

## Introduction

The State of Connecticut Judicial Branch and Department of Social Services are working together to help support relationships between children and their parents who do not live with them by offering supportive services under the Access and Visitation Federal Grant. Community-based service providers, under contract with the Judicial Branch's Court Support Services Division, offer two programs to help parents build relationships with their children:

- Supervised Visitation
- Transitions in Parenting

The goal of these services is to help parents who do not live with their children achieve meaningful, healthy, and productive interactions with them. Services are available to parents who have access/visitation cases filed in the following Judicial District Courts: Danbury, Hartford, Litchfield, New Britain, New London, Putnam, Rockville, and Waterbury. These services are offered at no cost to the clients for a limited amount of time.

A referral to either of these programs is only possible if the parents have an active case in Family Matters before the Superior Court. Family Services will make the

referral to the community agency after a court order. A Family Relations Counselor will be the coordinator between the Court and the contracted service provider. Family Services will become involved if significant concerns come up while you are taking part in the program by bringing the matter back to court.

## Supervised Visitation Program

The purpose of the Supervised Visitation Program is to provide a safe, substance-free, closely-monitored and controlled environment for children to have contact with their parent. The Supervised Visitation Program is not intended to be a long-term solution to maintaining contact between a parent and child. Referrals are time-limited, with a court date scheduled for reviewing the matter to avoid putting unnecessary restrictions on a parent's access to their child for long periods of time.

When the period of supervised visits is over, Family Services will review the information provided by the visitation supervisor and help parents put together a long term visitation/access plan. The Family Relations Counselor will also prepare a report that lets the Court know that the period of supervised visitation is finished and will share any visitation/access plan the parents agree to for the future.

## Transitions in Parenting

The Transitions in Parenting (TIP) program deals with the complex emotional issues involved when a parent re-enters a child's life after a long separation or enters the child's life for the first time. The TIP program provides professional guidance and support for families during the process of establishing or re-establishing relationships between a child and an absent parent. Once it has been determined to be in the child's best interest, this program helps develop the groundwork for the parent-child relationship. This program can help set up the basis for a healthy, positive, and lasting parent-child relationship.

In most cases, parents who are referred to the TIP program meet separately with a therapist who is employed by the contracted service provider. The child will meet with the therapist one or more times separately from the parents. The Court refers families to this program to begin the process of bringing the child and the absent parent together. The therapist will decide when the child is ready to start this relationship. When the therapist believes the child is ready to meet with their parent, the two are brought together for closely monitored sessions. Afterward, the therapist will review these sessions separately with the child, and with each

of the parents. Once the therapist decides that the child is reasonably comfortable with the interaction, the therapist will talk about possible strategies for maintaining and strengthening this parent-child relationship.

Most families will return to Court after the first 3 months in TIP to review the progress being made. After the TIP program has ended for the family, the Family Relations Counselor may meet with the parents to see if they can agree to a regular visitation/ access schedule. Some families may need to move to a more structured access plan, and a referral to the Supervised Visitation Program may be the next step. The Family Relations Counselor will prepare a report that lets the Court know that the family has finished TIP and will share any visitation/ access plan or next steps the parents agree to for the future.

## What Parents Need to Do

Your participation and cooperation in the programs described in this brochure is very important. We ask that you cooperate in the following ways:

1. Keep scheduled appointments and arrive on time for all meetings.

2. Sign the necessary Authorization for Release of Information forms.
3. Keep an open mind about how the program can help your relationship with your child.
4. Cooperate with program rules and protocols.
5. Share your opinions and concerns in a way that shows respect for everyone in the process.

**For additional information, contact the Court Support Services Division - Family Services Office in Danbury, Hartford, Litchfield, New Britain, New London, Putnam, Rockville, or Waterbury. Contact information is available at The Superior Court – Court Service Center.**

For more information, you may go to the Judicial Branch website at:  
[www.jud.ct.gov](http://www.jud.ct.gov)



JDP-FM-217

# Connecticut Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division Family Services **Access and Visitation Federal Grant Contracted Programs**

