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**SUPERVISED ACCESS:
A QUALITATIVE PROGRAMME EVALUATION**

By

Bonnie Gagné
B.A , University of Waterloo, 1993

THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of Social Work
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Master of Social Work degree
Wilfrid Laurier University
1996

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative evaluation examined the custodial and noncustodial parents' and children's experiences of using a supervised access programme. There were a total of forty-three interviews completed using open-ended questions. Both custodial and noncustodial parents clearly reported that if supervised access was not available, the child(ren) would not have contact with the noncustodial parent. In general, parents were grateful for the service being offered. Unfortunately, in some cases, the parents stated that the programme acted as an obstacle in allowing the family to progress. With respect to the children, even though custodial and noncustodial parents attempted to lessen the impact of their marital situation on their children by using the programme, the children were still affected. Finally, this evaluation can impact the policies of and, therefore, possibly alter the programme format and its implementation. In addition, the parents recommended changes to the present supervised access programme and policy which are discussed in this evaluation.

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INTRODUCTION

This evaluation will explore the experiences of separating and divorcing families who use a supervised access programme, more specifically Child and Parent Place, in the Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge area. This programme evaluation looked at the following questions: "Tell me what it's been like for you being in a supervised access programme at Child and Parent Place?" "How do you think supervised access is affecting your child?" "How do you think supervised access is affecting your relationship with your child?" "If supervised access was not available, how would this affect (a) you; (b) your child?" "What changes would you like to see made to the present supervised access format?" "Are there any other comments about the programme, or your experiences with the programme?" and, for the children, "What is it like for you to come here to visit your mommy or daddy?"

This programme comes under the mandate of the Ministry of the Attorney General. According to the Attorney General's Office (1993), there has been an increase in child access disputes, consequently family courts are ordering more parents to use supervised access until the court has reached a decision about parental access to the child (rer.). Therefore, there is a need for services which facilitate this emotionally demanding, legal process (Straus & Alda, 1994). To counter this problem, supervised access programmes were created to provide a

service to Ontario's Family Courts and parents who were having difficulty settling child access disputes.

Unfortunately, during the process of divorce or separation, there can be a tendency for the parent who has custody of the child(ren) to prevent the other parent from seeing his or her child(ren) (Pearson & Anhalt, 1993, p. 151). Research indicates that the child's well being is better supported if they have contact with both parents even though the parents are separated or divorced (Hess, 1986). The issue at hand is that the parents are separated or divorced from each other, not from the children. Therefore, consistent contact between the parent and the child(ren) is still a vital component in the child's life (Kline, Tschann, Johnson, & Wallerstein, 1989). The children need to see their father and mother on a continuous basis, unless the parent poses a danger to the child's emotional or physical well being or safety (i.e. abduction).

To assist parents to remain in contact with their children while settling child access disputes, the Attorney General of Ontario created a number of supervised access centres in Ontario. In 1992, Attorney General Howard Hampton and Women's Issues Minister Marion Boyd announced that they would be allocating two million dollars in funding for thirteen community organizations across Ontario which would be providing supervised access services and exchanges (News Release, 1994, see Appendix A). As part of a two-year pilot project, these centres would assist separating and divorcing families in carrying out access arrangements ordered by the court (News Release, 1994).

The question that must be asked is: "What is a supervised access programme?" Supervised access programmes provide two main services. One service involves supervising a noncustodial parent (the

parent who does not have custody of the child) who needs to visit his or her child under supervised conditions. For example, a paid staff or volunteer observes the noncustodial parent and child during the visit. These supervised visits occur at a neutral site where the custodial parent drops off the child(ren) so that he or she can visit with the noncustodial parent and the custodial parent leaves. The intent of this service is to ensure the child's and/or the mother's safety. The other service is supervised exchanges. Supervised exchanges are used when there is a great deal of unresolved conflict between the custodial and noncustodial parents. Like supervised visits, a neutral site is used and staff are used to facilitate the supervised exchanges. Using a neutral site to exchange the child(ren) for visits makes the access visits easier to arrange and reduces the tension for the child. Essentially, only the exchange is supervised; the visit between the noncustodial parent and child occurs elsewhere. Ninety to ninety-five percent of families who use Child and Parent Place are court ordered. Essentially, the judge has created a court order specifying that the custodial parent will bring the child(ren) to a supervised access centre where the noncustodial parent will be supervised during the visits (see Appendix B). However, there is a small percentage of parents (approximately five percent) who mutually agree to use the site without court intervention.

In 1994, the Ministry of Attorney General permanently funded a supervised access centre in the Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge area and in other areas of Ontario. The annual operating budget for the Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge supervised access programme, known as Child and Parent Place (CAPP), is approximately ninety thousand dollars (Child and Parent Place Operating Budget Outline,

1993). The Ministry of the Attorney General in 1993 contributed eighty-five thousand dollars and the remaining five thousand dollars came from Lutherwood Child and Family Foundation (Child and Parent Place, Operating Budget Outline, 1993). To give an indication of programme growth, in 1992 the number of visits between the noncustodial parent and child was four hundred and eighty-one. Furthermore, in June 1992, Child and Parent Place expanded and opened a supervised access programme in Cambridge. In 1993, the number of visits completed for the year was seven hundred and twelve. By March 1994 the number of completed visits was already seven hundred and ninety-seven, which was nearly a four-fold increase over 1993 (Monthly Agency Service Statistics, 1994). Presently, there are a total of fifty-seven families involved in the programme. In addition, all but six are fathers who visit their children under supervised conditions or use supervised exchanges.

With respect to the operation of the programme, there are three paid staff, a Programme Coordinator and two Family Workers, who all work on a part-time basis. The programme coordinator works Tuesday through Friday. Some of the tasks of the Programme Coordinator are: scheduling families, mediating between parents to reschedule families, contacting lawyers, and completing the intake process. The two family workers are the individuals who supervise the visits and exchanges during the weekends. The majority of the family workers' hours are spent on the weekend supervising the visits and exchanges. However, one of the Family Workers assists the Programme Coordinator once a week during the weekday. The combined number of hours the staff work are seventy hours per week.

Along with the paid staff are volunteers who also supervise the visits between the noncustodial parent and child. There are approximately fifteen volunteers. Without the volunteers, the programme would have difficulty serving the number of families who are supervised at one time.

To cover some of the operating costs, parents are requested to pay a twenty dollar fee for each visit if they are able to financially. However, Child and Parent Place's philosophy is that a family will not be turned away because they are unable to pay. There are families who are unable to pay. In situations where the parents can pay, the fee is based upon what the parent can pay up to the maximum of twenty dollars for a supervised visit and ten dollars for a supervised exchange. As to who pays the fee, the court sometimes stipulates who will pay. For example, the Family Court may order the noncustodial parent to pay the full fee. In other cases, the Family Court will order both parents to share the cost. The noncustodial parent will pay ten dollars and the custodial parent will pay the remaining ten dollars. As well, there are other situations where one parent voluntarily pays the fee.

The following outlines a few of the Child and Parent Place (CAPP) objectives.

- 1) To assist children and their parents through times of great stress to maintain the ties the children have with both parents.
- 2) To provide a neutral, child-focused, safe environment for on-site visits and exchange purposes.
- 3) To reduce the conflict and tension surrounding access to children of separated and divorced parents.

- 4) To function as a neutral drop-off and return point for the child.
- 5) To help ensure the physical and emotional safety and security of all including children, parents, volunteers and staff.
- 6) To improve the well-being of children and parents.
- 7) To result in improved attitudes to visits on the part of all concerned, as a result of the programme's neutrality with respect to parents and its focus on the child's needs. (Funding Proposal, 1994)

(For further information about Child and Parent Place refer to Appendix A, Service Description.)

A review of the literature indicates there has been little research exploring this type of social service programme (Straus & Alda, 1993). There is no qualitative research which highlights the experiences of the custodial and noncustodial parents and children in supervised access programmes or their satisfaction with these programmes. There is no doubt that further qualitative research is needed to explore what are the experiences of families using a supervised access programme. This study is important because it explores the views of families using the supervised access programme (CAPP) in the Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge area. During times of governmental fiscal restraints, the effectiveness of programmes is always questioned. This study will also provide important feedback to service providers on how the programme might be modified to better meet their needs than at present.

This evaluation report is arranged in the following manner. The next section will be the literature review which highlights the research surrounding separation, divorce, and child access. Following

the literature review, the methodology that was used to conduct the evaluation will be outlined. Next will be a presentation of the findings, essentially the custodial and noncustodial parents' and children's perspectives of their experiences using Child and Parent Place. The report will then close with a discussion of the data and a conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

The limited published material on supervised access describes the structure and format of various programmes in the United States (Stocker, 1992; James & Gibbon, 1991; Straus & Alda, 1994). Stocker (1992) describes a Supervised Visitation Project which is run by the Victim Assistance Programme in Akron, Ohio. The programme was originally funded by the Governor's Office of Criminal Justice and other local funding sources; however, visiting parents are now paying twenty dollars per hour.

According to Stocker (1992), the programme's purpose is to provide a safe and positive environment for contact between the noncustodial parents and their children. The philosophy of the programme is that the noncustodial parent is just as important to the child's post-divorce adjustment as the custodial parent (Stocker, 1992). This position is also supported by the Committee on the Family of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry:

Providing access to both parents helps both children and parents deal with feelings that are evoked if the child looks like, is named for or reminds the custodial parent of the divorced spouse. Since the divorced spouse has been rejected, the child may be vulnerable to anxieties about being abandoned or rejected himself. If the noncustodial parent is accessible, the child will benefit from that parent's support of the consequent affirmation of his own identity (Stocker, 1992, p. 353).

Stocker concludes that one way to realize the objective of permitting a child to retain contact with both parents, even when the divorce is particularly difficult, is through a supervised visitation programme.

The format of the Akron programme involves visitation which consists of having a qualified and trained supervisor participate in every minute of each visit. According to Stocker, this format creates a sense of security for the child and trained supervisors provide a positive role model for parents which leads to families progressing through the programme. The visits which are two hours in length are held at the office of the Victim Assistance Programme on alternate weekends between 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Supervised visitation is described as "a safe, hassle-free two-hour visit between a noncustodial parent and his or her child under the supervision of a compassionate, qualified adult who protects the child from any form of threat or abuse" (Stocker, 1992, p. 354). Furthermore, the first four visits must be held on the premises of the Victim Assistance Programme and are for the noncustodial parent only. If there are no problems during these visits, the noncustodial parent and child are supervised outside of the Victim Assistance Programme meeting facilities. The noncustodial parent and child are able, along with a supervisor, to go to a restaurant, a park, or a shopping mall. Other significant family members may be included — grandparents, aunts, and cousins — on these later visits. The custodial parent is informed of what is being planned or who will be included. This programme, however, does not allow visits to occur in private homes. This approach is seen as preventing the child from reliving the abuse or being put at risk of further abuse.

