

What is supervised visitation?

Supervised visitation is an arrangement where the visiting parent spends time with their child under the supervision of a family member, friend, or professional visitation monitor.

What is supervised exchange?

Supervised exchange is the process of having a family member, friend, or professional visitation monitor transfer the child from the custodial parent to the visiting parent. Exchanges may take place at any location the parties or the courts choose, such as police stations, shopping centers, or a visitation center. Only the exchange is supervised; after the child is transferred to the visiting parent, the visiting parent has unsupervised visitation with the child.

What is the purpose of supervised visitation or exchange?

Supervised visitation and exchanges may keep victims and children safe from the other parent while still allowing children to spend time with the other parent. Supervised visitation or exchange can be especially helpful when there is a protective order in place preventing the parents from having contact.

How to obtain supervised visitation/exchange services

Courts can order supervised visitation in custody, visitation, or protective order cases. Parents may also agree to participate in supervised visitation on their own and have the visitation or exchange monitored by a family member, friend, or community provider.

Supervised visitation and exchange services in Fairfax County

Fairfax County offers two supervised visitation and exchange programs: Stronger Together and Safe Havens. For more information about Stronger Together or Safe Havens, please call **703-246-3040**.

- **The Stronger Together Program** is only accessible to families with a court order from Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court. Families who use the program may have a variety of issues within their family, not only domestic violence.
- **The Safe Havens Program** is designed to serve families where there are concerns of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking. Safe Havens can serve families from the community without a court order or families with a court order from any jurisdiction. At least one parent must reside in Fairfax County.

Important Considerations in Supervised Visitation and Exchange

When looking for a professional supervised visitation/exchange provider, it is important to look for certain features in the program:

- **Contact:** Does the visitation provider ensure the parents will not have contact while using the program? Does the program have staggered arrival times, separate parking lots, and/or separate entrances for each parent? Does the program prohibit parents from passing messages back and forth?
- **Child Safety:** Are there rules to prevent a parent from saying negative things to the child about the other parent? Are there rules to prevent abusers from emotionally, verbally, or physically abusing the child?
- **Gifts:** Are there rules to prevent gifts or other items to the child that might remind them of the abuse?
- **Trained Staff:** Is the staff trained in supervised visitation and exchange, domestic violence, mental health, the effect of domestic violence on children, and substance abuse?
- **Sensitivity:** Does the staff attempt to understand the family's unique safety needs and take them into consideration when providing services?

