

**Department for Children and Families
Family Services Division**

**Initial Caregivers Meeting, Shared
Parenting Meetings and Family Time
Practice Guidance**



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Acknowledgements

The Vermont Family Time Guidelines (2008) will assist the state in reaching its goals for family engagement, safety, permanence, law abidance and well-being. The primary audience for this practice model is our Family Services staff and community partners. We offer this guide as an opportunity for agencies and staff to enhance their practice with children and families.

Many individuals contributed to the development of these guidelines. Their time and suggestions are greatly appreciated. The Family Time Task Force Members include: Suzanne Legare Belcher, John Bisbee, Ellie Breitmaier, Sandra Clougher, Dawn Donahue, Auguste Elliott, Ruth Houtte, Lisa Keller, Jane Siddall, Bunny Thompson, and Sarah Ward.

While researching literature and other sources to support our charge, we discovered Olmsted County (Minnesota) Child and Family Services Division and the Ohio Department for Children & Families had already developed guides similar to what we wanted to produce for Vermont. By obtaining permission from these organizations, we were able to incorporate parts of their guides along with additions and revisions to adapt to Vermont and complete our version of the guide. We acknowledge the hard work Olmsted County & Ohio DCF undertook to develop such comprehensive guides and give thanks for allowing our group to make modifications.

The model that Vermont has adopted for working with families is Visit Coaching developed by Marty Beyer, PhD and will be referred to as "Family Time Coaching" in this document. We believe that every parent deserves a family time coach to enhance their abilities to meet their child's needs.

In 2013/2014 these guidelines were updated to reflect changes in practice and lessons learned from the implementation of the original guidelines. These changes centered around the following: emphasizing other types of family time in addition to Family Time Coaching and caregiver meetings as a stand alone practice; clarifying the purpose of Shared Parenting Meetings; providing guidance on engaging fathers in family time and family time with teens; updating the forms; and language changes to support our focus on kinship care. Thank you to the following individuals that contributed to this: Auguste Elliott, Sarah Gallagher, Alix Gibson, Ruth Houtte, Barbara Joyal, Karen Shea and Suzanne Shibley.

Introduction

Children are removed from their parents and placed in out-of-home care because a court has determined that it is not safe for them to live at home. However, children who are removed from home, particularly those who are very young, are exposed to a new danger—the emotional and developmental harm that can result from separation. In most families, children attach to their parents or caregivers through emotional bonds. Such attachment is basic to a child's life, providing a secure emotional base for the child to build relationships later in life. The threat of loss of attachment creates anxiety, sorrow and other intense feelings (Bowlby, 1969). Researchers have continued to understand the importance of maintaining and strengthening attachments, particularly in children in out-of-home placement (Falberg, 1979; Jenkins & Norman, 1972). So essential is this attachment to a child's well-being, that children who are in out-of-home care must have access to their parents/caregivers, siblings and other important people in their lives. (Toolbox No. 1 Using Visitation to Support Permanency, Lois E. Wright, CWLA Press 2001.)

This guide acknowledges the importance of parental and family contact and provides a model of best practice for children who are placed in out-of-home care. Language is powerful and it is important that we are mindful of that when communicating with families. The word supervision, for example, denotes observation and concern, not assistance and opportunity. Throughout the guide, the term parent(s) can also refer to the child's primary caregiver, legal guardian, and birth parent. The terms (1) "visitation", (2) "parenting time", (3) "family access", and (4) "family time" describe parent-child, kin, sibling and other relative contact. Parenting time is defined as face-to-face contact between the child and their parent and the child and their siblings. Family access may involve kin, relatives, and other important people in the child's life. Other forms of contact would include telephone calls, letters, and exchange of gifts, videos, and photographs between family members and significant others.

Safe and timely reunification is the first and primary goal for most children in custody. Frequent, supported family time is essential to maintaining attachments, thus reducing the sense of abandonment, and contributing to successful reunification. Family time has been found to be strongly associated with family reunification and decreased length of stay in out of home placement. One study of 922 children in San Diego revealed that children who visited with their mother were approximately 10 times more likely to be reunified (Davis, et al 1996). Research also shows that children who are visited frequently are more likely to have high well-being ratings and to adjust well to placement. (Borgman, 1985, Cowan and Stout, 1939, Fanshel and Shinn, 1978,

Weinstein, 1960). (Visiting Between Children in Care and Their Families: A Look at Current Policy, Peg Hess, PhD, 2003.)

Values of Family Time

Family Services Division and community partners hold the following values:

- Family time is the right of every child and family.
- We honor the existing bond between children and their families.
- We respect parents for their strengths.
- Family time is an educational opportunity for parents.
- Family time creates a linkage between the present and the past and a basis for future relationships.
- Family time is planned and purposeful with a productive outcome.
- Family time should be in the least intrusive and most natural environment available based upon safety and risk.
- Family time recognizes and respects the emotions of the parent and child, which underlie the process. Division staff should attend to those emotions in a respectful and thoughtful manner.
- Family time is family-driven and individualized.
- We respect a family's culture and rituals.
- Family time is never used as a reward or punishment for the parent and child.

Benefits of Family Time

Family time is the primary tool that social workers and caregivers can use to help a child cope with the separation and loss associated with out of home placement and the traumatic results of the maltreatment. In addition to this, benefits include:

Adapted from Wright, 2001

- Maintaining and strengthening family relationships.
- Reassuring the child of the parent's well-being.
- Dealing with changing relationships and supporting the family in coping with changes.
- Enhancing parental motivation to change by providing reassurance and hope.
- Enhancing parental empowerment - Millham et al. (1986) noted that parents normally have some power to affect the lives of their child and a child is reassured by this. This is diminished significantly when a child is placed outside of the home.
- Providing the opportunity for parental change and demonstrating these changes.
- Helping participants deal with reality. Distortion occurs when a child is in care due to defenses and a lack of information.
- Supporting the child's adjustment in the foster home.

- Providing the context for self-assessment by a parent and agency assessment of how the parent is doing.
- Supporting decision making.
- Reducing time in care.
- Increasing the likelihood of reunification.
- Assisting with transition to reunification.
- Contributing to family stability once reunification has occurred by reducing the likelihood of a disruption of reunification.
- Providing the forum for ongoing information sharing.
- Enabling the parent to stay current with the child's development and activities.
- Supporting child developmental progression.
- Helping families cope with another plan, grieve and work out their future relationship, if reunification is not the plan.
- Providing accurate, verifiable documentation.

Other benefits may include:

- Allowing the social worker and foster parent the opportunities to support the parent-child relationship.
- Supporting foster parents to have clear roles and to experience themselves as therapeutic agents in the reunification plan.
- Reducing painful loyalty conflicts in foster children.

(Toolbox No. 1 Using Visitation to Support Permanency, Lois E. Wright, CWLA Press 2001.)

Separation and Loss and Family Time Feelings



Everyone involved in planning and implementing family time needs to be aware of the complex reactions and responses each individual is likely to have to the separation, placement, and subsequent contact.

The Child's Experience

Parents, kin/foster parents, and social workers can understand that separation is traumatizing for a child and the child's reactions to family time are usually not a sign that the family time itself is harmful to the child.

Separation due to out-of-home placement can be so traumatic for children that, if the child welfare system is to “first do no harm,” it has a sacred responsibility to ease the pain associated with separation as well as to help children progress along their developmental paths and to return them to safety and stability as soon as possible. (Wright, 2001).

While we may all experience the grief and loss of separation at various times in our lives, a child in out-of-home placement is especially affected as he/she lacks control, resources, and understanding with which to change the situation. In addition, the separation has occurred in the midst of trauma. As well, sometimes the grief and loss of a child in care manifests as family time refusal or out-of-control behavior, which may curtail family time, resulting in still more confusion, stress, and loss. For a young child, development of secure and healthy attachments may be at risk and frequent family time is recommended.

Other common child responses seen in the traditional family time situation include:

- Happiness and relief to see the family.
- The need to care for the parent or for siblings.
- Confusion about why he/she cannot go home.
- Desperation
- Withdrawal
- Regression
- Anger or fear related to the abuse.
- Guilt that the removal is her/his fault and/or the need to perform for professionals who are involved in family time.
- Loyalty conflict experienced as the child by the need to choose between, favor, or take care of parent and/or kin/foster parent.
- Re-traumatization if certain settings, statements, objects, or persons trigger a trauma response.

Family time that focuses on the child’s need for nurturing and fun will decrease distress and creates memories. Parents and kin/foster parents trained to understand and address a child’s reactions will turn distress and ambivalence into growth experiences. Frequent and positive communication between the parents and kin/foster parents will make both discussion of child reactions and mutual focus on child’s needs easier and more productive. For older children, clear expectations, sincere and consistent explanations, inclusion in planning and debriefing, and opportunities for expression both inside and outside of family time will maximize the short-term as well as the long-term impact of family time.

Please see Appendix A for additional information on children and trauma.

The Parent’s Experience

The parent experiences loss when their child is placed in foster care. The parent's experience may not be recognized as trauma by others when behavior becomes the focus, i.e. "he's always late," "she talks about herself," "she just complains about the social worker." Rarely do we consider that disinterest, hostility, or last minute cancellations may be the manifestation of grief and loss similar to the child's. In one of the few studies to have looked at the experience of parents involved with the child welfare system Haight and her colleagues (2001) found that all of the parents shared feelings about the separation, mostly grief, depression and trauma, and most spoke about the feelings of their child. Some mothers shared hopelessness and a lasting rage towards the child welfare system.

Under the microscope of traditional supervised visitation, parents may also experience:

- Confusion
- Anger
- Desperation
- Withdrawal
- Incompetency, inadequacy, inferiority
- Judgment and pressure to perform to often unknown expectations.
- Shame
- Re-traumatization - for example, for some mothers their baby's cry may act as a trigger to past trauma.

Substance abusing parents have been known to relapse following family time as a means of numbing the pain. Parents that have been absent from a child's life may experience guilt, anxiety or other feelings as they are reintroduced to and work to develop a relationship with the child.

Models such as Visit Coaching (Beyer, 2003), which will be discussed in the following section, focuses on parent strengths and building capacity to meet their child's needs. Parent confidence can grow rather than diminish during family time. Parents have the opportunity to understand their case plan requirements in terms of their child's needs. Parents are empowered to take charge of family time and show off their skills to social workers. While parent needs are left outside of the family time, they are picked up again at the end of the time together where debriefing includes support for self-care, advocacy, therapy, and other means of getting adult needs met.

