

VISITATION BENCH CARD TO BE USED AT EVERY HEARING AND REVIEW

“Visitation has been called the ‘heart of permanency planning’ and frequent visitation can promote healthy attachment and reduce the negative impact of separation for both the child and the family. Research shows that regular, frequent visitation increases the likelihood of an expeditious reunification.”

The NJ Child Placement Bill of Rights protects the child’s right to maintain contact with his/her parent and siblings. NJ regulations presume that this contact should be frequent and unsupervised unless there is an articulated reason for needing supervision. The first visit should occur within five working days of the date of the initial placement. Other relatives may be included in the visits. Below are sections of relevant regulations and questions to ask when making decisions related to visitation.

NJ REGULATION

SUPERVISION: N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.10 & N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.11

Visits shall be unsupervised unless it is determined by the Division or the Court that supervision is necessary. If visits will be supervised, the plan shall contain a statement of the reason supervision is required, or the court should state a reason for imposing supervised visits on the record.

Supervision may be provided by family, friends, a representative of the Division or others the visitor and child feel comfortable with.

the need for supervision for each parent should be considered separately.

FREQUENCY AND DURATION: N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.1(b) & N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.14(a)(3)

For most children in out-of-home placement, the goal is to hold a visit every week for as long a duration as possible. The frequency and duration of visits are determined on a case by case basis. Special consideration shall be given to the needs of preschool children to have frequent visits since their sense of time is different than that of older children.

LOCATION: N.J.A.C. 3A:15-1.9

The law requires that visits take place in the least restrictive, most comfortable setting possible. This may be in the foster home (by permission of the resource family), in the home of parents, or other relatives. Visits may take place in the Division office when it is necessary for the safety of the child, for the convenience for those participating in the visits, or when no other suitable location is available.

SUPPLEMENTAL CONTACT: N.J.A.C 3A:15-1.4

Additional forms of contact including attendance at school, sport and other extra-curricular events, telephone, texting, instant messaging, letters and cards, email, video chats and social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc) provide other ways for families to maintain contact.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Is supervision of visits required for this parent?

___ Yes ___ No

- If Yes, articulated statement of need for supervision (including facts specific to this case):

Names of potential supervisors for review?

- Relatives, Family Friends?
- Resource Parents?
- Contract Providers?
- The Division?

Who will supervise?

- If supervisor is Division employee,
- articulated reason:
- articulated barriers to supervision by relative, friend, or resource parent:

What is the frequency and length of visits?

- If less than weekly, articulated reason:

Is holiday visitation permitted? ___ Yes ___ No

- If Yes, specific schedule :
- If No, articulated reason:

Where are potential locations for visits in this case?

- Home of parent, relative, friend, or resource parent?
- Facility in community (church, temple, community center)?
- Public space (park, shopping mall, restaurant)?
- Facility of contracted provider?
- Division office?

Best location of visits?

- If in Division office, articulated reason & barriers to less restrictive environment:

Transportation arrangements for visitation?

Is phone or internet-based communication permitted?

___ Yes ___ No

Is parent permitted to attend school meetings and functions? ___ Yes ___ No

Is parent permitted to attend extracurricular activities of child (sporting events, recitals, etc.)? ___ Yes ___ No

- If No, articulated reason:

VISITATION BENCH CARD

DECISION TREE

