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1. **Policy** CSSD Family Services will be available to screen and accept referrals from the Court, coordinate services, and provide case management for the Access and Visitation Grant Program (AVGP).

2. **Definitions**

A. Access and Visitation Grant Program (AVGP) A federal grant program through the Department of Social Services that provides funding for Supervised Visitation and Transition in Parenting services for clients within the Judicial Branch and Family Civil Court. Both programs are designed to serve as a bridge from supervised to unsupervised visitation for non-custodial parents. The goal of these programs is to assist clients with limited income, by increasing the non-custodial parent’s access to the child or children in a safe and controlled setting.


B. Access and Visitation Liaison (AV Liaison) A Family Relations Counselor (FRC), Lead Family Relations Counselor (LFRC), or a Family Services Supervisor (FSS) designated in a CSSD-Family Services Office to assess, accept, and manage referrals for the Access and Visitation Grant Program.

C. Family Relations Counselor (FRC) A CSSD employee with the qualifications and training who performs the functions outlined in the job description which can be accessed by clicking the following link:
http://zeus/AdminSvc/HRM/New%20Job%20Descs/New_job_descriptions.htm

D. Family Services Supervisor (FSS) A CSSD employee with the qualifications and training who performs the functions outlined in the job description which can be accessed by clicking the following link:
http://zeus/AdminSvc/HRM/New%20Job%20Descs/New_job_descriptions.htm

E. Lead Family Relations Counselor (LFRC) A CSSD employee with the qualifications and training who performs the functions outlined in the job description which can be accessed by clicking the following link:
http://zeus/AdminSvc/HRM/New%20Job%20Descs/New_job_descriptions.htm

F. Negotiation A conflict resolution process in which the FRC/LFRC/FSS meets with the attorneys, GAL, and/or Self-Represented Litigants with respect to the


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motions pending before the Court. The role of the FRC/LFRC/FSS is to facilitate discussions and to assess and recommend potential solutions.

- G. Self-Represented Litigant A person who files an appearance to represent him or herself.
- H. Supervised Visitation (SV) A court-ordered program where the non-custodial parent has supervised contact with the child or children in a safe, closely-monitored, and controlled environment at pre-determined days and times through a contracted provider with the Judicial Branch.
- I. Transitions in Parenting (TIP) A court-ordered program that provides professional guidance and support in a clinically supervised setting for families during the process of establishing or re-establishing relationships between a child and a non-custodial parent through a contracted provider with the Judicial Branch.

3. Pre-Service Initiation - Referrals

- A. Prior to the FRC/LFRC/FSS making a recommendation to the Court for a referral to AVGP the following will be determined:
 - (1) Access between the parent and the child is the goal and there is no information available to contraindicate a referral to the AVGP (i.e. a no contact order prohibiting the parent from having contact with the child).
 - (2) Barriers and safety concerns (including family violence, mental health, and substance abuse) will be identified that may impact the referral. To determine family violence/safety concerns, the Domestic Violence Information Gathering sheet, (**CSSD Attachment A**) will be utilized.
 - (3) The AVGP Supervised Visitation or Transitions in Parenting is the most appropriate intervention to best meet the needs of the current situation, as well as those of the child(ren).
 - (4) The parents have financial limitations that warrant the use of this contracted service and would be unable to afford this service from a private provider.

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B. Recommendations for referral to AVGP may be made by the FRC/LFRC/FSS to the Court:

- (1) As part of the Family Civil Court negotiation by CSSD- Family Services to address a motion related to a parenting plan, if the parties agree to such a referral.
- (2) Subsequent to, or in conjunction with, a CSSD-Family Services Alternative Dispute Resolution or Evaluative Service.

C. The FRC/LFRC/FSS will recommend the following for the Court to order:


- (1) That the case is referred to CSSD-Family Services for Access and Visitation Grant Program services.
- (2) That there is a formal order authorizing CSSD-Family Services to provide written and/or oral reports to the Court that detail progress, compliance and/or recommendations for termination as a result of non-compliance, service completion, and achieved access/visitation agreements.

D. All referrals to the AVGP must be ordered by a Judge of the Superior Court.

E. Once the Court has ordered the referral, the parties' case information will be inputted into CMIS-II and the JD-FM-194A, [FM194A.PDF](#) will be completed and submitted to the office Supervisor. The Family Civil Intake Screen will be completed if necessary. The FSS will assign the case to an AV Liaison. This AV Liaison will be responsible for the intake, case management, reporting, and closure of the case.


4. Pre-Service Initiation – Intake Process

A. In all cases ordered into the AVGP, the AV Liaison will meet with the parties to complete the intake process. The AV Liaison can complete the intake while the parties are in court or schedule the parties to return to the Family Services Office

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at another time when the AV Liaison is available. The intake process includes, but is not limited to:

- (1) Information gathering for domestic violence/safety concerns utilizing the Domestic Violence Information Gathering form, (**CSSD Attachment A**).
- (2) Information gathering regarding mental health and/or substance abuse concerns.
- (3) Information regarding any special accommodations/needs required by the parties/child(ren).
- (4) The AV Liaison will provide to the clients:
 - a. A verbal description of the service.
 - b. A verbal description of the liaison role.
 - c. Information regarding the reporting to the Court progress, compliance, and future parenting agreements.
 - d. An overview of the expectations/rules related to program/service participation.
 - e. A brochure of the ordered service.
- (5) The AV Liaison will address the following:
 - a. Review issues or concerns that the parents have regarding the program and answer questions about the process.
 - b. Reinforce that the goal of the AVGP is restoring/increasing the non-custodial parent's access to the minor child or children within the confines of the referred program.
 - c. Indicate that future access plans may be addressed by the FRC/LFRC/FSS during and/or after service completion.