The programme's clientele involve children ranging from the ages of nine to seventeen with an equal proportion of girls and boys.

There are approximately twenty-five families in the programme, of which a quarter of the custodial parents are fathers.

Stocker goes on to discuss some of the benefits of this visitation programme. For instance, during 1992 ten noncustodial parents went from supervised to unsupervised visitation (Stocker, 1992). As previously stated, the trained supervisors act as role models for the noncustodial parent and, therefore, assist the parents in becoming better parents. However, Stocker reports that the families which remain in the programme have comfortable and happy visits, though no explanation is offered as to how she reached this conclusion in her article. The article did state that the program needs an objective, behavioural instrument that can be used by all supervisors in all visits which adds authenticity and consistency to the evaluation process. This evaluation would assess the small and subtle improvements in the noncustodial parent and child's relationship (Stocker, 1992).

Other published material relating to supervised access explores the procedures that an agency develops in order to lessen serious conflicts between parents and between parents and children. James and Gibson (1991) highlight the importance of having clear and understandable conditions (guidelines) in writing which need to be followed by noncustodial parents and children during visits. In Fairfax, California a supervised access programme outlines the guidelines which they used during parent-child visitation. With respect to the child, the guidelines are:

1. The child is free to have an enjoyable experience with the visiting parent,
2. He/she is physically safe, and

3. The child is not exposed to behaviours that are unduly stressful and emotionally upsetting.

The following guidelines attempt to balance the needs of the parents with the needs and concerns of the child.

1. The parent is not to be left alone with the child or to engage in whispered conversation.
2. The parent can invite but not demand/coerce physical contact with the child.
3. Gifts for the child or inviting others to a visit must have the prior approval of the supervisor.
4. References to past events and future plans should be avoided in discussions with the child. The visit should focus on the present so that the child experiences a calm and pleasurable time.
5. Parent-child interactions and behaviours will be documented for each visit.
6. In the initial interview, the custodial parent will include time for the supervisor to get acquainted with the child.

If the parent does not follow these guidelines or jeopardizes the physical or emotional well-being of the child, the visit is automatically stopped.

As well, James and Gibson (1991) point out that there are certain objectives that a supervised visitation programme should have. These following objectives are some of the most common:

1. Supervision provides an opportunity for a relationship while safeguarding against abuse or exposure to other behaviours which are unduly stressful or emotionally upsetting.
2. The custodial parent or other caregiver is assured the child is protected during contact.

3. The parent who poses the threat, be it actual or perceived, maintains a relationship while gaining protection against accusations that improper behaviour is continuing.
4. The visits can document the quality of the interactions of both parents with the child. Observed interactions can serve as indicators of the quality of the relationship and may be considered during the decision-making process. They are insufficient for determining whether or not abuse occurred in the past (James & Gibson, 1991).

James and Gibson believe if there are clear and understandable objectives and conditions, there will be less opportunity for disagreement between parents and between parents and staff. Therefore, there is a greater degree of cooperation. The level of anger and resentment by both parents due to their involvement in a supervised visitation programme can act as a catalyst for disagreements which often directly impacts the child (James & Gibson, 1991); consequently, jeopardizing the child's well being.

A recent article traced the evolution of supervised access across the United States and Canada. Straus and Alda (1994) acknowledge that separated parents and courts need a format that would assist noncustodial parents to remain in contact with their children while settling child access disputes. As well, they point out that with the natural evolution of supervised access programmes there has been a tendency for various programme formats to develop.

Straus and Alda (1994) make an important distinction between families who use a supervised access programme due to the involvement of state protection agencies and parents settling child access due to a separation or divorce. This distinction can also be seen in the supervised access programme in the Kitchener-Waterloo and

Cambridge area. There are families who were involved with Family and Children's Services and needed to seek supervised access because of allegations of physical or sexual abuse or poor parenting skills. On the other hand, there are parents who used supervised access because they were attempting to set some type of visitation schedule and used the programme as a temporary measure. As a family worker, this is an important distinction to make, especially in determining the degree to which the visit is supervised between the noncustodial parent and child(ren).

Leading from this point, Straus and Alda highlight some of the characteristics of supervised child access programmes. They distinguish between three basic types of supervision which are used in nearly every child access programme. The most intensive supervision involves a supervisor with the parent and child at all times who can hear details of the conversation and observe the interaction minute by minute. This approach is used when there is a chance the child will be coerced during the visit or there are safety issues (abduction of the child). This approach is used at Child and Parent Place. If the noncustodial parent is alleged to have physically or sexually abused the child, there is one-to-one supervision. Either a staff member or volunteer is present during the entire visit.

The second method of supervision is therapeutic supervision. This does not happen at the supervised access programme in Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge. According to Straus and Alda, a trained clinician carries out parent-child treatment during the visit. This approach can also be used as an assessment for the court.

The least intrusive method of monitoring the visit is often used in the Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge programme and other supervised access programmes in Ontario. This monitoring involves a family worker being close by, occasionally observing, or just listening in through a sound system. (The sound system is not used at the Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge programme.) Often there are a number of families being monitored in a common space or outdoor play area.

In the United States, some programmes operate only with professional staff who are usually trained mental health providers with a graduate degree (Straus & Alda, 1994). Others depend upon trained volunteers to help staff during visits between noncustodial parents and children. With respect to the programmes in Ontario, staffing varies from programme to programme. However, volunteers play a vital role in supervising the visits in all Ontario's programmes.

Finally, Straus and Alda (1994) discuss the issue of service fees. The authors point out that fee structures vary from programme to programme in the United States. The fees tend to range from fifteen to twenty-five dollars for a one to two hour visit. In many of the programmes, there is a sliding fee scale. However, the cost of operating such a programme is about eighty dollars per hour when using professional trained staff. In programmes which use volunteer supervisors, the cost is between sixty and seventy dollars per hour of operation (Straus & Alda, 1994). In Ontario the fees vary.

Overall Stocker (1992) and Straus and Alda's (1994) research is primarily a programme description and history of supervised access in the United States and Canada. Straus and Alda concluded that there is

a need for funding more comprehensive research on the characteristics of supervised child access programmes and services, their costs, and the outcomes of using their services for children, their parents, and the court system.

With respect to a deeper understanding of supervised access programmes in Ontario, the Attorney General of Ontario requested Norpark to evaluate supervised access programmes. In July 1994, their report was released to the programme directors of the various supervised access programmes in Ontario. The evaluation's general objective was to provide the Ministry of the Attorney General with a description and assessment of the fourteen supervised access centres in Ontario. The cost of the evaluation was \$130,000 and took eighteen months to complete. It concluded that there were high levels of satisfaction with the pilot project by both custodial and noncustodial parents who were using the programme. Family lawyers and judges believe that supervised access saves the legal system time and had a positive attitude and high levels of satisfaction with the programme. Both judges and lawyers also reported that if there was not a supervised access programme in the community, informal access arrangements were ordered and agreed; however, they proved to be unsatisfactory; and supervised access provides a safe environment for programme participants (Norpark Evaluation, 1994, p. xi).

The methods Norpark used to collect information were: monthly statistics reports; a survey of custodial and noncustodial parents; interviews with staff, community agencies, parent organizations, advisory board members, and community groups; interviews with children, judges, and lawyers. The main instrument

used to collect information from the parents was a structured questionnaire.

Five years prior to the Norpark evaluation, Child and Parent Place was involved in another evaluation conducted by Mark Pancer, a professor from Wilfrid Laurier University, and Gary Edwards, a Research Associate from the same university (1989). The purpose of this evaluation was: to describe the programme's services, and the roles, responsibilities and training given to programme staff; to examine the reasons for using the service, and the ways in which clients come into contact with the programme; to describe the families and individuals who use the programme's services; to assess the utilization of the services offered; and to determine the satisfaction of those who utilize the programme with the services they have received (Pancer & Edwards, 1989). According to the evaluation, parents who use Child and Parent Place found it to be a needed service, worthwhile and effective (Pancer & Edwards, 1989). In addition, noncustodial parents were highly satisfied with most of the programme's operation and felt that the programme had a positive impact on their relationships with their children. However, the custodial parents were not as satisfied. Pancer and Edwards (1989) attributed this finding to the possibility that custodial parents did not want noncustodial parents to have access to the children. Here again, is an evaluation that examined the organization, staffing, and client's level of satisfaction and outcomes using a structured questionnaire.

As yet, no study has explored the subjective experiences of custodial and noncustodial parents and their children using a supervised access programme qualitatively. I think this can be

explained by the fact that supervised access is a new social service programme in the United States and Canada and very little research of any description has been done in the area. As well, supervised access in Ontario has been a pilot project for the last few years and has just been given core funding. Research such as Stocker's (1992) has examined programme objectives, structure, and format, but without looking at how these objectives, structure, and format impact the relationships between parents and their children who use a supervised access programme, essentially the family. This research will take a step forward in that I will be examining how supervised access directly impacts the relationships of custodial and noncustodial parents and their children. I will also be gathering more indepth data which will tell me not only whether the different stakeholders are satisfied with the service provided, but how they would suggest improving it if they were not satisfied.

Research surrounding the issue of separation and divorce and the impact these issues have on the family leads to the rationale for supervised access. Research indicates when parents are less distressed about their separation, divorce, custodial arrangements or access, the better the transition is for the child(ren) during this time (Bray, 1991; Hess, 1986). Essentially, the child's well being and self-esteem are not as damaged. As well, other research suggests the more contact there is between the noncustodial parent and the child, the better it is for the child's emotional and psychological well being (Hodges, Landis, Day, & Oderberg, 1991). Research states that in the majority of cases it is important for the child's self-esteem to have contact with the noncustodial parent (Hess, 1986). Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) point

out that their research indicates the father has a major impact on the child's self esteem and affects the child's sense of well being.

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1989) state that children of divorce experience the problem of trying to find the needed parent at needed times. For example, the boy who is beginning school may have a father who only has access once a month and no contact outside that visit or the adolescent girl who visits her mother for three hours bi-weekly and is not present for the daughter's first date. Consequently, visiting parents and children miss the opportunities to share in the special occasion together. Children need one particular parent more at a developmental transition than at other times (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Unfortunately, visiting parents and visiting children may not align their visiting times with the important developmental events in the child's life. Essentially, supervised access is to help during these special times. As well, supervised access is to help during the transition of separation and divorce, especially in facilitating child access. However, therapeutically speaking, can supervised access help in the building of the parent-child relationship if supervised access is continued over a long period of time?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Through the use of qualitative analysis, more specifically grounded theory, I explored the views, perceptions and experiences of the custodial and noncustodial parents and children within a supervised access programme in the Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge area.

