Sadusky

Jane M. Sadusky, Madison, WI, is a writer and independent consultant on community response to violence against women. Her experience in the battered women's movement spans 30 years and includes work with shelter and advocacy programs, coordinated community response projects, and law enforcement agencies. Her publications include: *Building Safety, Repairing Harm: Lessons and Discoveries from the Safe Havens Demonstration Initiative*. She is a Praxis technical assistance partner for the supervised visitation program and for safety and accountability audits.

Documentation, Confidentiality and Record-keeping in Supervised Visitation Centers

I. Introductions and Overview

II. Documentation exercise and discussion

Any Place Visitation Center memo to the Court

With the exception of names and any identifying details, all of which have been changed, the content of this report appears as it was originally written.

Any Place Visitation Center Letterhead

To: Family Court

From: Any Place Supervised Visitation Center (SVC)

Re: Case# Amanda Moore (Petitioner; Custodial Parent); Joe Brown (Respondent; Visiting Parent)

Date: 6/7/04

Number of Children: 2; Joe Jr., 6 years old, DOB; Jill, 4 years old, DOB.

Date Visitation Started: 2/3/04. There have been fifteen visits. The visits were scheduled for one hour every week.

Punctuality: Mom did not show up for the first scheduled visit. When SVC called her, she expressed she forgot about the visit and was apologetic. On 5/6/04 mom's friend dropped the children off ten minutes late. On 6/6/04 mom was five minutes late for visitation. On 2/17/04 dad was fifteen minutes late for visitation. He expressed that his lawyer advised him to start visits on 3/1/04. However, he wanted to see his children and arrived late to the visit. On 4/15/04 dad called and said he would be ten minutes late because he was picking up his son, Charles, to visit with Joe Jr. and Jill.

Compliance: Dad complied with all rules of visitation. However, mom was advised

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on 5/13/04 that her friend, Mr. Smith, was not to drop the children off for visitation in light of the Restraining Order against Mr. Smith. On 5/20/04 dad called police to SVC and explained the Restraining Order. The police asked for the 5/13/04 letter to be faxed to them and SVC faxed the letter the same day to Officer Pine's attention.

Observation: Mr. Brown interacts with his children playing board games and outside play. Jill enjoys putting her head on dad's shoulder and hugging him as dad walks around holding her during the visits. Dad brought his son, Charles, to six visits and Joe Jr. and Jill were happy to see him and enjoyed playing with him. Dad was very loving, caring, and attentive to all his children during supervised visits. Also, Mr. Brown always displayed a positive attitude during his weekly visits with his children.

III. Seven key foundations of documentation

- i. Build documentation on an equal regard for safety
- ii. Begin with a guided reading of the center's files
- iii. Recognize that there is no single recipe, no one formula
- iv. Understand your state's legal framework and develop a source of legal advice and support
- v. Question the impact of each documentation practice on the center's time, attention, and resources
- vi. Question 'neutral,' 'objective,' and other familiar concepts and assumptions
- vii. Establish an ongoing dialogue on documentation

IV. Accountability of centers

- i. Defining the role of supervised visitation programs
- ii. Determining what centers are accountable to document, and why?
- iii. Practices that minimize potential harm and maximize protection

V. Considerations for practice

VI. Final questions and comments

VII. Closing wrap-up