



Visit Hosts: A Resource for Children in Foster Care and their Families

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**New York City Administration for Children's Services
Division of Family Permanency Services
Family Visiting Unit**

This guidance updates and supersedes the previous document, *A Bridge Back Home: Visit Hosts*, which was issued in June 2007.

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Visit Hosts: A Resource for Children in Foster Care and Their Families

BACKGROUND

Family Time (aka family visiting) is critical to expediting children's reunification with their parents. In addition, frequent, consistent and high-quality family time reduces the trauma of removal for children and improves their adjustment to placement.

In February 2013, NYC Administration for Children's Services issued, '[Determining the Least Restrictive Level of Supervision Needed During Visits for Families with Children in Foster Care](#).'¹ This policy provided guidelines for safe, high quality family time helping families to maintain and strengthen the connections during their child welfare involvement supporting speedy achievement of reunification and permanency.²

A Visit Host is someone identified by the child, family, ACS or the foster care agency who can supervise parent-child or sibling visits in place of -- and in communication with -- the agency worker. A Visit Host is someone who:

- 1) Can assure the safety of the child(ren) during the visit;
- 2) Is invested in the well-being of the child(ren); and
- 3) Is supportive of the parent and the family's efforts to successfully reunify or maintain strong relationships (if reunification is not the goal).

Visit Hosts might be another family member, a resource in the community connected to the family (coach, pastor, neighbor, family friend, etc.) or the foster parent involved in the visiting family's case. Regardless of the child's connection to the visiting host, any and all individuals deemed to be appropriate should be considered.

Visit Hosts offer agencies a way to expand and improve opportunities for parents and children to experience genuine family time – quality visits that support families moving more quickly towards reunification and permanency. Visits held at the agency may limit opportunities for parents to engage in normal family activities with their children (recreation, medical appointments, etc.) and may be restricted by limited staffing, space and availability (e.g., outside of normal business hours to accommodate parents' other responsibilities). By offering families more flexible scheduling, settings and activities for visits, Visit Hosts can facilitate a more normal, natural environment for family interaction. This also allows for 'real world, real time' assessments of family attachment and parents' behavior changes reflecting their capacities to safely meet their children's needs.

Visit Hosts are a promising option because they can encourage the visiting circumstances that make family time more enjoyable, normal and supportive. Visit Hosts can accompany the family to community settings that are more comfortable than the typical agency visiting room – and do so

¹The policy can be found at <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/acs/policies/init/2013/C.pdf>.

²The guidelines also seek to improve the quality and frequency of sibling visits.

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more frequently, for longer periods of time and more quickly than a case planner with responsibility for facilitating and supervising family time for multiple families. If the family has chosen the Visit Host to assist with their family time, the family's relationship with the Visit Host is likely to be more amicable, with the resulting visits more supportive of the children's well-being during the time they're separated from their parents and reunification planning.

These guidelines are intended to assist foster care agencies in identifying and integrating Visit Hosts into routine family time for children in foster care.

A. WHAT SITUATIONS ARE APPROPRIATE FOR VISIT HOSTS?

There are many situations in which Visit Hosts can help families have more meaningful and enjoyable family time. While the practice makes the most sense for families with a goal of reunification, Visit Hosts may also be appropriate when reunification is not the goal but the Visit Host can help maintain the child's connections to parents, siblings, extended family or others. For example, teenagers maintaining connections with their families of origin, sibling groups (especially those who do not reside together), families with frequent supervised visits, and children moving toward KinGAP or open adoption all may benefit from visit hosting. Visit Hosts can be integrated into family time at any point during the life of a foster care case.

It is important for the case planner to consider any aspects of the parent's and/or child's behaviors and needs that could lead to safety concerns during the visit. For example, if there are substance use or mental health challenges, a case involving domestic violence or a child with special needs, can a Visit Host appropriately manage this? Case planners should discuss these questions with their supervisors.

B. IDENTIFYING A VISIT HOST

In many cases, simply asking parents and youth about people available to host visits will produce fruitful results. A good starting point is to gather psychosocial information from the parent to develop a genogram (i.e., resource map) including family members and other important people in the parent's and child's life. Relatives who are identified but unable to be foster care placement resources are often good candidates. Places and activities that are important to the parent and family should also be explored. School age children may have connected with coaches or guidance counselors; families may have been involved with religious or other local community groups. These involvements often include people who not only know the family but who are willing to help the family stay connected by supervising their visits.

