



Chemical Use and Parental Visits



Pine County Experience

How Does Meth and Other Chemical
Use Affect Parental Contact With
Children in Substitute Care?



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

- The debate is on over allowing or banning visits between parents and their kids when and/or if they test positive for meth or other drugs just prior to a visit.



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

- What are the concerns which must be considered when making this decision in each case?
- Is a unilateral policy appropriate for METH users?



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

- But first, acknowledgement
 - Olmsted County in compiling the research and in applying it to their Visitation/Family Access Guidelines, MCWTS, Ann Ahlquist, and Dr. Marti Erickson.



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

- Pine County has applied the following principles on a case by case basis.
 - Adult parental behavior drives the success or value of the visit.
 - Visit supervisors have criteria to gauge this success.



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

- Parents have input but are expected to follow the conditions or the visits will be terminated.
- The criteria is shared with the parents.
- Parents have someone to contact to redress grievances over anything that happens in a visit.



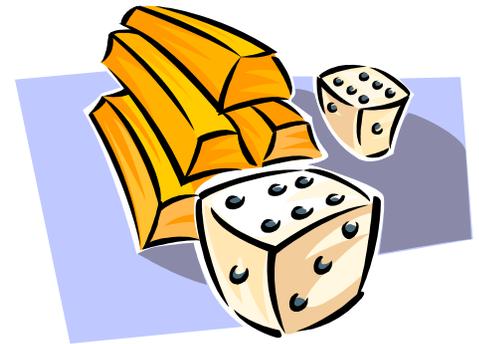
Chemical Use and Parental Visits

- What we consider when assessing for parental access to children, and child access to parent and other significant family members.
 - Safety risk
 - Other risks

Chemical Use and Parental Visits

Safety risk to kids if visit takes place

- What have they seen before?
- What have they heard before?
- What have they felt before?
- What cannot be controlled in the visit?
- Potential for physical and emotional violence?



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Risks to kids if visits do not take place.

- Attachment disorder
- Loss of self worth
- Parental disengagement
- Lower chance of reunification



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What are the purposes of visits.

- Is visitation done because of benefit to kid, or is it because of kid's rights?



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Parental Responsibility

- Will loss of visit motivate them to be clean?
- Is visitation a right of the parent or a privilege that can be lost?



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Parental Responsibility

- Does coming to a visit with a dirty UA demonstrate that they are unable to control their addiction and have not taken personal responsibility for their addiction?
- Will the court accept that?



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

- **What Really Happens in Pine County?**



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

When are visits not facilitated and/or when are they terminated?

- Parent in jail
- Parent abandoned kid(s)
- Traumatic to kid(s) (therapeutically identified, and approved by court)
- Parents don't **agree** to abide by visit rules

Continued





Chemical Use and Parental Visits

When are visits not facilitated and/or when are they terminated? - Continued

- Parents don't abide by visit rules
- Dirty UA – METH addicts
- Show up intoxicated and out of control
- Behavior is abusive to staff or children



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

All METH out-of-home placements have parental visiting as much as possible that is practicably. Our Goal:

- Infants 3 times per week
- Older up to pre-teen 2 times per week
- Reality for teens, not more than one per week
- Parents must follow the visitation rules



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

- Visitation is limited by lack of resources more than any other cause.
 - Visitation centers availability
 - Hours of availability
 - Staff time to arrange
 - Finances for transportation
 - Availability of transportation in rural area
 - Qualified persons willing to supervise



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

- Behavior is the key in Pine County
 - Erratic
 - Violent
 - Garrulous
 - Threatening language
 - Emotionally damaging actions or words
 - Intoxicated



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

- METH users will be tested
- Reports will go to the court
- Behavior during visits will be reported
- Appropriateness will be monitored
- Visits will be terminated
- Future visits will be postponed pending rectification of behavior



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

- Pine County will stop and discontinue visits that have a detrimental affect on the children that doesn't have a clearly counter balancing positive affect. Each child is considered separately.

To this end we have the following policy.



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

Pine County Policy and Procedure

Health and Human Services

Children's Services

- The parent or other visitors, the foster parents and the Health and Human Services Department, Social Worker, shall discuss the need for supervised visits at the time the visitation plan is negotiated or renegotiated.



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

- Unless the Department or the District Court finds a need for supervision, visits shall be unsupervised.
- If visits will be supervised, the plan shall contain a statement of the reason supervision is required.
- Reasons for the supervision of visits may include:
- Facilitating interactions between the parent and the foster child



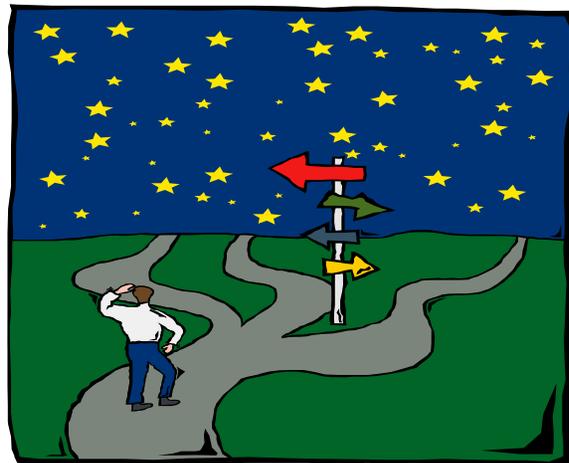
Chemical Use and Parental Visits

- Modeling positive parenting behavior
- Mediating conflict between the parent and the foster child
- Providing protection for the foster child
- Visits shall not be recorded or video taped unless ordered by the court to do so.

Chemical Use and Parental Visits

Responsibility of the parents:

Certain responsibilities for which a parent should be accountable include:





Chemical Use and Parental Visits

Ensuring the emotional and physical safety and well-being of his or her child

Providing his or her own transportation whenever possible

Calling as far in advance as possible to cancel visits so a child may be less likely to feel rejection and disappointment from a no-show visit



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

Planning an activity to participate in with the child during the visit

Taking the parental role during interactions with his or her child

Expect and respond to direction from the visit supervisor when the visits are supervised



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

Follow the pre-established guidelines and rules for visitation, including but not limited to the following

No blaming

No favoritism

No discussing court cases

No discussing therapy or problems of others

No foul language



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No threatening of anyone, present or not present

No getting one or more children to pick on another

No inciting children to make them upset by making statements and claims about things that are not yet settled

Follow the directions of the supervisor



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Responsibility of the child:

Attend

Respond appropriately to parental/sibling interaction

Follow directions of the visit supervisor



Chemical Use and Parental Visits

Responsibility of the visit supervisor:

1. Maintain safe and healthy interaction
2. Monitor behavior of participants
3. Clarify rules
4. Intervene and stop negative behavior
5. Terminate visits for inappropriate behavior
6. Report to Health and Human Services orally and in writing
7. Call law enforcement for assistance in terminating visit if participants do not cooperate



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Foster parent responsibilities regarding visits:

- The foster family agrees, for each child placed in her/his home, to permit and support visits between the child and the child's parents and/or siblings as recommended by the Department, both within and outside the foster family home



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Social worker responsibilities regarding visits

1. Set limits within which parents, children, and supervisor of visitation must stay; including attendance, duration, location, language, and behavior
2. List consequences of behavior outside the limits
3. Enforce consequences if limits are exceeded



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4. Report to court the content, tenor and tone of all visits, including positive and negative behaviors, and the affect on the children
5. Determine agency services which will be provided to support the visits
6. Set procedures to be followed when changes are made in visit plan or changes in plan.

Chemical Use and Parental Visits

- Thank you
- 4/27/05

