



Children's
Safe Harbor

**Children's Safe Harbor
Supervised Visitation Services
Parent Handbook**

Welcome to Children's Safe Harbor. The following policies and procedures are intended to inform you of the expectations, as well as, your rights when utilizing our program. The policies are also intended to increase your safety and well-being.

Fees

There are no fees to utilize Children's Safe Harbor services.

Location

1340 S. Alpine Rd.

Rockford, IL 61108

Contact Information

Phone: (815) 316-7772

Email: info@childrenssafeharbor.net

Hours of Operation

Children's Safe Harbor is open for administrative purposes and intakes during business hours or as otherwise scheduled by the staff.

Supervised Visits

Tuesdays: 2pm-8pm

Wednesdays: 2pm-8pm

Thursdays: 2pm-8pm

Fridays: 2pm-8pm

Saturdays: 10am-7pm

Sundays: 11am-8pm

Holiday Hours

Holiday hours of operation are determined on a year to year basis. You will be informed in writing once the schedule has been determined.

Children's Safe Harbor is accessible for persons with disabilities and for persons using public transportation.

Access to Services

Access to Children's Safe Harbor services can be gained by:

- Court Order
- Agency Referral

Intake for Parents

Children's Safe Harbor staff will conduct an intake with each parent (separately) so that both parents and children are familiar and comfortable with program expectations prior to the first supervised visit. Supervised visitation services will not begin until both parents have completed their intakes.

Case Selection

Children's Safe Harbor will determine whether or not a family is eligible for services. You will be notified in either instance.

Scheduling

Supervised visits are scheduled for one (1) hour weekly or bi-weekly. Exact arrival times will be determined by Children's Safe Harbor staff. A regular time slot for supervised visitation cannot be guaranteed but will be attempted. You may be added to the waiting list for desired time slots (if otherwise occupied). Available slots will be offered in the meantime.

Arrival

Staggered arrival and departure times will be required for all adults involved in supervised visitation services.

Your arrival and departure times, entrances and parking areas will be determined by staff. It is very important that you arrive and depart at the times given and that you use the entrance and parking area assigned to you. Failure to comply could result in a suspension, or termination of services. You will be informed by phone

of this information prior to the start of service, and in writing on the first day of service.

Children's Safe Harbor will encourage a child to visit with a parent but at no time will a visit be forced upon a child who is expressing unwillingness to do so. After continued refusal for visitation, the case will be closed and sent back to the court.

Documentation

Children's Safe Harbor will maintain confidential files for each family member that includes all intake paperwork, written and signed agreements, such as, policies and program rules, photographs of children and parents, releases of information, record of client contact forms, and court reports.

All contact with each family member may be documented. This includes any phone calls, action taken with a parent or child, and any contact or request of contact with the court.

Each Record of Client Contact form and/or visit includes at a minimum:

- Name of custodial/visiting parent.
- Name of staff member providing service.
- Date and time of the visit.
- Information regarding intervention or redirection.
- Comments or requests made by children.

We want the visitation process to be a pleasant experience for everyone. We ask that you not engage in the following types of behavior:

- Repeated late arrivals.
- Repeated no shows.
- Non-compliance with staggered arrival and/or departure times.
- Negative talk about the other parent.
- Using children to send messages to the other parent.
- Making promises about future living arrangements or visitation changes.
- Questioning the child about the other parent's activities.
- Parent who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Violence or threats of violence or incidents of abuse whether verbal or physical.
- Violations of protection and visitation orders.
- Account of any failure to comply with Children's Safe Harbor policies, procedures, and rules.

Staff will not document:

- Hearsay statements such as: She said, he said that are not related to safety.
- Opinions on what was witnessed.
- Speculations on what may occur outside of the center based on behavior which does occur at the center.

Expectations for Supervised Visitation

Food

Food brought by either parent that is to be eaten during the supervised visit must be approved by Children's Safe Harbor. If, as a visiting parent, you choose to have a meal with your child during the visit, you will be expected to clean up by the end of the visit.

