



Monroe County Department of Human Services

Family Time Visitation

Frequently Asked Questions

Monroe County DHS is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and supporting families whose children have been removed from their care. We recognize that this is a painfully difficult time and that you may have questions. These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are questions commonly posed by parents in similar situations. We hope you find these helpful. You are always welcome to reach out to your caseworker with questions and concerns.

1. Scheduling Family Time Visitation

How will my Family Time Visitation with my child(ren) be decided?

Your visitation schedule will be based on the unique needs of your family and must be approved by the court. Because every family situation is different, the type, frequency, length, level of supervision and location of visits may vary. Factors considered in making these decisions include:

- The reason the child(ren) is/are in out-of-home care
- The child(ren)'s age (s), and the number of children visiting
- Your participation in and progress with services
- Safety related issues or concerns
- Your needs and needs of your child(ren)

Visits will be scheduled based on your needs and availability, as well as the needs and availability of the child(ren), foster parents, relatives, and staff. We will work with you to resolve barriers whenever possible.

How do I get started with visiting my Child(ren)?

- Visits will be started as soon as possible, usually within one week of the child's placement
- An initial visitation plan will be created by the caseworker and the parent together, under the direction of the Family Court order. The plan will include the location of visits, the number of visits per week, dates and times, and expectations of you during visits.
- Initial visits are most always supervised, which means someone (e.g., the caseworker, a visitation specialist, approved relatives, resource persons) will be present at the visit with you

Where and when will I be able to visit my child(ren)?

Most supervised visits start at the Visitation Center located on East Henrietta Road, or at a relative's home, if available and agreeable. Visitation may progress to the family home or to a community location based on the factors listed above in "How will my visitation/time with my child(ren) plan be decided?"

What can I do to help myself and my child(ren) have a great visit?

- Ask if you can bring a small healthy snack to share.
- Enjoy the playroom with large motor activities like a climbing structure and other toys.
- Read the books available in each room or draw in a coloring book with your child.
- Think of a positive story from your week and share this with your child. It does not have to be anything big! Ask your child about something they did that was fun since you last saw them.
- Bring things to do that your children enjoy: toys, games, balls, puzzles, books, & other fun activities. Help your child with homework.



Monroe County Department of Human Services

Family Time Visitation

Frequently Asked Questions

- Give your child your full attention.
- Transitions can be hard. Give your child the time he/she needs to be comfortable during the visit.
- It's okay to ask for help from your visit supervisor or caseworker before, during or after the visit. Family Time is a good place to strengthen your parenting skills.
- Allow your child to express their feelings. It's normal for children to feel angry or scared. Use your time together to reassure and support your children.
- Help your children say "goodbye" or "see you soon." Let your child know when there are 5 or 10 minutes left and help them pick up to ease departure.
- Keep in touch between visits if possible. Ask your caseworker about the best ways to let your children know you're thinking of them while you are apart.

What about extra, family, or special visits?

A. Extra visitation for Special Situations

Every effort will be made for you to attend your child's medical, educational, and special events. If your child is experiencing any of the situations below, your caseworker may arrange additional visitation.

- Your child is hospitalized
- Your child is moved to a new home or is separated from their siblings
- Your child experiences a crisis and would benefit from your support
- There has been a death in the family
- A clinician recommends that additional contact would be beneficial
- Special occasions or holidays

B. Family Visits

Relatives will be considered as a resource for visitation. Please share with your caseworker anyone who might be interested and able.

Siblings placed in separate out-of-home care locations and/or children at home or living with others can visit with each other on *at least* an every other week basis, unless there are concerns about a serious risk of physical or emotional harm OR there is a situation that poses additional barriers (for example, siblings do not reside in Monroe County).

Can a missed visit be rescheduled?

Efforts will be made to reschedule missed visits when they are the result of DHS, the supervising provider or contracted transportation. Rescheduling of visits missed for other reasons, including illness, missing transportation, or confusion as to the date and time of the visits will be considered but are not guaranteed. NOTE: Parents are encouraged to speak with their attorney and request a new court date if their scheduled court date conflicts with their scheduled visit.