The Kin/Foster Parent's Experience

Kin/Foster parents play a critical role in the success of family time. They are essential partners in maintaining connections between a child and the people who are important to them. For them the experience of family time is more

likely to be related to perceptions of themselves, the parents and the child's response to the contact. Kin/Foster parents may experience:

- Delight when child and parents have a great time.
- Confusion regarding expectations, child's response, the role and importance of family time, and their own role.
- Concern (particularly if child has a negative response to the parent or family time).
- Ambivalence towards parent.
- Resentment or helplessness at demands placed upon them by family time, particularly as family time increases, or in infant cases requiring daily family time.
- Annoyance or even anger at disruptive schedules, changes, or miscommunications.
- Secondary trauma or be triggered to their own trauma by a child's behavior or family situation.

Kin/Foster parents need information and involvement in planning family time. Supports for them should be included in this plan. The earliest possible communication can assist in developing a mutual focus on child needs as parent and kin/ share information about the child and how she or he eats, copes, learns, and celebrates. Education, empathy, and support are all necessary to assist them in maintaining their commitment to reunification (even in concurrent planning) as their own attachment to the child grows. They require continual support to remain professional in their role as therapeutic agent. Ideas for support may include:

- Individualized connection to the Resource Coordinator.
- Mentoring with an experienced kin/foster parent.
- Support from the child's therapist.
- Support from a parent educator or family support worker.
- Short term stabilization from an Intensive Family Based Service worker.
- Connection to another family for respite.
- Support group.
- Education & training specific to the issues.

Social Worker Experience

The social worker's role is to facilitate the opportunity for a positive experience of family time between the parents, the child and the kin/foster family. The social worker has multiple roles: protector of the child, advocate for the parent-child relationship, supporter and employer of the kin/foster parent, and assessor of the parent's capacity and progress.

A social worker may experience:

- Delight when child and parents have a great time.
- Everyone's emotions and cannot prevent the painful feelings of others.

- Ambivalence about continuing contact when the child's reaction to family time is extreme.
- Being torn between providing natural family time experiences and protecting the child.

In summary, the coaching relationship for the parent, appropriate support for the kin/foster parent, and supportive supervision for the social worker will provide opportunities for processing the complex responses and reactions and go far to create safe, productive, consistent, and fun family time for a child and their parents. Good and frequent communication is important in all aspects of a family time program, and especially in helping to manage everyone's experiences.

Ways Family Time Can Occur

Family time can and should occur in the most natural settings possible given the unique risk and danger concerns that are present. Parents should be encouraged to continue to be involved with their child/youth's doctor and dentist appointments, school meetings, sporting or other extracurricular activities, ect... (See Location section under Creating a Comprehensive Family Time Plan for more information.)

Family time can be supported or unsupported depending on the risk and danger. Extended family members, friends or other natural supports can be good supports for family time. They could support the entire contact or be involved to help the parent plan the family time and then offer minimal support during the actual activity or time that the child/youth spends with the parent. Often family supports are helpful in supporting additional family time when coaching is offered as a service. During this informally supported time, the parent can practice what the coach is helping the parent to learn during Family Time Coaching.

Family Time Coaching is to be used when there are safety concerns and parenting skills that the parent needs professional support to develop and practice. Family Time Coaching is a very effective intervention to be used to reduce risk and increase safety. It is responsive and flexible. Coaching is a service that should evolve as progress is made i.e. move to less coaching and increased informally supported family time and unsupported time. When there is a court order that specifies an amount of family time, that time can be structured in a way that best meets the needs of the child which is not always through Family Time Coaching, but through the use of various activities (i.e. playgroups) and natural supports.

Initial Caregiver and Shared Parenting Meetings



The Initial Caregiver Meeting and subsequent Shared Parenting Meetings are an opportunity for the parent(s) and alternate caregivers to develop a relationship so that the child is understood and supported by both - in essence parented by both. It is also a time to plan what family time will look like. These are important meetings whether or not the parent is receiving coaching services. According to the Oregon Department of Human Services (2004, p.1) "when there is contact between birth and foster parents, studies show children:

- Have more stable placements
- Experience better emotional development
- Are more successful in school and,
- Return home sooner"

Benefits of caregiver/shared parenting meetings: (adapted from the Oregon DHS Ice Breaker, The first meeting between parents and kin/foster parents, 2004)

For the child:

- Provides a continuum of care.
- Enables the transition to be as smooth and short as possible.
- Decreases the child's ability to split the adults.
- Ensures that the child is free to love and be loved by both the family and the kin/foster family.

For the Parent:

- Empowers them to be an active participant in aiding in their child's transition into kin/foster care.
- Helps them feel more at ease with the kin/foster parent.
- Provides them the opportunity to meet the family who is going to be caring for their child, and feel more confident in their child's safety and well-being.
- Offers the potential for a supportive, mentoring relationship with the foster parent.
- Allows the potential for a long-term natural support from the kin/foster parents.

For the kin/foster parent:

- Helps the kin/foster parent to feel more at ease with the parents; to experience them as real people, not just someone who had their child removed.
- Increases the likelihood that the kin/foster parent will support the reunification plan.

It is vital that family time be a well planned activity and that this planning be an immediate priority when a child enters out of home care. An Initial Caregivers Meeting is convened by the social worker and the Family Time Coach if there is one to bring together the parents, kin/foster parents and sometimes the child or youth and other family members that will be supporting family time, within five working days after a child is removed from their home (link to policy 124). This is the first opportunity for all parties to talk about the family time schedule that will benefit the child and to share information about the child. Perspectives and feelings of all participants can be expressed and reconciled to promote the best possible collaboration. Important information can be given regarding the child/youth's needs, preferences, routines, ect...The initial family time between the child and the parents by policy (http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/fsd/policies/124_Family_Time_12_2_2014.pdf) should happen within three working days and should not be delayed while the Initial Caregivers Meeting is being arranged.

Shared Parenting Meetings provide an opportunity for the parent(s) and the alternate caregiver to deepen their connection for the benefit of the child. It also provides an opportunity to update everyone on how family time is going, to discuss the child's changing needs from all perspectives (parent, child, kin/foster parent and social worker), and to make adjustments as progress is made. When Family Time Coaching is happening the child's needs list becomes the focus, enabling the parents to share how those needs are being met in family time. If progress is not being made it is a time to discuss why and change strategies if necessary. Shared Parenting Meetings are not a time to review progress with overall case plan services and goals. If the family is not receiving coaching services then it is recommended that the meetings be convened and facilitated by a Child and Family Support Contract staff member, Resource Coordinator, supervisor and/or social worker. It is policy for Shared Parenting Meetings to be convened every 3 months (http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/fsd/policies/124_Family_Time_12_2_2014.pdf). It is best practice to hold these monthly.

How to have an effective Initial Caregiver/Shared Parenting Meeting

The meeting facilitator should adequately prepare parents and alternate caregivers. Both should be coached as to the purpose, guidelines and decisions to be made during the meeting. The family time decisions may include: timing, location, participants, schedule of review and structure. It is important to

review the benefits of these meetings. Guidelines for these meetings include the need to:

- Focus on the child's needs.
- Respect the feelings, opinions, cultural differences and ideas of others.
- Recognize the importance each person has in the life of the child.
- Clarify the limits of confidentiality.
- Arrive on time.

Parents should be supported to:

- Share information about their child, including bed time and daily routines, favorite toys and foods, hobbies, likes and dislikes, etc.
- Bring important personal items for their child, such as pictures, favorite toys and clothes or other special things.
- Bring information about their time schedules and routines.
- Share information about family traditions and culture.

Kin/Foster parents should be supported to:

- Ask for specific information about the child from the parents, such as routines and medical needs.
- Ask questions that will help them to understand the child's needs, including cultural traditions.
- Talk about why they are kin/foster parents and some of the basic rules of their house.
- Bring pictures which show their house, especially where the child will be sleeping and activities.

Creating a Comprehensive Family Time Plan

A family time plan should be developed during the Initial Caregivers Meeting and subsequent Shared Parenting Meetings that consists of all the logistics for family time (see appendix C) and this should become part of the case plan. The plan should be reviewed at regular intervals at least every three months, although if progress is being made, changes to move the family towards reunification should not be delayed. Reviews and changes should be documented in the plan as well. Like everything, the family time plan should be individualized respecting the family's traditions and culture.

Safety

Family time plans address obvious and more subtle risks related to the child's physical, sexual and emotional safety.

The dilemma for the work is, of course, to balance realistic and necessary caution against the parties' rights for visitation and more

importantly, the benefits of visitation. Solutions are to be found only in creative planning, making decisions that preserve both benefits and safety. Openness with participants about the dilemma- the agency's responsibility to protect as well as its sincere desire to support visitation- can greatly increase the creative options. (Wright, 2001,p.52)

The following factors should be considered in designing family time(adapted from Hess, 2003, p.13 cited from NH Visitation Policy):

- The risk to the child and context of abuse or relationship dynamics.
- The age of child.
- The potential for abduction of child.
- Extreme emotional reactions of child due to trauma, separation, and/or abuse/neglect history.
- Parent is known to behave in inappropriate or unpredictable ways.
- When there has been a lack of contact between parent and child.

The plan for safety should mitigate the specific risks identified. Strategies can include controls such as rules and observation. Safety concerns impact planning decisions such as location, participants, timing, and content of the family time. These will be discussed below. The specific risks and mitigating strategies should be reevaluated at every Shared Parenting Meeting or more frequently. The reevaluation process should include a review of the safety plan and an assessment of the parent's demonstrated ability to provide protection to their child during the family time.

Family time should move towards increased unsupported time when the risks to the child have been reduced. The parent would plan activities and be increasingly capable of managing the child's behavior without assistance. The parent may accept greater responsibility for providing transportation for the child if able. Family time does not occur in the office, but in the home of the parent, alternate caregiver or in the community.

A monitor should only be used when safety concerns cannot be mitigated by the coach, informal support or other professional and/or in the rare instance that coaching is not therapeutically indicated. There may be times when an additional person is needed to assure safety. (Please see Special Consideration Sections for more information.)

Location

Family time should be held in the most normal, comfortable, familiar setting possible. Family time does not need to occur in the same place all the time. The location should be dependent on the activities and needs of the child.

