



Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation

The Institute for Family Violence Studies

Florida State University

JULY EPRESS

QUESTIONS FROM DIRECTORS

Do our monitors have to have the five hours of shadowing before they can sit visits, or can they just have the training the Clearinghouse provides?

In addition to training, the Minimum Standards require that monitors have five hours in a mentoring program with a practicing supervised visitation monitor either at an existing visitation program or with a licensed professional who has at least one year of experience in supervising visitations. You can find the directive here:

[http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Supreme Court Standards for SV from 1998.pdf](http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Supreme_Court_Standards_for_SV_from_1998.pdf)

I would like to use college students as monitors. Are all college students considered interns at supervised visitation programs?

No. "Intern" is a term that indicates a very direct and ongoing experience for a college student that is supervised by a college instructor or administrator. The day to day work of the intern is supervised onsite by your staff, but there must also be official enrollment in an internship at a university and a very clear set of educational goals that have been approved by the university/college. If students volunteer at your program to monitor visits, they are considered volunteers, and must have all the requirements of other monitors.

Am I required to have a letter signed by DCF in order to accept sexual abuse cases?

Yes. Before you accept such a case, be sure your staff is trained on sexual abuse issues, and be sure to have a letter of agreement with DCF. Here's a sample.



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott
Governor

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.

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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)

From last month's June E Press...

Are there any in-person trainings planned by the Clearinghouse for 2016?

In the past, we have traveled to hold in person trainings in different parts of the state and are willing to do so again if there is enough interest. Most people tell us they prefer the phone conferences, because they are easier to attend. The issue for programs has been getting funding for such travel: directors have told us that they do not get mileage reimbursement or hotel stipends for such trainings. In addition, smaller programs have difficulty remaining open while staff attend trainings. However, since you've expressed an interest in holding a training, we will send out a survey to determine if directors and staff would attend. Here is the link. If there is enough interest from SV staff, we may plan an in-person training.

https://fsu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_6XWOQs2HKA0yHT7

Giving Incentives that Work

By Jessica Webber

Introduction

One of many challenges faced by parents is the encouragement of positive behavior, and the discouragement of negative behavior. Doing so can be an arduous process, and patience often wears thin over time due to the inherent frustration. However, there is a solution that can make children confident and happy, and keep parents from experiencing excess stress. By introducing positive reinforcement, parents can increase the likelihood that the behaviors they would like to reinforce – such as completing homework without being asked– will be repeated. Pairing this approach with incentives that are effective and that are tangible ways for children to understand the positive effects of good behavior and allow parents to communicate expectations effectively.

Objectives

This document includes the following information for parents about positive reinforcement and successfully incentivizing children:

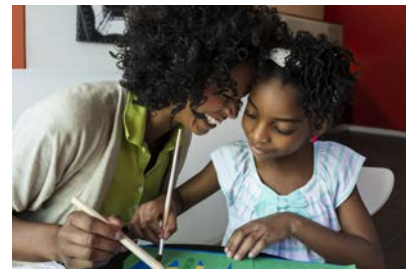
- Selecting an incentive that will motivate children.
- Tips and tricks for utilizing positive reinforcement effectively.
- Avoiding bribery in incentivizing and rewarding children.

What Incentives Work?

The selection of incentives is a key part of making this approach work. Parents should actively praise children for their good behavior and accomplishments, but this should not be their only incentive. Choose an incentive that will clearly feel like a reward to the child – an ice cream cone, an hour of computer games, or a new toy now and then is much more likely to be understood as an actual incentive rather than the occasional pat on the back.

Parents may also tie rewards to a system which allows children to earn them and helps them to see how they are progressing in learning positive behaviors.

Consider a sticker sheet, jar of marbles or other tracking system for good behavior and establish a reward for when a specific amount is obtained (i.e. “When the marble jar is full, we will go get ice cream together”).



Tips for Positive Reinforcement

Parents can use positive reinforcement to their advantage by utilizing the following tips:

- **Use praise, but be specific.** When parents see a child engaging in a behavior that they would like to reinforce, the parent should praise the child for that specific behavior. While saying “good job” now and again can certainly bolster the self-confidence of the child, specifically praising a child for their achievement (i.e. “You did such a wonderful job on your last spelling test, I can tell that you studied very hard.”) helps the child understand that the behavior in question generates positive attention from their parents.