My reason for selecting a qualitative method can be explained by Patton's argument of "a paradigm of choices" (Patton, 1982). Patton states that there should be "a paradigm of choice — which recognizes that different methods are appropriate for different situations" (Patton, 1982, p. 195). Some methods are better able to reflect the participants in their own terms than other methods. I felt that the qualitative method fit this research because of its natural exploratory approach. This research inquires about the internal dynamics of families who are involved in the supervised access programme. As well, the research examines programme implementation, essentially what are the clients' experiences in the programme. Another factor in choosing a qualitative approach involved looking at collecting descriptive data and reporting the information in terms of differing perspectives among the custodial and noncustodial parents and their children. In addition, the lack of a proven quantitative instrument that would reflect the experiences of the programme participant led me to choose a qualitative approach. Finally, my goal was not to look for a cause and effect relationship among the research findings. In relation to this last point, finding a quantitative measuring instrument, this research

needed to go beyond measuring a level of programme participants' satisfaction or measuring a variable such as the number of positive contacts between parent and child during a visit. Finally, I did not want the programme participants to fit their views, perceptions, and experiences into a researcher's categories. I wanted the parents to create their own categories.

For the parents to discuss their experiences, I used the following questions as outlined in the interview guide (see Appendix D):

Custodial and Noncustodial Parents:

1. Tell me what it's been like for you being in a supervised access programme at Child and Parent Place?
2. How do you think supervised access is affecting your child?
3. How do you think supervised access is affecting your relationship with your child?
4. If supervised access was not available, how would this affect:
 - (a) you
 - (b) your child?
5. What changes would you like to see made to the present supervised access format?
6. Are there any other comments about the programme, or your experiences with the programme?

Children:

1. What is it like for you to come here to visit your mommy or daddy?
2. Would you like to draw what it is like for you to come here?

Sample

This population was easily accessible due to the researchers' position as family workers (Debi McKinnon and Bonnie Gagné) at the Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge sites. We have the experience of working with these families for a period of time and have built a level of trust with them.

Presently at Child and Parent Place, there are a total of eighty-six families using the programme. Seventy-eight information letters were given out at the Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge sites.

The sample consisted of forty-three individual interviews which involved present and past users of the programme (refer to the following chart for the break down of the sample). The number of complete families in the study was six. All the families, except for two, use the Cambridge site only. This can be attributed to the fact that the Kitchener-Waterloo programme services younger children (below the age of three years old) or infants and, consequently, were not suitable for the study. As well, two of the six families use both the Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge sites for their supervised exchanges. In that sense, the sample was not evenly divided between the two centres. Nevertheless, the parents were able to provide their views about the differences in the two centres. There was no age criterion for the parents; however, children who were part of the research had to be able to verbally communicate their thoughts and feelings about seeing their parent under supervised conditions. The child's ability and willingness to take part in the interviews was determined by the parents. As well, the family was involved in this supervised access programme for at least three months. The reason for this criterion was

that the family had the opportunity to have a few visits under supervised conditions. This allowed time for the family to experience the process and, therefore, generate personal thoughts, opinions and feelings about supervised access.

Obtaining Consent

Prior to conducting the evaluation, the coordinator of supervised access programmes in Ontario agreed to have the evaluation completed. As well, the director of Community Services and the programme coordinator of Child and Parent Place (the supervised access programme in Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge) also agreed to have the research conducted. Finally, to obtain consent from the parents, an information letter and consent form was initially distributed to the families by the family worker who supervised their visits. Upon reflection it was thought that coerced consent might result from this process due to the relationship between the family worker and the families they supervise. Therefore, to prevent an element of coerced consent the parent was asked the following question prior to starting the interview: "Do you feel coerced, forced, or feel a level of obligation to take part in the evaluation?" In all cases, the interviewer was the family worker who did not supervise their family visits. As well, the parents were asked to review the consent form once again and sign a new consent form, if they still wished to take part in the evaluation. None of the parents stated that they felt they were forced to take part in the evaluation and all signed a new consent form.

Figure 1
Research Sample
K-W and Cambridge Combined

Length of Time in Programme	3 Months To 3 Years
Number of Non Custodial Parents (NCP)	*16 9 - K - W 7 - Cambridge
Number of Custodial Parents (CP)	*15 7 - K - W 8 - Cambridge
Number of Children	12 2 - K - W 10 - Cambridge
Number of Complete Families (CP, NCP, CHILD) Interviewd	6 1 - K - W 5 - Cambridge

- * NOTE: 1. One of the NCP and CP were past users of the programme
 2. Children's ages ranged from four to ten years of age
 3. Two of the five families from Cambridge use both Cambridge and K-W

Interview Process

The goal of the interview was to provide a framework within which the respondents can express their own understandings in their own terms (Patton, 1987). So, if further clarification was needed by the researcher or if the parent or child wanted to change their answers or add any new information they had the opportunity to do so at the end of the first interview. They also had the opportunity to review their interview to determine if I had accurately understood their experiences. All interviews were taped and all questions were open-ended (see Appendix D for interview schedules). The interview involved the following procedure:

1. Each parent was interviewed separately in a private room by a family worker who normally did not supervise the family. The custodial parent's interview occurred while the noncustodial parent was visiting the child. Prior to or at the end of that visit, the noncustodial parent was interviewed. On the next visit, the child was interviewed prior to the beginning of his/her visit with the noncustodial parent or at the end of the visit. In some families where there was more than one child, the noncustodial parent allowed the interview to occur during the visit. With this approach, the noncustodial parent had the opportunity to spend one-to-one time with the other child(ren). This format allowed for confidentiality, safety, and a degree of trust.
2. The children's interviews were conducted without the parent being present. This format was used because the

parents' presence can be intimidating for the children when asked about their thoughts and feelings about seeing their noncustodial parents. Neither parent had access to the information discussed by the children during the interview. This was to protect the child's sense of security. Finally, at the parents' recommendation the child was interviewed by the family worker who would have contact with the child on a consistent basis. Parents felt that the children would be more comfortable with somebody that they knew.

The interview involved asking custodial and noncustodial parents questions (see Appendix D) which elicited their perspective about supervised access at Child and Parent Place. Furthermore, there was one question which was designed to suit the child's level of development (see Appendix D). In questioning children, we were careful not to make the question too complicated. In two cases, the children drew pictures to communicate their experiences at Child and Parent Place. Different children drew a picture and described the meanings to the interviewer.

The use of set open-ended questions allows each interviewee to answer questions worded the same way by both interviewers. Therefore, the chance of a degree of bias is lessened between the two interviewers, because interviewers may have a tendency to ask questions on the same topic but in different ways. Therefore, set, open-ended questions prevented this. This type of format allowed for systematic and thorough data to be collected (Patton, 1987). These questions were set prior to the interview; however, spontaneity was part of the informal conversational interview, which means that there

was also some difference in the questioning from one parent to the next and between the two interviewers.. The final question: "Are there any other comments about the programme or your experiences with the programme?" allowed for individual differences in experiences and opinions to be discussed.

Coding

The research participants were numbered and labelled custodial parent (CP) or noncustodial parent (NCP), and the child(ren). For example, a custodial parent who is a mother and uses the Cambridge programme would be coded as "CP 023." If the research participant was a noncustodial father who used the Kitchener-Waterloo programme, this particular father would be coded "NCP 014". The middle number informed the researcher of which programme site the parent came from; the even number "2" in "CP 023" indicates that the parent used the Cambridge programme and the odd number "1" in "NCP 014" indicates that the parent is from the Kitchener-Waterloo programme. As well, the audio tapes were labelled and coded in the same manner. Children were labelled, for example, "Child 023" or "Child 014". This method also corresponded with the parent's numerical code.

With respect to the individual summary reports, the parents were informed of their individual code. They were also informed that all research material would be coded. The researcher explained to the parents that the code allowed for confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The initial organizing of the parents' and children's data involved an open coding process. Open coding involves the analysis of a single word, phrase, or sentence and the making of comparisons

between incidents (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For every paragraph, or block or line of information that the parents and children gave, the following questions were asked: "What is this?" or "What does it represent?" From the paragraphs, blocks or lines of information, certain key words became apparent. For example, the word "safety" is talked about by the parents and children. Consequently, there were certain categories, themes, and patterns that developed and were labelled.

Open coding serves three purposes: (1) it helps one see the emerging theme; (2) it stimulates the finding of themes in future open coding; and (3) it uses the list to build a universe of all themes in the study, which reorganizes, sorts, combines, discards or extends in further analysis (Joint Committee of Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1994). From point number three, the process of reorganizing, sorting, combining, discarding, or extending can lead to axial coding.

Axial coding involves reviewing and examining the initial codes that were generated during the open coding stage. This process looks at the possible causes, consequences, conditions, interactions and the processes of the various themes. After the procedure of open coding, the concepts can be put together to highlight the conditions, context, strategies, process or interaction that occur within a supervised access programme (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Reporting of Data

There were a number of written reports during this evaluation process. The first report involved an individualized summary of the parent's interview. The summary was released only to that parent.

Therefore, each parent did not know the interview contents of the other parent. As well, the child's information presented during the interview was not released to either parent. After the individualized summaries, the final report identified the research participants as "custodial parent" (father/mother), "noncustodial parent" (father/mother), and "child" which allowed for confidentiality when direct quotes were used.