- A. Child's Home - "Hess and Proch (1993) state that the preferred setting for the family time is the child's home, unless this is precluded for

- safety reasons.” (Wright, 2001, p. 55) The home is familiar and can meet the child’s need to reconnect. Even if the parent has moved, it is important for the child to know where his/her parent lives. Leaving may be difficult for the child at first, but this does not mean that the home setting should be disregarded. Being in the home puts the parent in comfortable surroundings during a stressful time.
- B. Kin/Foster Home - “Visiting in the foster home is consistent with foster parents’ seeing themselves as role models and teachers, and being willing to form a relationship with the...parent that is supportive of improving parenting skills and of eventual reunification.” (Wright, 2001, p.56) Boundaries should be negotiated as part of the planning process.
 - C. Child’s Community - This might include the home of another relative or family friend and locations of activities that are enjoyable and/or important to the child, i.e. libraries, restaurants, parks, team sports games. As family time progresses, location can allow for family tasks (grocery shopping or doing laundry), which increases the opportunity to build the parents’ skills in a variety of situations and the child’s sense of family.
 - D. Appointments - These can include medical and dental visits, therapy sessions, school meetings and/or tasks like haircuts. When working towards reunification, in-home service providers can be encouraged to join family time in the parent’s home e.g. visiting nurse. This involvement reinforces the parent’s responsibility for meeting the child’s basic needs and keeps the parent up to date on how their child is doing.
 - E. Office Family Room - This should be used when there are significant safety concerns that cannot be mitigated or safety has not been clearly assessed, or another location has not yet been identified.
 - F. Visitation Center - When there are significant safety concerns and family time must be closely monitored, centers are especially equipped to deal with these situations. Having a secure place such as this may be the only option except for terminating contact, which is to be avoided except in extreme situations (Tortorella 1996). Please see Appendix B for the list of centers in Vermont.

Who Will Participate

In addition to the parents, there may be others important to the family that should participate in family time. Siblings should always be considered in planning as they are important and can present complexities. Other relatives,

including grandparents, and friends should also be considered. Things to discuss during the planning process:

- Who do the parent and child suggest should be involved? Do not forget to inquire about pets that may be important to the child.
- What part (if any) did the person play in the maltreatment (particularly where sexual abuse or severe physical abuse is involved), and can the child be adequately protected?
- What positive role does the person play in the child's life?
- What positive role can the person play in the child's current and future life?
- Overall, how can family time with this person contribute toward the achievement of the permanency goal?
- Does the child for any reason veto family time that includes this person?
- Are there other safety concerns for any member of the family, including but not limited to domestic abuse? (If so, see Special Considerations section.)

Social workers should participate in family time at least monthly so that parents have the ability to demonstrate what they are learning to the person they perceive as the decision maker. Social workers should handle any case management or other issues that arise separately from the family time. These issues should never be brought into the family's time together.

Timing

"Hess and Proch (1993) recommend that the first visit occur within the first 48 hours and that visits occur at least weekly after that. Chiancone (1997) relates frequency and duration of visits to the age of the child, noting that for younger children visits should be more frequent and briefer; infants and toddlers need several visits a week to foster attachment." (Wright, 2001 p. 55) For most children, family time should occur at a minimum of 2-3 times per week (Wright, 2001; Smariga, 2007). Additional contacts may include phone calls, letters and e-mail. Family time should increase in frequency and duration moving towards reunification. Consistency is the key; the schedule should be regular, predictable and easy for everyone to follow. (Chiancone 1997)

All participants' schedules should be taken into consideration when planning family time. A child's schedule and needs are paramount, i.e. naps, meals and school. A variation of timing allows for variation in activities and skill development.

Transportation

It is important that the child be transported to family time by a consistent person known to them who can help them prepare and debrief as necessary.

Ideally their alternate caretaker would transport. Consideration should be given to having a friend or relative provide transportation. The person providing transportation should communicate to the parent, family time coach, other person supporting family time, kin/foster parent and social worker about their experience with the child during this time.

Please see Appendix B for the Family Time Comprehensive Plan Form & Appendix C for the Calendar Page.

A Best Practice Model for Family Time - Family Time Coaching

The Family Time Coaching model being recommended in these guidelines is committed to empathic engagement. The Family Time Coach puts herself into the parents' shoes as a means of helping the parent put him or herself into the child's shoes. Family Time Coaching offers all participants - child, parents and social worker - clear expectations and roles, buy-in based on parent strengths and child needs, clear indicators for progress, and recognition of the complexity of placement. Coaching provides the opportunity for parents to become more confident in parenting by increasingly recognizing and responding to their child's needs. Parents come to understand their child's needs from the inside out rather than from imposed curriculum or milestones. Family Time Coaching draws on the best of family strengths and traditions to create fun and nurturing time together.

Philosophy and Principles (Beyer, 2003)

The four principles of Visit Coaching are empowerment, empathy, responsiveness and active parenting. These principles are applied in such a way that Family Time Coaches adjust their interventions to allow the parent to *take charge* of their family time.

- Empowerment: Family Time Coaching builds on the parent's strengths as well as the family's unique ways of showing love to their child. The parent is encouraged to celebrate their time together. The parent is supported to take charge of the family time and make it as "homelike" as possible.
- Empathy: Family Time Coaching supports the parent to see their child for all his or her uniqueness. The parent is asked to put themselves in their child's shoes. The parent's choice of lifestyle and its impact on the parent's ability to meet the child's needs are an ongoing topic of discussion during planning time between the coach and the parent.
- Responsiveness: Family Time Coaching assists parents in managing the conflict that may exist between meeting their own needs and the needs of their child. Separate time is given to the parent to discuss their

needs with the coach so that the parent can concentrate on their child. As well the parent is coached to understand their child's need for stimulation and expectations that fit their child's age. Active Parenting: Family Time Coaching assists the parent to learn how their child's behavior is influenced by the parent's words, actions, and behavior. Parents are coached to improve the fit between the child's temperament and behavior and the parents' style of discipline and limit setting. Parents are coached to not see their child's behavior as "bad". Parents are involved in the child's school activities and medical/dental appointments.

The How-to of the Family Time Coaching model

Visit Coaching includes an initial interview with the parent and subsequent parent meetings (15-30 minutes) both before and after each family time. In the initial interview the coach establishes a relationship with the parent and asks the parent to imagine what their child wants from the family time. This is the beginning of helping the parent to place themselves in their child's shoes and plan family time in accordance with the child's needs. The identified need or needs, which at the beginning may be as simple as "he needs to sit on my lap" or "he needs mommy and daddy to play on the floor," become part of the family time plan. The needs form the structure for the family time note on which the coach records observations related to how the parent met those needs. After the family time the parent does a self-evaluation on how he/she met the child's needs. At least one of the needs identified will be related to the reason(s) the child came into custody.

The Family Time Coach builds on strengths in the parent's nurturing to help the parent to identify the child needs. The conversations are parent directed with the coach asking questions and being curious about the parent's perceptions. In subsequent meetings, the coach helps the parent to understand more and more of the child's needs, particularly safety needs that have brought the child into care.

The pre-family time meeting is held before each scheduled family time. It is an opportunity for the coach and parent to identify and review the child's needs which will be the focus of this family time, to express any concerns the parent may have that could interfere with her/his focus on the child, and to practice skills. In the post-family time meeting the coach reviews the notes with the parent and the parent completes their own brief self-assessment. This time is also used to support the parent so that they are able to get their own needs met and be emotionally able to return to the next family time.

During family time, the coach supports the parent to develop their capacity for play at all developmental levels. Efforts are made to make family time as natural as possible, to include meals and community activities. It may need

to be staggered or separate for siblings in order to build the parent's capacity to recognize and respond to each child's unique needs. Modeling and prompting are provided as necessary. Through family time planning and coaching parents take charge of the family time and begin to create their own teaching moments, both to teach their child and to learn from their coach.

Please see Appendix D for a diagram of planning, connection and coaching.

The Family Time Coach

Therapeutic interview skills are key to the coach's ability to draw strengths and insights from the parent in order to identify each child's needs. The coach needs to know about child development, family dynamics, parenting skills, cognitive/learning styles and cultural differences. The coach helps the parent to stand in the child's shoes, repeatedly helping the parent to wonder what the child might be thinking and why the child behaves a certain way. The coach draws information from the parent about family traditions and experiences important to making family time more meaningful and fun.

Kin/Foster Parents and Social Workers

In order for Family Time Coaching to be implemented, kin/foster parents and social workers need to understand the model and be supportive of the changes necessary for model success.

Training and supporting kin/foster parents to understand and respond to a child's family time reactions is essential to their role in coaching. Family Time Coaching recognizes that removal of the children is in itself traumatizing. When parents and children come together in family time, they have both been changed. Communication between parent, kin/foster parent and coach needs to be as natural and frequent as possible in order to best meet the needs of the child, including diminishing painful loyalty conflicts.

Social workers participate in one family time session per month. These sessions are immediately followed by a feedback and planning discussion between the parent, social worker and coach in the post-meeting. Social workers will experience parents who are excited to demonstrate their new skills.

The goal of monthly participation by the social worker in family time is to bring the social worker into the parent/coach dyad so that the social worker can understand what strategies the coach is using (or not using) to help the parent learn how to meet the child's identified needs. It is also a time for the parent to be able to demonstrate to the social worker, whom they view as the decision maker, what they have learned in the coaching process. It is a time to build the relationship between the parent and the social worker and to share the work that is being accomplished.

This may be a heightened time of anxiety for the parent, so the preparation that the coach does with the parent in advance of the social worker's participation is very important. The coach can assess with the parent how that participation might work best. Coaches should also be preparing parents by reminding them when the social worker is coming and asking what the parent would like the social worker to see. The coach can then use this information to prepare the social worker as to the parents' goals for their participation. It is also important that the social worker explain to the parent why they will participate in family time and what they are hoping to learn from the experience. It is vital that the participation be consistent and that the social worker provide feedback during the post meeting. Social worker feedback, based in direct participation, can be vital to movement and/or changes in family time. Even if this movement is towards increased monitoring and support during family time because progress is not being achieved, it is still timely and honest feedback that may help the parent to understand the reason for case plan goals, for instance a goal of adoption. Participation becomes less awkward over time with consistency as both the parent and social worker gain comfort in the work.

Participation is not "covering" family time when the coach is unavailable. This cannot serve the purposes described above.

