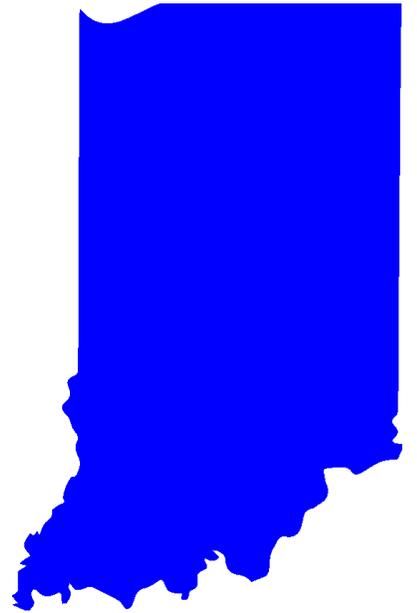


INDIANA LIBRARY FEDERATION

BEST PRACTICE GUIDE FOR SUPERVISED VISITS IN THE LIBRARY



Prepared by Indiana Library Federation in collaboration with Indiana Department of Child Services and its contracted supportive service providers, last updated September 2018.

Working together for Indiana's children



We are pleased to partner with Indiana Library Federation on this *Best Practice Guide*. Indiana's libraries are valuable community resources for children and families. We appreciate the active support by libraries to help children and families during and after the reunification process. We seek to build relationships and habits so that families will thrive long after our contact with them. Together, we will see our vision that all Indiana children will live in safe, healthy and supportive families and community.

Terry J Stigdon
Director, Indiana Department of
Child Services

Thank you to the outstanding children and teen librarians who initiated our collaboration on improving supervised visits in the library. With support from staff of Indiana Department of Child Services and their many child service providers, we developed this *Best Practice Guide for Supervised Visits in the Library*. Our librarians seek to foster a lifelong love of learning with the full range of services in the library. Whether story time, a coding class, STEAM activities or computer internet safety, our libraries welcome all.

Lucinda Nord
Executive Director
Indiana Library Federation

About Indiana Libraries

Indiana residents are served by **236 independent public library districts with 428 local branches**. By Indiana law, residents of a library district may obtain a library card. Each library maintains its own policies and procedures.

Like social workers and other professionals, librarians strive to uphold the Library Bill of Rights and a strict Code of Ethics.

