



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Charlie Crist
Governor

Robert A. Butterworth
Secretary

DATE: November 15, 2007
TO: Regional Directors
THROUGH: George Sheldon, Assistant Secretary for Operations
David Fairbanks, Assistant Secretary for Programs
FROM: Patricia Badland, Director of Office of Family Safety
SUBJECT: Agreement between DCF and Supervised Visitation Programs

Purpose: This memo is for the purpose of dissemination of the Agreement for Supervised Visitation Programs to be implemented in accordance with s.39.0139, and s.753.05, Florida Statutes.

Background: Section 39.0139, and s.753.05, Florida Statutes, provide that any supervised visitation program that wishes to accept referrals involving cases of child sexual abuse must have "...a written agreement with both the court [of the circuit in which the program is located] and with the department, that contains policies and guidelines specifically related to child sexual abuse." This Agreement has been developed in accordance with the statutory requirements for the provision of supervised visitation services in cases of child sexual abuse, and has been approved by both the Office of the General Counsel and the Secretary, as required by the August 14, 2007 Interagency Agreement Decision Memorandum (copy attached).

Action Required: Each Regional Director must appoint a Department representative/designee to meet with the program director of every supervised visitation program in the region that accepts referrals involving cases of child sexual abuse, and sign the Agreement. For all such programs, the original signed Agreement is to remain on file within the region; signed copies need to be provided to the supervised visitation program, the court of the circuit in which the program is located, and contract managers.

Inasmuch as s. 753.05, F.S. requires that any supervised visitation program accepting referrals involving cases of child sexual abuse has "a current affidavit of compliance on file with the chief judge of the circuit in which the program is located affirming that the program has agreed to comply with the minimum standards contained in an administrative order issued by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on November 17, 1999...", the department's role is not to determine compliance in this regard, but only to verify, by signature, that the supervised visitation program director is aware of and has agreed to

1317 Winewood Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

Agreement Between DCF and Supervised Visitation Programs
November 15, 2007
Page Two

comply with the safety standards as set forth in both s. 753.05, F.S., and the Agreement. This must be completed no later than December 31, 2007 by each circuit.

At this time, the law does not address agreement expiration, therefore this is a one-time effort for every existing program meeting the criteria of accepting child sexual abuse cases. However, if any new (or existing) supervised visitation program were to decide to begin accepting referrals of cases involving child sexual abuse, an Agreement would need to be signed by the program director and a Department representative/designee prior to the program accepting any such referrals.

Contact Information: For additional information, please contact Arlene Carey, Policy Management Analyst, at (850) 921-1928 or Suncom 291-1928.

Attachments

cc: Walter Sachs, Contract Administration
Circuit Administrators
CBC Contract Managers
Karen Oehme, J.D., Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Charlie Crist
Governor

Robert A. Butterworth
Secretary

AGREEMENT FOR SUPERVISED VISITATION PROGRAMS

Pursuant to s.39.0139 and s.753.05, F.S., this Letter of Agreement outlines specific requirements in the provision of supervised visitation services administered by the (Name): _____ Supervised Visitation Program in accordance with the agreement on file with the _____ Judicial Circuit.

The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) agrees:

1. To acknowledge the authority of the staff of the above-named Supervised Visitation Program to accept or decline referrals. Programs shall decline to accept a case for which they cannot reasonably ensure the safety of all clients, program staff and volunteers, for reasons including, but not necessarily limited to the following:
 - a. The volatile nature of the case or client;
 - b. Inadequate training of program staff and/or volunteers;
 - c. Inadequate facility security;
 - d. Insufficient resources;
 - e. Insufficient case background information;
 - f. Conflict of interest.

The (Name): _____ Supervised Visitation Program agrees that:

1. The program has an agreement with the court and a current affidavit of compliance on file with the chief judge of the _____ Judicial Circuit affirming that the program has agreed to comply with the minimum standards contained in the administrative order issued by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on November 18, 1999.
2. The program will ensure that all program staff monitoring supervised visitation and other contact will have previously received special training in the dynamics of child sexual abuse provided through the Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation; same training will be clearly documented in staff personnel files.
3. The program will have protocols established for obtaining background information on the family/case, prior to the initiation of supervised visitation services.
4. The program will accept only those referrals for which staff members have the requisite case background information, training, and security in place to safely monitor visitation and other contact.

1317 Winewood Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

5. The program will decline referrals of child sexual abuse cases when staff lacks the necessary training or education, when background information has not been received, or when lack of security may enable revictimization of the child.
6. The program will establish and train staff on procedures for staff to follow when supervising visitation and other contact, particularly in cases involving child sexual abuse.
7. The program will develop and follow policies for the handling and reporting of critical incidents.
8. The program will develop and enforce rules for appropriate interaction between the child(ren) and the parent(s)/individual(s) visiting during supervised visitation and other contact.
9. The program will suspend visits and subsequently notify the court in cases when the child appears to be traumatized by the visits, or when the parent/individual visiting or having other contact with the child engages in inappropriate behavior or otherwise violates program rules.

(DCF Representative Signature and Title)

(Date)

(Supervised Visitation Program Director Signature)

(Date)