Fathers in Family Time and Coaching

Literature regarding father engagement suggests that human service workers often need to take a different approach to communication, relationship, and programming with fathers. Engagement is a complex process, more than mere contact and can include such elements as receptivity (openness to help); expectancy (perceiving a benefit to cooperation); investment (commitment to the process); working relationship (good communication and mutuality); and trust. (Yatchmenoff, 2001 cited in Thoeness, 2011)

I'll stick with [Coach]. She knows me, everything about me. If I shed some tears, she backs off from me, gives me space, she's got my back, I trust her. - Dad in Family Time Coaching

Researchers have suggested that difficulties with engaging non-resident fathers may represent a mismatch between services needed and services provided, the system being "cold, unforgiving, and filled with roadblocks," or a reflection of caseworkers' lower expectations for fathers than for mothers, "expectations that likely mirror those of the community and society in general." (Thoeness et al, 2011).

Currently, most Family Time Coaches are women. One female coach suggested, "take some time to relate, especially as a woman, as a mom, use

your humility and ask him 'what does this look like for you?' Learn about how they perceive their role...and the way they will define success." Coaches report that many dads defined their role as protectors and providers and given the families current situation, felt that they had failed in that way. Some dads talked about their own models or lack of models for fathering.

I never saw what real parents were, (coach) and (child's counselor) helped me bridge that gap in six months...I feel I'm gonna break those chains. - Dad in Family Time Coaching

One of the key recommendations of the Washington State Father Engagement Program is to provide fathers with an opportunity to share their stories. It takes time and patience, but the time spent listening to a father's story at the beginning will save time and grief for both fathers and social workers [coaches] in the long run. All fathers want to tell their stories. They need social workers to understand why they no longer live with their children; why they are no longer living with the mother; and in some cases, why the maternal side of the family might not speak highly of them. (Harper & Grossman, 2011, p. 106)

Coaches interviewed said that communication with dads is different. "Success was when we were very direct, cut to the chase of how things impact the family, not 'how does this make you feel?'" The fourth recommendation of the Washington State project is "Engage in honest dialogue about fathers' rights and responsibilities to their child(ren).

"More than anything, fathers want and need the truth... The more forthcoming with information a social worker is with a father, the better their working relationship. In addition, social workers [coaches] should understand how males have to be culturally socialized to ask for and accept help and support. This awareness will help social workers decide how to present information to males, understand how fathers might process information differently from mothers, and relate to the actions fathers take." (Harper & Grossman, 2011, p. 108)

One dad reported that his coach "didn't buy in...to the smoke and mirrors...she really listens, she doesn't forget much, stays more on top of your game." Another dad suggested that he, for one, liked more activities and "would rather do something, than talk about it." The turning point for one father was "when I saw it (coaching) was changing (my son)...In the beginning I thought I knew everything. Once I started seeing improvements in my son, then I said 'all right I'll listen to you guys'."

The Washington state project also strongly recommended that in working with non-resident fathers, the child welfare system "accommodate his work schedule when setting meetings, appointments, and visits with his children."

Some fathers reported that they felt that they had a limited number of choices and lost or quit their jobs because they could not accommodate the amount of time they needed to take off to attend required services, meetings, and court dates. (Harper & Grossman, 2011, p. 110)

Josh Edelbaum of the Vermont VNA Fatherhood Initiative suggests three starting places for Family Time Coaches:

1. Start by finding out what they love most about being a father and have them tell their birth story.

It means everything to be a Dad. I would have said this a year ago but now when I say it, my main goal in life is to better the world...Now I see the way to make my two children into perfect people and start that chain to better everyone's life. - Dad in Family Time Coaching

2. Believe that they want to be good dads and value their perspective, however different it may be from the mom's.

For someone who's working with both sides, I just love the fact that she was so neutral. She never gave off judgment, as a father, that's what I thought it would be like. - Dad in Family Time Coaching

3. They too have many wounds so treat them with kindness and compassion despite the harms they may have caused.

I wasn't put in this position because I was a good parent. You gotta want it you've gotta really ask yourself if you want to be a dad if you're willing to fight and give it your all. - Dad in Family Time Coaching.

John Badalament of the fatherhood project at Massachusetts General Hospital suggests that "competence, confidence, and connection" are the pillars of the work with fathers. Dads need lots of information, says Badalament, about brain development and the impact fathers can have on development in order to build that confidence. Good resources for coaches and dads to talk about that impact and the importance of father involvement in child outcomes can be found on the Fatherhood Initiative website (www.fatherhood.org), the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (www.fatherhood.gov), and at Zero to Three (www.zerotothree.org). Dads in coaching speak of learning a lot from their coach and appreciating the combination of services available for them and their child simultaneously.

Competence comes from the opportunity to practice and the recognition of accomplishment. Badalament (2010) suggests specific practices for fathers to become a "new kind of provider" and "be the bridge between your past and future." These practices build the father/child connection by focusing on the

child's needs, telling stories, listening, and coming to know his child and let his child come to know him. These practices fit well with the Family Time Coaching model's focus on identifying and exploring the child's changing needs. For fathers who have been incarcerated or otherwise unavailable to their children for a long period of time, coaching can be critical to separating their often ambitious hopes for seeing the child from the child's own needs and experience. Marty Beyer and colleagues (2010) provide examples of how the coaching model can be helpful to incarcerated dads in their article, *Strengthening parent-child relationships: Visit Coaching with children and their incarcerated parents*.

When asked what advice he had for dads starting Family Time Coaching, one dad said "put your kids before anything else...not along the line of what they do...I'm talking about your feelings." Remember, said one coach, "every Dad is different, every situation is different, look at that person as an individual and what kind of person he is."

Teens in Family Time and Coaching

With infants and young children, the model focuses on getting the parent to notice, understand, and plan for children's needs. With teens, however, it is critical to recognize their power, their independence and their growing ability to make their own decisions and define their own needs. Dr. Beyer has provided a variation on the visit coaching model for working with teens. One critical change is that the planning is done with both the young person and the parent in a multi-stage process. The planning, itself, then becomes a negotiation.

The perspective of each person is gathered regarding their Strengths, the Purpose of Family Time, and the teen's Needs. The Needs List, as well as the activities and ways of being together, are then negotiated between teen and parent(s).

- First, the coach meets with the young person to find out what they want to get out of Family Time. The coach notices and talks about whether the teen wants contact, what kind of contact, what kind of support they might need inside and outside of Family Time, and how the teen's perspective will be shared with the parent.
- The second meeting is between Coach and parent to learn from the parent(s) how they view their teenager's strengths and needs and what the parent(s) want from Family Time. As agreed, the teen's perspective will be shared. The coach often needs to help the parent make room for the differences between their teen's perspective and their own.

In both the introductory meetings it is best to put the "what and where" of the family times off until the joint meeting.

- At this point, the teen, coach and parent(s) meet to discuss their perspectives and plan for their time together. A good way to start that meeting is looking at the Strengths lists together. Those strengths can form the basis for creating a family time that can address the Wants/Needs/Purposes that family members have created. Conversations can lead to thinking about possible strengths of the family as a whole. If there is no agreement on the young person's needs, the purposes will provide a starting point. e.g. "I just want to see you." Even at this point a basic, safe "what and where" can usually be agreed upon.

Coaches and families have adapted the ongoing family time components in a variety of ways. Some teens and their parents have a pre meeting together, then family time, then a debriefing post. Amazingly, families who have previously been unable to communicate are capable of shifting from planning to participatory, to reflective stance using this model. Just as with parents and their post meetings, these posts are frequently the first part of family time to drop away. Debriefing can be kept to a minimum with the feedback being thoroughly reviewed with the parent later, even by telephone if necessary. When the teen and parent simply cannot stay for post, a three-way phone conversation can be considered. There have also been families where, because of the traumatic history, each party needed separate pre and post meetings. The advantage with teens is that, depending on the teen, he or she may be able to wait while the parent has their meeting.

The Teen Model can pose new challenges, especially to coaches with limited experience with teenagers and parent/adolescent dynamics. We may, as Dr. Beyer says, be used to loaning our ideas of child development to parents learning to identify child needs. The new question is how do we loan our ideas to teens, whose social needs are likely the most important, who are engaged in all or nothing thinking, and who are famous for minimizing risk?

Family Time Coaches have had considerable success in promoting safe, nurturing contact between parents and their estranged teens. Increasingly, residential programs have asked Family Time Coaches to assist in building family relationships, whether to provide connection for the participating teen or to facilitate transition back to community and/or family. These partnerships have often succeeded because of the parent education and support the Family Time Coaching model affords, as well as the creativity and flexibility Coaches employ in designing parent-child contact. Family times have occurred in the institution, gradually moving outside, into the community and then to parents' or other family members homes. In some cases, parents were able to work with staff to join in on institutional routines (i.e. cooking) to better understand the structure and their young person's response to it. Shared Parenting

Meetings generally occur between a clinical or staff representative, parent and coach, creating a more intimate parenting-to-meet-child needs focus rather than traditional residential team meetings parents are asked to attend. Both reunifications and long term family-supported contact have resulted from use of the Family Time Coaching. While, the realities of travel and distance, confused roles and expectations, and fiscal responsibility complicate this partnering, the demand illustrates the adaptability and appeal of the Family Time Coaching model.

Documentation in Family Time Coaching

The documentation of Family Time Coaching is focused on the individualized needs of each child. These needs will have begun to be identified in the initial meeting(s) between parent and coach and at least one of the needs will be related to the risk(s) or reason(s) the child is in custody. The needs and what each need “looks like” in Family Time are regularly reviewed, refined and extended, both by the parent and coach dyad and then in Shared Parenting Meetings. During Family Time and in the post meeting, the Coach will record the (1) parent’s efforts to meet each need, (2) coach interventions (as a means of describing missed opportunities), and (3) child response. Child response is not necessary in every instance however, recognizing a child’s positive response can often reinforce positive changes in parenting and recognizing a child’s negative response can identify a new need or avoid re-traumatization. Space is provided on the feedback form to note key issues discussed in the pre and post meetings and an optional pie chart can be used to help parents link lifestyle changes required for safe reunification directly to their Family Time and their child’s needs. Detailed description and documentation examples are provided in Appendix F.

Transparency has been a key factor in parent satisfaction with the Family Time Coaching model so, unless contraindicated or logistically impossible, documentation should be reviewed and finalized during the post-meeting and then copied for the social worker. The Needs List feedback format is designed to simultaneously provide immediate, transparent, child needs-focused feedback to the parent and a moment-in-time picture of the parent-child interaction and parent learning and engagement to the social worker. It should be a dynamic record of the intervention as well as a visual clarification for the parent of what is being worked on and what has been achieved.

