



Facilitating Positive Visits: 10 Tips for Professionals

1. Work in partnership with caregivers, sharing information about the importance of visits for children's attachment and for relieving their worries and possible self-blame, while also offering support for caregivers and acknowledging their stress.
2. Facilitate frequent or regular visits. When there is a pattern or schedule of visits, visits become less stressful for children and the goodbye a little easier.
3. Provide tips for caregivers on how to prepare children for visits, and support and debrief with them afterwards. Visits can cause separation anxiety and pain for children who do not want to leave their parents behind.
4. Help the parent prepare for the visit and use it productively. Talk with the parent before the visit (via a correctional staff person or a letter) to help her focus on the children and their needs.
5. Confirm that the incarcerated parent is located in the facility the morning of the visit.
6. Prepare to make the travel comfortable for the child. Bring food and age-appropriate activities (remembering that you can bring very little into the actual visit with you).
7. Arrive early with the proper identification for yourself and the children you are escorting, and check your and their pockets before you enter.
8. Do your best to cooperate with the directions given by correctional facility staff. Remain professional at all times and model for the child how to handle what can feel like disrespectful behavior and harassment.
9. Think of creative ways to keep children engaged before the visit. An escort's job is to deliver a supported child who is prepared and as happy as possible.
10. Be nonjudgmental and open-minded, yet attentive to the needs of the child at all times.

Gaynes, E., Krupat, T., Lemaster-Schipani, D., Hunt, J. (2013). *Stronger Together: Volume II, Maintaining and Strengthening Family Ties for Children with Incarcerated Parents*. New York: The Osborne Association.