Visit Hosts can also be identified by the agency, and might include staff such as parent advocates, volunteers, former foster parents and others interested in hosting visits.

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Visit Hosts can also be explored at family team conferences and other casework meetings where the provider is reviewing the level or type of visiting supervision.³ Certainly, the family's – and agency's -- desire to have visits outside the agency or organized around more family-friendly activities should prompt a discussion of Visit Hosts.

These are a few examples of questions for parents and youth to identify potential Visit Hosts:

1. Who are the people important to you now and in the past?
2. Does your child have other family members and adults s/he is close to? What other adults did your child spend time with prior to foster care?
3. How, and with whom, do you celebrate birthdays and holidays? What fun activities did you do together prior to foster care? Who else participated in those activities? Are there school, religious or recreational activities that are important to you or your children?
4. Are there people in your community who know your child? Or are there people in your community who you trust and who you feel are supportive and reliable?
5. And, for children/youth -- Who else did you spend time with before you came into foster care? Would you feel safe if this person were at a visit with you and your parents? Who are other adults do you like or respect?

C. ASSESSING WHETHER A PERSON IS APPROPRIATE TO BE A VISIT HOST

The Visit Host's primary responsibility when supervising a visit is to support the safety and well-being of the child.

Visit Hosts are usually not trained visit coaches⁴ or experts in child development. Case planners must assess whether potential Visit Hosts are reliable and willing to work with the agency and family to support visiting while also responding to any safety concerns that may arise during visits. Below are some general criteria to guide agency staff in assessing whether someone will make an appropriate Visit Host.

³ Current ACS Visiting guidelines direct that visiting plans should progress and/or be revisited at least every six months, so at a minimum, you should ask whether a visit host is appropriate in a particular case when visits have been supervised for six months and continue to go well.

⁴ Visit coaches provide intensive support to parents to improve the quality of family time. The coaching model involves a pre- and post-visit meeting to plan for and then process the visit with the parent. Coaches also receive training in the coaching model and, though not a requirement, often have clinical skills/experience guiding their interventions. This contrasts with hosts who generally have basic knowledge about how to supervise visits without the more intensive, strengths-based and collaborative framework of coaching.

An appropriate Visit Host candidate is a responsible adult who:

1. Is identified by the family or the agency as someone willing and able to support family time;
2. Is willing and able to host visits on an ongoing basis;
3. Is willing to maintain consistent contact with the foster care agency and family and respond to inquiries from both in a timely manner;
4. Will intervene appropriately if any physical or emotional safety concern arises during a visit and will report any concerns to the agency;
5. Agrees to report back regularly (verbally or in writing) to the agency and be forthcoming about the quality and content of the visits;
6. Is knowledgeable about the original placement circumstances, ongoing family issues and current goals of the family to the extent relevant to the Visit Host's ability to safely host visits;
7. Is invested in helping the family to have safe, productive visits;
8. Is willing to participate in a home assessment (if visits will be held at the Visit Host's home), interview and background check for child abuse history;
9. If applicable based on background check, is willing to discuss any of his/her own relevant child protective services history with the agency;
10. Is willing to participate in orientation, and additional training as needed, to understand the supervisory responsibilities of being a Visit Host, the family's specific needs during a visit, and how to intervene appropriately if any safety issues arise during the visit;
11. Is willing to sign an agreement to the above expectations. *(A sample of such a written agreement is attached as Appendix C.)*

What to Discuss with the Parent, Child and Visit Host Candidate

When a parent suggests a potential Visit Host, s/he may already know at least some of the circumstances that led to the child's placement. Many relatives and community supports, for example, were close to the family prior to placement, and it may be just this intimate relationship that makes them a good candidate to host visits. However, case planners should not make any assumptions about the candidate's knowledge; rather, they should ask parents whether and how much the potential host knows about their child welfare case.

