



## SAFE HAVEN PROGRAM Access Center Rules & Guidelines

### I. Introduction

The Children's Rights Council (CRC) operates "family friendly" access sites called Safe Haven Centers, such as this one in \_\_\_\_\_ to which you have been referred. The purpose of the Safe Haven Centers is to enable children to remain close to both parents regardless of the family situation or parental conflict. These Centers are operated in cooperation with the County Family/Domestic Relations Court and remain neutral in family disputes. These Centers are focused on your well-being and that of your children for court-ordered access where **safety is the first priority.**

The Children's Rights Council has been selected by the Court to provide this service to you because CRC firmly advocates the principle that "*The Best Parent is Both Parents*<sup>®</sup>", and will help you to act in the best interest of your child(ren) by extending the opportunity to remain a loving and involved parent. To promote a rewarding relationship and the continuing welfare of your child(ren), these rules and guidelines will help you cooperate in matters that affect your child(ren) – whether you are in dispute with the other parent or not. CRC can assist you in these strategies and has monitors trained to observe and enforce these rules, as well as report to the Court and other authorities as necessary any violations. It is necessary to review the Safe Haven Center Rules & Guidelines before your first visit and be prepared to ask any questions. All parents must agree by their signature to follow the rules before being allowed to participate in the Safe Haven Program services.

### II. Check-In Processes

Each time you arrive at the Safe Haven Program, you are directed to sign a log of your attendance and be sure to list your child(ren)'s name. The logs are furnished to the Court upon request, and from time to time monitors may also be summoned to testify based on their observation of parental behavior, concerning conformance to rules, and parental abilities to cooperate with one another for the benefit of their child(ren).

It is recommended you identify a reliable person to serve as a designated "go-between" with the other parent in the event you have an emergency and are unable to visit or make the scheduled transfer.

On your first visit you should arrive 15 minutes early to process your Intake documents and procedures, as well as provide an opportunity for staff to answer your questions, conduct an orientation of the facility, and

### **III. Scheduling & Fees**

Enclosed you will find schedule for the Safe Haven Program. It details the address, days and hours of operation, and contact information. Although the Court may assign schedules at its discretion, you are first urged to contact the CRC staff person listed on the enclosed Safe Haven Program schedule to arrange for your visitation.

The Safe Haven center operates primarily on weekends.

Children benefit from consistency. Once a schedule has been established, please ensure you understand the rules and follow your schedule; it is your responsibility to arrive and depart on time. Sessions will end at their scheduled time even if one parent is late. You may not miss a transfer or visitation session without permission of the Court. CRC does not have authority to excuse absences or pardon repeated instances of tardiness. The schedule will remain the same unless changed by an order from the judge.

There are no fees for using the Safe Haven Program. It is however, your responsibility to provide meals, medicines, and any toys or gifts to your children when visiting the Center. You are reminded to be conscious of the other parent's wishes regarding acceptable diet and items appropriate to the child(ren).

### **IV. Access Programs**

There are two access programs available to parents: 1) monitored transfers, and 2) supervised access.

A. Monitored transfers will usually occur on Friday and Sunday evenings for transfer of the child(ren) between parents. Most often this occurs with the transferring parent arriving between 7 pm – 8 pm on Friday with the child(ren) to the center. The receiving parent arrives within approximately 15 minutes of the scheduled arrival time. Safe, peaceful transfer is made on the premises under the monitored direction of trained staff. The process is reversed on Sunday evening between 6 pm – 7 pm to accommodate return of the child(ren).

B. Supervised access is offered at the Safe Haven Center on Saturdays in blocks of up to four (4) hours depending on the court order. Supervised access is determined by the court and restricts parental access to the on-premise location. There are generally two sessions available for supervised access. Session 1 is from opening at 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.; Session 2 is from 11 a.m. to 1. p.m. closing. Judges, at their discretion, may designate whether one or both sessions should be made available to you.

Under no circumstances, my child(ren) be left at the Safe Haven Center without one parent being present. Furthermore, parents should not bring others with them, including a “significant other”. This will help reduce the possibility of controversy and unpleasantness. If you must bring someone with you for assistance due to a disability or other reasonable need, please let the Center Director know in advance. An accompanying person not approved by the court, may enter the Center but will not be permitted to visit with the child(ren).

