



### **Creative Activities Parents Can Do With Their Children During Supervised Visitation Services**

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It is without question that providing supervised visitation services is challenging, requires a steady head and heart, and can create meaningful and lasting change for individuals and families.

Supervised visitation providers are constantly responding to the unique needs and realities of working with families to provide trauma-informed, compassionate services. In doing so, the work requires creativity, flexibility, and a reliable assessment of safety and well-being for child and adult survivors of intimate partner abuse. When providing safe, supervised visitation services, developing compassion and empathy for each parent and child is an important strategy for supporting safety and creating opportunities for change. Leading from a place of care demonstrates to families that they matter. It can also help soften worries that parents and children may have when entering services.

Concrete practices to help visitation program staff engage in a humanistic and compassionate manner with individuals and families include:

- Facilitate orientations and regular check-ins with each parent and child.
- Create opportunities for each family member to share their story and experience and incorporate what you learn into future engagements.
- Use active listening by conveying your desire to be present both verbally and nonverbally.



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- Do not express judgment.
- Foster a sense of safety, honesty, trust, and well-being.
- Create a warm, caring, and welcoming environment.
- Acknowledge each parent and child's feelings and concerns about services.
- Show compassion and dignity to every person who enters your doors.
- Avoid assumptions.
- Build authentic partnerships with each parent and child.
- Be transparent about roles and expectations.
- Be flexible.

In the context of providing supervised visitation services, parents may want some support and ideas for how to engage with their child(ren) during supervised visitation. When determining the suggestions you can offer, getting to know each family you serve and determining their unique needs is essential. It is important to recognize the difference between supporting a parent and child during a difficult time and cajoling or strongly persuading a child to use services. Remember, the purpose of safe, supervised visitation services is not to get kids to visit but that if a visit happens, it occurs safely with support and understanding.

There is no “one size fits all” solution for visitation activities. Children, youth, and their survivor parents often have emotional safety needs that vary even within one family; an activity that feels fun and lighthearted to



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one child may feel overwhelming and stressful to another. Centering the safety and well-being of adult and child survivors takes precedence. Below, we have provided some suggestions for activities to start your brainstorming.

#### **Activity Ideas for Parents of Infants and Toddlers:**

- Sing songs or hum a tune.
- Make funny faces or play peek-a-boo.
- Read stories aloud - use puppets or stuffed animals to narrate the story.
- Hold up a stuffed animal and talk about the animal or act as if that animal is talking to the child.
- Engage in dialogue with the child (e.g., what is the sound a cat makes?).
- Play games like Simon Says, Where's Your Nose? and Peek-a-boo.
- Use songs/fingerplays such as "Itsy Bitsy Spider," "Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed," and "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star."
- Play music or dance.
- Serve & return: offer engagement, wait for the child to respond, respond to what they return (vs. trying to stick to the parent's activity idea), and vice versa.
- Encourage culturally specific activities, songs, rhymes, and norms, which nurture an environment where parents feel comfortable accessing culture within parenting



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#### Activity Ideas for Three- to Five-Year-Olds:

- Make silly faces together.
- Sing together.
- Counting games (for example, “Let’s count our steps as we walk around the room.” or “Let’s count to 10 as fast we can together.”)
- Ask what sound these animals make, e.g., cow, duck...
- Read a story out loud and narrate the pictures in the story.
- Listen to music and dance together.
- Draw pictures of the same things and show or describe them to each other; or ask the child what they should draw together.
- Make up silly stories together.
- Have a puppet show.
- Play “What is it?” - identifying an object and giving clues until the other guesses the selected object.
- Create clay or playdough creations together.
- Serve and return (see above)
- Let the child lead and narrate what they are doing: “You are really concentrating on your drawing,” and “You chose the color green for your picture,” etc
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#### Activity Ideas for School-Aged Children:

- Build a story together (adults and children take turns going back and forth to build an imaginative tale).
- Storytime with developmentally appropriate books (chapter books can be used over time during visits). The parent and children could take turns reading.
- Have a dance party.
- Sing songs together.
- Take turns telling each other what to draw.
- Play charades.
- Play adapted games such as silly Simon Says or Red Light/Green Light.
- Play a sound effect game (“Guess what makes the sound I’m making”).
- Listen to music together.
- Watch an age-appropriate show together.
- Play interactive games such as Pictionary, 20 Questions, Battleship, Hedbanz, Apples to Apples, and Telestrations.
- Do science experiments.
- Have a Lego challenge or build with Legos together.
- Do a craft project together.
- Do homework together.



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#### **Activity Ideas for Teens:**

- Play “Would you Rather” - can be a prepackaged game, or families can create their own - giving two random, silly, or icky options to choose between. For example, “Would you rather eat a peanut butter pickle sandwich or ketchup on popcorn?”
- Guess movie lines. Share a line from a movie and ask the other person to guess the movie.
- Play charades.
- Play Bingo or creative versions of Bingo (music Bingo, online Bingo)
- Hold trivia contests.
- Engage in craft projects.
- Engage in “conversation starter” questions. Some possible starter questions include:
  1. What was the funniest/best/most heartwarming thing that happened today?
  2. If you could have a superpower, what would it be?
  3. Tell me a joke, and I'll share one with you.
  4. What's something you recently learned?



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5. What is your favorite movie, and why? Or what movies have you watched recently?
  6. What has been the thing you like to do the most lately?
  7. What are a few things you have really wanted to try or learn more about?
  8. Tell me about a fun time you had with friends
  9. What Instagram, TikTok or other social media memes and trends have your attention?
  10. What's your favorite fashion trend of the moment?
  11. Who's your favorite musician/performer right now? Who would you want to see in concert?
- Play Catch Phrase, Pictionary, 20 Questions, Battleship, Hedbanz, Apples to Apples, Telestrations.
  - Encourage culturally specific activities, songs, rhymes, and norms which nurture an environment where parents feel comfortable accessing culture within parenting.