



CIRCUIT COURT OF JACKSON COUNTY, MISSOURI
FAMILY COURT DIVISION
625 EAST 26TH STREET
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI 64108-2719

POLICY & PROCEDURE

Issued by: Director of Office of the Guardian ad Litem – Family Court

Topic: **Policy No. 1030-24 -- OGAL-Recommendation for Visitation Between Children, Parents and Siblings**

Effective Date: July 7, 2015

New:

Revised:

Rescinds:

Reviewed: June 1, 2018

POLICY:

The Office of the Guardian ad Litem (OGAL) will make recommendations regarding visitation between parents and their children and children and their siblings.

Regular frequent visitation increases the likelihood of successful reunification, reduces time in out of home placements, promotes healthy attachments and reduces the number of negative effects of separation.

When making recommendations regarding visitation, the attorney Guardian ad Litem (GAL) and non- attorney staff shall consider the following:

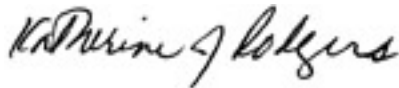
1. Unless there is substantial evidence that a child' life, health or safety is at risk, including any evidence of physical or psychological abuse, visitation should occur.
 - a. Visitation should not be suspended or increased as a form of punishment or reward. It should not be linked to engagement (or lack thereof) in services or drug test results unless there is a direct link to the safety and well-being of the child.
 - b. Increases or reductions in visitation should be directly linked to the reduced or increased danger to the child.
2. Limiting the visitation to weekly visits stretch the bounds of a children's sense of time and doesn't truly allow for psychologically meaningful relationships.
 - a. Ideally, infants should see parents daily.
 - b. Toddlers should see parents every two (2) to three (3) days.

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- c. The first visit after removal from the home should be as soon as possible, no later than 48 hours.
3. As much as possible, recommendations for visitation should specify the frequency, length, location of and participants included in the visits.
 - a. Parents should be encouraged to attend medical and professional appointments for the child.
 - b. Visitation plans should implement a continuum of increasingly challenging and stressful situations in order to ensure a parent is able to appropriately parent, such as:
 - i. Changing and feeding,
 - ii. Learn about child's cries, habits, and growth,
 - iii. Demonstrate the ability to keep the child safe in real life situations.
 - iv. Visitation plans should discourage attendance by friends, significant others with no relationship with the child, and extended family members.
4. Visitation with siblings should occur regularly and consistently and should happen unless there is actual demonstrated harm to the child.
5. Recommendations should specify if and how the visits are to be supervised.
6. Visitations should be well documented to include:
 - a. Child's response at the beginning and end of visits,
 - b. Parent's responses and interactions with child(ren),
 - c. Parent's progress or lack thereof.
7. If permanency other than reunification becomes the goal, visitation between parents and child should gradually decrease in frequency and should begin to focus on grief work.
8. Visitation between siblings should not decrease with any permanency goal changes.

REVISIONS: The proponent for this policy is the Director of the Office of Guardian ad Litem. If you have recommended changes or want to report errors, send your suggestions to the Director of Guardian ad Litem, Family Justice Center, 625 East 26th Street, Kansas City, MO 64108.

REVIEW DATE: July 1, 2019



June 1, 2018

Kathy J. Rodgers
Director of Office of the Guardian ad Litem-Family Court

Date

APPLICABLE STANDARDS:
None

CC: Deputy Court Administrator – Family Court Division