Transitioning out of Family Time Coaching: From Intervention to Support

When families have fully engaged in Family Time Coaching and are making gains in meeting their child’s needs, professionals sometimes wonder how to transition to another service or no service. A critical part of successful Family Time Coaching is the continual reassessment of the risk which led to the child(ren) coming into custody. That risk together with the protective factors

being developed, should be the primary factors in deciding when a family moves to less coaching and more uncoached time together. If the safety risk has or can be clarified, and met, then a transition can be designed. A frequent design includes the coach participating in the pre-meeting, staying a bit into the family time, leaving for a period of time and then returning for the last part of family time and the post-family time meeting. Often at the beginning of a transition, the coach will wait outside the home during the uncoached time, remaining available in case of a problem. As the family is successful, the Coach spends less and less time in the actual family time and the amount of unsupported family time continues to increase to include mealtimes, bedtimes, and other parts of family life. If potentially challenging parenting moments, like bedtime, have not already been rehearsed, the coach or another support may plan to drop-in the first few times.

At this point a Family Support or other home visiting program can be introduced to continue developing parenting capacity. In programs where coaches are cross-trained in family support, they have sometimes remained with the family in a new, reduced role, out of respect for the relationship that has been built. In other situations, the family has preferred to “graduate” from one program into the next.

It is important that, in transitioning to uncoached time, parents continue to use the needs list format, filling it in themselves either during or after Family Time. This assists them in continuing to hold the frame of child needs, into the home and into natural, uncoached Family Time. If a parent does not write, they can record (on a phone or mini-recorder) what they did to meet the need and how their child responded and any challenges they faced in their parenting. In this way parent and coach (or other provider) can celebrate success, identify challenges, and practice new strategies. If a different service engages with the family, it is helpful for the parent to introduce the Needs List and explain what they have been working on and how the child’s needs have changed. It is hoped that this learning, to hypothesize what need might be behind their child’s behavior and to reflect about their parenting will last throughout their lifetime.

A parent may run into a problem in their uncoached time; perhaps a difficult child behavior or a conflict created by another person coming to the home. If possible, rather than pull back, a safety plan or a behavioral strategy is worked on. That plan will include additional support, whether from a coach or from natural supports, family, friends, neighbors. Occasionally, uncoached time and/or a move back into the home has been a catalyst for a parent to realize that they are not ready or able to meet their child’s needs and to begin planning an alternative permanency.

In some situations, for example where Family Time Coaching has meet with limited success, or when more family time is needed and coach availability is

limited, relatives and/or foster parents have provided coaching or monitoring. Again, safety planning is critical and should be done, extensively, together with all parties. The risks that require coaching and/or monitoring must be clarified and very specifically addressed in the plan. By safety planning together even difficult relational dynamics can be addressed. If foster parents and/or kin are asked to provide Family Time Coaching, they must be trained to do so. Coaching is different than mentoring or monitoring, and in these situations, coaches may face even more complex challenges in managing their dual role. Kin/Foster coaches will likely need additional support in beginning pre/post meetings in order to manage any relational difficulties that emerge. Similarly families and kin or friends are providing monitoring or mentoring may need support to negotiate their roles. If children are going to have all their loved ones available to them, then adequate support must be provided to build new relationships and relational habits that can continue, as appropriate, throughout the life of the child.

Family Time Coaching has been developed to be an available intervention to families with children in custody. There are situations where and/or times when parents appear not able to engage or make progress with Family Time Coaching. In those cases, based on the continuum of service chart in the guidelines, efforts are made to engage the parents in an alternative service first, focused on remedying the factor that prevents engagement, most commonly mental health or substance abuse crises, while Family Times are monitored. There are also situations where contact may be court ordered at a frequency or intensity that parent or child is not able to emotionally manage. In both cases child needs must be kept in the forefront and accommodations to the family time made accordingly.

For example, a parent with unmet mental health needs may need support understanding how their lack of treatment impacts their child and pursuing that support, they may need a shortened family time or periodic breaks, because their affective capacity is limited. Children who have grown up with a mentally ill parent often need to see that parent regularly in order to be sure they are "okay." They may need clear explanations from their parent as to the current situation for child and parent. All of these needs likely require coaching support. In other words, the coaching shifts to meet the child's need for supportive intervention. In these situations, monitoring may not meet the child's needs. Therapeutic supports can also be enlisted in guiding and sometimes providing such contact.

Coaches are in the position to recognize stress, in child or parent, which interferes with a nurturing family time. Coach training addresses differences between the stress responses related to separation and loss and responses related to child abuse trauma. How to recognize and respond to these differences is information needed by foster parents and kinship placements as well. Transition rituals, attention to trauma triggers, and caregiver affect

management, for example, are all supports which can be consistently and simultaneously implemented by all of a child's caregivers and incorporated into family time. From a child needs perspective such efforts must be the preferable alternative to monitoring that is directed at demonstrating a need for suspension of family time, based on child stress.

Family Safety Planning Meetings (FSPs) can be helpful in many of these transitions. In addition to clarifying risks and providing an outline for both short and long-term safety plans, FSPs provide a means of developing natural supports, who can provide the monitoring, mentoring, and/or ongoing coaching needed for safe, enjoyable family time.

Special Considerations



Involving Absent Parents/Extended Family

Best practice indicates that absent parents and extended family members should have the opportunity to take an active role in raising their child. Involving parents and/or family members in a structured family time plan can provide a unique opportunity. It allows for the development of parenting skills and relationships. It is also an opportunity for assessment of family members' ability to commit to a consistent role in the child's life.

Given the prevalence of domestic abuse caution must be exercised if there is any history indicating a pattern of controlling and/or violent behavior or if the child's mother demonstrates a reluctance to involve an absent father and/or his family. This reluctance needs to be explored and safety planning should occur prior to any reconnection with an absent father or his family. Domestic Violence Specialists and/or the local domestic violence agency should be contacted for consultation and assistance. Also see section on Domestic Abuse which follows for more information.

Tips for Involving Absent Parents/Family Members:

- Social workers should discuss with the absent parent/family member the importance of their consistent involvement in their child's life.
- Social workers, Family Time Coaches and other supportive people can lend support and education to the absent parent who may be providing care and nurturance to their child for the first time.

- Workers should keep absent parents and/or family members equally informed of appointments and activities that a child may be involved in and encourage attendance to these activities when appropriate.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is defined as a pattern of assaultive and coercive behavior including physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, and economic coercion that an adult or adolescent uses to obtain and maintain control over their intimate partner. Children can be affected in a variety of ways and it is important that the potential impact be assessed for each child. The parenting of both victim and abuser is also affected, and it is important that these effects are understood and addressed in the context of family time. It is important that providers of family time services understand these contextual factors as described by Bancroft and Silverman (2002).

An extensive review of this issue is beyond the scope of this document, some basic guidelines are:

- A victim and perpetrator of domestic abuse should have separate coached family time until the abuser has met the following criteria:
 - Successfully completed a certified batterer intervention program.
 - Progresses in a parenting program that directly addresses the parenting issues of someone who chooses to use coercive control.
 - Demonstrates a reduction in controlling behavior.
 - Demonstrates behavior consistent with a supportive respectful co-parenting relationship with the child's mother.
- Safety for the adult victim and the child should be assured through family time planning. The victim and perpetrator should not engage in planning with the social worker/family time coach together. The drop off and/or pick up times, location, and activities should be arranged with safety in mind. Monitoring assures that the child is not being used to give information about or convey information to the adult victim.
- A signal should be arranged with the child if he/she feels unsafe and needs a break or for the family time to end.
- It is important to seek feedback from the child and adult victim as to how the family time is impacting them both.

Through their work on divorce and custody cases, Bancroft and Silverman (2002) concluded a tiered approach to visitation is appropriate:

- Beginning with supervision of the abuser at a visitation center or other similarly safe place.

- Visitation monitored by a trained supervisor in the community.
- Then by a friend or relative who supports a healthy relationship between all parties.
- Moving to visits of 2-4 hours unsupervised.
- Day long without supervision.
- And in rare cases progression to overnight.
- Progression is based on serious, successful participation in a certified program and demonstrated by observed behavioral change.

Sexual Abuse

In sexual abuse cases, readiness and preparation of the child is critical prior to family time. The Court may also set very clear boundaries about contact and supervision.

Considerations for contact between sexually offending parents/family members and children:

- The child's feelings and preferences should be given strong consideration.
- The child's therapist should be consulted.
- The family time coach should have the ability to monitor behavior and verbal and nonverbal communication. This includes communication that may increase the child's sense of guilt.
- Family time should occur in a neutral setting and not the child's foster home or the place where the abuse occurred.
- The family time monitor may be a family member, spouse or partner of the child or offending parent who supports a healthy relationship.
- The family time monitor should establish a relationship with the child before family time begins.
- Conversation about the allegations of abuse or any court proceedings is prohibited.
- The offender should not be left alone with the child, nor be allowed to bathe or dress the child or accompany him or her to the bathroom.
- Disturbances in the child's behavior should be expected before and after family time. Unless they are extreme, these disturbances should not affect the family time plan.

Incarcerated Parents

Children have a right to family time with their parent even when a parent is incarcerated. There should be an assessment of what type of contact makes sense and this should be child driven. Vermont Correctional Facilities have been very open to develop opportunities for Family Time Coaching to occur outside of the bounds of normal visiting times. There has been a willingness to

work with Family Services and Child and Family Support staff to develop a protocol so that Family Time Coaching can occur in the best way possible given the setting. In addition to guidelines previously discussed, there are special planning considerations.

Children are sometimes placed when a custodial parent is incarcerated and arrangements with other appropriate caregivers, such as extended family members, cannot be made. When a parent's incarceration is related to having harmed the child, the impact of contact with the parent on the child should be assessed. When a child is placed due to the parent's incarceration and family reunification is the goal regular visiting should occur. The child's fantasy of the parent's experience in prison may be much more frightening than the reality, and family time can reassure the child that the parent is alive and safe.

In planning family time between children and incarcerated parents, it is essential to determine in advance what is required to secure permission for the child to have family time, who can accompany the child to family time, and how often and for how long the child can have family time. So that you can appropriately prepare the child, determine whether the child will be able to hug or kiss a parent or will be required to have family time through a glass window and what rules govern family time behaviors.