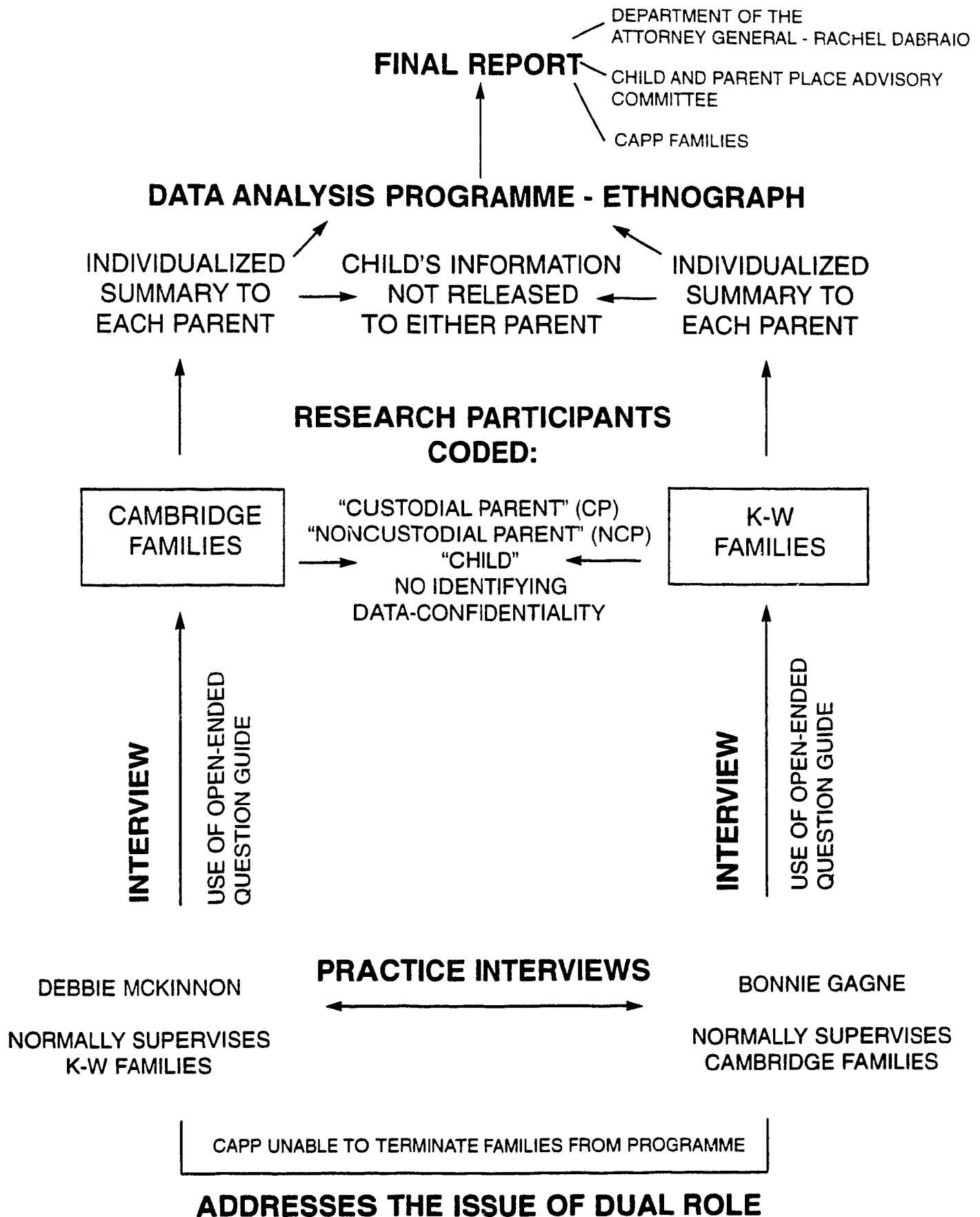
After this initial step, two additional reports were presented. A mid-term report was presented verbally to the Child and Parent Place Advisory Committee. This report reflected the parents' views of the programme. Upon completion of the evaluation, a final report will be presented to the Attorney General and Child and Parent Place Advisory Committee (refer to Figure 2, p. 29).

Delimitations and Limitations

Within any research design there can be limitations which need to be acknowledged. One of these limitations stems from the availability of funding to conduct this evaluation. Ideally, when examining how supervised access affects custodial and noncustodial parents and children, more than one supervised access centre should be included in the study. In this study two centres are being used; however, these centres are run by the same agency and have the same programme format, objectives, and structure. Presently in Ontario there are fourteen supervised access centres (Straus & Alda, 1994) and each of these centres has a different programme format, objectives, and structure. Stemming from this aspect, this particular study is only examining one supervised access programme hence perhaps these research findings may not reflect the custodial and noncustodial

FIGURE 2
DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND REPORTING PLAN

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parents and children's experiences, views and perceptions that families are having in other supervised access centres in Ontario.

If we look at the work of Schofield (1993), the issue of generalizability is reframed by asking the question: "How can we design qualitative studies in a way that maximizes their generalizability (p. 208)?" She suggests that the issue of typicality can increase the level of generalizability or transferability/adaptability. Basically, does the site selection and sample have things in common with other sites? In this evaluation, on these two dimensions there is a degree of transferability. This point is based on the fact that in other supervised access centres in Ontario, you will find custodial and noncustodial parents and children and a neutral third party who may be paid staff and/or volunteers supervising the visit between the noncustodial parent and child, and having the visits occur at the same site, and the access centre's policies are based upon the Ministry of the Attorney General's operational guidelines for supervised access.

If we also examine Lincoln and Guba's (1981) concept of "fittingness" (p. 118), the criterion of fittingness relates to what degree the situation being evaluated matches other situations. Essentially, what is the degree of fittingness between the two contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1981, p. 119)? Therefore, based on Schofield and Lincoln and Guba's concepts, typicality and fittingness, this evaluation can provide a deeper understanding of supervised access that can be applied to other supervised access centres.

Using a qualitative research design will allow a description of the process or a pattern of interaction within which the Waterloo Region programme is the main focus of this research. This research

explores how a programme affects familial relationships and processes. Within the parameters of that setting, population, and theoretical framework, the research will be valid. This research was based upon data which was gathered from the actual views, perceptions, and experiences of those participants who use Child and Parent Place.

Along with analyzing the custodial and noncustodial parents' and children's views and perceptions, the issue of research bias must be addressed.

Ethical Considerations

My position as a family worker as well as a conductor of this evaluation can present an ethical issue of "dual role". As a family worker, I have known the families in Cambridge for a minimum of three months. To address this issue of dual role, the family worker who deals with the Kitchener-Waterloo access programme interviewed the families who are involved in the Cambridge access programme. My role was to interview the families who use the Kitchener-Waterloo access programme. I have limited contact with the Kitchener-Waterloo families; therefore, hopefully, a possible tendency to not reveal their true experience will be less as compared to interviewing families from the Cambridge centre.

Another consideration related to the family workers' involvement with families may be the families' tendency to answer questions according to what they feel will please the family worker. Consequently, the data may not be a true reflection of what the parent's experiences are in a supervised access programme. As well, parents may want to know how the data will affect their access. Another important issue is how our role as family workers is perceived by

parents as being related to the court system. Sometimes parents see the family workers as an extension of the court, and therefore may believe their answers will be passed on to the court and affect the court's decision about the noncustodial parent's access.

To ensure that there was not a concern, I assured parents that their answers were confidential and would not be passed on to the court. To increase the trust between the parents and the interviewers, we explained our role as family workers and provided an individualized summary report of the parent's discussion during their interview. Finally, this programme does not have the authority to terminate families from using the programme. Therefore, if the family refused to cooperate or withdrew from the research, the family will continue to receive the services they normally received from the programme. On the other hand, an internal evaluator knows the programme's philosophy, policies, procedures, products, personnel, and management (Love, 1991). Therefore, an internal evaluator is the person who has knowledge about the organization, its problems, its goals, the type of service being offered, and its people which can be considered an argument in support of internal programme evaluation (Love, 1991). Stemming from Love's argument, my position as a family worker allowed me to understand the philosophy, policies, procedures, products, personnel, and management of Child and Parent Place's programme. Hence, I understand the internal processes (philosophy, policies, procedures, and management) which are part of the organization.

Trustworthiness

The important issue which remains is: how I am going to ensure a level of "trustworthiness" in my research. Lincoln and Guba describe "trustworthiness" as having collected data which is to be found credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Essentially, Lincoln and Guba ask the question: "How am I going to persuade the reader that the research findings are worth paying attention to and worth taking account of?". Lincoln and Guba outline four areas that need to be addressed in order to establish a level of trustworthiness. These areas which are addressed in my evaluation are: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability which all lead to trustworthiness. (See Trustworthiness Chart, Figure 3, p. 37)

Lincoln and Guba outline specific techniques which can assist the researcher in achieving a level of confidence that he/she accurately reflected the respondent's experiences in the research findings. The first technique which will be used in this research is prolonged engagement which increases the chances that a high degree of credibility will be reached. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that a researcher must have spent an amount of time which is sufficient enough to learn the environment which the researcher is about to explore. This amount of time will, hopefully, allow a degree of trust to be established between the researcher and respondents. In addition, this approach can be used as a test to challenge the researcher's values and ideas about what is happening.

As well, the issue of trust is an important factor between the researcher and the respondents. The more trust there is between both parties, the greater the "flow" of information from the respondent. As

this research is being conducted, confidentiality will be ensured and no hidden agendas will exist which can lead to mistrust. With respect to increasing the level of trust, the participant data will not be used to influence the parental access to the child or be used in court. Having been involved with this programme for three years is a definite advantage. The overall goal is to examine how supervised access is affecting separating and divorcing families in hope of improving the programme for the clientele if there is a level of discontent.

Another technique which was used to increase the level of credibility is persistent observation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Persistent observation involves focussing on the characteristics and elements in the situation that are relevant to the problem or issue. This gives greater clarification to the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, the researcher must be able to outline how he or she processed the participants' information. A reflexive journal can be used to highlight how the data processing, identifying the relevant from the irrelevant data, is completed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Essentially, the occasional occurrence may be just as important a reflection of what is happening in the supervised access programme. One such occurrence could be the noncustodial parent who remains in the programme after being granted unsupervised access.

In addition to persistent observation, I used triangulation. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), triangulation is a technique used in relation to other sources, methods, or investigators. If there is another medium which supports the naturalistic findings by the researcher, then the findings are considered to be credible. The technique which was used to a great degree in this research is the use of

other investigators. The other family worker was also involved in the research project. The other family worker interviewed the families who use the access programme in Cambridge, and I interviewed the families who use the Kitchener-Waterloo access programme. Through discussion with the family workers, I hope that a level of "honesty" will be achieved. The use of multiple researchers helps in creating a level of credibility.

The use of peer debriefing helps to increase the level of credibility as well. Having a neutral party who is not directly involved in the research allows a different perspective to examine the data. This neutral party can be the devil's advocate. This individual can probe the researcher's biases and explore the researcher's interpretations of the data. To accomplish this, I used three external sources: Professor Westhues, a joint staff meeting to examine and discuss the findings and an individual who worked outside of Child and Parent Place.

The final technique which I used is member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). That I could successfully reflect to the research participants their reality of supervised access, I think is an indication of a high level of credibility. Providing a summary of the participants' data gives many messages to the participant. One such message is that the participants are being heard and the information which they give is important and acknowledged.

The second area is transferability. Transferability relates to the possibility that an individual is able to apply this "thick description" to other areas (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There needs to be sufficient data which allows an interested party to make judgements as to whether or not these findings can be applied to other situations. However, Lincoln

and Guba (1985) clearly state that the concept of "thick description" has not been fully defined.

The two other areas contributing to trustworthiness, dependability and confirmability, can be reached by using an audit method. With respect to dependability, Lincoln and Guba examine the inquiry process. Basically, the auditor examines the inquiry process. This examination would involve the steps which were used during the data collection process. As well, the auditor examines the end result by reviewing data which support the final product or data. The auditors for this research will be Professor Westhues, Professor Fusco, and Professor Levene who will examine the data collection and inquiry process and the final product.

Finally, to address all the the issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, the use of a reflexive journal can help in auditing the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The journal can highlight what my feelings, thoughts, and ideas were during the research process. As well, the journal can reflect what thinking was behind a certain methodological decision. The journal will consist of feelings, values, and new insight as well as the factors which lead me to take a certain methodological approach. During this research project, I intended to have this journal reflect my experiences of working with a committee, a co-worker, issues surrounding data analysis, and generating and linking categories. However, my level of commitment to the journaling process prevented me from highlighting my process (Refer to Figure 3, p. 37 for the actual outcomes which occurred during this evaluation.)

