



**Children's Safe Harbor  
Visitation Exchange 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](mailto: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 director.

**Visitation Exchanges**

Wednesdays: 4pm-8pm

Thursdays: 4pm-8pm

Fridays: 4-8pm

Saturdays: 11-7pm

Sundays: 12pm-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
- Self-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. Visitation Exchange 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 writing in either instance.

### **Scheduling**

Exact pick-up and drop-off arrival times will be determined by Children's Safe Harbor. We will make every effort to schedule exchanges according to the court order. When this is not possible or there is no court order, Children's Safe Harbor will attempt to make reasonable accommodations for both parents. Once you have been added to the active exchange schedule, your arrival times will remain the same unless otherwise modified by the court or by request and agreement of the parties involved.

### **Arrival**

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

## **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 residential/non-residential parent.
- Name of staff member providing service.
- Date and time of the visit.
- Information regarding intervention or redirection.

We want the exchange 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 Visitation Exchange Services**

- Cell phone use should be handled in a respectful manner while using visitation exchange services. Please do not accept or receive calls, listen to or watch inappropriate materials or be disrespectful of others with your cell phone use. Children's Safe Harbor reserves the right to revoke cell phone privileges at any time.
- To respect everyone's privacy, no electronic recording devices, whether audio or visual, or photographs are allowed during a visitation exchange.
- Parents without a valid driver's license, who have not taken public transportation or walked to the agency, are required to appear for exchanges with a licensed driver. The driver must:
  - Agree to be photographed.
  - Provide picture identification.
  - Abide by all Children's Safe Harbor guidelines and policies.
  - Children's Safe Harbor reserves the right to revoke someone's status as a licensed driver at any time.
- Third parties are not allowed to appear on someone's behalf for the visitation exchange process unless approved by both parents and/or part of a court order. If approved, third parties will:
  - Agree to be photographed.
  - Provide picture identification.
  - Abide by all Children's Safe Harbor guidelines and policies.
  - Children's Safe Harbor reserves the right to revoke someone's status as an approved third party at any time.

## **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-residential 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 visitation exchange schedule, notification to the court and will be documented in the parent’s file.

### **Late Arrivals**

At the start of exchanges, if the non-residential parent is more than 15 minutes late of the designated arrival time and they have not called to receive approval from staff the visitation exchange will be canceled. Children’s Safe Harbor may make an attempt by phone to determine the status of service for that day.

If the residential parent is more than 15 minutes late of the designated arrival time, Children’s Safe Harbor may make an attempt by phone to determine the status of service for that day.

### **Canceled Exchanges**

As a courtesy of both parents and children, Children’s Safe Harbor requests a 24-hour notice if a parent needs to cancel an exchange. This applies to both residential and non-residential 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/speak/visit with the non-custodial parent.
- The court no longer requires visitation exchanges 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. 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 residential and non-residential 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 visitation exchange program at their designated time.
- Children's Safe Harbor staff has the authority to terminate any exchange 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 exchange 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 the exchange process, 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 at Children's Safe Harbor 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 visitation exchange. 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 visitation exchange services.

## **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](http://www.wincoil.us)

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