Gifts

Gift exchanges will be allowed at the discretion of Children's Safe Harbor staff. If approved:

- Gifts should be easily transportable by the custodial parent/staff.
- Gifts should be brought to Children's Safe Harbor unwrapped, one week in advance of the scheduled visit.
- Gifts that are not pre-approved will not be allowed.
- Gifts that are intended for either parent will not be allowed.

Cell Phones

Cell phone use is not allowed during the supervised visit.

Photographs

Photographs will be allowed at the discretion of Children's Safe Harbor staff. If it is decided that pictures are allowed:

- Children's Safe Harbor staff will take a picture on a camera provided by the parent.
- Cell phone cameras may be considered an acceptable means of taking a photograph provided the cell phone is not used for other purposes during the visit.
- No other electronic recording devices (such as video cameras or the video function on a cell phone) will be allowed during a supervised visit.

Guests

Generally speaking, guests are not allowed to participate in the supervised visitation process. Expectations may be made at the discretion of the Children's Safe Harbor staff. If approved, guests will:

- Agree to be photographed.
- Provide picture identification.
- Complete an orientation prior to taking part in a visit.
- Abide by all Children's Safe Harbor guidelines and policies.

Discipline

Physical discipline or corporal punishment of any kind is not allowed at the supervised visitation site.

If your child becomes disruptive during a visit and you as the visiting parents are having difficulty redirecting, suggestions can be given by the Visitation Supervisor. Suggestions include:

- Verbal redirection
- Starting a new activity
- Asking you, the visiting parent, to step aside to discuss the behavior in question.

If these interventions do not assist, then the visit may be ended.

Medication, Diet, and Allergies

Parents should provide Children's Safe Harbor staff with any information regarding a child's medical concerns, medication, allergies, disability, dietary or special needs. There is an expectation that children coming to Children's Safe Harbor for supervised visitation will be healthy and not exhibiting signs of a contagious illness. Examples of contagious illness include, but are not limited to: fever and/or gastronomic illnesses. Children's Safe Harbor reserves the right to cancel or terminate a visit based on the signs of a child's illness.

- Medications will not be given to children during visitation, with the exception of emergency medications such as inhalers or epi pens. Please discuss this with staff before your first visit.

Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse

Children's Safe Harbor reserves the right to suspend or terminate visitation services when there is an allegation or pending investigation of sexual abuse against a minor child by the non-custodial parent and a determination has been made that services cannot be provided in a safe manner. Suspension or termination of supervised visitation services can be determined by:

- The Illinois Department of Child & Family Services
- Court of Law
- Children's Safe Harbor Staff
- Custodial Parent

Program Guidelines

*For the purpose of the next three sections, a "continued pattern" is generally considered three (3) or more times. A continued pattern of behaviors by a parent may result in a suspension or termination of services, removal from the active supervised visitation schedule, notification to the court and will be documented in the parent's file.

Late Arrivals

If the visiting parent is more than 15 minutes late than the designated arrival time and they have not called to receive approval from staff, the visit will be canceled. Children's Safe Harbor may make an attempt to reach the parent to determine the status of the service for that day.

Children's Safe Harbor will only modify supervised visitation time frames if the center is able to accommodate and both are in agreement. This program rule is to be applied regardless if the parent is custodial/non-custodial.

Canceled Visits

As a courtesy of both parents and children, Children's Safe Harbor requests a 24-hour notice if a parent needs to cancel a visit. This applies to both custodial and non-custodial parents.

Termination of Services

Families are allowed to utilize the services of Children's Safe Harbor as long as necessary. Children's Safe Harbor will terminate or end services for a family if any or all circumstances occur:

- Safety or other issues involved in the case cannot be effectively addressed by Children's Safe Harbor.
- The child has a continued pattern of refusing to see/visit/speak with the visiting parent.
- The court no longer requires supervised visitation for the family.
- The parties have terminated services themselves.

When a case is terminated by Children's Safe Harbor, we will make an attempt to inform you of the status of services either in-person or over the phone. You will also be provided a status of services in writing, sent to the address on file. The Court will be notified when necessary. Services may be reinstated pending a new court order, agency referral, or parent agreement.

