



40 WORTH STREET, SUITE 605 89-14  
 PARSONS BLVD, 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10013  
 JAMAICA, NY 11432  
 MAIN NUMBER: (212) 691-0950 MAIN NUMBER: (212) 691-0950  
 691-0950  
 FAX NUMBER: (212) 691-0951 FAX NUMBER: (718) 291-4360  
 4360  
 COURTHOUSE NUMBER: (212) 233-8900  
 FAX @ COURTHOUSE: (212) 233-8922

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**Cornerstone Advocacy: Small Adjustments and Next Actions**

**ALWAYS**

- reframe when possible**
- argue from a common sense standpoint—remind Court and other actors about what matters to children and parents**
- learn a few pertinent regulations—keep copies handy**
- ask WHY**

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**Visiting:**

- Ask WHY regarding visiting plans: Why exactly is supervision necessary? Why at this level?  
 When can it change? \*\*Is the visiting plan treating all the children as similarly situated when perhaps they are not? *Next Actions: ask that court reports include specific reasons for supervision; ask about visiting at every court appearance; ask: when will visits become unsupervised?*
- Try to identify a visit host in appropriate cases: *Next actions: add to your standard questions of young people and parents those that will help identify a visit host; ask the agency to ‘explore and report’ if you identify a particular visit host; read the NYC guidelines (or assign an intern to do this) and list the people who might help develop similar guidelines if necessary;*
- Surface philosophical and professional development issues pertaining to visiting—do we think increased visiting should be a reward for compliance with a service plan? Are

we formulaic in our approach to visit plans? Do we need additional training? *Next Action: set up a meeting to begin discussing this;*

- Think about developmental needs of the child in supporting attachment to parents
- Raise the visitation issue in court: one hour/once a week = only 2 days per year (reframe)— argue this is not enough; if the county says it does not have the staffing to provide more visits, and you can identify a visit host, ask that person to be explored;
- Ask if the kids/youth can talk on the phone with their parents; think about whether or not older kids and parents can exchange cell phone numbers or whether a parent can give a child a pre- paid phone
- Think about what you can do to insure:
  - As frequent visitation as possible
  - Least amount of supervision necessary
  - Visitation centered around activities that mimic family-like activities (i.e. haircuts, doctor visits, school conferences, festivals, picnics, sporting events)
  - Ask a SW or legal intern to research free community events in your area
- Ask parents what they would like to do on a visit; can't make promises, but can ask
  - ASK: at our particular agency or within our particular practice, could we benefit from additional training on how to interview parents about visiting? So that we can feel more comfortable with “hard” conversations, but also get more information so we can be more creative? *Next Action: schedule a meeting to discuss this and whether we'd like help in doing this;*

**Generally:** Don't reinvent any wheels... i.e. if you like the idea of developing Visit Host Guidelines in your county, start with those developed by ACS in NYC [ accessible here - [http://www.nccourts.org/citizens/cprograms/improvement/documents/7visit\\_host.pdf](http://www.nccourts.org/citizens/cprograms/improvement/documents/7visit_host.pdf) ] .....they were the result of more than two years of collaboration between court personnel, child protective and foster care personnel, parent and youth reps, all members of the advocacy and legal community, and focus groups.