



## **SUPERVISED VISITATION GUIDELINES**

### **ABOUT OUR SERVICES:**

Pineywoods Family Supervision provides individualized supervision of parent-child contact. We coordinate a professionally trained staff who supervises visits at the office or another child-friendly location.

Our goal is providing supervised visitation in order to minimize the conflict that child frequently have to endure as a result of custody litigation while allowing the child to have safe and positive contact with their parent and/or other significant relatives.

These guidelines outline the basic expectations and procedures for services. Failure to comply with guidelines may result in termination of our agency's services.

### **INITIATING SERVICES:**

The first step in beginning services is for the parties to obtain a signed court order or written agreement for supervised visitation services. The order or agreement must detail the following information:

1. Individuals who are to participate in the supervised visitation sessions and whether any other family members, relatives, or individuals are permitted to attend visits. The order or written agreement must include each individual specifically or they will not be permitted to participate.
2. The schedule of supervised periods of visitation which shall include the days, times, and length of each supervised period of visitation. The agency will conduct a maximum of two-hour visits on each occasion, unless otherwise ordered by the Court. The agency will attempt to comply with specific times; however, the exact time and day will depend on the availability of agency staff.
3. The location of where are the supervised periods of visitation are to take place. Most visits take place at the agency's office; however, offsite visits are possible so long as this is permitted by the court order or written agreement and the location is determined by the agency.

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4. The person who is responsible for the cost of the supervised visitation, including the registration fee.

To begin services of supervised visitation, all adults involved must complete the intake information and provide all required documents at the time of the orientation appointment which is typically conducted via telephone. Your visitation will not be scheduled until this is completed.

**FEES FOR SERVICES:**

Registration fee (one-time fee for supervised parent) .....	\$25.00
Basic Supervision (brief summary reports included) .....	\$50.00 per hour
Facilitative Supervision (detailed notes included).....	\$75.00 per hour
Offsite Basic Supervision (must be local).....	\$60.00 per hour
Supervisor Court Appearance (Two hour minimum required).....	\$100.00 per hour
Records requests.....	\$25.00 per file
Any additional activities requested (i.e. meetings or depositions).....	\$100.00 per hour

All fees for supervision are required 48 hours prior to the date and time of the scheduled visitation. Failure to pay fees 48 hours in advance will result in your appointment for the supervised visitation being cancelled. If you fail to show up for your scheduled visitation, the fees paid are non-refundable.

All cancellations must be made at least 24 hours before your scheduled visitation. Failure to cancel at least 24 hours in advance will result in your fee being non-refundable. If you need to cancel or reschedule a visit and it is done so within the required timeframe, the payment will be applied to the next scheduled appointment.

Fees for Court appearances are due at least one-week in advance and are non-refundable within one week of the scheduled appearance. Travel fees for offsite visitation outside of Angelina County will be assessed individually and provided to you prior to being scheduled. All travel fees are required to be paid at the time the supervision fees are due. Refunds are provided on a case by case basis and must be requested in writing.

Payment is accepted via check, money order, or cash. Checks and money orders should be made out to Pineywoods Family Supervision. Payments can be mailed or dropped off at the agency. If a payment is dropped off and no staff is available to accept payment, you may deliver the payment in a sealed envelope through the mail slot located in the door at the back of the building. **Do not place payments in the mailbox located at the front door of the building.**

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## **CANCELLATIONS AND MISSED VISITS:**

Cancellations of scheduled visits must be received at least 48 hours prior to the time of the visit. If the appointments are cancelled within the required timeframe, the fees paid will be applied towards the next visit. If there are no more scheduled visits, a refund must be requested in writing within 4 weeks of the date paid, otherwise the fee is non-refundable. Cancellations made less than 48 hours prior to the scheduled visit are non-refundable, unless conditions met the exceptions listed below:

Child illness exception: The canceling party notifies the agency at least two hours in advance that the visit is cancelled due to the child being ill **and** the party provides written documentation of the child's illness and proof of a doctor's appointment no later than 72 hours after the appointment.

Other emergencies: If the canceling party has an emergency such as medical emergency, death in the family, or other significant circumstance **and** the party is able to provide proof of the emergency within 72 hours of the cancelled visit, the party may not be held responsible for the cost of the visit. The supervisor will assess the situation on a case by case basis. It is up to the supervisor's discretion to determine if the proof provided is considered valid.

If the individual being supervised does not show up for a visit, the fee for that visit is non-refundable. If the other party or individual transporting the child to the visit does not show up they will be responsible for reimbursing the cost of the visit. If the transporting parent is unable to deliver the children into the office for the visit, this will count as a missed visit and this parent is responsible for reimbursing fees for the visit. The determination of which parent will be responsible for fees of missed visit is ultimately up to the discretion of agency director. If this individual is not compliant with payment, the Court and attorneys will be notified.

