**INFORMATION ON DOING EI SESSIONS DURING SUPERVISED VISITATION**

*CHERISH Kindering*

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**VISITATION PROVIDERS**:

There are 12 contracted Visitation Providers in our area, some of which span into other counties as well. The number of employees that work with each provider ranges from 1-19 staff. There are also several Child Placement Agencies that do supervised visitation as a part of their CPA contract. Those agencies include: Amara, Lutheran, Olive Crest, and Catholic Community Services.

**COMMUNITY SPACES FOR VISITATION**:

Visitation can occur in libraries, play spaces in restaurants (McDonalds) and malls. However, these are sometimes not ideal for the parent and child’s interactions and conducting a private EI session.

SOLUTION: CA had started a list of potential visit spaces that are located within the community. The spaces include, Amara (Central Seattle), Overlake Church (Kirkland), Community Center (West Seattle), and a church in the south end (Kent).

**DCFS REQUIRES VISITATION IN THEIR OFFICE**:

ESIT has determined that DCFS offices are not considered a “natural environment” as children and families don’t typically use these spaces.

SOLUTION: When the case plan requires the use of the Child Welfare office for visitation, you will need to document the circumstances under which this is the only choice and how the EI team will work towards moving to a less restrictive location.

**APPROVAL FOR EI IN VISITS:**

EI providers must have approval from Child Welfare social workers to attend visits. This approval needs to be conveyed to the Visitation Supervisor prior to the session. We shouldn’t need session-by-session approval, just one time from the social worker. Visitation Supervisors do not need to know about what we are doing with the child and parent, just that we are approved.

SOLUTION: Email the Child Welfare social workers something they can forward to Visit Supervisors (see example template below). Be sure to follow your agencies HIPPA procedures when doing so. (“Please reply and forward to the visitation supervisor. Effective [ date ] , [ your name/agency ] will be working with [ child’s first name/parent’s name or initials] and is approved to attend visitation to provide Early Intervention service.”)

**SCHEDULING:**

How should EI providers best schedule to attend visitations?

SOLUTION:Coordinate with the Visit Supervisor. Visitations often cancel and the VS will be the person to check in with about cancellations.{EI Provider note: Clear communication with the parent around cancellations is important. Cancelling a visit with the EI provider is different that cancelling with the Visit Supervisor. Several missed visits, especially “no shows” can result in the contract being cancelled.}

**NUMBER OF PROVIDERS IN VISITS:**

Sometimes there are too many providers for one parent and the visit time is full with these providers. Per regulations, every visit must have at least 30 minutes of “unstructured time”. If EI is the only provider, we should be fine as far as the contract goes because they are usually 2 hours minimum in length. However, if there is another provider using some of the visit time – say a Parent Coach or Public Health Nurse, and the visit is only 2 hours, we may run into issues.

SOLUTION: 1) Explore ways to provide access to EI service outside of visitation time. 2) Map visitation and services out on a monthly calendar. Child Welfare social workers can take the lead on this task or you can take the lead and complete it with the SW and/or parent(s).

**INITIAL BUY-IN FROM VISITATION SUPERVISORS:**

Visit Supervisors can be protective about the time parents have with kids. Therefore, getting buy-in from Visitation Supervisors about our attendance in these visits may sometimes be an issue.

SOLUTION: EI provider can present themselves from the very beginning as using Evidence-Based Practice or “EBP” (a decision-making process that integrates the best research evidence with family & professional wisdom and values). Don’t assume the VS will know your service because they have seen it before in sessions as we know EI services can look different Provide a summary of services utilizing flyers or other aids. CHERISH has created an *“ESIT Flyer”* which gives a brief overview of some of the important key concepts of EI for use with Visitation Supervisors and CWF social workers. Key concepts include: family-centered; relationship-based service; parents set their own goals; may be provided by a variety of professionals including OT, PT, Speech, Educators, Social Work, and Family Resource Coordination; often looks different between families given all these above reasons listed.

