

Visiting with Families

Making meetings with families successful can be accomplished with a few key pieces of information and a little planning. Tips to help in planning visits with families are:

1. Initial phone call tips:

- Make a personal introduction
- Share where the referral came from
- Offer a brief description of the parent mentor role
- Offer a chance to meet (their home, a park, a restaurant)
- Clarify expectations for the meeting (length of time, children welcome, nothing to bring)
- Get good directions
- Offer an invitation to both parents

2. On the initial visit, remember:

- Be on time
- Ask where the parent would like to visit (living room, kitchen, etc.)
- Start with positive statements. (the garden is lovely, the child has beautiful eyes, such pretty curls in their hair, etc.)
- Offer contact with everyone in the room (adults, children, guests, etc.)
- Watch personal dress. (avoid over dressing and in some cases under dressing)
- Accept hospitality (even if it's not a personal preference)
- *Do more listening than talking*

3. Clarify the expectations the family has for a parent mentor:

- Be willing to accept 'no thank you' to offers made
- Identify the concerns of the family



- Define a plan that is empowering to the family (*I'll do...you'll do...*)
- Leave with a link established. (“Would it be OK if I called in a couple weeks, when I have this information gathered maybe we can get together again, you have my number if something comes up between now and our next visit, etc.”)

4. Safety considerations:

When visiting families it is rare for situations to arise that create concerns or are unsafe. For personal safety it is better to have strategies ready to use in that rare situation.

- Trust personal intuition.
- Carry a cell phone if possible.
- Tell someone where the meeting will take place and the anticipated length of the meeting.
- Keep the door in sight.
- Pay attention to the neighborhood and the surroundings.
- Take a partner if necessary.
- Have a friend or colleague call shortly after arrival if in doubt or concerned about a situation. The friend can make sure everything is OK or provide an excuse to leave.
- Make up an excuse, apologize and leave, if a situation seems unsafe.