If the individual being supervised arrives more than 15 minutes after the appointment time, the supervisor has the right to cancel the visit without a refund or allow a shortened visit at that time, without any refund being given for the missed time. If the parent transporting the children is late arriving or picking up the children, the agency has the right to impose a \$25.00 for each time they are late.

If the supervisor or the agency has an emergency that results in your visit being cancelled, a refund will be provided.

## **LOGISTICS OF SUPERVISED VISITATION:**

If the court order designates that the custodial parent may select another competent adult to deliver or pick up the child from the visit, this individual must also complete required paperwork. The supervisor is not able to provide transportation and is not permitted to ride in a parent's vehicle.

The individual being supervised must arrive 10 minutes prior to the start of each visit and remain in the location as directed by the supervisor until the child arrives. The individual dropping off or picking up the child must remain in the front lobby area or area designated by the supervisor until the child is escorted to that individual. The individual being supervised must wait inside the building until the individual with the child has vacated the property. These designated locations and rules are set in order to prevent the parties from interacting. The individual being supervised shall not have any contact with the child until the supervisor is present.

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For example, if the individual being supervised is in the parking lot and the individual with the child arrives early, the individual with the child is required to remain in their vehicle until the individual being supervised arrives inside the building. If there are any concerns or issues that take place in the parking lot prior to or following a visit, please call the office number or, in the event of an emergency, call 911. Exact arrangements regarding the drop off and pick up of the child will be made on a case by case basis and are up to the discretion of the supervisor. All parties and individuals involved in the visitation are expected to comply with the supervisor's instructions and failure to comply can result in the cancelation of services.

### **INTERACTION DURING SUPERVISED VISITS:**

Parties and individuals being supervised are expected to take care of and be responsible for managing the child's behavior during all visits. They are expected to set limits and discipline appropriately when needed; however, physical discipline of any type (spanking, swatting, pinching, etc.) is **not** allowed.

All contact between the individual being supervised and the child will be monitored by the supervisor. Children who are potty trained will use the restroom privately without being supervised. If a child is being potty trained, the supervisor will accompany and observe the individual being supervised when assisting the child. If the child is in a diaper or pull-up, the individual being supervised is responsible for changing the child while the supervisor remains present to observe.

All parties are expected to interact with the child in a positive and supportive manner. Any communication or behavior that is emotionally or physically damaging or threatening is not permitted and will not be tolerated. Profanity, derogatory comments, or any negative comments about the other parent or any other party involved is not permitted and can result in the supervisor ending the visit. In addition, comments regarding the litigation, the current court case, or any issues pertaining to issues regarding the current court case are not permitted, which includes comments regarding the future such as "when this is all over", or "if/when you come to live with me".

All conversations between the individual being supervised and the child must be audible to the supervisor. Whispering, hand gestures, or written notes are not permitted. All conversations must be in English, unless the supervisor is multilingual. If you are deaf or speak a different primary language, arrangements must be made prior to the visitation.

Interrogation of the child is not permitted. The behavior that constitutes interrogation is left to the discretion of the supervisor, but this includes using the child to gather information about the other parent or party involved, or leading the conversation in such a manner that encourages the child to reveal such information. Conversations should be focused on the child.

Children are not permitted to be physically examined or inspected during the supervised visitation.

Cellphones, Apple watches, Ipads, and/or any other electronic devices are only permitted upon the approval of the supervisor. The individual being supervised must turn off their cellphone and remove Apple watches and must request permission prior to using any device. No videoing or audio recording of the visit is permitted at any time.

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Children are not permitted to bring their cellphones, but if they do, they will be required to turn them off. The individual who transported the child or other parent/party involved is not permitted to have any communication with the child during the visitation. In the event there is an emergency, the individual will contact the supervisor through the office telephone.

The custodial parent or individual transporting the child to and from the visit is required to leave the location of the visit. There will be times the child and individual being supervised will be permitted to go outside of the office and the child must not see the transporter's vehicle. If the transporter chooses to remain nearby, please ensure your vehicle is not in sight in any direction of the agency's building. This also applies to any offsite visitation. The transporter must comply with any requests by the supervisor to leave the premises.

The agency will allow only the exchange of the child and certain items for the child. Neither the agency, supervisor or the child should be used to pass messages or exchange items that are not for the visit, with the exception of medication, but this information must be approved prior to the start of the visitation by the supervisor. Gifts may be given to the child during the visits; however, this is to be limited and is left to the discretion of the supervisor if considered to be too much or inappropriate, and should be restricted to items a child or adult can carry in one trip to the vehicle. Gifts given to the child should be for them to leave with at the end of the visit, gifts are not permitted to be given with the condition of the child having it later when with the other parent/party or at the next visitation. The agency and supervisor reserve the right to inspect all items brought to the visit and all gifts prior to presentation to the child.

The party or individual being supervised is permitted and encouraged to provide food or snacks to the child. The agency does not provide any food. The food must be appropriate and the supervisor has the right to prevent the child from eating certain foods, such as foods that are not age appropriate or providing a child with a significant amount of sugar and/or caffeine. The individual being supervised is required to clean up the food and trash at the end of the visit.