Visiting or waiting in the parking area or in front of the building is not permitted. Parents involved in child transfers are directed to enter the building upon arrival and log in their transfer; drop off or pick up their child(ren) then immediately leave the premises.

Parents are further reminded to coordinate their arrival time to pick up their child(ren) from the Center immediately after each supervised access session is concluded and promptly depart the premises.

## **V. Rules Enforcement**

Please obey all rules and directed interventions by staff or security personnel. Inappropriate behavior is not tolerated. Safe Haven Center personnel are instructed to notify police after one warning. Rules violations will also be immediately reported to the Court and other public protective/social service agencies as necessary. Additionally, a certified law enforcement or security officer is onsite during periods of supervised access to ensure the safety of personnel and compliance with Court directives.

## **VI. General Restrictions**

Drugs and/or alcohol are prohibited in all areas of the Safe Haven Program. This includes all spaces within the building, the parking lot, surrounding green areas, and your personal vehicle if parked on private property of the premises. If any monitor or security person suspects such use before or during a visit to the Access Center, the session will be cancelled and the referring court and/or agency will be notified. If active use or possession is observed, police will be immediately contacted.

For parents involved in a supervised access program, an appropriate Safe Haven Program staff person shall accompany any child(ren) to the restroom in the instance such child(ren) are too young to go alone.

There is no smoking allowed on the premises of a Safe Haven Program. Premises include all private rooms, office spaces, restrooms, and general areas. Check with the Safe Haven Program supervisor to learn if smoking maybe permitted in a designated area outside away from the flow of foot traffic to and from the building.

Parents are not allowed at the Access Center before or after regularly scheduled “open” hours. Establish a time that you will arrive at each transfer session and keep with this schedule. Monitors are available to assist as necessary.

Cameras, tape recorders or video recorders are not permitted in the Center without prior approval of the Center Director. Photographs and electronic imaging of your child(ren) are allowed with the consent of the other parent. Still and video recordings of other children, parents and staff are prohibited.

**VII. Parental Behaviors**

Set a good example for your child(ren) as a loving, considerate, responsible parent; make your comments and behavior toward the other parent in a courteous manner. Endeavor to help your child(ren) view the Safe Haven Program in a positive way. Children imitate their parent's behavior, including perspectives of transfer and supervision. Let them know they are there to visit the other parent or to be transferred in a safe and caring environment.

Parents not under protective orders may speak with the other parent if both parents wish. Keep the conversation polite and non-controversial. Arguing or inappropriate comments are not allowed in the presence of children or staff. Should either parent get "out of control", monitors are directed to intervene, and if necessary, initiate security procedures.

Parents are reminded to consistently arrive on time. Too early or late arrivals may create additional anxieties for your child(ren). Additionally, your child(ren) may make new friends at the Center and look forward to the brief time available to interact with others.

The Court and the Children's Rights Council want you to have a pleasant child/parent transfer and access experience. Strive to be positive and cooperative, and keep the process safe and secure for your child(ren) and all others participating in the Safe Haven Program.

**VIII. Special Considerations**

Inform the monitor(s) if your child has a special emotional or physical need. The continued safety, health and wellbeing of all children are the first priorities.

If there is a protective order in place against another person, be sure to inform the Center Director or Supervisor, and bring a copy of the order for your record.

Safe Haven Program personnel are not counselors or attorneys. Monitors may not discuss the merits of your particular case or give professional advice. You are also advised to refrain from discussing your case with other parents. Like you, they are using the center strictly for the benefit of being with or transferring their child(ren).

With the exception of legal documents, parents may pass messages and letters at the Access Center and/or exchange items necessary to make the child's stay more pleasant and safe with the other parent by providing such items as medicines, special diet foods, clothes and/or favorite toys. However, monitors have no authority to force another parent to accept them.

Clean up after use of your area. Remove all trash and personal belongings. CRC does not provide storage areas to keep clothing, toys or other items between visits.

It is a requirement of all parents to state in writing their agreement to observance all rules and guidelines before being allowed to participate in the Safe Haven Program.

If you have questions or concerns about the Safe Haven Program, please discuss them privately with a monitor or the Center Director at your earliest convenience.