FIGURE 3
TECHNIQUES USED TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

Criteria

Credibility	<u>Method Implemented in this Research</u>	<u>Possible Negative Outcome</u>	<u>Actual Outcome</u>	
Prolonged Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both family workers have been supervising access visits for minimum 1 year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Going Native" Lose perspective and, consequently, lose objectivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewing families not usually involved which allowed for a level of objectivity and insight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of the programme, however remaining neutral as much as possible
Persistent Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion of atypical data to determine relevancy Discussion with committee members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nullify certain findings too early 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion with external source and staff about voluntary use by parents with outside support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These cases are different from mandated families who use the programme
Triangulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of other investigators e.g. family worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only two family workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External source used to evaluate findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Past users of the programme interviewed Exit forms examined for common themes with present users of the programme
Peer Debriefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devil's advocate Discussion of findings with relief family worker or Professor Westhues Test hypothesis, insight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discouragement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debriefing occurred with staff and external source Each provided alternate explanations and understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents' challenged how children should be interviewed Enhancing insight for staff and evaluator
Member Checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with parents and children after the first interview to check if researchers' interpretation of the findings reflect participant's reality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could lose participants' interest if do not accurately reflect participant's reality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did not lose parents' interest Individualized summary given to CP and NCP two weeks after the interview Summary of final report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed and requested feedback about direct quotes used in final report from parents. (Parents' Section Only)
Transferability or Adaptability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thick description "Fitness" "Typicality" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not fully defined as to what constitutes "thick description" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Fittingness" (Guba and Lincoln) degree which situation studied matches other situations Other supervised access centres in Ontario Other CP and NCP and Child involved in supervised conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schoenfeld "Typicality" "How typical was this site?"
Dependability and Confirmability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit format used by research committee 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews passed onto Professor Westhues, external source, and staff 	
Reflexive	Daily Log Highlighting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal insight Methodological decisions Why a certain decision How will decision be implemented When will the decision be put into place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient time to complete journal Dedication in keeping journal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient time to give to journaling therefore use of a journal limited 	

To conclude, Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that, "No amount of member checking, triangulation, persistent observation, auditing, or whatever can ever compel; it can at best persuade" (p. 329).

Point of View

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), no researcher begins conducting research without any prior notions, ideas, or formulations. I am not different. I have reached certain conclusions about supervised access that need to be discussed before starting the research. Firstly, I believe that the noncustodial parent should remain in contact with the child, unless there are serious concerns about the child's well-being which cannot be dealt with during a supervised visit. Secondly, from my experiences of being a family worker, I have seen the parents' (both custodial and noncustodial) frustration of being involved in a supervised access programme.

With respect to access, in some cases the custodial parent is reluctant to allow the noncustodial parent to see the child(ren). On the other hand, the noncustodial parent thinks that he/she should not be supervised by a third party (family worker). Essentially, the court is forcing some type of access to occur. Consequently, the child is placed in the middle of this conflict with little or no input. If mediation was part of the supervised access programme, perhaps this could assist parents in settling child access disputes outside of a court system. Therefore, legal costs would be less and fewer parents would spend less time in court.

Unfortunately, the programme can be a revengeful medium for custodial parents. Some custodial parents hold the view that since the noncustodial parent was only granted supervised access somehow the

custodial parent has control over the noncustodial parent's access to the child. The feeling that the noncustodial parent did not get what he/she wanted, i.e. unsupervised access, empowers the custodial parent. In some cases, the parents have unresolved issues stemming from the marital breakup. These unresolved issues are brought forward in settling access disputes. Consequently, allegations of physical or sexual abuse or poor parenting skills arise. Unfortunately, the programme format sometimes contributes to the escalation of these unresolved marital issues. An example of this is the programme's requirement for permission from the custodial parent so that the child, during the visit with the noncustodial parent, can make a phone call to a noncustodial parent's relative. I think the programme needs to review these policies in some way.

Another issue that I have seen which creates problems is the families' tendency to remain in a supervised access programme for a lengthy period of time (over a year). There are a number of families at Child and Parent Place who have been using the programme for at least a year. Based on my experience as a family worker, I think a family should not be involved in the present supervised access programme format any longer than one year unless the child's needs are better met within a supervised access programme. Essentially, there should be different levels of supervision or the opportunity to conduct supervised access visits at alternate sites, such as a restaurant, park, or special event. With respect to the maximum length of time a family can remain in the programme, the family which needs further assistance from a supervised access programme after a year or has exited the programme and wishes to return will have the opportunity

to seek further assistance from the supervised access programme. An "open door" policy will exist for families who exit or who need further use of the programme.

As well, when children are ten years or older, the current sites sometimes cannot accommodate activities like fishing, playing football, or visiting a park, which these children would like to engage in with their noncustodial parents. Ironically, in some cases the court states the noncustodial parents must improve their parenting skills before being granted unsupervised access. The question that remains is: "How can these noncustodial parents improve their parenting skills under these artificial conditions and without a parenting aid to assist them with their parenting skills?"

My position is that a supervised access programme needs to exist in order to allow the children to have contact with their noncustodial parent. However, the present programme format does not lead to a parent-child relationship which grows. The boredom which is part of visiting under the same conditions affects the noncustodial parent-child relationship. Basically, with this type of programme format, noncustodial parents and children are seeing each other in the same setting, doing the same activities over and over, and are being watched by a third party for a number of months and, in some cases, years. This directly impacts the relationship between the custodial parent and child.

In addition, supervised access should be working with other mental health professionals who are involved with the family. These mental health professionals could be family therapists and mediators as well as a professional conducting a family assessment. Nevertheless,

these services could be provided by one agency along with supervised access. Basically, you could have "one stop shopping." The client could receive counselling or mediation, or have an assessment completed within one organization. Unfortunately, as it stands now, there may be a number of professionals involved with certain families. However, there is no coordinated plan between these professionals and staff supervising the visits. I have seen the benefits for families who are involved with a mental health professional, mediator, or assessor. These families communicate about parenting plans, negotiate, and discuss what is in the best interest of the child. Nevertheless, the programme does serve an important role for families. I truly believe that this allows noncustodial parents access to their child(ren) that would not have occurred otherwise. It is my opinion that this programme is still offering something to families who use Child and Parent Place.

To conclude, there is a need for this type of programme; however, the present format needs to be changed in order to assist families who use a supervised access programme and who are trying to renegotiate their family's role during a separation and divorce.

FINDINGS

The findings section will be structured in the following manner:

(1) there will be three separate categories — custodial parent, noncustodial parent, and, finally, the children; (2) within each category the data describes the influence of supervised access on the relationship between the child and parents, between the parents, and the children's and parents' thoughts about the supervised access programme and the staff of Child and Parent Place (CAPP). Finally, data are further organized in a time-oriented framework according to the participants' past experiences with supervised access and the anticipated future impact of supervised access.

Custodial Parents' Perspective

Child and Custodial Parent Relationship — Past Experiences Which Necessitated Supervised Access

When the custodial parent discussed past experiences between the noncustodial parent and child, they discussed safety issues. For example, a custodial parent discussed past allegations of sexual abuse. The custodial mother stated:

. . . if there weren't further outbursts of pain or molestation . . . and this had happened. This could happen again, horrible.

In addition, one custodial parent who used unsupervised visits reported that the children felt safer because of supervised visits. According to this mother,

They knew they have some place to run if there is a problem or if they were unsupervised, where would they go?

Along with the issue of the child's safety, there were issues about the mother's own safety. This was evident when families were involved in exchanges. The custodial parent's previous history of exchanging the child at their home created many personal problems for them. One custodial mother stated:

I don't want him coming up to my farm and harassing me.

Another custodial parent who was using Family and Children Services reported that:

At first I was taking them to Family and Children Services and that was really stressful because he would meet me in the parking lot or he would be in the same lobby.

Past Supervised Access Arrangements

When they referred to the past the families spoke about previous supervised access arrangements. All of the families who were involved indicated that previous access arrangements were not adequate. One custodial parent stated:

I would prefer that it was here than someplace like the family because feelings are involved.

Furthermore, the issue of finding an individual who could be unbiased, one custodial parent who has been involved in the programme for more than two and a half years states:

. . . to expect someone that is just a friend or family member under the circumstances, to kinda be unbiased towards us. It is hard, especially when there is a lot of things that have happened in the past. Where someone who knows both of us could just be there for "J".

So, from the above quotes, one can see that finding an individual who could be unbiased was a major concern when trying to find an alternate

method for having the children visit the noncustodial parent under different, supervised conditions.

Impact of Supervised Access on the Child and Custodial Parent Relationship

Custodial parents discussed their views on what they thought the child was thinking and feeling about their noncustodial parent. In addition, the custodial parents discussed their relationship with their children. When the custodial parents were asked: "How do you think supervised access is affecting your relationship with your child?" the answers were mostly positive; however, there was one custodial mother who stated it had a negative impact. A custodial parent whose ex-husband was not consistent with his visits at the time states:

This may be tainted with more recent memories, but one of the things I would say is consistency with the visits . . . like I said it might be tainted is, my son is really hurt when his father can't keep a commitment and he then is grumpy, very sad, and more sensitive.

She goes on to describe what she would say to her son:

It is okay, Honey. Daddy still loves you but he couldn't make it.

This particular custodial mother was the parent who soothed the child when the noncustodial father cancelled his visit with his son. This custodial mother dealt with the child's sadness, frustration, and disappointment of not seeing the noncustodial father.

In another case, the custodial mother states:

I don't know that it does. I don't think it does.

She goes on to say:

I think I'm not as worried. You try and hide the stress from your children, but you know they have these little

beacons that sense it on you . . . I think when you lessen the stress in your life, when you are comfortable with where they are, that they are safe and secure, that lack of decrease of stress may be just overall good for them.

Therefore, in this case the custodial mother is stating that knowing the children are safe causes her to feel less stress which leads to a better overall emotional state for the children.

Another custodial mother who has used Child and Parent Place for approximately two years states the following about her relationship with her daughter.

I have a great relationship with my daughter. She is very open and we always talk. I don't think that I ever had a problem with her holding back on anything. But I do notice when she comes here she is sometimes angry with me. I think a lot of the blame is put on me. I'm making them visit here.

With this particular mother-daughter relationship there is a negative impact. This custodial mother states that she is seen as the person who is forcing her daughter to visit her noncustodial father under these conditions.