**CONSENT FOR COLLABORATION**:

VS’s have an important role in the child’s life and are often at the very center of the interactions between parties. Early Interventionists realize this can bring up complicated situations (e.g. foster parents want more information; parents frustrated or worried about their child’s care; child dysregulated with transitions). EI wants to know if it is appropriate to support VS’s in their understanding and role in supporting a child’s well-being and regulation.

SOLUTION: A release of information to speak with the VS about the case is needed. CHERISH may talk with the VS about the child and their needs after an ROI is signed by the state. In most cases, this should be sufficient in completing the work and set a clear boundary of what the EI role is in the case. However, if EI would like to talk with the VS about the parent, then an ROI signed by the parent must be completed.

**COMMUNICATION TO CAREGIVERS ABOUT VISITS:**

CHERISH and other EI providers often hear about the types of communications that are provided to the caregiver about a visit with parent(s). What are the guidelines and recommendations provided to VS’s about these communications?

SOLUTION: VS’s should give the “*Child Specific Caregiver Notification*” DSHS 15-450 (01/2015) tocaregivers after every visit. This includes first names of attendees at the visit, food/drink consumed, last diaper change, naps, injuries, or unusual incidents that may affect the child’s well-being. At the end of the visit they are to spend a few minutes in their car filling out form 15-450 for the caregiver. This form then goes to the caregiver and only the caregiver holds on to this document (there is no duplicate copy). The information on this form may be captured in the more extensive visit narrative for CA, but not necessarily, and therefore if caregivers want something on that form to be addressed they should connect with the Child Welfare social worker. As an EI therapist, avoid being the messenger between caregiver and parent. Instead, find other ways to encourage better communication between caregiver and parents like a journal, emails, calls, etc.

**VISITATION SUPERVISOR IS LATE BUT EI SESSION HAS STARTED:**

Occasionally a visitation provider might arrive late to a visitation and your EI session start time. When Child Welfare office space has been reserved you should be permitted to be let in to that space by the office staff. The Child Welfare policy is that there needs to be a provider with the parent to use that space but it is possible that different staff may not know this.

SOLUTION: EI therapists are encouraged to talk with Office staff and explain their role as a provider. If this does not work, ask to speak to someone else and/or follow-up later to have the issue resolved.

**NOTES DURING SESSIONS:**

EI session notes are taken at each meeting. They are specific to the child’s IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) in that they focus on the parent’s goals for their child’s developmental skills – documenting strategies discussed, activities undertaken, and developmental progress of the child. In contrast to that, Child Welfare has specific guidelines for contracted Visitation Supervisors on how to take notes on visits which is more like a narrative report of everything that occurred during the visit.EI providers are not expected to take narrative notes or report back to Child Welfare about actions of the parent at visits.

**SUPERVISION DURING VISITATIONS WITH EI SERVICE:**

While EI providers are mandated reporters, ESIT has determined that EI provider cannot be a Child Welfare-designee for visitation supervision. Therefore, Visit Supervisors cannot leave during the visit if the court-order states contact between the child and parent must be supervised.

SOLUTION: Clear communication with the Child Welfare social worker is required on this topic and each case considered individually until there is guidance from state-level entities on how to address this issue more broadly. It is possible that Child Welfare may be able to shift the time of EI service to be considered “monitored” by the Visitation Supervisor which would provide the family with more privacy by checking in occasionally. There is the possibility that the use of a Visitation Plan could also address this need for clear expectations and roles.

**VISITATION SUPERVISOR INTERJECTING IN SERVICE**:

There have been a few occasions where EI providers report Visitation Supervisors are interjecting into the EI session. This is not allowed in their contract unless there is a safety issue.

SOLUTION: Set expectations with Visitation Supervisor about your visits from the very beginning. If that doesn’t work you can connect with the Child Welfare social worker or you can connect with the CHERISH program staff at Kindering. This might not be an issue in the same way if the visit happens in a space where there is an observation room. This might also be alleviated if Child Welfare says that this portion of the visit can be shifted to “monitored”.