Prior to communicating with a Visit Host candidate, the case planner must discuss with the parent that they will need to share with the Visit Host any case information pertinent to the child's safety on

a visit. Only information currently relevant to safety during visits should be shared. When possible, case planners should use general parameters rather than case specifics to convey the relevant safety information. For instance, regardless of particular case circumstances, if anyone arrives for a visit intoxicated, the Visit Host must end the visit and inform the case planner. In some instances, case planners may need to inform potential Visit Hosts about the specific case circumstances such as orders of protection and/or allegations that brought the child into care. **Parents must be given the option of sharing information with the Visit Host (i.e., choosing to have this information come directly from them in their own words). However, the case planner should also be present so all are clear what information has been shared. It is imperative that the Visit Host have enough information about the case circumstances to be able to safely supervise parent-child visits.**

Parents will need to provide explicit consent for the case planner to release any case-specific information to the Visit Host. The case planner may have the parent sign a written consent form or forego a written consent and instead discuss this issue and then make a record in the progress notes of the discussion and the parent's consent. (*Sample Consent language is included in Appendix C: Sample Parent/Visit Host Agreement*).⁵

Children -- especially older children -- may also be able to propose a Visit Host or name other people they enjoyed spending time with prior to entering foster care. Children are often able to tell you whether they feel safe with such a person and why. Case planners should be sure to let a child know that s/he will have the opportunity to talk privately with the case planner about how visits are going with the Visit Host once they begin.

The process to determine whether someone is appropriate to host visits depends on case circumstances. At a minimum, case planners should always have at least one orientation meeting with the proposed Visit Host individually and one meeting with the parent and Visit Host together before visit hosting starts. During these orientation meetings, case planners should review the purpose of family time, the supervisory requirements of hosting, and the family's specific supervisory needs to maintain safety during visits. Case planners should advise families and Visit Hosts that family time is an opportunity to build and maintain relationships, not a time to discuss case circumstances or court proceedings. More meetings may be necessary in the beginning, including a meeting with the child/ren, to make sure everyone understands the expectations for hosted visits. The criteria above may help to structure the case planner's discussion with a Visit Host candidate.

During these initial meetings, case planners will also need to tell the prospective Visit Host about the need to obtain clearances to check for any history of alleged child neglect, abuse or criminal

⁵ If the Visit Host is someone who already works for or volunteers with the agency, such as a parent advocate, you should be sure to tell the Visit Host that the same expectations regarding confidentiality of families being served by the agency applies to the situation of hosting visits. In cases involving sharing substance abuse, HIV and/or mental health information, your agency may have particular protocols that you must follow to comply with federal and state laws. If you have questions about how they relate to the practice of Visit Hosts, contact the Office of Family Visiting at 212-487-8630.

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convictions or pending criminal charges. The clearances for Visit Hosts are similar to those required for any other type of volunteer who will be interacting with children in foster care. Because family time will likely be improved when supervised by a Visit Host, expediting these clearances is important. To do this, case planners will need to obtain the Visit Host's informed consent for ACS to conduct a local person search that will provide the initial information enabling them to begin supervising family visits. (*Use the form provided in Appendix D.*) This local person search will be followed by a more comprehensive Statewide Central Register (SCR) of Child Abuse and Maltreatment clearance. This will be done in the same manner that expedited clearances are done for emergency kinship placements, so that visit hosting can begin and a family need not wait for the full SCR clearance before starting the visits. Case planners should inform Visit Hosts that their ability to continue supervising these visits may change depending on the outcome of the SCR clearance.

In addition to these person searches and clearances, case planners should conduct an assessment of a Visit Host's suitability to supervise family visits with questions about how the potential Visit Host would handle particular situations if child safety became a concern during a visit they were hosting and how s/he would describe his/her relationship with the child/ren or the parent.

Case planners should review and discuss the Parent/Visit Host Agreement with the parent and the potential Visit Host. Lastly, agencies are encouraged (though not required) to ask the Visit Host candidate to observe some visits currently being held at the agency so that the case planner can see this person interact with the parent and child. Note that the agency must request and receive the parent's permission before arranging these observations.

D. APPROVING A VISIT HOST

Visit Hosts should be considered "volunteers" in the same way that agencies consider other people who assist the agency without compensation, e.g., volunteers helping with transportation or special events. Agencies must follow these steps for approving Visit Hosts.

1. **Obtain and review a 'local' person search and a Statewide Central Register (SCR) of Child Abuse and Maltreatment clearance:** It is critical that agency staff determine whether the Visit Host candidate has ever had allegations of abuse or maltreatment indicated against him/ her. *The mere existence of an indicated SCR history should not automatically prevent the person from hosting visits; instead, as with potential foster parents, it should be one factor the agency uses to determine if the Visit Host is appropriate.* In reviewing prior indicated SCR history, agencies should consider how much time has passed since the report as well as the type and severity of the allegations and whether there is a foster care history for any children of the potential Visit Host.

