

CHILD ACCESS AND VISITATION SERVICES INCLUDE:

Case intake and Assessment:

Obtaining initial information to determine problems and barriers to visitation, and setting a plan of action to intervene.

Group Parenting Education:

Group instruction for one or both parents to provide legal information, guidance on interacting with the other parent respectfully, and guidance on understanding child behavior at different age levels.

Counseling/individual education:

A session to address individual problems which are specific barriers to visitation.

Co-parenting Education Sessions and the Development of

Parenting Plans: A meeting between the non-custodial parent and the custodial parent with a neutral third party to establish a schedule for visits and exchanges of the child(ren) from one parent to another.

Supervised visitation: Visitation observed by a trained professional.

Monitored visitation:

Setting up a visitation session for the non-custodial parent. A social worker schedules and follows up the visitation by phone contacts with each parent. For visitation sessions arranged by the parents without staff assistance, follow up of the visitation by phone contacts with each parent is provided.

Neutral drop off/pick up sites for child visitation

– A mutual safe site is provided for one parent to bring the child to deliver to the other parent. This is set up so that there is no contact between the parents. (available in Dublin, Eastman, Sandersville, & Swainsboro)

LEGAL SERVICES ARE NOT INCLUDED AS PART OF THIS PROGRAM'S SERVICES.

Basic Visitation Rights:

- When the father is married to the mother, he has the right to visit his child if he becomes separated from the mother.
- If the father and mother are not married to each other, the father needs to legitimate his child to establish his legal right to visitation.

What does “legitimate” child mean?

When a child's parents are married to each other, even if the parents married each other after the child was born, the child is considered “legitimate.” A legitimate child:

- Has full legal rights as the child of both the father and the mother.
- Can inherit property from both parents.
- May qualify for social security benefits if the father should die.

A child who was born outside of marriage:

- Has full legal rights as the child of the mother only.
- Can only inherit property from the mother.

How does a father legitimate his child?

- Through a court process, fathers may obtain the same rights they would have had automatically if they were married to the mother. This legal process is called legitimation.
- If the mother consents, an unwed father may sign to establish paternity of his child on the paternity affidavit form at the hospital or at the Health Department for up to a year after the child is born. This process may assist the father in legitimating his child through the court process if the parents were never married to each other.

Do unwed fathers have visitation rights?

- When married parents divorce, the parents have equal rights to custody and visitation with their children until a court makes an order about custody or visitation.
- If the parents are not married to each other and the father has not legitimated the child, only the mother has custody and control of the child. This means the father does not have the right to have visitation with the child without the mother's permission.

Does it matter if the father's name is on the birth certificate or if he pays child support?

- No, being listed on the birth certificate or paying child support does not give visitation or custody rights to the unwed father in Georgia.

What if the unwed father has been taken to court for child support?

- If the court orders a father to pay child support, he may feel that it should give him visitation rights. Payment of child support does not give this right.

How does the unwed father get rights to visitation or custody?

- A father may file a petition to legitimate his child with the clerk of court in the Superior Court of the county where the mother and child live.
- At the time the father files for legitimation, he can also petition the court for visitation or custody rights.
- If the mother does not allow the visitation after the court has ordered it, the father may file a motion for contempt of court.

What if the unwed father cannot afford to hire a lawyer for court?

A father may choose to file the action on his own. The following web sites have legal forms and instructions for legitimation and visitation.

www.legalaid-ga.org
www.icandocs.org
www.eighthdistrict.org

A father who cannot afford to pay the court filing fees that are required through the self-filing process may choose to complete and file Poverty Affidavit forms to request waiver of court filing fees.

Who is eligible to receive the Child Access and Visitation Services?

- Those with active cases through the Division of Child Support Services.
- Noncustodial parents or custodial parents may call for services.
- The father OR the mother should live within the area served by this program and the other parent must reside within the State of Georgia.

SERVICES ARE PROVIDED BY:

TLC Children's Services

Teddy Drakes, Coordinator

**1347 N. Jefferson St.
Dublin, GA 31021
478-275-8100, ext. 3**



Division of Child Support Services

(Revised February 2018)

Child Access and Visitation Services



Provided in Dublin, Eastman, Sandersville, and Swainsboro

These services are offered through contracts with the Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Child Support Services. Funding comes from the Administration for Children and Families.