- **Consider ignoring negative behavior.** Giving a child attention for negative behavior, even though it may be to punish them, can often reinforce the behavior because it gains the attention of the parent. While many negative behaviors (such as hitting) may need to be addressed right away, it may be beneficial for parents to consider ignoring other less desirable behaviors. A child becoming restless and upset in an office prior to an appointment can likely be ignored. Parents should consider instead waiting until the child calms down before praising them for the behavior they *should* be exhibiting (i.e. “Thank you for reading your magazine so quietly”).

- **Always be sincere.** It is easy for parents to begin searching for any little reason to encourage their children. Parents instinctively want to bolster their self-esteem and help promote positive behavior. However, it is important to remember that praise should come only when an activity, task or accomplishment is completed to create the expectation that praise comes from hard work and positive behavior.

- **Avoid using bribery.** There is a significant difference between positive reinforcement and bribery. Parents should avoid promising rewards for good behavior that are not attached to a particular plan (such as the aforementioned sticker sheet or marble jar). This approach can be confusing for children and allow them to believe that they should behave well *only* when they are incentivized.

- **Utilize praise before the task is completed.** Praising children before they complete a task can also be an efficient way to reinforce positive behavior. Parents may gently encourage children to behave in the way that they would like by thanking them for doing something before it has been done (i.e. “Thank you for putting your dish in the sink before you leave for school”).

Phrases for Praise

- “Thank you so much for ...”
- “I love the way ...”
- “It makes me so happy when you ...”
- “It was so nice of you to ...”
- “You did a wonderful job with ...”

Case Scenario

Luke's parents have been trying to get him to eat more vegetables for quite some time now. Every night at dinner, he will avoid eating the spinach or broccoli presented to him. Instead of demanding that Luke try the vegetables on his plate (and thereby running the



risk of setting off a tantrum), his parents choose to ignore the behavior, but continue to present the vegetables so that Luke has the opportunity to take a bite.

Finally, one evening Luke hesitantly pops a broccoli spear into his mouth. He only eats two or three, but it is an improvement. As his father clears away the plates, he pats Luke on the back and says, "thank you for trying some of

the broccoli tonight. It makes me happy to see you trying new things!" This encourages Luke to be a little more adventurous with his eating habits, and a little less mistrustful of leafy greens.

Conclusion

Positive reinforcement is a powerful tool in parenting which focuses on what children do well rather than addressing (and thereby reinforcing) behaviors which are less than ideal. Using these examples and resources, parents will be able to not only increase the frequency of positive behaviors but also encourage their children to become higher achievers and boost their confidence.

References

McDaniel, T. R. (1987). Practicing Positive Reinforcement: Ten Behavior Management Techniques. *The Clearing House*, 60(9), 389-392.

Natrajan, R., & Myers-Walls, J. A. (2004, April). *Positive Reinforcement and Rewards* [PDF]. Purdue University.

Walsh, B. (2015, June 03). Making Incentives Work. Retrieved from <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/15/06/making-incentives-work>

Compassion Fatigue

By Brittney Clemons

Introduction

Child protection workers are in a profession that may bring additional stress into their lives, often called “compassion fatigue”. Compassion fatigue occurs when an individual working with children and families is exposed to the trauma that his or her clients have experienced. The path to wellness begins with awareness. This training provides child protection staff with some information on compassion fatigue and ways to prevent and cope with it. Healthy coping skills for handling the stress that you may encounter in the workplace includes expressing your needs verbally, exercising, developing healthy eating habits, engaging in enjoyable social activities, and having alone time. Self-care should be maintained in order to prevent compassion fatigue and live a healthy and happier lifestyle.



Objectives:

Upon completion of this module, a monitor will be able to:

- Define compassion fatigue.
- Recognize symptoms of compassion fatigue.
- Learn ways to prevent and cope with compassion fatigue.

What is Compassion Fatigue?