It is essential to examine your own attitudes about the child's family time in prison. If you are uncomfortable with this plan you may be depriving families of their right to contact by delaying the scheduling of family time. (Family Visiting in Out of Home Care, Hess and Proch, CWLA 1988, p 40-41.)

Social workers should also encourage correspondence between parents and a child in this situation by providing stationery and stamps.

When a Parent is in a Treatment Facility

A child has a right to contact with a parent in treatment. Special care and attention is needed when planning for family time between a child and parent who is in a specialized care setting such as a mental health or chemical dependency treatment facility. Social workers should work closely with treatment staff to assess the parent's readiness. Family time should occur as soon as the parent is able to welcome and be present for the child. Social workers and treatment staff can offer support to a parent by talking about how it will be to see the child, what the parent might say to the child, and make a family time plan. The social worker will work with the child's caregivers and therapist to share this information with the child who is probably eager to know when the first contact will be.

If the child verbalizes a desire to not see the parent, social workers can help identify and work through the child's concerns. A child may be able to overcome initial reluctance when he/she has an active role in deciding what the family time will look like (who participates, where in the facility it occurs, what they might do, how to signal when the child wants leave, etc.) Depending on the age and developmental level of the child, reassuring questions/statements can assist in preparation for contact, for example:

- What have you heard about this place?
- What do you think this is going to be like?
- This is a place of healing.
- This is a safe place.

When a parent is able to leave the facility for periods of time, consideration should be given to bringing family time either into the community where the facility is located or where the child is residing. Social workers should encourage correspondence and phone calls between parent and child.

Monitor

If this is necessary because of a high level of risk, a range of persons may be appropriate to serve as family time monitors, including agency staff and other community service providers, the child's relatives, foster parents, other caregivers, student interns, clergy, and parent aides. Education around boundaries, expectations, documentation, etc., will be needed. Persons monitoring the family time also have an important role in contributing to the quality of the experience and should:

- Encourage positive interaction between the child and parent.
- If the parent has problems controlling the child's behavior or setting limits, assist the parent. Every attempt should be made not to embarrass the parent in front of the child. Some instruction may need to be given to the parent after family time.
- Be aware of parent trying to win over the child with gifts or special things now and/or promised in the future.
- Be aware of signals to the child that may be reminiscent of past interactions, which told the child how to act; a nod of the head, finger pointing, winking, staring, glaring, body posture, etc.
- If the child experiences undue discomfort during family time, which is not decreasing, take the child aside and try to determine any needs the child has. If the anxiety continues and it is in the best interest of the child to stop the family time, this can be done (adapted from CAPSAC, 1997, p.11).

If the parent will not conform to the guidelines, the family time can be terminated. Before stopping give a clear message about what the parent needs to stop or change. If family time needs to end early, it is very important to support the child and process with the parent after. Documentation of the events should be factual.

Termination of Parental Rights/Goodbye Contact

Family time does not end when it is determined that reunification is not the goal. Family time continues until parental rights are terminated or family time is prohibited by court order. However, if there is an appeal, family time may continue until a final decision is made.

In some cases, contact and family time for an older child or teenager and a parent whose rights were previously terminated may be beneficial. Teens and older children may desire a relationship with a parent who has made changes since parental rights were terminated.

A special and perhaps most difficult form of family time occurs when parental rights are terminated and there is knowledge that there will be no further contact. Much of the literature on separation and loss supports this type of family time whenever a child is about to lose an important attachment figure whether through death, a move, or loss of custody. A child can accept painful reality better than facing the unknown.

The child should be told the reason that he/she is no longer able to live with the parent. It is especially important that the child be told that the termination of parental rights was not his/her fault. Also important is the parent giving permission for the child to attach to an adoptive family. This can minimize the loyalty conflicts experienced by the adopted child, especially those adopted at an older age. The child must also be helped to understand the permanence of the termination and adoption (Hess, 2003). The process of saying goodbye can take many forms and it is important that this be individualized for the family. Consultation is necessary in these circumstances and at a minimum should include the family time coach, therapists, and foster/adoptive family.

The parent and child need a great deal of support in this process. The parent will likely need support and coaching to explain the reason for termination and placement. The child will need the parent to give permission for him/her to move forward by expressing their hope and dreams for the child. The family time coach and social worker can help the parent translate adult ideas into language that is understandable by the child. To the extent possible, the parent should be encouraged to accept responsibility for what has occurred.

It may also be helpful to vary goodbye visits according to the age of the child. For example, one visit may be best for a young child, but a series of two or three may facilitate the grieving process for older children. Although the content of the family time may be similar, the child will be able to absorb more of the meaning during the second and third family time because there is more time to deal gradually with the shock and denial. While the timing of multiple family times may vary based on the situation, it is advisable for all to occur within a one week period (Knight 1985). Another useful strategy is to make a tape of the family time so that the child may replay it at appropriate times.

Some parents may refuse to participate. The intensity and grief involved can be overwhelming. They may, however, be able to create a gift for the child rather than see and talk face to face.

Other parents who appear unwilling may be able to participate if more direction and support are given. Concrete supports such as transportation, and emotional support and prompts during and after the family time can help parents feel like they can get through a very difficult time.

For both the parent and the child, the goodbye does not mark the end of grief but is, instead, a means of facilitating the grieving process. It is important to remember that goodbye is a process and not an event. After goodbye, all parties will continue to have strong reactions. For all involved, including the social worker, it is important to plan for self-care.

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Appendix A

Traumatized Children in Foster Care and in Family Time

In family time, we see a range of feelings and behavior from a child that are difficult for parents and foster parents to manage. It is important that we work to distinguish expected responses to removal from abuse trauma or attachment difficulties. A child exposed to disrupted care giving (from being separated from their families or from being moved between foster homes) are at risk for continued difficulty in emotional regulation; irritability, protest, clinginess to foster parents and/or parent, anger at parent and/or foster parent, diminished appetite or food hoarding, sleep problems, and withdrawal are not unusual (Marty Beyer, 2008).

Some of the children coming to family time have also been traumatized by physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and/or exposure to violence. Traumatic experiences are those that overwhelm the child and the child's coping skills, leaving him or her feeling helpless. Traumatic experiences can be acute as in the sudden loss of a loved one, being a victim or witness to violence, or being physically or sexually assaulted. Traumatic experiences can be chronic, as in physical, emotional, and sexual abuse over time. Some children experience complex trauma, meaning exposure to both multiple and prolonged traumatic events; typically neglect, psychological maltreatment, physical and sexual abuse, and domestic violence (National Child Traumatic Stress Network [NCTSN], 2008). Separation from a caregiver, emotional neglect, and transitions from foster home to foster home can also be traumatic (Kinniburgh & Blaustein, 2005; Wright, 2001).

Children respond to trauma and traumatic stress in a variety of ways, depending upon development, temperament, and each child's vulnerabilities. Children in intense distress may demonstrate a variety of symptoms, including disturbed sleep, difficulty with concentration and attention, irritability, withdrawal, repeated and intrusive thoughts, and extreme distress when reminded of (triggered to) the traumatic event(s) (NCTSN, 2008). Chronic or ongoing trauma can have a negative impact on brain and nervous system development, emotional regulation, relationship formation, and sense of self, all of which can have long-term implications if unaddressed (Kinniburgh & Blaustein, 2005; NCTSN, 2008; See NCTSN website for age specific responses and vulnerabilities).

Children who may be reacting to abuse trauma should be referred to infant, child, or adolescent therapists (See www.NCTSN.net.org for caregiver advice on seeking treatment and best practice descriptions.) Children's reactions in family time may include fearfulness, aggression, vigilance, and anxiety. Therapists treating these children should be encouraged to meet regularly with

parents and foster parents to provide guidance in understanding the child's needs and how best to meet them (Beyer, 2008). Family time coaches can help parents respond to each child's unique reactions to separation and maltreatment or trauma. Coaches can support parents to understand their child's experience and the potential impact; to avoid minimizing their child's feelings; and to remain emotionally available even if the child is aggressive or withdrawn. Communication is paramount among the social worker, parent, foster parent, visit coach, and child's therapist to facilitate the child's recovery.

As described above, adult responses to children with abuse trauma should be guided by the child's therapist. Some basic guidelines, however, may include:

- Reflective listening. (Kinniburgh & Blaustein, 2005)
- Providing as much information as possible considering child's age and situation. (Johnston & Straus, 1999; Perry, 1995)
- Predictability (Johnston; Kinniburgh; Perry)
- Consistency (Johnston; Kinniburgh; Perry)
- Clear boundaries and limits. (Kinniburgh; Perry)
- Choice giving as appropriate. (Perry)
- Child directed touch for physically and sexually abused children. (Perry)

Johnston and Straus (1999) recommend that the child and family be referred for assessment, with the potential for interruption of family time, if the child experiences a pattern of refusal to attend visits, fear of the parent, extreme withdrawal, persistent decline in functioning in multiple domains, and for younger children, sustained loss of previously attained developmental milestones or capacities.

In extreme cases or situations involving family time between a child and abuser, family time should occur in a therapeutic context, after a period of treatment in which both child and (alleged) perpetrator have been prepared for contact which will be physically and psychologically safe for the child (California Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2001; Reiniger, 2000).

Another area of concern in distinguishing children's responses is the unknown number of children who may have had attachment problems prior to entering foster-care. It should not be taken for granted that children of substance abusing parents have attachment problems. Since difficulties in self-regulation commonly seen in children separated from their families and in abused children also affects their ability to connect with others and sustain relationships, it can be difficult to assess an enduring attachment problem (Beyer, 2008). Children who have true attachment problems should be referred to child and family therapists with attachment expertise, as responses on the part of caregivers and others will need to be specialized.

Caregiver Trauma

Many of the parents and some foster parents coming to family time have their own trauma histories which may be triggered by the child's feelings and behaviors. The child's triggered responses, anger and opposition, extreme need for attention, pattern of approach and rejection, and extreme emotional reactions to stress may challenge the parents' own ability to tolerate and modulate their own emotions. Parents and foster parents may be reminded them of their own abuse and question their efficacy as parents. Parents may feel guilt and shame over what has happened to their child. The result may be a caregiver who shuts down, over-reacts, or becomes overly permissive (Kinniburgh & Blaustein, 2005).

Social workers and family time coaches can work with the parent and foster parent on a plan of self care. Such a plan can include basic safety and support planning, individual therapy, behavioral management training, respite, and learning and practicing self-monitoring and emotional regulation skills (Kinniburgh & Blaustein).