Custodial Parents' Views on the Present Relationship Between the Child and Noncustodial Parent

However, custodial parents, in the majority of cases, acknowledge the importance of having the children keep in contact with the noncustodial parent. To highlight this issue, one custodial parent had a strong desire for her son to have a relationship with his father. This custodial mother states:

I felt that it was important that he have a father figure and felt like the problem that broke up our marriage shouldn't affect his relationship with his father and his relationship with his dad.

She adds:

I would probably have stopped being the driving force behind the relationship or having it happen.

In the case of another family, the custodial mother reports:

If we had been in a smaller town or city, it would have ended up going unsupervised or no access which is not good.

In another family, the custodial parent's decision to have the children have contact with their father was based upon her childhood experiences. This custodial mother states:

My own experience is that I was thirteen years old when my parents split up. My mom went out West for two years. I never had a relationship with my mother only at a distance. It was a rocky relationship before she left. So I stayed with my father and where is my relationship now? . . . There is no relationship; there's no relationship because of that distance. I see a lot of other people out there with kids who stop their kids from seeing their father or their mother. I don't feel they have that right. I would have to find some way for him to see those kids. It's not my right. It's the kids' choice, not mine.

Another custodial mother whose supervised access is indefinite states:

. . . they don't know where he lives and I think that it bothers them. But at least they have something. If they didn't have nothing at all then I think that would probably bother them more than being here from their side.

In another case the custodial mother stated:

. . . he still feels that he can see his dad, because, understand that he still misses his dad, and if he doesn't see him at all, that would harm him, because other kids are talking about their dads.

In another case, the custodial mother encouraged the children to remain in contact with their noncustodial father. This particular custodial mother reported:

I have tried to explain to them that severing communications with their father at this point, years from now they will regret it. May not like it right now, but eventually down the road, they are going to have to build a relationship, a positive relationship. I really think they need to keep the communications open.

From the quotes, it appears that even though there is underlying conflict between parents, there is a degree of putting aside these differences and examining what is in the best interest of the child. It appears in some families that there is a belief that children should have contact with their noncustodial parent. However, in another case the noncustodial father's type of occupation presented a big concern for the children and the custodial mother. This custodial mother states the following:

The security issue was a big concern for us at first. The children and the position their father holds was a big concern.

This custodial mother adds:

Their biggest fear was, my oldest would say, "I don't want to appear on a milk carton." He is quite concerned about kidnapping.

Supervised exchanges allow the parents to have contact with each other and, in some cases, allow the child to say "No" to a third party if he or she does not want to go with the noncustodial parent. In such cases, the staff at Child and Parent Place will listen to the child's concerns if there are any at the time of the exchange. One custodial parent states:

. . . she (the daughter) is very cautious and she is still terrified of telling her father. She does not want to go.

Even though there were families which had a level of fear or concern, in the majority of the cases custodial parents acknowledged that the children are happy to see their noncustodial parents and encourage that contact. A number of custodial mothers stated:

He or she is really happy to see him.

Child and Custodial Parent Relationship — Future Without Supervised Access

When the custodial parents did talk about the future in the context of the child-parent relationship, they talked about changes to the programme and the consequences of not having a supervised access programme. Essentially, the custodial parents did not talk about leaving the programme or finding it unnecessary.

With respect to supervised visitation, in many of the cases the custodial parents stated there would be no visitation if there was not a supervised access programme. One custodial parent stated:

There would be no visitation with the children's father.

A custodial parent who has been involved with Child and Parent Place for two and a half years stated:

I mean, we'd be scrambling for alternatives and it would depend on what happens with the courts. You know, if they say, "Well, there isn't a viable alternative." It would have major impact, major negative impact. I'm sure there would be no positive impact. Absolutely none.

When asked how it would be negative, the custodial mother reported:

The children wouldn't have access to their father. They literally wouldn't have and then there would be a court battle, I'm sure, about who is more appropriate. There is

nothing in between. Child and Parent Place is the stop gap.

In another case where the custodial parent uses Child and Parent Place for supervised visits, she stated.

I think that there would be a lot more anger or fear because they'd have a lot more fear of their father, and a lot more fearful situations. I wouldn't see them as relaxed as they are.

It appears that custodial parents would not allow access to happen if there was not a supervised access programme, like Child and Parent Place. As well, if there is to be an alternative, it appears that the alternative method would not be one that would be satisfactory and would likely involve court proceedings. Therefore, it seems that custodial parents need to have a supervised programme to enable the noncustodial parents to see the children. There is a necessity, however the question arises: "Does the programme satisfy the custodial parents' needs?"

Conflictual Relationship Between the Parents that Necessitates Supervised Access

The custodial parent's allegation of spousal abuse was a major reasons for the parents and their children to use Child and Parent Place. This particular custodial parent allegedly experienced verbal abuse while exchanging the children. She reported:

There would be a confrontation right in front of my apartment building and I didn't want that. Not only for my kids, but I live there. It would have been humiliating to do that with other people.

As well, in this case there were alleged incidents of the noncustodial father calling the custodial mother a "psychopath" in front of the children. As well, the children were witnessing the conflict between

the parents. The custodial parents and their children who are involved in supervised exchanges feel that one of the major benefits of supervised exchanges is the fact that the children do not witness the parents' hostility and angry feelings that were witnessed by them during other exchange arrangements. The lack of contact between the parents during the supervised exchanges prevents hostile confrontations. One custodial mother reported that:

There were a lot of worry and a lot of stress that's not there anymore They are not witness to any sort of confrontation.

In relation to the children not witnessing situations, one custodial father added:

At each other's homes and the problems we were experiencing was times were not properly adhered to and the exchanges at the home gave the other party close contact so that there was always a lot of sometimes threats, bickering that sort of thing going on.

This same custodial father goes on to report that:

She (the daughter) was present during all of the exchanges and she saw, she saw all the stuff that was going on before — the anger, the resentment, the hatred, the threats, that sort of thing and she was present for all of that and that certainly wasn't healthy for her.

With respect to exchanges, the issue at hand is not proper care of the child but rather the friction between the parents and the consequences when the parents have contact with each other or with stepparents.

According to the parents who are involved in supervised exchanges, there was a level of stress prior to coming to Child and Parent Place; however, while being involved in the programme, the stress decreased. One custodial father commented that:

It would really cause a lot of stress in my present relationship. I know my wife is really threatened by ----- and every time an exchange was to take place, there was always the fear of is there going to be a confrontation, are they going to be threats, is there going to be yelling, screaming, and cursing . . . we couldn't get past and physically threatened us, curse and swore at us, jumped on the car and face.

Another custodial mother states:

I'm much calmer during the access periods then what I used to be.

She goes on to add:

There was a lot of worry and a lot of stress that's not there anymore.

Another custodial parent states:

It lessens the friction — I'm not so nervous.

In another case, a mother who is the custodial parent talks about her fear of the chances she will have contact with the noncustodial parent.

The custodial mother goes on to say:

I don't want to run into him at the door. He has made a lot of threats. He is stalking me, he has kicked in my windows, he has people harass me at the farm. I had my accelerator cables cut on my car. So, I'm scared of him, to put it mildly.

Consequently, these families come to the supervised access program with past issues that still continue.

Present Relationship Between Parents Who Use Supervised Access

The past conflict that both the custodial and noncustodial parent experienced in their relationship continues. One custodial parent who has used Child and Parent Place for visits during the last two and a half years states:

I don't appreciate seeing him under any circumstances, but I think we both behave, especially if there's somebody that happens to be at the door, very appropriately. I think otherwise there is this temptation at least I feel on his part, to egg on.

Another custodial mother talks about how if the noncustodial parent sought some help:

I wouldn't have the worries or the dislike.

In another case, the court order states that neither parent is allowed to talk to each other. According to the custodial father:

In that when exchanges are to take place whether here or whether at a neutral site, there is to be no dialogue, no confrontation, it is an exchange of the child. So, we are not allowed to talk to each other.

In addition, the friction can be created by the fact that the custodial parent resents the fact that the noncustodial parent has contact with the children. One custodial parent states:

I mean that I'm the one out in the cold out there behind the locked door and he is charming them — I guess it burns me a little bit.

She goes on to say:

He comes out of here and he has his two hours and then he leaves them. He gets to be "Superdad" for two hours.

This friction is an issue that parents are aware of and make an effort to keep from the children. A past custodial parent who used Child and Parent Place for at least two years states:

Rarely would we be angry or talk in an angry way and we avoided for the most part getting angry in front of our son.

Another custodial parent who has been using Child and Parent Place for the last two and a half years states:

We are both the parents of these kids and at one point, we are going to have to learn to get along for the kids' sake.

The lack of communication or the limited amount of communication between parents is definitely seen with these parents. For example, one custodial parent describes a situation the following way:

I found it awkward for the first few times I met with my ex-partner and I would say "Hello" to him and he wouldn't say "Hello" to me. I found that very hurtful.

She goes on to say:

I think that it would be helpful and then you wouldn't have to go through the desk clerk and the trial and error and the hurt feelings. If you can agree that you can simply say "Hello" and "Good-bye" with one another in a pleasant and civilized way that creates less static.

A few of the custodial parents discussed their perceptions of the noncustodial parent as a parent. One custodial parent who has used the programme for over two years states:

I would feel a lot better about her visits and her mental state or when she comes to see her father, you know, he got himself sorted out and made sure he was okay.

With respect to parenting skills, a custodial mother who became involved through a voluntary agreement and had concerns about the noncustodial parent's skills reports:

It is not as if he is a bad parent, it is just that he never had parenting skills . . . just the fact he is able to come here and practice his parenting and he doesn't feel like I'm looking over his shoulder, somebody else is looking out for her safety.

The conflict issue became apparent when asked the question: "If supervised access/exchange were not available, how would this affect you?" One custodial mother stated:

I would be a basket case . . . or I would have to meet up with him and there is a lot of friction between him and I and my stomach just goes in butterflies.

The impact of not having a supervised exchange can affect other members of the family. One such case involved a custodial father and his new wife. He says:

Well, it would really cause a lot of stress in my present relationship. I know my wife is really threatened by my daughter's mother and every time an exchange was to take place there was always the fear of: "Is this going to be a confrontation?" "Are there going to be threats?" "Is there going to be yelling, screaming, and cursing?"

Another custodial mother stated:

I think he contributes to it a lot because he holds me responsible for being here.

Along with this concern is the issue of how custodial parents cannot have a level of privacy in their lives. The child's need to share what is happening in his or her life impacts the custodial parent's degree of privacy. One custodial parent stated:

I really think it is funny, she wants him to know what is going on in her life and she is really interested in him knowing about the kitten. You know, but it is like an invasion of privacy too. It is like we have a life and I don't want him to know anything.

These dynamics may lead to the unresolved issues that sometimes result from not making a healthy transition during times of separation and divorce.

Resolution of Conflict Between Parents

There were a few custodial parents who talked about helping the family function better versus having a level of animosity. For example, one custodial parent requested assistance in setting guidelines

for parents on how to communicate. This custodial mother who has been involved in the programme since the fall of 1994 states:

I would like to see some discussion with the parent beforehand as to what sort of communication they might agree to have with one another.