Threats of physical violence or inappropriate behaviors will not be tolerated and could result in termination of services from the agency. All parties must conduct themselves in a manner that clearly demonstrates that the well-being of the child is their highest priority. Individuals being supervised are not to place their hands on the child in any way that the staff deems inappropriate and they are to ensure that the child does not inappropriately expose themselves during the visit.

The supervising staff and agency will determine appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and conversations with the child. **All parties are to comply with the limits set by the supervisor without complaint, comment, or further explanation during the visit.** Parties may request to speak to the supervisor after the child leaves, if time allows, or contact the agency during business hours to discuss any questions they may have regarding the supervisor's directives.

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## **INTERACTION WITH SUPERVISING STAFF:**

### **Basic Supervision:**

The supervisor is present to observe and record the behaviors and interactions between adults and children. Supervisors may interact when necessary at their own discretion.

Neither party should initiate involvement of the supervisor in conversation or activities. Parties are not to ask personal questions of the staff or supervisor, nor are they to offer food or other gifts to them. Furthermore, parties are not to involve the supervisor in discussions regarding the court case, their opinions of the other parties involved, or any disparaging remarks. Any concerns regarding the other party or the current case must be addressed at the time of the orientation or during business hours outside of the scheduled visitation. All supervisors are required by law to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect. This includes physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, and physical neglect. Staff will also contact the appropriate authorities if there is harassment, threats, or physical contact during the exchanges.

### **Facilitative Supervision:**

During facilitative supervision, the supervisor may interact to assist the parent and child, this may include encouraging and facilitating communications, games, and imaginary play. The goal of facilitative supervision is to assist the parent and child in bonding, as well as teaching the parent appropriate and healthy ways to respond to their child. The supervisor will also spend some additional time after the child leaves the visit to discuss with the parent any concerns or questions regarding parenting skills, managing behaviors, and emotional support of their child. Facilitative supervision also includes more detailed notes of interactions.

## **OTHER GUIDELINES:**

The agency clocks determine the correct time concerning appointments, services, lateness and cancellations.

This agency has the right to terminate any and all services for supervised visitation for any reason deemed necessary, including but not limited to:

1. If ongoing contact appears too stressful or traumatic for the child;
2. The agency determines that it cannot effectively address safety or specific issues in the particular case;
3. The case places an undue demand on the agency's resources;
4. A party harasses or threatens staff or other parties; and
5. One or both of the parties fail to comply with policies and guidelines.

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The child and parties involved should be dressed in appropriate and unrevealing clothing. Children wearing skirts or dresses should have shorts on under their dress or skirt.

There is no smoking, vaping, alcohol use, or other substances allowed at any time during supervised visitation. If a party appears to be under the influence of any substance at the time of the visit, the supervisor has the authority to cancel the visit.

Parties involved in supervision are not allowed to bring any weapon to the supervised visitation.

### **QUESTIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE AGENCY:**

During the orientation and registration process, there will be time set aside to ask questions and address any concerns. Please make sure you have read the guidelines prior to the meeting to ensure your questions are not addressed in the forms.

In the event questions or concerns arise after the orientation is completed, please contact the office during business hours. Messages left on the office telephone will typically be returned within 24 hours during the week, unless an urgent message is left regarding a cancellation of a visit. Do not address your questions or concerns with the supervising staff prior to, during, or after the visit. Supervising staff are only trained and assigned to supervise the visitation and cannot fully respond to questions and issues pertaining the agency's policies.

### **RECORDS REQUESTS:**

All records requests must be made in writing and payment is required prior to the records being released. Additionally, records will be released with appropriate authorizations to agents working for the Court, including but not limited to psychologists, social workers, counselors, child custody evaluators, and attorneys.

Disclaimer for released records: Information released is based on staff observations. When providing supervised visitation, we do not provide evaluations of the families who use our services or make recommendations about future arrangements for parent-child access. These recorded observations of the parent-child contacts have occurred in a structured and protected setting and there is no prediction regarding how the parent-child contacts will occur in a less protected setting without supervision. Caution should be exercised by those reviewing the documents provided by the agency regarding observations made during the supervised visitation.

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING:**

The most important guideline to remember is that all parties are expected to comply with all directives from the supervisor and the agency staff. Although parties may not understand why an instruction is given or may not agree with the instruction, they must comply at the time without comment or complaint. The time to address questions or concerns about the directives is not during the visit or in the presence of the child, but at a later time.

These guidelines are not meant to be all encompassing. Additional arrangements, policies, instructions, and modifications may be made at any time based upon changes and specific case details.

By signing this form, I have read and agree to abide by all the policies and guidelines of Pineywoods Family Supervision.

Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2022.

Client Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Client Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form by mail, email, fax or it may be dropped off at the office. If no one is at the office then you can place the documents through the mail slot in the rear door located at the back of the office building.

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Adapted from Dr. Aaron Robb with Forensic Counseling Services