How can I build a relationship with my child's caregivers?

Try to stay positive about your child's caregivers when your child is present, even if you don't always feel positive.

Consider providing a notebook to travel with your child. It can be used to share information about your visits and your child. Foster parents and caregivers can contribute to the notebook as well. Talk with your caseworker if you are interested.



Monroe County Department of Human Services

Family Time Visitation

Frequently Asked Questions

2. Supervision of Family Time Visits

Why do my visits need to be supervised?

See “How will my visitation/time with my child(ren) plan be decided?” above. Here are some situations that may lead to visits being supervised:

- The court order states that visits must be supervised
- There is reason to believe that your child may be at serious risk of physical and/or emotional harm or injury during the visits
- There is reason to believe that you or someone attending the visit with you, may attempt to influence or interfere with your child’s potential testimony in court
- There is reason to believe you, or someone attending the visit with you, may leave with the child without permission
- In the presence of your child(ren), you, or someone attending the visit with you, has displayed explosive or emotionally uncontrolled behavior towards agency staff, or other persons attending the visits.

What types of supervision are possible?

Please note that all options, except for the second one, can be at the Visitation Center, in the community, at a relative’s home, or in your home.

- **Continuously Supervised** - someone will be always in the room with you
- **Continuously Supervised Outside of the Room** -someone will be outside the room observing the visit through a 1-way mirror or video cameras. (This is only available at the Visitation Center)
- **Intermittent Monitoring** – a worker will come in and out of your visit
- **Unsupervised** – no staff or agency workers will be in the room with you

How and when will the level of supervision be changed?

The decision to “advance” visitation is made based on your progress in addressing your, and your child(ren)’s needs, areas of strengths, and areas where additional support(s) may be needed. This includes:

- Your progress towards or completion of court-ordered services and service plans outlined in the FASP (Family Assessment and Service Plan)
- Your ability to safely and adequately care for your child(ren)
- The absence of child safety-related issues
- Your attendance at and participation in your visits

If there are reasons to change visits, but a court order prevents the change, the caseworker will consult with the Children’s Services Unit attorney for a decision about modifying the order. Please understand that the caseworker may not make a change in the visitation plan until receiving confirmation from the attorney that the court has ordered the change.

If there is no court order regarding the level of supervision, the caseworker may increase or decrease the level of supervision after consultation with their direct supervisor and the Children’s Services Unit attorney, and notification of the modification to the parent’s attorney and the attorney for the child.



Monroe County Department of Human Services

Family Time Visitation

Frequently Asked Questions

3. Changing My Family Time Visitation Plan

How do I get more visits? How do I get the location of my visits changed?

For one-time changes, please contact your caseworker.

Please remember that much like your initial visitation plan, ongoing visits are determined by Family Court orders and will be scheduled around your needs and availability, as well as the needs and availability of the child(ren), foster parents, relatives, and staff.

If you think you or your child's needs and/or situation has changed and a change in visitation is a good idea, please speak with your caseworker.

Your caseworker and/or the people who supervise your visits may also recommend that your visitation plan change. They will talk with you and seek your opinion. The final decision will be made by the Family Court.

Can my worker stop my visit?

A visit will only be stopped or limited if there is imminent danger to anyone present. This includes:

- You attempt to leave the visiting area with the child without permission
- You demonstrate explosive or out of control behavior towards your child, agency staff, or others supervising or attending the visit
- You appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- There is a court order authorizing termination or limitation of the visit
- You tried to influence or interfere with your child's potential testimony for court

Family Time visits may also be ended early if anyone at the visit displays disruptive behavior that is distracting to and infringes on other Family Time visits occurring at the same time and place, or if participant's behaviors place the safety of others in jeopardy.

Why do I have to call and confirm visits? Why do I need to be there so early?

Confirmation of visit attendance and early arrival are limited to situations where attendance has been inconsistent. Missed visits can be challenging for children, especially after they have been transported to the visitation location. Confirmation and/or early arrival are necessary in some situations to avoid disappointment and frustration on the part of the child(ren).