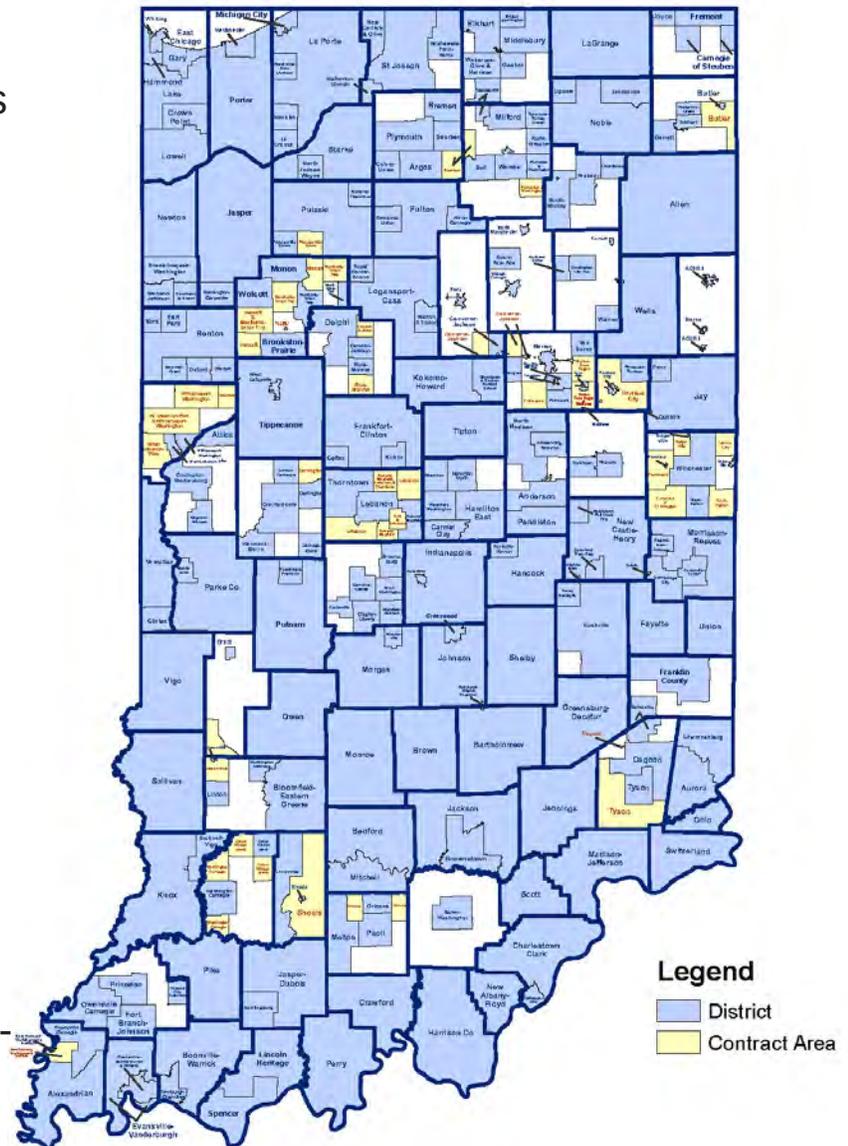
Library core values include confidentiality, equitable access for all and the right to read and seek information.

The **modern library** offers much more than books. Explore the full range of digital resources (e-books, virtual library, music, movies, games), educational classes, hands-on activities and programs for children and adults. Many libraries issue a monthly schedule of events. **Library staff** are available to help select materials.

Multiple research studies show the **value of reading aloud** to children. Reading aloud develops vocabulary, stimulates brain development and curiosity. Long-term, reading results in higher test scores and increased empathy.

Indiana Library Federation is the statewide nonprofit association whose mission is *to lead, educate and advocate to advance library services for the benefit of Indiana residents.*

Indiana Public Library Districts 2017



The map above shows the public library districts as of 2017. Download at <https://www.in.gov/library/files/Library%20Districts%202017%20FINAL.pdf>

941 E. 86th Street, Suite 260
Indianapolis, IN 46240
317-257-2040
www.ilfonline.org

About DCS

Mission: The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) engages with families and collaborates with state, local and community partners to protect children from abuse and neglect and to provide child support services.

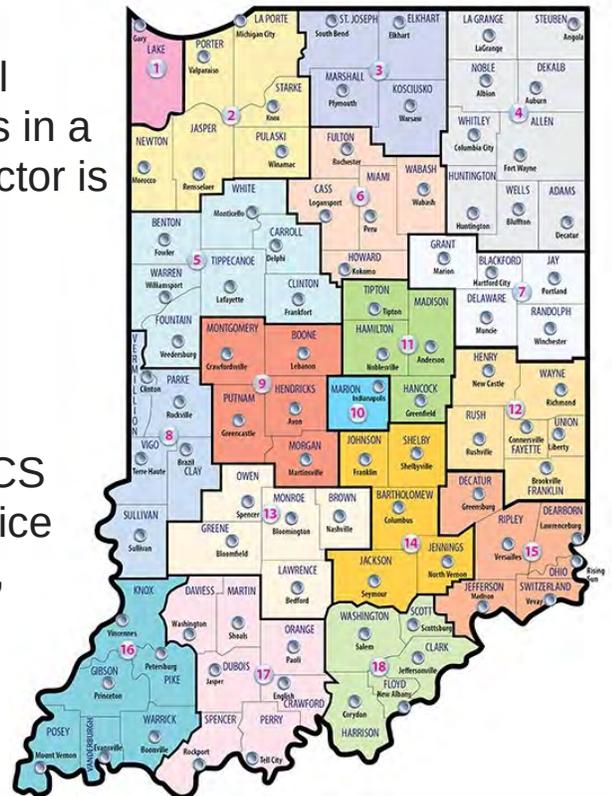
Vision: Indiana children will live in safe, healthy and supportive families and communities.