Compassion fatigue, also known as secondary traumatic stress (STS), is a condition characterized by a gradual lessening of compassion over time. Compassion fatigue can result from an accumulation of stress after being exposed to the traumatic experiences of another. Compassion fatigue is commonly seen in occupational setting such as medical professions, child protection workers, and other caregivers. Individuals who work with children and families encounter many difficult and traumatic stories which increase their risk of experiencing compassion fatigue.

Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue may cause a range of responses in workers. Compassion fatigue symptoms are normal displays of stress resulting from the caregiving work one performs

on a regular basis. Listed below are examples of ways compassion fatigue may manifest in workers.



- Abusing drugs, alcohol or food
- Diminished sense of personal accomplishment
- Exhaustion (physical or emotional)
- Frequent headaches
- High self-expectations
- Low self-esteem
- Hypertension
- Inability to maintain balance of empathy and objectivity
- Increased irritability
- Sleep disturbances
- Excessive blaming
- Bottled up emotions

- Isolation from others
- Compulsive behaviors such as overspending, overeating, gambling, and sexual addictions
- Poor self-care (i.e., hygiene, appearance)
- Reoccurrence of nightmares and flashbacks of traumatic events
- Chronic physical ailments such as gastrointestinal problems and recurrent colds
- Apathy, sad, no longer finds activities pleasurable
- Difficulty concentrating
- Preoccupied
- Working too much



Preventing Compassion Fatigue

With visitation monitors and social workers at a higher risk for compassion fatigue, it is important that workers and the agency administrators take steps to prevent compassion fatigue. This can be done through a variety of ways.

What Administrators Can Do:

- Educate employees on the causes, signs, preventive strategies, and coping strategies of compassion fatigue;
- Avoid assigning workers overwhelming caseloads;
- Be accessible to your workers and provide consistent supervision and help;
- Allow workers more flexibility in their schedules.



What Staff Can Do:

- Express job difficulties with your supervisor;
- Avoid materials that may be traumatic outside of work;
- Build healthy relationships outside of work;
- Do activities that help you feel at peace;
- Beware of your emotions;
- Spend plenty of quiet time alone;
- Recharge your batteries daily;
- Eat healthy;
- Exercise;
- Spend time with close family and friends;
- Do things that you enjoy;
- Take care of yourself!

Coping with Compassion Fatigue



Awareness of the symptoms of compassion fatigue and their negative effect on your life can lead to positive change. Once you realize that you suffer from compassion fatigue it is important that you address and express your emotions and other ways you may have been affected by compassion fatigue. Understanding the causes of your negative behaviors, creating personal and professional boundaries, and maintaining authentic self-care will help cope with compassion fatigue.

Ways you can engage in authentic self-care includes:

- Be kind to yourself;
- Be proactive;
- Be organized;
- Accept where you are in life;
- Understand that those close to you may disappoint you;
- Disclose with close others;
- Clarify your personal boundaries;
- Express your needs verbally;
- Take positive action to change your environment;
- Engage in health-building activities such as exercise, massage, yoga, and meditation;
- Eat healthy foods;
- Drink plenty of water;
- Use natural healing products to care for and heal your body;
- Understand that it is okay to say no sometimes;
- Develop a healthy support system;
- Take positive action to change your environment;
- Live a balanced life.

Do's and Don'ts of Recovery

Do's

- Find someone to talk to.
- Understand that the pain you feel is normal.
- Start exercising and eating properly.
- Get enough sleep.
- Take some time off.
- Identify what's important to you.

Don'ts

- Blame others.
- Become impulsive and reckless.
- Fall into the habit of complaining with your colleagues.
- Work harder and longer.
- Self-medicate.
- Neglect your own needs and interests.

Compassion Fatigue Self-Test

Being aware is the first step to recovery. Here's a self-test that you can take to assess whether or not you may have compassion fatigue.

Compassion Fatigue Self-Test: An Assessment

Answer the questions below to the best of your knowledge. There is no right or wrong answer.

Assign one of these numbers to each one of the questions below:

Responses: 1 = Very True 2 = Somewhat True 3 = Rarely True

You will find summation directions at the end of the test.