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- d. Have the parties sign authorization release forms for communication with the contracted agency and Guardian Ad Litem if applicable.
- e. Remind the parties of their next court continuance date.

B. If the AV Liaison determines there are concerns and the referral to the program is not in the child’s best interest, the matter should be returned back to Court for further advisement.


5. Post-Service Initiation – Case Management

A. The AV Liaison will forward the following information to the contracted agency within three business days of the intake:

- (1) A completed contracted service provider referral form. The AV Liaison will note on the referral form the existence of any protective or restraining orders between the parties, in addition to any other safety concerns (including family violence, mental health, substance abuse, etc.) noted during the intake process.
- (2) Authorization of release forms signed by the clients.
- (3) A copy of the current court order regarding custody/visitation and the referral to the program.
- (4) The next scheduled court continuance date.

B. The AV Liaison will then contact the contracted provider to confirm that the referral was received, discuss the parameters of the service, and any issues, including domestic violence/safety concerns, substance abuse and mental health issues, vital to program participation/completion.

C. The AV Liaison will ensure that a hard copy and CMIS-II file has been opened for the case. The AV Liaison will record all activities and contact with the parties and the provider in CMIS-II and add a description of the activities if appropriate.


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All paper correspondence will be maintained in the hard copy file. Any electronic correspondence will be printed and entered into the hard copy file.

- D. The AV Liaison will contact the service provider periodically during the course of program participation to obtain information regarding progress and compliance. The AV Liaison will monitor the parties' participation and interactions with the contracted agency throughout the process.
- E. The AV Liaison will be available to assist the contracted agency if there are issues related to the parties willingness to participate in appointments and/or any issues that arise creating an impact on the child(ren)'s access and relationship with the non-custodial parent. This assistance can include contacting the clients, their attorneys/GAL or returning the matter back to court for further direction.
- F. The AV Liaison will obtain and review the written reports from the contracted agency for either Supervised Visitation or Transitions in Parenting cases prior to each court continuance date. Copies of the interim reports will not be disseminated to the parties, GAL and/or the attorneys of record. The information in the report will be summarized and orally shared with the parties, GAL, and the attorneys of record, if necessary.
- G. The AV Liaison will, if necessary, provide an interim written or oral report to the Court. This report should include a summary of the parties' progress and a recommendation regarding the next court continuance date.
- H. The AV Liaison will return the referred cases to Court at any time if the AV Liaison and/or the contracted agency deems the case no longer appropriate for services (i.e. lack of cooperation by either parent, numerous cancelled appointments, inappropriate behavior/activity during sessions or visits, etc.).

6. Post-Service Initiation – Service Completion


- A. The AV Liaison will obtain a final report from the provider at the conclusion of the service. Copies of this report will not be disseminated to the parties, GAL and/or the attorneys of record. The information in the report will be summarized and orally shared with the parties, GAL, and the attorneys of record, if necessary.

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- B. Upon satisfactory completion of the court-ordered service, the AV Liaison will meet with the parties prior to or on the return court date to determine if the parties can reach a parenting plan for future access. If the parties reach an agreement, the written agreement will be drafted and submitted to the Court for approval.
- C. If the parties are unable to reach a resolution regarding the non-custodial parent's access to the child or children, the AV Liaison will submit a written report to the Court summarizing the information provided in the contracted provider's report (i.e. participation, number of session, any assessment offered by the provider about future action needed, etc.) and efforts, if any, to resolve future access made by the FRC/ LFRC/FSS.
- D. After the court hearing, the AV Liaison will email/provide written documentation to the service provider regarding the outcome so the case may be closed within the contracted agency.

7. Post-Service Initiation – Case Closure

- A. AV Liaison will close the referral in CMIS-II at the end of the referral period, reporting the outcome of the service.
 - (1) The referral will be closed as successful if:
 - a. The parties cooperated with the service.
 - b. The non-custodial parent's contact with the child/children was deemed appropriate.
 - (2) The referral will be closed as unsuccessful if:
 - a. The parties or a specific party did not cooperate with the service.
 - b. The non-custodial parent's contact with the child/children was deemed inappropriate.

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B. The case will be closed as withdrawn if the parties did not cooperate with the initiation of services and the matter was referred back to Court.

8. **Professional Conduct**

A. The AV Liaison will conduct him/herself in a professional manner, treating clients with courtesy and respect throughout the AVGP process.

B. The AV Liaison will strive to be accurate, objective, fair and independent in their work.

C. The AV Liaison will assess all information that is provided in a balanced manner.

D. During the course of the AVGP, the AV Liaison shall not have substantive ex-parte communications about the case with the Court except of an administrative nature or with mutual consent of all parties.

E. The AV Liaison will not offer legal advice or conduct any therapeutic intervention with anyone involved in the AVGP process.

9. **Exceptions** Any exception to this policy will require prior written approval from the Division's Executive Director.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INFORMATION GATHERING

The following areas will be addressed with all parties when assessing domestic violence and/or safety concerns:

- a) The existence of an active Order of Protection, including a check of the Protective Order Registry
- b) A history of Orders of Protection
- c) The existence of Court order prohibiting contact (i.e. conditions of probation)
- d) Current / prior domestic violence arrests
- e) Current allegations of domestic violence
- f) Possession of one or more firearms
- g) History of reported or unreported domestic violence to include a report of specific behaviors (i.e., push, grab, slap, punch, bite, kick, choke, threats to kill, use of or threats to use weapon)
- h) Concerns of fear and intimidation (physical, emotional, financial)
- i) Level of conflict between the parents
- j) Child-related safety issues (i.e., abduction concerns, substantiated DCF matters, emotional/physical trauma)