With a proposed Visit Host, ACS will conduct a local person search on the candidate to identify any NYC SCR history. This will be done in the same manner that expedited clearances are done for Child Protective Services, so that visit hosting can begin and a family need not wait for the full SCR

clearance before starting the visits. When they do receive full SCR results, agencies should review them and reassess the appropriateness of the Visit Host based on the results. Case planners should inform Visit Hosts that their ability to continue supervising visits may change depending on the outcome of the full SCR clearances.

To request a local person search, contact the ACS Office of Centralized Services by emailing local.clearance@acs.nyc.gov. The case planner must obtain **written consents** from candidates prior to conducting a local person search of their SCR history necessary to approve them as Visit Hosts. Please use the attached form (Appendix D) and send the signed copy to ACS along with your request. The form may be scanned and attached to an email.

Note: ACS can complete local person searches only on resources residing in one of NYC's five boroughs. The agency must then follow up with a statewide clearance request to OCFS to obtain a clearance letter. ACS cannot conduct a local person search for someone who resides in another state or has a SCR history in a county outside the five boroughs. If a potential Visit Host has lived outside of NYC at any time in the past five years, agencies must assess whether they have enough information to approve the Visit Host or need to wait for the full SCR clearance results.

2. **Address criminal background:** Agencies must assess any prior criminal convictions or pending criminal charges. State law does not require fingerprinting for volunteers except in congregate care settings.⁶ Therefore, ACS recommends using publicly available databases. See Appendix E for a list of databases and instructions. For assistance or questions concerning public database searches, please contact your agency representative from the ACS Office of Shared Response (OSR). Agencies may also contact their OSR representative to request training on how to use the databases and understand search results. OSR will connect agencies with the ACS Investigative Consultation team, which can provide training on these topics. *As is true of local person searches and SCR clearances, the circumstances of any prior criminal record should be viewed with discretion as one but not the only deciding factor for approving a Visit Host.*
3. **Provide orientation, training and ongoing monitoring:** Visit Host orientation and training can be informal, individual meetings with the Visit Host to review expectations and safety protocols. These protocols should include a phone number to reach agency staff immediately in case of any urgent questions or concerns. If the agency has several potential Visit Hosts needing training, the agency may invite the candidates to come to a group training session. *Most importantly, Visit Hosts need to understand what they are expected to do if a child's safety appears to be at risk during a visit.*⁷ See additional information about orientation and training in section E below.

⁶ Issued in November 2019, [19-OCFS-ADM-21](#) -- Expansion of Background Checks for Congregate Care Staff Under the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) -- requires fingerprinting for volunteers in congregate care programs. This does apply to visit hosts if the visits include children in congregate care.

⁷ ACS recommends memorializing this expectation in writing, either in an agreement like the one in Appendix C or in a letter that marks the beginning of the Visit Host's role.

4. **Conduct a home assessment if the Visit Host intends to supervise visits at his or her home:** Case planners should conduct the same safety assessment done when initially investigating the home of a potential placement resource. This is particularly important when a Visit Host is supervising extended or overnight visits.
5. **Conduct a local person search and review of criminal public databases on any adult residing in the Visit Host's home:** If a child will spend time at the Visit Host's home or if other adults may accompany the Visit Host during visits, case planners must request and review a local person search on those people and use public databases to assess any criminal history. Use Appendix D to obtain written consent for the local person search. The Visit Host should always be clear that s/he is responsible for the visit and that no other adult should be at the visit without the parent's consent, the agency's knowledge, or if prior agreements prohibit that person from being present, e.g., someone considered a risk to the child or the parent. Visit Hosts should supervise visits in the community if an adult in the home declines to consent to these clearances. Staff should also talk with the child about additional adults who may participate in the visit.
6. **Ask the Visit Host and the parent to establish a written agreement about the visits:** These agreements can provide guidance about visiting 'ground rules' for the Visit Host and parents. A copy of a sample agreement is included as Appendix C.

In addition to the above required steps, case planners and agencies may consider these additional steps, depending on the case circumstances:⁸

7. **Have the Visit Host appear in court:** In cases where the Court has made specific orders or directives about visits, case planners may invite the Visit Host to appear with them in court to discuss visiting plans and expectations with attorneys and the judge. Visit Hosts are not expected to attend every court hearing. When they do attend, the case planner should always be present as well.
8. **Have the Visit Host meet other relevant parties to the case:** Information from the foster parent, extended family members and others may help the Visit Host appreciate the importance of their role and enrich their support of the family. These people can also help parents appreciate that a Visit Host is an integral part of the plan supporting reunification with their child.