- 1. When people get upset, I try to smooth things out.
- 2. I am able to listen to other's problems without trying to "fix" them and/or take away their pain.
- 3. My self-worth is determined by how others perceive me.
- 4. When I am exposed to conflict, I feel it is my fault.
- 5. I feel guilty when others are disappointed by my actions.

6. When I make a mistake, I tend to be extremely critical of myself. I have difficulty forgiving myself.
7. I usually know how I want other people to treat me.
8. I tell people how I prefer to be treated.
9. My achievements define my self-worth.
10. I feel anxious in most situations involving confrontation.
11. In relationships, it is easier for me to "give" than to "receive".
12. I can be so focused on someone I am helping that I lose sight of my own perceptions, interests and desires.
13. It is hard for me to express sadness.
14. To make mistakes means that I am weak.
15. It is best to not "rock the boat" or "make waves."
16. It is important to put people at ease.
17. It is best not to need others.
18. If I cannot solve a problem, I feel like a failure.
19. I often feel "used up" at the end of the day.
20. I take work home frequently.
21. I can ask for help but only if the situation is serious.
22. I am willing to sacrifice my needs in order to please others.
23. When faced with uncertainty, I feel that things will get totally out of control.
24. I am uncomfortable when others do not see me as being strong and self-sufficient.
25. In intimate relationships, I am drawn to people who are needy or need me.
26. I have difficulty expressing my differing opinion in the face of an opposing viewpoint.
27. When I say "no," I feel guilty.
28. When others distance from me, I feel anxious.
29. When listening to someone's problems, I am more aware of their feelings than I am of my own feelings.
30. I find it difficult to stand up for myself and express my feelings when someone treats me in an insensitive manner.
31. I feel anxious when I am not busy.
32. I believe that expressing resentments is wrong.

- 33. I am more comfortable giving than receiving.
- 34. I become anxious when I think I've disappointed someone.
- 35. Work dominates much of my life.
- 36. I seem to be working harder and accomplishing less.
- 37. I feel most worthwhile and alive in crisis situations.
- 38. I have difficulty saying "no" and setting limits.
- 39. My interests and values reflect what others expect of me rather than my own interests and values.
- 40. People rely on me for support.

It is important for you to periodically review your self-care, along with your needs and action plans to meet those needs.

If you find that you responded with a 1 (Very True) to more than 15 of these items, it's definitely time to take a close and careful look at self-care issues.

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Conclusion

Individuals that work with children and families are at risk for experiencing compassion fatigue. It is important that visitation monitors understand the causes and symptoms of compassion fatigue and know how to prevent and cope with its effects. Healing the symptoms of compassion fatigue begins with identification, establishing personal and professional boundaries, and self-care. As you continue to do the necessary internal work, your life will begin to change for the better.

References

1. <http://www.compassionfatigue.org/pages/compassionfatigue.html>
2. <http://www.aafp.org/fpm/2000/0400/p39.html>
3. <http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/september-2013-epress/>

Promising Practices: Trauma-Informed Approaches to Working with Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence and Other Trauma, and How This May be Applied to Supervised Visitation

Written by Lisa S. Panisch

Individual supervised visitation monitors can enhance the quality of their work by adopting the following trauma-informed principles and practices:

- Learning about the effects of vicarious trauma, and how to recognize it within themselves and others.
- Maintaining consistent habits of self-care in order to minimize the impact of vicarious trauma.
- Making a commitment to seek appropriate help if the effects of vicarious trauma begin to interfere with a monitor's work and/or personal life.
- If a family member is willing to share, monitors can deeply listen to their stories and experiences, as well as to what those family members feel has been helpful and/or supportive to them.
- Refining their approach to working with families so that it is as individualized, adaptable, and trauma-informed as is possible.
- Becoming informed about and practicing culturally relevant responses to trauma as well as to the related issues that these families may be facing.
- Educating themselves about collective and historical trauma.
- Acknowledging that the effects of historical and collective trauma amongst different cultures may impact the relationship between the family and the monitor.
- Recognizing the importance of building trust with families.
- Actively working to build trust by:
 - Avoiding power-based hierarchical dynamics that may re-traumatize family members.
 - When possible, avoiding overly rigid rules, while still maintaining consistency.
 - Being clear with families about the role of the monitor, the limitations of this role, and outlining specific expectations about what the monitor and their agency is and is not able to offer.
 - Providing as much information to families about all of their available options, as well as the risks and benefits of each, and letting families know that additional information may also exist.
 - Prioritizing the confidentiality of all members of the family.
 - Understanding the effects of trauma and how it impacts family dynamics. Understanding that perplexing and even self-destructive behaviors of some family members may be the result of survival reflexes. Using this understanding to work with family members in a non-judgmental way in order to help them learn behaviors and skills that will be more beneficial in meeting their needs.