Current situation: In part due to the Opioid Crisis, DCS and its contractors are responding to high caseloads, working diligently to provide a range of services to over 16,000 children in their care and to their families. DCS contracts with over 400 service providers.

Supervised visits: As DCS works to reunify children with their families, the first step may be supervised visits, followed by partially supervised visits, graduating to unsupervised visits. DCS and its contractors appreciate the opportunity to observe normal family interactions in public places like libraries and parks. Library visits offer the benefit of connecting the child and family with resources that will be available after DCS involvement.

County offices: Each county has a local office of IN Dept. of Child Services and is in a designated region. The county DCS director is charged to work collaboratively with community organizations. County office contacts may be found at <https://www.in.gov/dcs/2372.htm>.

DCS-contracted service providers: DCS contracts with hundreds of different service providers to provide supportive services, including casework, counseling, family reunification and more.



Best Practices for Libraries

Libraries want to help and serve all equitably, to offer quality programming and to foster lifelong learning. Libraries want any experience with the library to be positive for both the child and the family, while also serving other patrons.

Get to know local organizations and staff outside of the supervised visit. Due to very strict federal and state laws governing DCS and confidentiality, caseworkers are not permitted to acknowledge or identify DCS-involved children or families. It is critical to find alternative times to get to know the county DCS office director, local service provider organizations and their staff. Ideas might include hosting staff meetings or collaboration meetings *at the library*. During these meetings, offer a tour and share library hours, programming, story times, classes and policies about food, running, child supervision, etc.

Treat children and families as any other patrons. Explain if you have a policy of no food, no running or if children must be supervised at all times. Explain room and computer use policies just as any you would for any patron. Provide access to resources and supports to that families will transition to regular patrons when the supervised visits conclude. Note that a single caseworker may be visiting multiple libraries and may not remember each library's policies.

Go the extra mile to be welcoming and to explain the resources and policies of the library. Provide a checklist or tip sheet for service providers, children or parents. Samples are provided at the end of this document.



Best Practices for Libraries

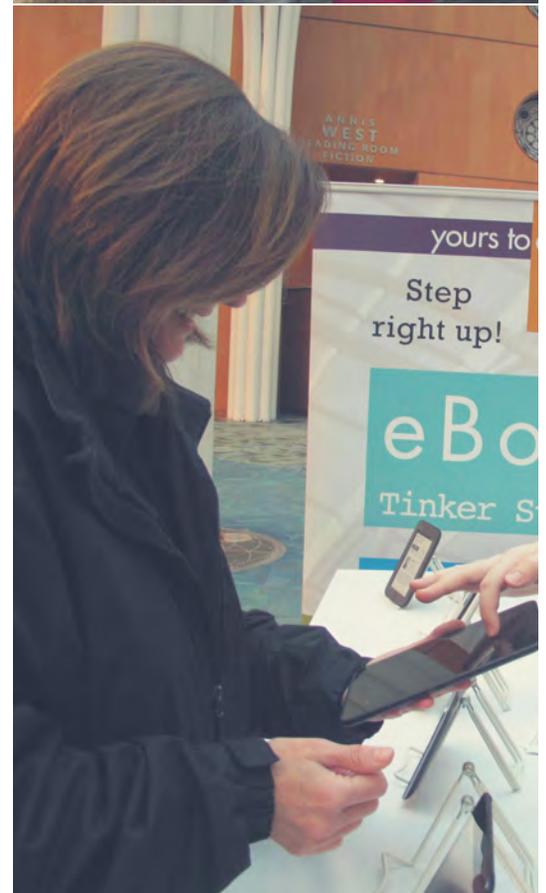
Train staff. Remember that various staff may observe or interact with caseworkers, children and families on supervised visits, including clerks, janitorial and security staff. Staff training days may include this Guide. Or invite the DCS office to provide a refresher on Mandatory Reporting of Suspected Abuse and Neglect.