Security

Children's Safe Harbor has security arrangements that seek to increase safety for all participants in the program. Although Children's Safe Harbor takes reasonable precautions and provides security measures, the program cannot guarantee the safety of all clients. The adults involved remain responsible for their own actions.

No one may bring guns, knives, or other weapons onto Children's Safe Harbor property, even if their profession makes it legal to carry a weapon. If weapons are suspected, Children's Safe Harbor will contact law enforcement.

On-site security arrangements:

- Metal detector.
- Panic buttons that contact law enforcement.
- Layout of premises that allows for physical and visual separation between the custodial and non-custodial parents.
- Staggered parental arrival times.
- Separate parking lots and entrances.
- Locked doors with video monitors that allow staff to identify clients and provide entry.

Other Security Guidelines

- Waiting in the parking areas or loitering near the visitation center entrance doors or windows is not allowed at any time.
- Parents must leave the premises of the supervised visitation program at their designated time.
- Children’s Safe Harbor staff will contact law enforcement immediately if a non-custodial parent attempts to remove a child from the building at any time.
- Children’s Safe Harbor staff has the authority to terminate any supervised visit based on any number of factors, including, but not limited to: extreme discomfort of a child, fear for the safety of children, parents or staff, continued denigration of another parent and/or evidence or belief that a parent is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Center Closing Due to Inclement Weather

Whenever school is canceled due to weather, Children’s Safe Harbor will also be closed and that visitation time will be canceled. If there is inclement weather on the weekends or when school is not in session, or if the situation is unclear, please call Children’s Safe Harbor. If the center is closed, there will be a voicemail recording stating such.

Medical Emergencies

If a medical emergency occurs during a supervised visit, Children’s Safe Harbor will contact 911 and initiate first aid. Upon arrival of medical personnel, staff members will document all actions taken.

Mandated Reporting

All staff of Safe Havens are mandated by law to make an immediate report to the State of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) if they have “reasonable cause to believe a child known to them in their professional or official capacity may be an abused child or a neglected child” (Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (325IL CS 5/4) – Section 4).

All staff are mandated by law through the Illinois Elder Abuse and Neglect Act (320IL ILCS) to make an immediate report to the Illinois Department on Aging and/or elder abuse hotline in situations where they have reason to believe that an elderly person, 60 years or older, has or may suffer abuse and/or neglect and is unable to make the report themselves.

Client Privacy

Children's Safe Harbor staff will not discuss cases outside the center.

Individuals who are not employed by Children's Safe Harbor are not allowed to observe a supervised visit. These individuals include, but are not limited to:

- Guardian's ad Litem
- Parenting Evaluators
- CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates)
- Legal Counsel

Any request for a release of information will be for a specific agency/purpose, voluntary, signed and for a time-sensitive, limited duration.

Any subpoena received by Children's Safe Harbor will be sent to Children's Safe Harbor's lead legal counsel for review.

Interpreter Services

In an effort to best assess and meet the needs of all potential clients. Children's Safe Harbor will make every effort to provide a bi-lingual staff person, interpreter or use of the language line for intake, orientation, and supervised visitation services.

Visiting parents may not bring a family member or friend as an interpreter for the supervised visitation process.

Review of Records

All parents have the right to review their personal or individual files in the presence of a staff member. Upon request by a parent, an appointment will be made within 14 days. Generally, children are not allowed to be present during the file review process.

Parent Grievance Procedure

If a parent feels they were treated unfairly by staff, they have a right to file a grievance. This must be in the form of a written letter sent to the Director of Children's Safe Harbor. The Director will respond within 10 days in-person, by telephone and/or writing. If the parent is not satisfied with the decision of the Director, the grievance will be submitted to the Children's Safe Harbor Board of Directors for review. The Board of Directors will respond in-writing within 30 days. The decision of the Board of Directors is final.

Amendments to Policies and Procedures

Children’s Safe Harbor reserves the right to amend any policies with notice to participants.

Additional Information Resources

<https://childrenssafeharbor.net/>, <http://illinois17th.com/>, www.wincoil.us

“This project was supported by Grant No. 2017-FJ-AX-0002 awarded by the Office on Violence against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence against Women.”

Updated 02/02/2025