



**YWCA**  
LETHBRIDGE  
& DISTRICT

A TURNING POINT  
FOR WOMEN

# **CUSTODIAL PARENT HANDBOOK**

## **YWCA LETHBRIDGE & DISTRICT SAFE VISITATION PROGRAM**

Safe Visitation Facilitator  
(403) 329-0088

Welcome to the YWCA Safe Visitation Program. We provide a bright and cheerful Child Care Centre as a fun and secure space for positive parent-child time. As it is important to know what can and cannot be provided, this handbook details the mandatory protocols, procedures and policies that support the best experience for your child(ren) while on site.

Each parent will schedule and complete a separate intake process with the Program Manager. Children may also attend an orientation session depending on their age. After completion of both intakes, a visitation schedule is arranged by the Community Services Manager.

**Virtual Visitation service delivery is at the discretion of the YWCA Lethbridge Program Manager.**

**Custodial and Visiting parents do not have any direct contact with each other at any time.**

**The prompt arrival time of the custodial parent is critical to the visit process. Late arrivals complicate matters and could result in a visit reschedule or cancellation.**

**Custodial parents will enter and leave by the front door and park in the front parking lot. Children will be transitioned from lobby to elevator for visits by staff.**

**There are at least two staff members present during all supervised visits.**

### *Your Role as the Custodial Parent*

As the primary caregiver of the child(ren), it will be you who will help them to feel comfortable and secure about the visits. Following all program protocols will help ensure a smooth transition from one parent to another.

You must give advance written permission for child(ren) to be transported by any other person besides yourself.

**It is expected that you will notify the YWCA 48 hours in advance if a visit needs to be rescheduled.**

**The YWCA must be notified if you are going to be late for a visit. If you are more than 15 minutes late, the visit may be cancelled.** You will not be expected to wait more than 15 minutes if a visiting parent is late without notice and you may leave without fault.

**A pattern of no-shows or the repeated cancellation of visits may result in the termination of services.**

**Visits are reserved exclusively for parent-child(ren) time. Extended family, other siblings, friends, partners, etc. cannot participate in the visits.**

**Visits for out-of-town parents may be extended at the discretion of the coordinator.**

In the case of illness or an emergency, please notify the staff as soon as possible. The staff will notify the other parent of any changes to the visit schedule.

You must provide an emergency contact number where you or another designated adult can be reached during visit hours in case of emergency.

You may provide a snack for your child(ren) during the visit. All toileting supplies, changes of clothing and any other items that may be needed are to be supplied by you.

Washroom visits/diaper changes are the responsibility of the visiting parent, unless a court order directs otherwise. **Staff will monitor all washroom time for preschoolers or any time a child and parent are in the washroom together. Protocols do not allow for a cubicle to be locked when both parent and child are in a stall.**

**If children may require any medications during a visit, you must provide written instructions regarding dosage. The medication will be administered by the visiting parent and not by program staff.**

### *The Role of the YWCA Lethbridge & District*

**The YWCA has a zero tolerance policy with respect to inappropriate behaviour in or around the facility.** Any such behaviour may result in termination of services. If concerns arise regarding the safety of adults or children in the program, staff have a legal obligation to inform the proper authorities.

**Children will not be forced to attend or continue a visit once in progress.** All reasonable efforts will be made by staff to assist the child(ren) in transitioning to a visit. Should a child become distressed, i.e. crying and cannot be comforted or does not settle after 10 minutes **during the visit**, the custodial parent will be advised and the visit will conclude early.

### **Restrictions during Visits**

- Alcohol or drug use prior to or during a visit.
  - Smoking is not permitted during visit times.
  - Abusive, threatening, disrespectful or inappropriate behaviour directed towards the child(ren), staff, volunteers or anyone on the premises.
  - Discussion of access issues with child(ren) or in their presence.
  - Discussion of the other parent in the presence of the child(ren) in any context.
  - Questioning the child(ren) about the other parent is strictly prohibited.
  - Discussion of court proceedings.
  - Whispered conversation.
  - Any punitive disciplining of child(ren).
  - Use of cell phones, pagers, recording devices or texting during a visit.
  - Hot liquids in larger containers, i.e. tea in teapot, or coffee in carafe.
  - **Snacks containing peanuts or peanut products.**
  - Bringing in or showing photographs during a visit.
- **Due to a shortage of interpreters, we ask that dialogue between parent and child(ren) be spoken in English.** There may be opportunity for French language interpreters, depending on availability.

Visiting parents will leave their bags, coats and hats on the hooks provided in the back stairwell.

The YWCA will provide a comfortable, child-friendly setting with toys, equipment and activities for your child(ren). **The program promotes non-violent play and safety for all participants. Toy weapons (i.e.**

**guns, knives, handcuffs, etc.) are not acceptable as gifts.** Any crafts or drawings made during visits can be taken home at visit end.

Staff will intervene in circumstances where a child is at risk or program protocols are not followed.

**If there is suspicion that a parent may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the visit may be cancelled, rescheduled or services terminated. The proper authorities may be contacted if necessary.**

In the event that you are late in picking up the child(ren) and the YWCA has not been notified as to the reason for the delay, appropriate steps will be taken in the best interests of the children. This may include contacting the appropriate authorities.