Explore creative ways to provide families and children access to all the library resources.

The child or parent may not reside in the library district. A child may visit with a biological parent, non-custodial parent, foster parent, residential group home caregiver or caseworker. Especially for a child who has been removed from home, a library card can provide resources, pride, dignity, empowerment and more. To ensure access to resources, some libraries offer temporary cards, guest card access or e-cards through the visitor, agency or child's school.

INCLUDE IN YOUR TIP SHEET OR USER GUIDE

- Welcome and introduction to the library
- List of services for children and adults, including hours of operation
- Relevant library policies--checkout, computer and internet use, food, behavior, child supervision, room reservations, etc.
- Best times to visit for storytimes and children's or intergenerational/family program
- Include pictures and plain language
- Where to learn more



Best Practices for Caseworkers and Supervisors

Caseworkers and Supervisors can help make the supervised visits in the library a positive experience for both the child and the family. The public library is a critical community resource that will be available long after the child's or parent's interaction with DCS or contracted service providers.



Understand the libraries' policies, staffing, hours and programs. Each library maintains its own policies regarding room reservations, age at which a child may be left unattended, noise, food, behavior, safety, access to computers, etc. Share with your staff.

Help ensure length and nature of visit matches the library setting. Three or four hours is too long for an infant or toddler. Two hours may be too long if the library has a "no food" policy. Some libraries are spacious, active or noisy libraries, while others are cramped for space or have "quiet areas."

Encourage families to take advantage of library programming. Libraries offer scheduled programs for children, families and adults. Help introduce families to the range of programs available to each age and ability. It may be beneficial to adjust the visit to match the scheduling of a particular library program (i.e. story time, family STEM activity, art activity, music program or computer coding).

Get to know the library staff. Librarians and library staff understand and uphold confidentiality yet may not understand the strict laws and rules applicable in DCS cases. Respond to invitations to meet with library staff outside of the visit and to explore opportunities to partner.



Sample Language

Sample Policy Language

Below offers excerpts of the range of policies in Indiana libraries. Each library's policies reflect the needs of the local community and are adopted by the library's Board of Trustees. Please check with the local library for its policies.

Behavior and language

- Any behavior or language that is disruptive to other patrons is not allowed. The library reserves the right to ask disruptive patrons to leave.
- No running, fighting or disruptive behavior is allowed.

Food

- Food is only permitted in designated "food friendly" areas of the library. Please help us keep our library clean by cleaning up after yourself and your children. Ask staff if you need assistance.
- Food is not permitted in the library. Drinks must have no-spill lids.
- No food, drink, chewing gum and candy are permitted in the computer labs.

Child supervision

Child supervision policies often specify age and type of supervision.

- Children under 10 may not be left alone in the library.
- Children under 8 must be accompanied by an adult at all times.
- Parents and caregivers must supervise children directly and be within sight and sound of the child.

Other rules of conduct may cover sleeping, clothing, shoes, garbage, smoking, panhandling, weapons, talking, unattended bags, vandalism, hygiene, drugs, alcohol, soliciting, parking, cell phone use, noise, fighting, restrooms and more.

Samples from Libraries

Below are a few samples from libraries that have worked to provide quality experiences for families in supervised visitation. This page includes a **tri-fold brochure provided by Adams Public Library System**, which features photos, a welcome, rules of conduct, a description of child services and a list of activities to do with children while at the library.

Other samples are available upon request.