⁸ The additional suggestions outlined in 7-8 are not required by state regulation for volunteers, but they may, in a particular case, reflect prudent practice. One important consideration to keep in mind whenever you are approving a host is that the practice is designed to be as informal as possible in order to assure that people willing to support the family are not discouraged by what feels like burdensome limitations or conditions on their support of the family that go beyond assuring the child's safety.

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E. ORIENTATION, TRAINING AND ONGOING WORK WITH THE VISIT HOST

The specifics of each case will determine the amount and intensity of orientation and training Visit Hosts will need to support a family on visits. As previously mentioned, case planners may accomplish this in casework meetings that include the parent and/or the child. It is imperative, however, that case planners establish clear and mutual visiting expectations for both the Visit Host and the parent(s). Most importantly, a Visit Host needs to know the requirements for maintaining safety and managing any behavioral issues that impact child well-being during visits. This should always include the expectation that, if a safety issue arises, the Visit Host will end the visit and return the child to the foster home or agency depending on the arrangements made. Visit Hosts should be given a phone number to contact in case of emergency. Other aspects of the safety plan should be designed based on specific case circumstances. Staff may want to draw on similar sorts of expectations and guidance they provide to kinship foster parents who supervise visits in their home.

The case planner and/or supervisor should always be present for the first few visits to make sure the Visit Host is properly supervising visits and to identify any issues that may interfere with safe, productive visits. Even when the Visit Host is regularly supervising visits, the case planner needs to do regular 'check-ins' to directly observe how the visits are going. These 'check-ins' are recommended at least every month, but the frequency will be guided by case specific circumstances and progress of the visits. The case planner should also regularly speak with the Visit Host about progress of visits and any concerns just like they do with kinship foster parents supervising visits in their home. Less frequent check-ins may be possible if the case and visits proceed smoothly. Updates about family strengths observed during visits can help the agency assess the family's readiness to move to unsupervised visits.

Case planners should also solicit regular feedback from the child and parent. Case planners may wish to set aside a specific casework meeting to discuss with the Visit Host, parent and children their impressions of the visits. It's also important to interview children separately about their visiting experiences. Visit Hosts may also be invited to Family Team Conferences and similar casework meetings with the parent's consent. Case planners must notify parents that their consent is required for visit hosts' participation in Family Team Conferences and similar casework meetings.

F. DOCUMENTATION REGARDING VISITS

Even when Visit Hosts are supervising visits, the agency remains responsible for documenting reasonable efforts around service planning, including visits, in CONNECTIONS. Visit Hosts do not need to *formally document* their activities while supervising a visit, though case planners may ask the Visit Host to keep a log that chronicles visiting dates/times and a brief summary of the activities during the visit. It is necessary for case planners to regularly communicate with Visit Hosts to get feedback on the visits and include this in progress notes, service plans, court reports, etc. Just as case planners regularly hear from kinship foster parents about visits they are supervising, case planners should schedule regular times to get this feedback from Visit Hosts, either after every visit or at regular intervals. Feedback should include strengths and progress observed as well as any

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challenges or concerns. Visit Hosts may share their logs directly with case planners or share the information via email, phone or in person.

Visit Hosts need to understand that if a question or conflict arises regarding the accuracy of their visiting feedback, a case planner may temporarily or permanently stop hosted visits until the conflict is resolved. This stipulation should be included in the Visit Host agreement and/or discussed and that discussion documented in progress notes.

If case planners ask the Visit Host to complete a brief form or keep a log of visits, they should be sure to give the parent (and older children) the opportunity to record their impressions and feedback as well. Progress Notes should reflect any feedback from parents and children.

CONCLUSION

With proper assessment and implementation, Visit Hosts offer a promising approach to improving family time, meeting the needs of children and families in foster care, enhancing the support network of families beyond the child welfare system, and helping families to progress more quickly towards unsupervised visits, reunification and permanency. These guidelines will support agencies to effectively integrate Visit Hosts into their case practice.

APPENDIX A

Discussion Questions for Agency Staff: Implementing Visit Hosting and Making Case-Specific Decisions

In order for Visit Hosts to be explored and implemented as a visiting tool/option that allows for more frequent and higher quality visits, staff must believe in the model. To even begin to consider hosts, however, it may be important to have some discussion of the broader issues of visiting arrangements, decision-making and supervision as they are currently integrated into case practice. Below are some suggested general and case-specific questions to guide discussion.