Another custodial mother suggested the following:

If he tries to get some help, better himself, it will be better for everybody involved. For her and for myself, it would make it easier. I wouldn't have the worries and the dislike. If they are involved in this programme that they should be involved in something else to work together. Maybe a support group for parents. But I don't think that the government is spending a lot of money and putting a lot of resources into doing this, why not go the extra step. If you are trying to mend one thing, why not the whole family?

In some cases, the custodial parents wanted workshops around the transition of separation and divorce. One custodial parent wanted something to help her and her ex-spouse during their divorce. This custodial parent added:

I would like to see it modelled how a family might be able to cope with a split up.

Stemming from these points, one needs to examine the present supervised access format. According to the parents, the programme needs to be expanded to better meet the needs of the family.

Custodial Parents' Present Experiences with Child and Parent Place

When the custodial parents discussed their thoughts about the present supervised access programme format, they were overall satisfied with the programme. It was clearly stated by parents that if there was no supervised access programme there would be serious

consequences for the custodial parent and child. One custodial mother stated:

I think, if it wasn't available we would have had to have gone to other means. It has gotten to the point where we needed some sort of supervised access . . . if it hadn't been through Child and Parent Place, it would have been through a police department, is the other option I wouldn't have liked it near as much. There's always, especially for young children, there's always an intimidation factor there with seeing somebody that much bigger than you in a uniform.

A custodial parent who has been involved with Child and Parent Place for two and a half years stated:

I mean, we'd be scrambling for alternatives and it would depend on what happens with the courts. You know, if they say, "Well, there isn't a viable alternative." It could have major impact, major negative impact. I'm sure there would be no positive impact. I'm sure there would be no positive impact. Absolutely, none.

When asked how it would be negative, the custodial mother reported:

The children wouldn't have access to their father. They literally wouldn't have and then there would be a court battle, I'm sure, about who is more appropriate. There is nothing in between. Child and Parent Place is the stop gap.

With respect to the custodial parents' level of satisfaction, overall they were pleased with the programme. One custodial mother who has been in the programme for over two years states:

I think everybody here is great. I never had any problems with any of the staff or other parents.

Another custodial parent states:

I have never had any problems with Child and Parent Place.

Custodial Parents' Proposed Changes to Child and Parent Place

Even though the custodial parents were pleased with the programme, they also recommended some changes. Custodial parents want the visits to become more natural. One custodial mother who has been using Child and Parent Place for over two years stated:

. . . if they expanded the programme so that the relationship with the children when visiting would fall more naturally so that they could go outside and that would be ideal if there were funds and they could do one to one. You know the kiddies would be safe but they'd have a more natural flow to the visit.

Another custodial mother discusses the same issue. She stated:

Once in a while it is nice when they make it a more real situation for the parents who are having supervised access to share with the child.

Another of the proposed changes to the format involved having a "check in" with staff and parents during their time at Child and Parent Place; essentially, a mini-assessment or review process. There were a number of custodial parents who wanted to see some type of review perhaps once every three or six months. According to one custodial mother:

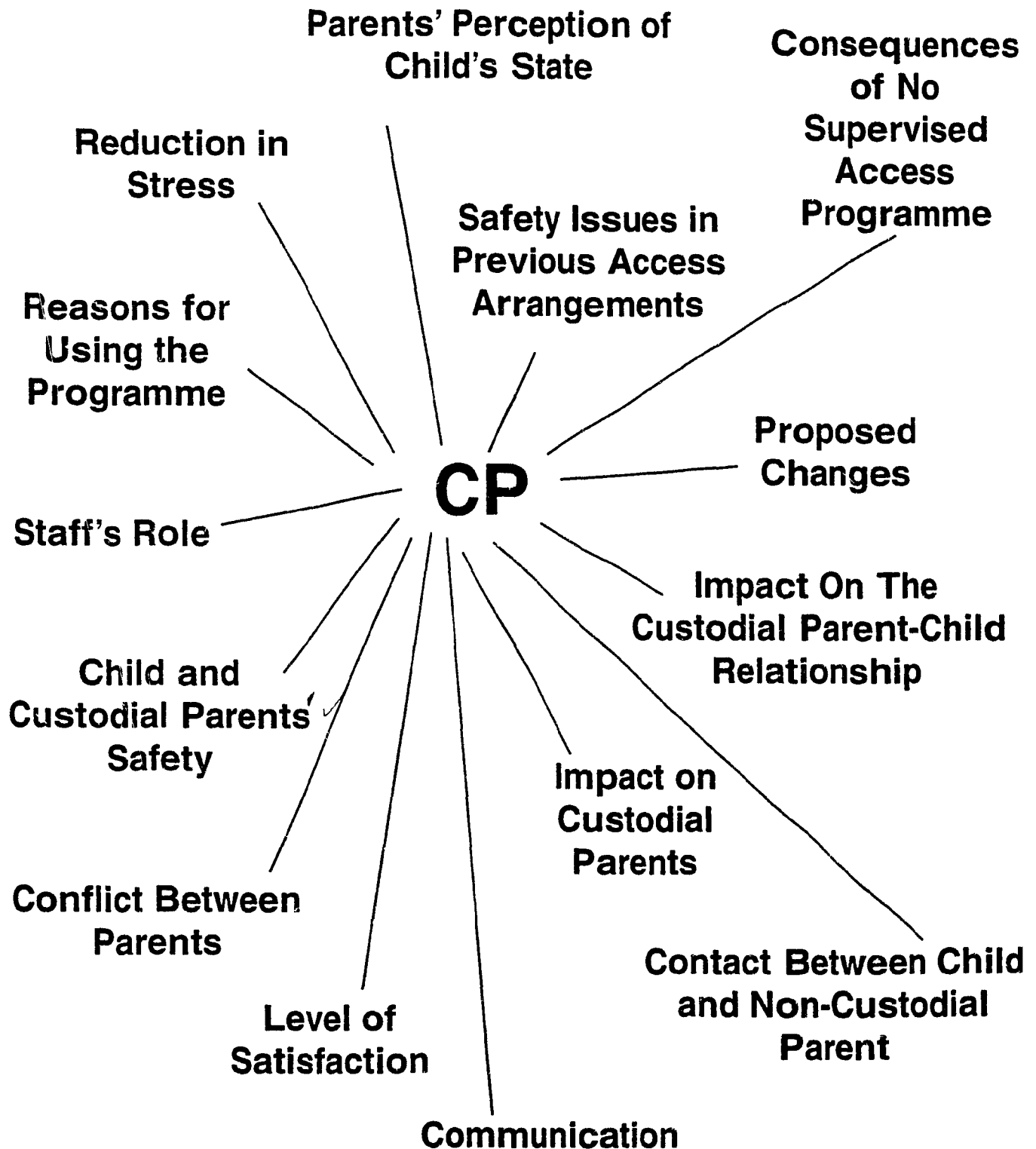
When they are doing the visits, if there is a situation, that once every three months or once every six months they could sit down and talk with the parents or the child and ask "How's things been going?" and then take that and work with it.

Another custodial parent wanted to see updates done every three months to see how the noncustodial parent and children are feeling. This custodial mother added:

Then I would know somebody else cares . . . so at least if you are asking, what you think about this? what do you think about that? because it is important.

Overall, the programme is meeting some of the needs of the custodial parents; however, there is a need for supervised access to become more of a natural visit.

Figure 4
CUSTODIAL PARENTS'
THEMES



Noncustodial Parents' Perspective

Problems with Previous Access which Impacted the Child and Noncustodial Parent Relationship

When noncustodial parents discussed their past relationship with their children, they often stated either they did not have access to the child(ren) or the previous access arrangements were not satisfactory. One noncustodial father who was seeing his child at the custodial mother's home found that it was more relaxing to come to Child and Parent Place because the custodial mother was not present during the visit. This particular noncustodial father says:

I had to see my daughter at my ex-girlfriend's house instead of here and I don't like being there and the atmosphere at that house and it was getting to a point where I almost didn't want to see my daughter . . . I think I would have been a little more agitated and I think I would have been a little more jumpy and not as patient.

Here was a noncustodial parent who was unable to have a productive visit with his child. In other cases, the noncustodial parents did not have access with their children until it was court ordered. Prior to using Child and Parent Place, this noncustodial parent did not see his child for eight months. He states:

I didn't see my daughter for eight months and I was virtually devastated.

Another noncustodial father says:

I missed most of their lives so far and — my access is better than none at all.

A noncustodial father who has been using Child and Parent Place for about six months states:

. . . if I didn't have this I would have nothing. This is better than nothing.

With respect to proving oneself, noncustodial fathers sometimes have to prove to their children they are not the "bad guy." This issue is similar to the custodial parents' complaint about how the noncustodial parent says negative things about the custodial parent. In this case, the noncustodial fathers explain how the custodial parents portray them as "bad guys." One noncustodial father talks about how this impacts his children. He states:

The tentativeness was about two minutes long because within that time they heard all sorts of stuff, they knew within two minutes that it wasn't true and they knew their dad wasn't a bad guy . . . I think the longer apart the visits are the more of an opportunity there is for their heads to be filled with manipulative and misleading ideas.

In another case, the noncustodial father states:

At first they were really paranoid. They had not seen me for a long time and their mother told them that I was a no-good drunk and that I hit her because they repeated to me . . . she is still trying to cause trouble.

A noncustodial father who has been using Child and Parent Place for the last two years states:

We went through a stage where, kinda nervous, but i think because of what Mommy said.

While being involved in Child and Parent Place or having difficulties with access to their children, some noncustodial fathers contemplated whether or not they should stay in their children's lives.

In some cases, the noncustodial father became discouraged with the entire process. For example, one noncustodial father who was

having a difficult time with his ex-partner complying with the court order states:

I'm still wrestling with the — do I belong in this picture anymore? — it is a tough thing . . . I didn't see him for four months at one point — when she refused access, she just disappeared. There was a lot of soul searching there, trying to decide — then again I see children at a later age that say, "Why did my father leave me or why did my mother leave . . . ?"

In another situation, the noncustodial father talks about giving up as well.

I originally thought of going back to England and just saying I had enough, I quit.

However, he goes on to say:

No, I'll stay, I'll fight, I'll stick with it.

In another case, the noncustodial father talks about a big deterrent. He states:

You feel like you are reinforcing everything because of it with the children. So you almost say to yourself that it is better not to see them than to see them supervised . . . at some points I almost was tempted to throw up my arms and say "Forget about the whole thing." When the kids get older they'll come to see me and they won't see me in this situation — it is like taking the kids and coming to see their dad in prison.

