

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT
OF THE FOURTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR CALHOUN, HOLMES, JACKSON AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES
FLORIDA

LETTER OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN TRI-COUNTY COMMUNITY COUNCIL, INC.,
VISITATION PROGRAM and THE FOURTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

This Letter of Agreement outlines specific criteria to be used by the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit and the Tri-County Community Council Visitation Program.

These criteria are necessary to protect all families referred to the Tri-county Community Council Visitation Program, as well as staff, volunteers, and the surrounding community.

The Court agrees to the following:

1. To ensure that referrals are appropriate for the level of service available in a program.
2. To work with staff of the Tri-County Community Council Visitation Program to establish policies and guidelines to protect all families referred to supervised visitation. The court acknowledges that cases involving domestic violence and/or child sexual abuse require special precautions and staff training.
3. To authorize Tri-County Community Council Visitation Program staff to accept or decline court referrals. Programs shall decline to accept a case for which they cannot reasonably ensure the safety of all clients, program staff, and volunteers, including but limited to the following reasons:
 - a. The volatile nature of the case or client.
 - b. Visitation personnel are not adequately trained to manage issues identified in the intake.
 - c. Facilities are not adequate to provide the necessary level of security.
 - d. Insufficient resources.
 - e. Conflict of interest.
4. To establish a timely mechanism for review of cases referred to the Tri-County Community Council Visitation Program. This might include a provision that each case be reviewed after a certain number of visits, or weeks, or months. For example:

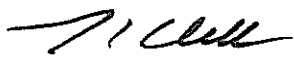
The court will schedule each case for a review hearing to check on the status of the case every four months.

5. To establish protocols for appropriate communication between the court and the Visitation Center. For example:

The center shall provide copies of all critical incident reports directly to the Judge's judicial assistant by email and provide a hard copy to the Clerk of Court for filing in the court file.

Tri-County Community Council Visitation Program agrees to the following:

1. To ensure that all staff who monitor visits have specific training in child development, child abuse indicators, child sexual abuse, domestic violence, mental health, substance abuse, parenting alienation, cultural diversity and crisis intervention consistent with training from the Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation and documented in personnel files.
2. To accept only those case referrals for which staff have the requisite case background material, training, and security in place to safely monitor contact.
3. To decline any referrals of cases when staff lack necessary training or education, when background material has not been received, or where lack of appropriate security may allow revictimization of child.
4. To establish guidelines for staff to utilize in all cases, including specific guidelines for use in cases involving domestic violence and child sexual abuse. All guidelines should be pre-approved by the court.
5. To develop policies for handling and reporting of critical incidents.
6. To suspend visits in cases when the child appears to be traumatized by the visit, or when the visiting parent engages in inappropriate behavior or violates program rules.



Chief Judge Hentz McClellan

1-4-08

Date



Tri-County Community Council Cindy Lee

12-18-07

Date