

Selecting A Supervised Parenting Service Provider

This guide is intended to help parents in the process of selecting a provider of Supervised Parenting or Visitation services. It also contains tips and suggestions on how to get the most out of your time spent in supervised parenting sessions.

**Provided by SVDirectory.com as a service to parents
and children involved in supervised parenting.**

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What Is The Purpose of Supervised Parenting?

The main purpose of Supervised Parenting (also referred to as "supervised visitation") is to allow children to have meaningful contact with a parent in a safe, structured environment and to assist the parent and child in maintaining their relationship. Supervised Parenting may also be employed for the purposes of family reunification or familiarization in the event the child has had little or no contact with a parent

When done properly, Supervised Parenting has benefits for both parents and children:

- For children, Supervised Parenting lets them have a positive relationship with both parents in a setting where they feel safe and protected. It also shields them from any arguments, conflicts, and disputes that might occur between the parents when they meet to exchange the children.
- The custodial parent (the parent child lives with) can feel at ease with the children spending time with the non-custodial parent, and can be assured that the child will be safe during the time with the other parent. This is especially true when the parent's relationship is seriously conflicted, or when there are allegations of physical or sexual abuse.
- The non-custodial or visiting parent can have contact with the children without fear of false allegations of improper behavior (allegations of physical or sexual abuse) because there is an independent, third party present who can serve as a witness to what took place during the supervised parenting time.

Selecting a Provider Of Supervised Parenting Services

In most cases you may use either a **trusted friend** or a **professional provider**. Both have advantages and disadvantages. Oftentimes a court order will specify that both parties must agree on the choice of supervisor.

Using A Trusted Or Mutual Friend: Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages

- For the children's sake, it can be very beneficial when both parents can agree on a mutual friend or someone who is familiar to the children. If the children know the person selected it can make supervised sessions much more comfortable and "family like" for them.
- If the parents can agree on a mutual friend, this can serve as a starting point for further cooperation and collaboration between the parents.
- Agreeing on a mutual friend reduces the cost (and complexity) of the supervised parenting process significantly, and will often allow the parenting sessions to begin sooner.

Disadvantages

- Be aware that using a mutual friend can create conflicts, not only between the parents themselves but between the trusted friend and the parents. The decision to act as a supervisor is a serious one that involves a substantial commitment of time and energy.
- Even trusted friends may get "sucked in" to taking sides or favoring one parent over the other when acting as a supervisor. This has significant short- and long-term ramifications, especially if the supervisor is ever required to testify in court. Neutrality can be difficult to maintain and this can call into question the impartiality of the supervisor.
- Another issue is that the trusted friend you select or agree on may not be suitable for a supervisor- for example, they may have issues in their background such as criminal convictions or arrests that call into question their fitness as a supervisor. If the friend has personal issues such as drinking or drug use, this can cause serious problems for both you and the children.
- The trusted friend may not have the patience, attention to detail, or temperament to act properly as a supervisor. Being a good parenting supervisor is *not* a simple task- it requires constant attention, a commitment to act impartially and a willingness to protect the children if necessary.
- If the proposed supervisor is a family friend the other parent may object on the grounds of trust or perceived bias.

Make certain that the trusted friend you choose understands exactly what will be required of them, including the time frame of what they're agreeing to.

Using A Professional Supervised Parenting Provider

Advantages

- A professional provider will normally provide more consistent service than a trusted or mutual friend and will be more familiar with what is required of a parenting supervisor.
- Professional providers often have greater standing in court than a trusted or mutual friend will have. This may be an issue if the provider is called into court to testify.
- Professional providers often have relevant training in family service issues; they may also have an educational background that assists them in providing a better parenting time experience for the supervised parent and the children.

Disadvantages

- Professional providers can be costly; typical fees range from \$20 per hour to over \$100 per hour.
- Professional providers may have more restrictive schedules than a trusted family friend- a provider can only service a limited number of clients, many of whom will want the same schedule (such as weekend visits).
- Some children may be less comfortable with a professional provider than with a family friend. This is an important consideration, as the quality of the parenting time is one of the most important factors to be considered.

Finding A Professional Supervised Parenting Provider

- Many court systems have a directory or list of Supervised Parenting providers that they will make available to you (often these lists are available from the Court Clerk or court service desk).
- Try checking with your state's Social Services Office to find out if they have a list of providers or other resources.
- Local parenting groups may be able to refer you to providers in your area.
- There are also online resources, such as our own directory of Supervised Parenting providers, located at the following URL.