Agencies offering supervised visitation can enhance the quality of their services by adopting the following trauma-informed principles and practices:

- Commitment across the agency to create a more trauma-informed organization. Recognizing that this is an ongoing and reflective process that involves a deeper understanding about the effects of trauma, as opposed to a checklist of services and changes to be implemented.
- Making a commitment to staff well-being.
 - Providing health and wellness incentives such as gym membership discounts, in-house fitness facilities or classes, etc.
 - Ensuring that monitors are provided with scheduling flexibility to meet personal and family needs.
 - Deeply listening to the experiences, feedback, and suggestions shared by monitors.
- Learning about the effects of vicarious trauma, and how to recognize it within their monitors.
 - Providing specific training for supervisors on how to educate workers about vicarious trauma and how to manage its impact.
 - Partnering with monitors to support their personal commitment to recognize and address their own vicarious trauma.
 - Creating a safe emotional environment for monitors and families receiving services.
- Utilizing a universal-design approach, so that services can be offered to meet the largest amount of people experiencing a variety of situations.
- Providing on-going training for staff in areas such as:
 - Trauma-informed principles, policies, stages of healing from trauma, historical and collective trauma, and vicarious trauma.
 - Cultural competency and relevant approaches.
 - Evidence-based interventions and approaches for working with families who have experienced trauma.
- Providing and participating in opportunities where other agencies in the field can share their innovative work, services, and/or approaches.
- Becoming involved in policy, advocacy, and community engagement activities that will address integrating a trauma-informed social justice approach for dealing with issues related to trauma and supervised visitation.

**Below is Part 1 of the Enhancing Professionalism:
Ethics in Action. To view all of our manual chapters,
go to our website at**

<http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/clearinghouse/newtrainingmanual2015/>

Introduction

Supervised visitation monitors will be faced with ethical dilemmas and professional decision-making while working with children and families. In order to provide the best service, it is important for monitors to think critically about some of the major issues that may be faced in this field. Issues such as blending boundaries and diversity awareness may play a role in the client-professional relationship. Monitors should become aware of their own values as well as the standards set forth by the employing agency in order to process through troubling situations. This chapter will provide examples of different ethical dilemmas to help monitors think about appropriate ways to respond.

What will I learn in this chapter?

Upon completion of this chapter, participants will be able to:

- Recognize ethical practice principles for supervised visitation
- Understand the difference between professional and personal standards
- Recognize ethical dilemmas and conflicts
- Learn how to make an ethical decision
- Understand common ethical issues that may arise
- Utilize the steps for ethical decision-making in examples
- Be aware of resources to refer to for ethical guidance

What are Ethics?

Ethics are the standards we uphold about what constitutes correct conduct for a specific group or party.

Ethical Practice Principles

As a monitor, it is important to understand the ethical values that shape all practices, skills, and interactions with clients in supervised visitation. There are five ethical principles that monitors should use to guide their everyday work. These principles promote client welfare as well as a strong relationship with the families served. Often ethical values are embedded within professional codes of ethics; The Clearinghouse on Supervised

Visitation has defined these five principles to motivate supervised visitation staff in ethical behavior and to assist with solving ethical dilemmas.