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Appendix B
Comprehensive Family
Time Plans & Updates

Comprehensive Family Time Plan

It is really important that family time be a well planned activity and that this planning be done quickly when a child enters out of home care. An Initial Caregivers Meeting is held by the social worker and the Family Time Coach if there is one (if there isn't it can be facilitated by a CFS meeting facilitator) within five working days after a child is removed from their home. The parents, alternate caregiver and sometimes the child/or youth and other family members attend this meeting as appropriate. This is the first opportunity for all to talk about the family time schedule that will benefit the child. The Family Time Plan that is written documents all decisions and addresses any safety concerns related to physical, sexual or emotional risks. Participants' roles and responsibilities related to family time should also be determined at this meeting. The plan should allow for flexibility based on increased or decreased risk that might occur in between reviews.

Decisions that need to be made at the Initial Caregivers Meeting and subsequent Shared Parenting Meetings include:

- Location - Most normal, comfortable, familiar setting as possible.
- Who will participate - Parents, siblings, other relatives and friends, and social workers once a month to see progress.
- Timing - Frequency, duration, other types of contact, i.e. phone and letters. Everyone's schedule will be considered during planning with the child's schedule and needs being most important.
- Consistency - This is the key and family time **must** be regular and predictable.
- Transportation - Should be provided by a consistent person known to the child whenever possible. Consider that the coach and parent will need to meet for 15 minutes before and after each Family Time. The social worker will be included once a month in the meeting after the family time.
- Who may not have contact and why.
- Risk(s) and plan to address.
- Special conditions.

Everyone will receive a copy of the plan at the end of the meeting. It will be presented to the court. The plan will be reviewed and updated at least every three months at a Shared Parenting Meeting with copies of the updated plan given to everyone. The goal is to move family time toward increased independence as risks are reduced.

Initial Caregivers Meeting/Family Time Plan

Child/ Children:	Date:	Location:
Parent(s):	Social Worker:	
Child's Current Caregiver:	Family Time Coach (if there is one):	

Introductions (including explanation of who will do what):

Information sharing (*Info about the child such as: favorite foods, upcoming appointments, comfort items, school, pictures, toys and info about the alternate caregiver such as make-up of their family, description of the child's room, how child is doing so far*):

Child's needs as related to reasons he/she is in care and what does meeting those needs look like:

Family Time Details:

Where: _____

Who will be there: _____

How will child get there: _____

How will parent(s) get there: _____

How often: _____

For how long: _____

If family time needs to be cancelled/rescheduled:

- Who to contact/ Phone number: _____
- Phone number(s) for parents: _____
- Phone number(s) for current caregiver: _____

Other contact:

Phone calls – how often/long: _____ Supported: _____

Letters: _____ Supported: _____

Other (text, Skype, Face Time, ect): _____ Supported: _____

Other people: _____

Who may not have contact with child: _____

Special considerations/risks and the plan to address: _____

Social Worker Participation Date: _____

Next Shared Parenting Meeting Date: _____

Please fill out and provide copies to each meeting participant after the meeting and send to GAL, attorneys and any additional case managers involved.

Attach a calendar page filled out with all dates for family time, social worker participation and Shared Parenting Meetings.

Shared Parenting Meeting/Family Time Plan Update

Child/ Children:	Date: Location:
Parent(s):	Social Worker:
Child's Current Caregiver:	Family Time Coach:

Social Worker feedback from family time participation:
 (It is best practice for the SPM to directly follow the SW participation)

Parent and coach share needs, what it looks like, coaching strategies used to help the parent meet the need and discuss progress:

- Need:

- What it looks like:

- Coaching strategies used:

Progress:

Need continued: Yes/No
 If Yes list indicators of progress:

- Need:

- What it looks like:

- Coaching strategies used:

Progress:

Need continued: Yes/No

If Yes list indicators of progress:

- Need:
- What it looks like:
- Coaching strategies used:

Progress:

Need continued: Yes/No

If Yes list indicators of progress:

Information sharing (*upcoming appointments, progress in the home, challenges in the home, school meetings*):

Identification of new needs (Coach, parent, caregiver and social worker):

Changes to Family Time (*if no changes, then discuss what needs to happen for progress to happen in Family Time*):

Where: _____

Who will be there: _____

How will child get there: _____

How will parent(s) get there: _____

How often: _____

For how long: _____

Unsupported Time: _____

Other contact:

Phone calls – how often/long: _____

Supported: _____

Letters: _____

Supported: _____

Other (text, Skype, Face Time, ect): _____

Supported: _____

Other people: _____

Who may not have contact with the child: _____

Special considerations/risks and the plan to address: _____

If family time needs to be cancelled/rescheduled:

Who to contact/phone #: _____

Phone # for parent(s): _____

Phone # for current caregiver: _____

Social Worker Participation Date: _____

Next Shared Parenting Meeting Date: _____

Please fill out and provide copies along with a calendar page that has all agreed upon dates/schedule outlined on it to each SPM participant after the meeting. Mail copies to GAL, attorneys and other involved case managers.

Shared Parenting Meeting/Family Time Plan Update (No Family Time Coaching)

Child(ren):	Date:	Location:
Parent(s):	Social Worker:	
Child's Current Caregiver(s):	Facilitator:	

Social worker feedback from family time participation:
(It is best practice for the SPM to directly follow the SW participation)

Progress on meeting child's needs in family time:

Identification of new needs (parent, caregiver and social worker):

Changes to Family Time *(if no changes, then discuss what needs to happen for progress to happen in Family Time)*:

What will support look like: _____

Where: _____

Who will be there: _____

How will child get there: _____

How will parent(s) get there: _____

How often: _____

For how long: _____

Unsupported Time: _____

Other contact:

Phone calls – how often/long: _____

Supported: _____

Letters: _____

Supported: _____

Other (text, Skype, Face Time, ect): _____

Supported: _____

Other people: _____

Who may not have contact with the child: _____

Special considerations/risks and the plan to address: _____

If family time needs to be cancelled/rescheduled:

Who to contact/phone #: _____

Phone # for parent(s): _____

Phone # for current caregiver(s): _____

Information sharing (*upcoming appointments, progress in the home, challenges in the home, school meetings*):

Social Worker Participation Date: _____

Next Shared Parenting Meeting Date: _____

Please fill out and provide copies along with a calendar page that has all agreed upon dates/schedule outlined on it to each SPM participant after the meeting. Mail copies to GAL, attorneys and other involved case managers.

Appendix C

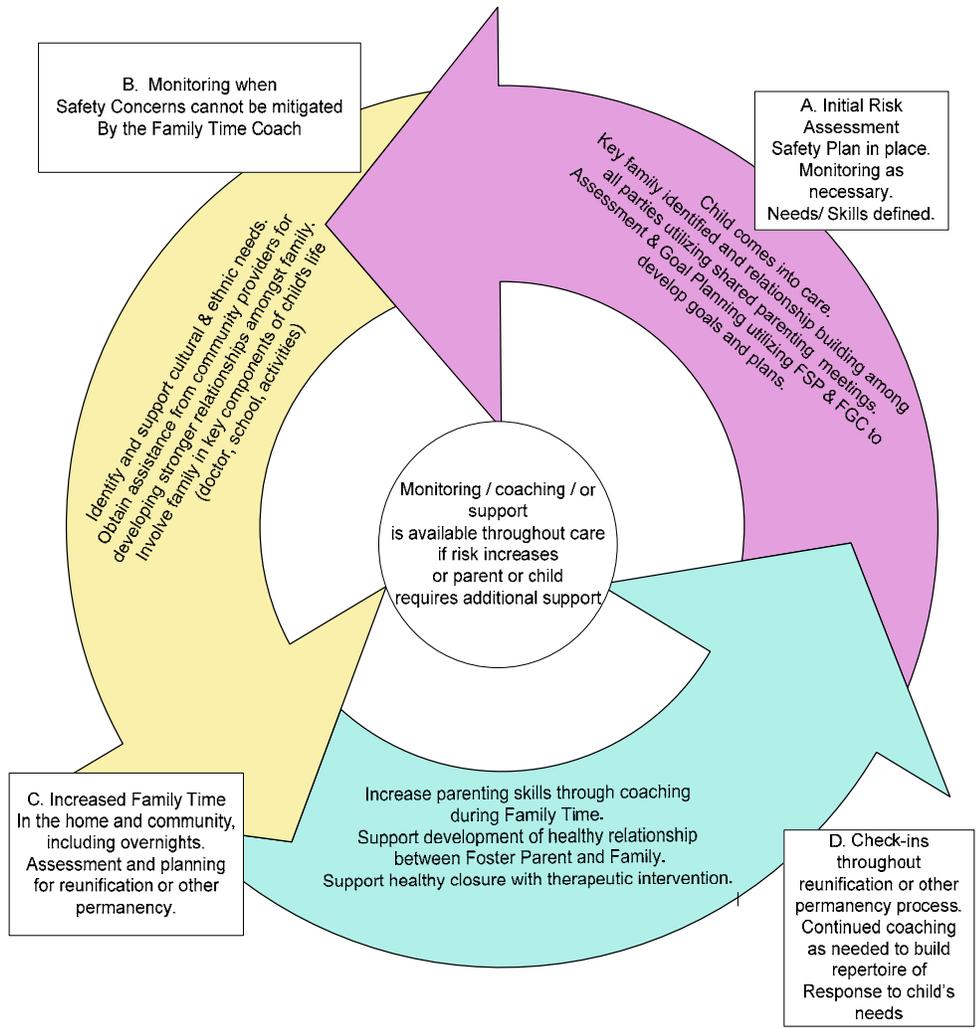
Calendar Page for Family Time Plan

Family Time Calendar

Month: _____

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat

Appendix D
Family Time Coaching
and
Continuum of Connection



Appendix E
Documentation of Family Time
Coaching

Family Time Coaching is a child needs based model. Accordingly, the documentation of Family Time is focused on the needs of the child which have already begun to be identified in an initial meeting or meetings between parent and coach. These needs are then regularly reviewed and refined with the social worker and kin/foster parent in the Shared Parenting meetings. As needs are consistently met by the parent, new needs should be created, first with coach and parent and then discussed and finalized in the monthly Shared Parenting Meeting.