<http://svdirectory.com>

Our directory service is completely free, and is searchable by provider name, state, and city, as well as by service area (the area in which each provider offers their supervision services). Many of the providers list their intake procedures and requirements, their standard fees, years in service, and other particulars to help you select a suitable provider.

- Doing a search in Google for “supervised parenting” or “supervised visitation” can help you find services as well.

Determining If A Supervised Parenting Provider Is Suitable For You

- No matter how much information you have on a particular provider, there is no substitute for meeting them in person and getting a “feel” for what they’re like. Some people get along better than others and all supervisors have different “styles”. Some supervisors are friendly and easy-going, some are not, some are very meticulous, some are not. It’s important that you feel comfortable with the supervisor and it’s equally important that the children feel comfortable with the supervisor too.
- It’s natural that it may take some time for children to get comfortable with the supervisor, but a supervisor that consistently makes the children feel scared or nervous is to be avoided. Look for a supervisor who is unobtrusive yet personable. Remember, the supervisor is NOT there to entertain the children or act as a parent- they are there to observe the children and the parent spending time together.
- Keep in mind that the supervisor will have their own time constraints that will affect scheduling- you may need to work with him or her and adjust your schedule so sessions can take place at a time and location convenient for both of you.
- Ask for written information on rules and procedures regarding missed sessions, rescheduling, late fees, plus any guidelines, procedures, or restrictions on drop-offs and pick-ups.
- Some supervisors do both on-site and off-site visits, while others do only on- or off-site. For off-site visits, find out from the supervisor what kinds of locations they service (i.e. parks, shopping centers, museums, etc).
- For on-site sessions you should always visit the facility and make sure that it’s acceptable to you. Some facilities are very welcoming and friendly, with parenting areas designed similar to a family home setting; others are (unfortunately) less comfortable, and have few amenities and a “sterile” or office-like appearance.
- A good supervised parenting facility will have quiet rooms, a kitchen area that the parents and children can use, and a suitable outdoor area either on-site or nearby (within walking distance).
- Some supervised parenting facilities offer video and audio recording of sessions. This is almost always to your benefit whether you are the residential parent or the supervised parent. A video and audio record can eliminate or rule out allegations of physical or sexual abuse, improper parenting, and misconduct for both the parent and the supervisor.
- A professional supervised parenting provider should have training in recognizing and responding to physical and/or sexual abuse. It is also preferable that they have knowledge of emergency first aid and CPR.
- Some supervised parenting providers offer a sliding scale or adjustable fees, often based on income or circumstances. Ask the provider if they offer payment schedules or discounts based on income or ability to pay. Also inquire about refunds for missed appointments and rescheduled appointments.

Making The Most Of Your Parenting Time

- Don't engage in any discussions or comments with your child(ren) about courts, lawyers, legal processes, attempted visits, negative comments, etc. In general it's best not to discuss the other parent unnecessarily. In no case are you to make negative comments regarding the other parent, regardless of the circumstance.
- Please keep an eye on the parenting supervisor- they may be trying to get your attention with regard to the guideline above. If they can't communicate with you non-verbally they will be forced to speak up instead. Please avoid putting the supervisor in this position if at all possible.
- If for any reason the supervisor is forced to end the session early, follow their directions. If they ask you to leave, please do so immediately. Doing so may seriously jeopardize any future visits or parenting time.
- Food and Drink: You're welcome to offer the supervisor food or drinks, snacks, Etc. but please don't be offended if they refuse. The reasons for this may be dietary, cultural, or allergy related. If the supervisor declines your offer, please don't insist or continue to offer them anything.
- Please don't discuss the details of your case or legal action with the supervisor. They can not give you any legal advice and are generally not to be involved in any legal process related to your case. Their function is simply to facilitate contact with your children; they have no stake in your legal situation and can not take sides.
- You're welcome to have the supervisor participate in a limited fashion during your parenting time, but please keep in mind that the supervisor is there to observe, not to co-parent. The supervisor may suggest a loose format for activities, but this is your time to spend with your child(ren), so make the most of it!

Complaints Regarding Supervised Parenting Providers

If you have a dispute or unresolved issue with a supervised parenting provider, contact your local court system that ordered supervised visitation. Some states have laws and or statutes that regulate supervised visitation providers and practices.

If you decide to pursue a complaint, make sure you can fully document the nature of the complaint as well as any specifics that would help prove your case or allegations (i.e. times, dates, specific notes you have taken, witnesses or witness statements, etc).