**As part of the intake process, a digital picture will be taken to identify both parents so that all staff can correctly confirm the parties involved for a visit.**

Security cameras are used to ensure safety and security within the YWCA building and for all those in the YWCA facility. Camera recordings are not archived. All security cameras and equipment are the property of YWCA Lethbridge and District and are not for use in assessments, evaluations or recommendations in private matters.

Staff will document objective Observation Notes during a visit. **Both parents can read what was recorded when signing the Observation Notes at the end of the visit. See example provided.**

**Safe Visitation program will not provide assessments, evaluations, documentation or recommendations specific to custody and/or access proceedings.**

**YWCA Lethbridge & District Safe Visitation reserves discretionary rights to terminate a visit or program services as required.**

Participation in the YWCA Safe Visitation Program is dependent on compliance with the YWCA Lethbridge & District policies and procedures.

The YWCA Safe Visitation Program operates within the definition of confidentiality. Records are protected under certain government and ethical regulations and can only be conditionally released with written consent or as subpoenaed by a court of law.

The YWCA Lethbridge & District has a duty by law to contact the appropriate authorities when there is a concern for the safety and well-being of parents and/or children.

### ***Custodial Parent Consents***

#### ***Gifts***

**Gifts are permitted on the first visit and on special occasions such as the child(ren)'s birthday or significant holidays. Gifts must be unwrapped and brought in gift bags. Wrapped gifts will not be permitted.** Should a staff member determine a gift is inappropriate for use during a visit, it may still be taken with the child(ren) when they leave.

I consent to additional gifts being brought by the visiting parent.

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### *Photographs*

**Picture taking will be permitted on the first visit and on special occasions such as the child(ren)'s birthday or significant holidays.** Once pictures have been taken they are to remain in the possession of the visiting parent and copies cannot be given to the child(ren).

I consent to additional photographs being taken by the visiting parent.

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### *Communication*

**All Safe Visitation communication concerning visits will only be between staff and the parties who signed consents on intake and/or are named in a Court Order. Communication will not involve a third party.**

**All visit times and dates will be confirmed by email.**

**If an email address is unavailable for the purposes of communicating visit dates and times, it is required that a parent advise verbally by phone or leave a voicemail message confirming the visit schedule at 403-329-0088 ext. 275.**

**If you are cancelling a visit, you must leave a voicemail message at 403-329-0088 ext. 275.**

Visit schedules may be altered to accommodate statutory holidays, staff absences or circumstances beyond our control, such as renovations, maintenance, etc. As much advance notice as possible will be given to the parties involved.

Parent confirmations of visit schedules are required by email or phone. No 'reminders' are sent out once schedules are confirmed.

**Visit confirmation requests require a response within 48 hours.** If there is no email or phone confirmation received by Safe Visitation within this timeframe, your visit schedule may be suspended and the other parent notified. Your visit time may be assigned to another family on the waiting list.

**The next visit date will be written on the Observation Notes signed at the conclusion of every visit. Your signature confirms the next visit scheduled. See example provided.**

In the event of unforeseen circumstances, any change to the schedule will be communicated via email with the same protocols of confirmation required.

**Safe Visitation staff will not pass documents, letters, notes or any communications between parents. The only information that may be relayed must be specific to the child, i.e. report cards, school pictures, medical information, etc.**

### *What Children Need From All of Us*

A divorce or separation is a troubling time for children. Some of the following suggestions may be helpful to you and your child(ren):

Children need to be reassured that both parents will be OK. Their lives together will be different but loving them will never change. Keeping a positive attitude about parent-child time lessens anxiety about divided loyalties.

**It is important not to use your child as your confidante or as a messenger between you and your ex-partner.**

It is helpful to remember that children need the transitions between parents to be predictable, comfortable and stress free.

Staff can provide activities, suggestions and provide alternate resources upon request, depending on availability of materials.

### *Emergency Procedures*

**In the event of a fire evacuation**, the visiting parent, child(ren) and staff members will immediately exit the building from the back stairwell. The custodial parent is called and the visit concludes.

**In the event of a medical emergency**, the first phone call will be for the ambulance and the second phone call will be to you. Should you not arrive before the ambulance, staff will accompany the child(ren) in the ambulance to the hospital.

**In the event of a lock-down emergency**, the visiting parent, child(ren) and staff members will exit the Child Care Centre and proceed to the Board Room which will then be locked. The custodial parent will be notified once it is safe for them to pick up the child(ren).

**In the event of a child abduction during a visit by the visiting parent**, staff immediately activate panic alarms, report details to 911 and inform the custodial parent. This would be a high priority for police intervention to the fullest extent of the law.

\*\*\* This handbook may be updated and revised as required. \*\*\*

## OBSERVATION NOTES

### EXAMPLE

#### Activities During Visit:

\* Built a fort with big foam blocks

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\* Went in  
playhouse

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\* Explored toddler  
toys

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\* Jumped with Skip-It  
toy

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\* Created a paper  
craft

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\* Played "Candyland" board game

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\* Rode in red Little Tikes  
car

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#### Additional comments:

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The date of next scheduled visit: Wednesday, May 29, 2016 at 11:00

AM

Custodial Parent Signature:

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Date: May 15,

2016

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Staff Initials of those present during Visit: \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_

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