Needs are written, as much as possible, in the parent's words, which both validates the parent as parent and helps the coach to speak a common, more meaningful language. What has proved to be extremely important to effective Needs Lists is the "Looks like" that is, what will meeting this particular need look like during (and outside of) Family Time. The "looks like" is a list of concrete examples, again defined with/by the parent. Ways the parent(s) might meet the need and ways the Coach might record parenting are not limited to that list of examples. For instance:

Julie needs not to worry about my emotional health; she needs Me to be there for her, emotionally and physically. (*This looks like smiling, being happy, playing with her, hugging and showing affection, leaving grown up worries out of Family Time, reassuring her it will be ok when Family Time ends by remaining positive, and going to my counselor's after Family Time*)

Because the needs are reviewed each Family Time, generally both in the pre-meeting and again in the post feedback, it is helpful to parents to use the most direct, personal words. That is, "Isaiah needs Me to...rather than "Isaiah needs Mom to..." or the least effective "Isaiah needs a mother who..." Professional jargon should be avoided and generally is not what parents use to describe their children's needs. The most common need first cited by parents may be something like "Mya needs to know that I love her." This can be a great place to start because it references the parent/child bond which is so critical and can "look like" coming to Family Time every time, on time, physical affection, paying attention, etc.

At least one of the identified needs should be related to the risk(s) or reason(s) the child is in custody. This can initially be hard for some parents but as rapport is built with the coach, parents are able to articulate how lifestyle changes and other case plan requirements are directly related to their child's needs. Sometimes the risk gets more clearly defined in the "Looks Like," for example: Tiffany needs my full attention. *Looks like checking the room for dangers, putting my phone away, noticing what she is interested in, playing with her at her level, practicing what I learned in group about staying present, following the schedule.* For some parents, each of these *looks like* could be a separate need, e.g. Tiffany needs Me to check the room for danger. The simpler the need the more immediate success the parent can have in making change. Another example is the common risk related to parental substance

abuse and the child's need for the parent to be clean and sober. The more clearly the risk is understood, the more immediately and accurately the needs list can address child safety and needed progress. For example, if the risk is that Dad was 'using' and not supervising Gabe, the need could be "Gabe needs me to know right where he is" and the *looks like* could include indicators of sobriety like alertness and the parent rationale would be "If I am sober, I can meet that need."

The pie chart illustrated below can be an additional, helpful tool in post meetings with parents for whom the major changes required for safe reunification will be accomplished outside of Family Time. Parent and Coach create a key to the pie defining each slice that needs to be worked on, of which Family Time is one. Coaches have found that at least initially, having all the slices be equal works best to make the visual point that each of those things needs to happen in order to parent the child. In the pre or post meeting the parent fills in the pie based on the work they did in each of those areas in-between Family Times.

Multiple children require individualized needs. However, frequently in the beginning the focus may be on basic care and risk and the need related to risk is commonly the same for all of the children; safety through sobriety, supervision, nurturing hands-off discipline, household cleanliness, etc. Even that need, however, can increasingly become individualized as the parent(s) become aware of the impact on each child of their action or inaction, each child's behavioral, emotional, or developmental response to the situation, and what each child now needs to heal and experience healthy development.

For example, the initial need shared by the children could be "(Child) needs my full attention," which is a big challenge with four children. As Family Time progresses the parent will not use the general need but will have identified related specifics for each child. For example:

Conner (6 mos) needs me to sing to him when I feed him his bottle.
Nathan (2 yrs) needs to have me play with the toy he chooses on the floor.
Willow (4 yrs) needs me to enjoy her artwork as she draws.
Courtney (6 yrs) needs me to listen while she talks about her school and friends.

Often, especially in the beginning, the safety need is the same and then a second and/or third need are related to the individual child's daily care and healthy development. In exploring the *looks like*, and then individualized needs, parents develop their capacity to *see* each child and where they are now. They can then continue to apply that skill, for example tailoring individual attention, as the children grow and develop, when Conner, Nathan, Willow and Courtney are 1, 3, 5, and 7.

The Needs List feedback documentation can be extremely challenging. The coach wants to faithfully record the parent's efforts to meet the need, coach interventions (as a means of describing missed opportunities) and child response, especially where that can reinforce positive changes in parenting. At the same time, Needs List feedback documentation must provide a clear picture to social workers and judges as to what is occurring and being worked on in Family Time Coaching. The four-part method for documenting is to record:

What the need is

- How the parent met the need
- How the child responded
- How the coach coached and/or intervened

Child response is not necessary to every notation, but can be important and helpful in several circumstances. Child's positive response to parent effort is a reinforcement for the parent to keep doing what worked well. Assuming the need is to practice bonding behaviors (Tynisha needs Me to bond with her. (Looks like, making eye contact, soft gentle touches, cooing, softly talking, and singing), Coach might write "Mom made direct eye contact with Tynisha, stroked her head and began to sing. Tynisha stopped crying, smiled and snuggled into Mom's arms." Not only does that documentation describe what is being worked on, Mom's effort, and success but in reading the feedback, Mom can relive and hopefully reinforce that successful experience. Conversely, the child's negative response (i.e. inability to be soothed, disappointed face, etc.) can be a helpful reflection for the parent in the moment and after and also important to all parties to signal new needs (and/or new parent responses) and avoid re-traumatization.

Coach intervention is recorded as a way to identify missed opportunities (rather than 'parent did not meet the need') and to illustrate what the coach and parent are working on. Specific ways of coaching have been defined primarily to better describe the things that coaches actually do during Family Time. Coaches and others should not interpret a lack of coach intervention to equal progress on the parent's part. Beyond safety intervention, the purpose of coaching during Family Time itself is to continually build and practice parent skills. Just thinking developmentally, a child's needs are going to change and/or look differently each Family Time. The coach is there to exclaim with the parent at a new milestone as well as support that parent and child through a new challenge. If the child's changing needs are being identified and met by the parent(s) during the Family Time itself, all consideration should be given to transitioning to some uncoached time with check-ins and parent-provided needs-based feedback. If supervision is required for other reasons, efforts should be made to engage natural supports in supervision while holding the parent responsible for maintaining the needs list, providing feedback, and continuing to work on the external "Looks Like"; drug treatment, safe housing, etc. with the coach and others.

Another challenge in documenting Family Times is the effort to make them as natural as possible, frequently not in places conducive to “taking notes” and coaches are frequently engaged in coaching. On the other hand, if a coach waits until the post meeting to write the feedback, his or her memory will be extremely selective and learning opportunities will be lost. One suggestion is that coaches jot down keywords/events, which can then be developed with the parent or while the parent is completing their self-assessment, during the post-meeting. The documentation is a balance, enough detail to record success, provide teaching opportunities, and give the flavor of the parent/child interaction, but not so much as to overwhelm the parent.

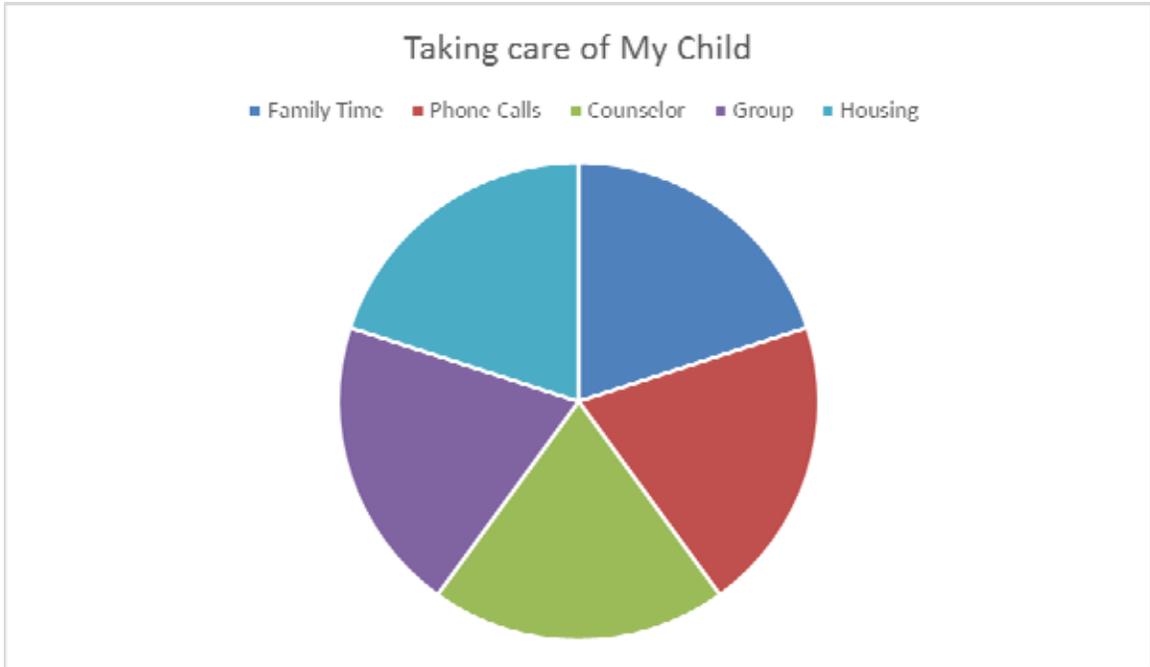
It is critical that the Needs List feedback documentation be provided as quickly and as transparently as possible. Transparency has been one of the key factors in parent satisfaction with the model (Easter Seals, 2011). Feedback is also much more readily received and incorporated in or close to the moment. One exception to that would be the parent whose grief and/or trauma response to goodbye clouds the post meeting. In these situations, coaches may defer to a follow-up meeting, call, or discussion of the feedback in the next pre-meeting.

The Needs List feedback format is designed to simultaneously provide immediate, transparent, child needs-focused feedback to the parent and the moment-in-time picture of the parent-child interaction and parent learning and engagement to the social worker. It should be a dynamic record of the intervention as well as a visual clarification for the parent of what is being worked on. Two additional techniques have been helpful to coaches in tracking progress in Family Time and making documentation more cohesive. Needs that have been consistently met can be typed at the top of the Needs List Feedback form, both as a record of progress for parent and a reminder that those needs continue even in the face of new challenges. Secondly, Indicators of Progress from the Medicaid Treatment Plan for this child are sometimes typed at the bottom of the Needs List as another way to tie Family Time coaching work to the larger outcomes anticipated for the child and the family.

SAMPLE FORMAT

Pre-Meeting (key concerns, plans, preparation)

Post-Meeting (needs list feedback, self-assessment, planning)



*Parent creates pie chart title and identifies, with coach, "slices" to be worked on.

Need #1:
(Looks like...)

Need #2:
(Looks like...)

Need #3:
(Looks like...)