General Discussion Questions:

- As an agency, how do we generally approach decisions to supervise visits? Do we always begin with supervised visits? Why? At what point do we consider moving to a lower level of supervision?
- What factors do we think indicate an opportunity for less supervision? Do we insist on a certain level of “compliance” with a service plan before moving to less supervised, longer, more varied visits?
- Do we wait for the court to suggest a change in the visiting arrangement? When appropriate, do we use agency discretion to progress visiting plans in between court dates? How can we make proactive recommendations to the court regarding case-specific visiting plans?
- Do we see quality visiting as having any impact on a parent’s ability to sustain engagement with services?
- Do we generally arrange for family time to happen outside the agency? Why or why not?
- What are some of the creative, less typical visiting arrangements we’ve made in the past? Could visit hosts be an extension of such arrangements? Did we ever engage visit hosts in the past even if the term “visit hosts” was not used? (please share experiences)

Visit Host Discussion with Supervisors and Caseworkers

What is your initial response to this practice?

What are your concerns, and how can we mitigate them?

Examples: Liability? Documentation? Response from the court? Family’s reaction? Trusting the Host? Other?

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Do you have families that come to mind that would benefit from this practice?
If not, what are the barriers that prevent you from exploring a host on certain cases?

What challenges do you anticipate in implementing this approach?

What would make you more likely to explore/ implement use of visit hosts?

Case-specific Questions:

What is the current visiting arrangement for this family?

What are the safety concerns on this case?

What is the current level of supervision and does it match the safety concerns (or lack thereof)?

What types of issues present themselves during visits (for example, need for more interaction, modeling of parenting skills, awkwardness among parties, no concerns)?

How can visits be arranged so that they move the family closer to reunifying (i.e., resemble real-life situations more closely)?

*** Reminder to staff:** even if a family does not have family members or family friends they can identify as potential Visit Hosts, there may be organizations, professionals, or activities to which they are connected where potential hosts may be found. Or, the agency may be able to develop a cadre of hosts from adoptive or former foster parents, or other volunteers.

APPENDIX B

Questions to Help Identify Visit Hosts

Who can be a visit host and how do you identify her/him?

In attempting to identify a visit host, a good starting point is meeting with the parent to gather thorough psychosocial information and develop a genogram including family members and other important people in the parent's and the child's life.

The following sample questions can be used when interviewing adults and children for purposes of identifying a visit host.

Questions to ask parents:

Can you think of anyone that could help with visits in this way?

Who are important people in your life?

Who do you trust?

Does your child have a godparent?

How do you celebrate birthdays, holidays, etc. and with whom?

What activities do you want to continue to be involved in in your child's life?

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Are there people in your neighborhood you are close to/feel you can count on?

Can you recall any teacher or caseworker, social worker, guidance counselor, you were close to?

Questions to ask children:

What did you like to do with your mom/dad/family member before you came into foster care?

What kind of activities do you like/participate in? (i.e., sports, clubs, dance, art)? Is there an adult you trust?

Would you have fun at a visit if that person were there? Would you feel safe?

Who do you go to when you feel sad? Happy?

Is there anyone in school you are close to?

Who are you closest to in your foster family?

Who is your best friend?

Do you have any siblings? Older? Younger? Who do they live with?

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Who do you look up to/admire? Do you have a hero(s)?

Have you ever had a teacher, caseworker, social worker, guidance counselor, friend's parent, family member who you admired? Who made a difference in your life?

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE PARENT/VISIT HOST AGREEMENT

Section I: To be Signed by Parent

I understand that by signing this form I will have the opportunity to visit with my children outside of the agency and have the following person present:

(Name of Visit Host)

This person will be referred to as the "Visit Host" for my family.

I understand that _____ (name of agency/caseworker) will share the following information with the "Visit Host" (*caseworker to fill in the below; be as specific as possible*):

I also understand that the visit host's role is to make sure that my children are physically and emotionally safe during visits. I know and agree that if at any time during the visit _____ (*name of Visit Host*) believes that my child/ren are physically or emotionally unsafe, she/he will end the visit and bring my child/ren back to the agency.