Supervised Visits at the Library

The Adams Public Library System (APLS) serves the residents of the Decatur and Geneva communities. As a public library, the buildings are open to the general public and may lend themselves as locations of supervised visits.



Because the Library is open to all, the Library implements a set of rules* so that everyone can enjoy their time in using the facilities. No one person or group may infringe on the rights and privileges of others in the building. Guidelines have been developed to ensure that appropriate behavior is encouraged and enforced.

APLS rules of conduct stipulate that those who disturb other patrons or have objectionable conduct will be asked to leave.

*Patron Responsibilities and Conduct Policy

Rules of Conduct

- It is the responsibility of parents to monitor their child's behavior.
- Running and/or horseplay are not allowed.
- Parties, full meals and/or cakes are appropriate only in the meeting room when a meeting room has been scheduled. Use of the meeting room for a social gathering has a fee of \$50 for less than 4 hours of use and \$100 for more than 4 hours.
- The Library is a drug, tobacco, weapon, and alcohol free environment.
- "Clean" language is appropriate. Cursing, swearing, name calling, yelling or screaming is not appropriate. Those who cannot refrain from using inappropriate language will be asked to leave.
- Respect library property so that what is available now will be available for everyone in the future. Damage or destruction of property is not tolerated.

Activities to Consider During Your Visit

- Help your child put a puzzle together
- Read a book together
- Work together on an activity sheet from the Writing Center
- Build something together with wooden blocks or DUPLO blocks
- Creative play with our puppets, puppet theatre or costumes
- Play "kitchen" together



HOURS

Decatur
Sun. 1:00-5:00
M-W 9:00-8:00
Th, F 9:00-5:00
Sat. 9:00-1:00

Geneva
M,W,F 10:00-5:00
T 1:00-5:00
Th 1:00-5:00, 6-8:30
Sat. 9:00-12:00
Last Tuesday of the month
Open at 9:00



SUPERVISED VISITATION



Children's Services

The APLS Children's Services departments welcome all children. The Library encourages interaction between parent and child by offering cozy places to read, puzzles, blocks, puppets, costumes and many activities to engage children and encourage creativity and learning.

Adams Public Library System
Decatur-Geneva
www.apls.lib.in.us

The next page includes a tip sheet from **Greenwood Public Library**, which includes program offerings and library guidelines.

Samples from Libraries



Greenwood Public Library
connect. experience. imagine.

Supervised Visitation | Resources & Guidelines

Welcome! Our imaginative and colorful public library is a natural place for children and their families to spend time interacting, learning, and playing. We are glad you are here!

In order to better serve you, please stop at our children's reference desk for an information packet which is guaranteed to make your visit more effective. We encourage you to get to know our librarians who can offer a wealth of information and resources to assist you.

Here are just a few of the things we might be able to offer:

- **Private areas**: Space may be available to conduct your supervised visitation privately. These areas are very limited and available on a first come first serve basis.
- **Toy check-out**: Our children's reference desk has a variety of toys and interactive kits that may be checked out for in-house use. Many of these provide fun opportunities for parent-child interaction.
- **Program guide**: Our staff would be happy to provide a list of scheduled programs and activities to participate in.
- **Food friendly areas**: If your family has brought a meal to share together, check with us to learn where food is allowed in the library. If you need the use of a microwave, please ask our staff for assistance.

** If you are a case worker who regularly provides supervised visits, our staff can share the times of week when the children's department tends to be the quietest for your convenience.

General guidelines and library manners

- Please walk rather than run – to avoid collisions!
- Parents or caregivers must supervise children directly.
- Children under 10 may not be left alone in the library.
- This is a family-friendly space. Behavior or language that is disruptive to other patrons is not allowed.
- A child's bathroom is available in the Children's Department. Adult bathrooms are located in the main downstairs hallway and upstairs behind the Help Desk. Changing tables are available in the children's bathroom and in the downstairs bathrooms.