- **Safety** – Monitors’ primary goal is safety; to protect and serve families and children. In supervised visitation, safety must be placed above all other considerations, including self-interest. Monitors can draw on their knowledge, skills, and policies to promote safety in all family interactions. Monitors are encouraged to understand all aspects of safety at their center and in each individual case.
- **Competence** – Monitors must develop and enhance their professional expertise to work within the appropriate competency expectations for supervised visitation. Monitors should continually strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills and to apply them in their everyday work.
- **Integrity** – Monitors should behave in a trustworthy manner. Monitors must act honestly and responsibly, in addition to promoting ethical practices on the part of the visitation center. Monitors are continually aware of the mission, values, and ethical principles and standards in addition to working in a manner that is consistent with them.
- **Respect** – Monitors should respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person. Through service, monitors must recognize the value of all human beings involved in visitation.
- **Community** – Monitors must be aware that other stakeholders may hold interests that are important and can impact the supervised visitation process such as the court, the child welfare system, the legal system, as well as the agency’s policies, standards, and laws.

Ethical dilemmas arise when ethical principles come into conflict. In many ethical decision-making situations, one or more principle is compromised for a “best” course of action.

In addition to the above ethical principles, Florida law provides some parameters regarding how supervised visitation services should be provided. The Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation also provides a code of conduct for exchange monitors which will serve as a guide to comply with when addressing ethical considerations in practice.



Code of Conduct

The monitor must:

1. Diligently use best practices in the monitoring of all families;
2. Resist influences and pressures that interfere with impartial monitoring;
3. Report honestly and impartially in the Exchange Reports what occurs during exchanges;
4. Respect the privacy of the child and the family and hold confidential all information obtained in the course of service as a staff member or volunteer, as required by law and Program standards;
5. Decline to monitor cases in which he or she may have a conflict of interest;
6. Attend pre-service training, and in-service trainings when the monitor has been with the Program long enough for that to be required;
7. Not practice, condone, facilitate, or participate in any form of discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, mental or physical handicap, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition, or status; and
8. Comply with all Program policies

Why do we need Ethics?

- **Reason #1: To serve as a framework for decision making when faced with dilemmas**
- **Reason #2: To define what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviors for visit monitors**
- **Reason #3: To promote high practice standards for the profession**

TRY THIS!

- ❖ Is it possible to monitor visits and remain neutral with respect to their clients' values?
- ❖ What ways do monitors' values affect the visitation process?
- ❖ Discuss life experiences you have had that you think will enable you to effectively work with others.
- ❖ Discuss limitations in your life experiences that might hinder your understanding of certain clients.

Determining Ethics

The conversation surrounding ethics requires making a distinction between ethics, values, and law and policies.

Ethics are propositional statements and standards that are used by members of a group to determine the right course of action in any given situation. Ethics rely on rational and logical criteria to aid in making a decision by outlining the priorities of the group or organization.

Values describe ideas that we prize. Values are held close and can determine the worth of the individual holding that value. There is often an emotional component associated with values. Values develop from personal experience and background.

Law and agency policies dictate a particular course of action. There may be legal obligations that require monitors to act in a way that is in conflict with an ethical standard or personal values.

Personal Values and Biases

Everyone has a unique background and experience that help shape the way they see the world. Monitors all have unique perspectives and in conjunction with previous experiences and history, monitors develop personal values. Personal values are largely associated with individual decision behavior, and while this is appropriate in one's own life, personal values and biases should not play a role in professional decision-making in supervised visitation.

- Working in an ethical manner can be difficult when personal values, biases, and professional ethics become hard to distinguish.
- To make appropriate decisions in compliance with professional ethics, monitors should work to understand their own personal values and morals. Monitors must work to understand their own background and experience and more specifically, how that background and experience affects the way they see the world.
- When monitors can identify their own personal values, it becomes easier to see how and when one's values overlap or conflict with professional ethical standards.

While personal values play a major role in an individual's life, the distinction must be made between personal values and professional ethics (should it be distinguished...i.e. personal values and professional ethics?). Personal values involve feelings and do not provide the objectivity that is necessary for decision-making in practice. By entering the supervised visitation realm, monitors have agreed to comply with the standards that are set forth for the profession. It is important for monitors to recognize and manage personal values but only in a manner that allows professional ethics to guide everyday practice. Conflicts involving personal values, although difficult and uncomfortable, should not be considered ethical dilemmas.