I agree to the following ground rules regarding visits with the "Visit Host": (*be specific*)

I understand that I will need to speak with the caseworker about the progress of the visits, any concerns that I may have about the visits, and any suggestions I have for improving visits. I understand that I may need to put my comments in writing or tell a Family Court Judge about the progress of the visits. I understand that I have the ability to end this arrangement if I no longer feel that it is supporting my relationship with my children.

Date:_____

Signature:_____

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Section II: To be Signed by Visit Host

Visit Host: I understand that I am being asked by _____
(name of parent/s)

and by _____
(name of agency)

to host visits between _____
(name of parent/s)

and their children (*list names and ages of all children*):

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

I understand that as a Visit Host, my first responsibility is to make sure that the child/ren are safe and comfortable during the visits. If at any point during the visit I believe that the child/ren are physically or emotionally unsafe, it is my responsibility to end the visit and to ensure that the child/ren return to the agency.

I have spoken with _____ (*name of case planner*), and I understand that any information about this family that is shared with me must be kept confidential. The information shared is to help me support this family during the visits.

I understand that I may need to attend trainings in order to serve as a "Visit Host" and that I will need to speak with the caseworker about the progress of the visits, any concerns that I may have about the visits, and any suggestions I have for improving visits. I understand that I may need to put my comments in writing or tell a Family Court Judge about the progress of the visits.

Date: _____ Signature: _____

APPENDIX D

Local Person Search Consent and Request Form

Visit Host Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Alias (maiden name or any other name visit host has used): _____

Address: _____

Any additional addresses in past 5 years: _____

If visits will happen in host's home, list all household members age 18 or older:

1) Full Name: _____ Alias: _____ Date of Birth: _____

2) Full Name: _____ Alias: _____ Date of Birth: _____

3) Full Name: _____ Alias: _____ Date of Birth: _____

4) Full Name: _____ Alias: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Add additional household members on a separate sheet if needed.

I understand that the above information will be used to conduct a database search for any history of child abuse or maltreatment. The reason for this search is to assess my qualifications to serve as a Visit Host. I hereby consent to this search.

Visit Host Signature: _____

Household Member Signatures: 1) _____ 2) _____

3) _____ 4) _____

For Agency Staff: To request a local clearance, scan a copy of this completed form to the ACS Office of Centralized Services (local.clearance@acs.nyc.gov). Please include the case name and case number in your email.

APPENDIX E

Public Investigative Websites for Criminal History Information

- **E-Courts (WebCrim):** <https://iapps.courts.state.ny.us/webcivil/ecourtsMain>
 - WebCrim enables you to view pending Criminal cases in Local and Superior Courts in 13 counties and Summons cases for all of New York City. You may search for cases by Case Number or Party Name and produce calendars by County and Part or Judge.

Notes:

- By entering only the first two letters of a person's first and/or last name, you will get all variations of the name.
 - The system will allow for a name search without using a DOB. To see the year of birth for the subject, you must open the summary page. From there you can look at the county of arrest as well as the NYSID number.
- **Inmate Lookup Service (New York City):** <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/inmate-lookup.page>
 - Contains information regarding current and former inmates of the NYC Department of Corrections

- **Inmate Lookup Service (New York State):** <http://nysdoccslookup.doccs.ny.gov>
 - Contains information regarding current and former inmates of the NYS Department of Corrections

Notes:

For City and State Inmate Locators:

- If the DOB that you have for the subject is different than the one being used by the city/state, your search will not find the subject. To avoid this, first try doing a search without using the DOB.
 - By entering only the first two letters of a person's first and/or last name, you will get all variations of the name.
 - If the first name is unusual, you can try searching for just the first name.
 - If you have the New York State Identification Number (NYSID) and/or Department of Corrections ID Number (DIN), search using just the number without entering the subject's name. Searching in this manner will show aliases the subject may have used.
- **National Sex Offender Lookup System:** <http://www.criminalcheck.com/index.html>
 - National Sex Offender database site that searches all 50 states (and the District of Columbia) with one click.
 - **NYS Parolee Lookup:** <https://publicapps.doccs.ny.gov/ParoleeLookup/default>
 - Individuals Under Parole Supervision - Search for individuals currently supervised by the New York State Division of Parole.

Notes:

- Provides name and phone number of parole officer.

Visit Hosts

For assistance or questions concerning public database searches, please contact your agency representative from the ACS Office of Shared Response (OSR). Agencies may also contact their OSR representative to request training on how to use the databases and understand search results. OSR will connect agencies with the ACS Investigative Consultation team, which can provide training on these topics.