In this particular case, it appears that coming to a supervised access programme implies that an offense has been committed by the noncustodial father. Even though the majority of these noncustodial fathers wanted to give up, they have been coming to visit their children between six months to two and a half years. These noncustodial fathers wanted to give up, especially those noncustodial fathers who only have access at Child and Parent Place; however, they

did not. It appears that noncustodial parents struggle with the issue of wanting to see their children, but become discouraged with the process of supervised access.

Impact of Supervised Access on the Child and Noncustodial Parent Relationship

The noncustodial parents discussed the impact supervised access has on their present relationship with their children. A noncustodial father talks about how supervised access is affecting his relationship with his children.

I think there is a negative aspect . . . it grows but it is a very limited growth. These things that I do here with the children are very repetitious. Let's say you are the parent and I took you to the park on weekends like a normal situation, you got involved in some sort of activity, chess, geography, looking for rocks or shells, it is all beneficial. But when you come here, it is beneficial you are spending time with the children. But you are not giving them anything except your time which is valuable, but you are not giving them a normal person.

One noncustodial father states after being asked whether his relationship with his children could grow under supervised conditions states:

Mine yes. From them being scared of me to them now wanting to rip out the door and be with me . . . basically, they didn't know what to do with me and now they can't wait to get here. They run out of the car, they pound the door down when they see me coming in. From before, they were sitting in the room hiding away — scared of me. It has grown big time.

In addition, the noncustodial parents talked about how their children perceive visiting at the same location. A noncustodial father has been visiting for two years under supervised conditions states:

I think they enjoy coming.

However, later in the interview, the same noncustodial parent reports:

Sometimes we get bored. I think it has been good for the kids too. Unless they start getting bored which may be pretty soon.

Another noncustodial parent who has been using Child and Parent Place for two years states:

I have heard my son say, "I'm really kinda getting bored, Dad. I don't want to come here, I want to go some place else."

Another custodial father also talks about his children's boredom:

I have always been free with my kids and all of a sudden I'm not . . . myself I'm getting bored with it. You come here doing the same thing. Every two weeks you are doing the same thing. I would like to do something different. I'm getting bored and we're getting bored. I know they would like to go out and do things with me and be free.

A noncustodial father who has been in the programme for over two years states:

In the summer time, it is not too bad because you can go out to the playground. They seem to have fun on the swings, in the sand or whatever is out there. I think they get bored of that fast too.

In another case, the noncustodial father talks about his past activities with his daughter and her views about coming to Child and Parent Place. He reports:

I think it could be better because we would be able to, it wasn't always supervised, I think we would be a lot closer together because we could go and do stuff we used to do before, like shopping, walking, trips here and there.

He goes on to say:

She doesn't really seem to mind because there are a lot of toys and stuff to play with. She has said on one occasion

she would rather come home with me and bring me home with her.

The noncustodial parents went on to say that if supervised access were not available they would probably not see their children. When the noncustodial parents were asked: "If supervised access was not available, how would they affect you?" they responded that they would not see their children. One noncustodial father stated:

I guess I would be up the creek without a paddle. I have to see if someone, she accepts, that wouldn't charge me and I wasn't able to — I would have to save enough money to hire somebody to go along with us.

Another noncustodial father states:

I probably wouldn't have a relationship with my children right now . . . I wouldn't be seeing them.

Another noncustodial father states:

I probably would never see them. Unless I went to court and battled it right out.

Anticipated Impact of Supervised Access on the Future Child and Noncustodial Parent Relationship

The impact of supervised access has an immediate effect and a long term effect as well. One noncustodial father describes the impact of supervised access on his future grandchildren. He states:

My children have children, grandad — my son talks to his wife or my daughter talks to her husband — all married couples talk to each other about their childhood so this will come up obviously. That spouse doesn't know me but turns around and says, "I don't want my children around him."

Therefore, according to this noncustodial father, there is a lifelong impact when involved in a supervised access programme. In another case, the noncustodial parent believes that people think you have done

something wrong to the children if you are involved in a supervised access programme.

As well, in some cases the noncustodial father hopes that the children never end up feeling like this is the only way to see their father. One custodial father reports:

I hope they never get too used to this — I hope they never get to feeling the only way they get to see their dad is two hours every second Sunday. I mean the children have a great time — on the other hand, I'm not real fond of the role of being an every other weekend daddy . . . as long as it is temporary. I don't think this should go on forever.

The core issue is the length of time in the supervised access programme and the stigma that is attached to using a supervised access programme by noncustodial parents.

Conflictual Relationship Between Parents that Necessitated Supervised Access

The core theme within this category is the conflict between the parents. One particular noncustodial father wanted to use Child and Parent Place due to the fact that the custodial mother was not following the court order. He states:

My situation was there were — I needed some form of — from me to say — my wife would not take the time because basically it was an inconvenience for her to let me spend time with him before — it is kinda sad but it really drove me nuts. This place she knows that if she fools around with it it will hurt her with custody and stuff like that . . . there would not be a phone call nothing — she wouldn't show up — she — there is plenty of record here.

In discussing other issues such as the noncustodial parent's relationship with the children, noncustodial parents would make reference to the custodial parent. There is a level of anger within the

noncustodial parent towards the custodial parent. One noncustodial parent stated:

I was dealing with a rigid ex-wife. She would have seen supervised access to continue forever.

Another noncustodial father says:

I don't go near my wife or hound her or knock on her door. I threatened her to take her back to court.

The noncustodial parents also discussed how the custodial parents will say negative comments about them to the children. One noncustodial father states:

. . . one thing that this supervised access has shown is that anything that they may have heard negative about their father from their mother

A noncustodial father discusses his relationship with his daughter's mother. He states:

I think my ex-girlfriend was worried about how well I could be a parent and how trusting she could be with me and it made it a lot easier for her to trust me and it made it a lot more comfortable for me because I know that I wouldn't get the fifth degree after I saw my daughter.

The conflict is a dominant factor in the relationship between these parents. The question that must be asked is: "Is there a role for a supervised access programme to deal with this dynamic?"

Resolution of the Conflict Between Parents

When noncustodial parents considered what would be a state of affairs that was constructive for the family, they talked about the child's well being. One noncustodial father states:

For the sake of my daughter, I never try and make a scene in front of her mother when her mother is here and if we did the exchanges at home — her mother would be forced to be civil with me in front of our daughter and it would

reinforce that Mommy and Daddy do get along but they just live separately.

Another noncustodial mother states:

To be able to sit down with the child like you and I are with my daughter in the room and discussing it as a family unit, both. That way it will open up some lines of communication. He could express things that are happening and I could express things that are happening. Have some sort of communication within Child and Parent Place that would make it accessible for people to be able for people who are not having any verbal contact, to have that verbal contact . . . People who have other problems who are using CAPP like physical abuse might need different types of counselling like drug or alcohol abuse. How they are going to deal with this or how the kids are going to deal with this. Mediation I would find very beneficial.

Essentially, from the above quotes the future involves a family where new family roles are assumed and the child's best interest is paramount within the family

Noncustodial Parents' Present Experiences With Child and Parent Place

When discussing their thoughts about the programme, the noncustodial parents highlighted the issue of stigma. To illustrate this point, one of the fathers talked about the immediate and future impact of being labelled by his children and others.

This noncustodial father has been involved with Child and Parent Place for the last two and a half years. He talks about his views of what type of message is passed on when someone is involved in a supervised access programme. He states:

But I feel uncomfortable in a sense — if somebody asks me where I'm going to see my children, I say a friend's place rather than Child and Parent Place . . . basically by coming here you are saying you are claiming you are guilty.

He goes on to talk about the impact on the children when there is a need to be supervised. He adds:

But if you have to come in and see your mother and father and they have to have someone with them, it is like having a prison guard. So, they obviously are going to know something is not quite right . . . the father is seen as negative . . . you can only see your parent under certain conditions.

This particular noncustodial father talks about how being involved in a supervised access programme affects his present relationship with his new partner. According to this noncustodial father, he was playing with his girlfriend's children and her ex-spouse allegedly made an accusation that he, the noncustodial parent, inappropriately touched his son. He reports:

. . . so, an accusation has been made and it has been blown out of proportion because of supervised visiting . . . still to this day when I tell people I have supervised visits they think I have assaulted my kids.

He adds:

I think it makes other people think that the person who is doing the supervised visit has done something wrong . . . the only thing that probably burdens people is the thought of supervised visiting just the word and if you tell someone that they think you did something . . . it is like he is a bad guy.

In the case of another noncustodial father, he states:

There were feelings like what will people think that the man is such a nut that he has to go to — there was a lot of self image stuff and the fact it was all my own stuff personally.

Along with the issue of stigma or being labelled by the children or other people is the association that a noncustodial parent is guilty of something and, therefore, needs to be involved in a supervised access

programme. In addition, there seems to be a dynamic where a noncustodial father needs to prove himself either as a competent parent, that the allegations are not true, or simply that he is not a "bad guy" or that he needs to gain the trust of the custodial parent.

In a case where both parents voluntarily agreed to use Child and Parent Place, the noncustodial father felt that he had to prove his parenting skills and gain the trust of the custodial mother. He states:

At first it was okay because I liked having somebody around to show that I could take care of my daughter and that I'm not going to do anything majorly stupid . . . they would see that I'm okay with my daughter and that I can handle it like any new parent.

The way the staff's role is explained to the children by the custodial parent may influence how the children see their noncustodial fathers. For example, if the staff are seen as a "safe person," what type of implications does this have for the noncustodial parent's relationship with his or her children? This was addressed by a few of the noncustodial parents. One such noncustodial parent states:

. . . if she is telling them "safe person" — if you have a problem run to whoever is here . . . but by specifying you are not safe with your own parent and you are safe only with the people you are with, what does that say? Strangers in a sense are safe people and their parents aren't . . . so basically what you are saying is the workers here are your parents and your parents aren't your parent.

In another case, the noncustodial father talks about what his daughter said to him if she had a problem. He goes on to say:

. . . she said to me last visit that if you pinch me I was supposed to tell Debi and Debi is going to phone my Daddy and he is coming to get me.

The message is that the staff person is the safe person and is the individual who is there for you to run to if there is a problem. Consequently, there are many factors which contribute to the noncustodial parent's image.

Another factor is the impact of being supervised by someone. In fourteen of the sixteen interviews with noncustodial parents who were visiting their children at Child and Parent Place, their discussion centred around being watched. In one of the noncustodial father's views, he equated being watched with doing something wrong. He states:

I like it better in Cambridge. At least they had a glass there if somebody was standing there you could not see them. Here, there is someone in the room 89 percent of the time. I feel like I have done something wrong in my life even though I haven't. That is a big thing. Like you are being watched — God what have I done wrong — if you had a camera there for watching people that would be far superior.

In another case, the noncustodial father talks about a prison guard.

. . . if you have to come in and see your mother or father and they have to have someone with them, it is like having a prison guard . . . where in the playground area or something like that a T.V. monitoring system where you can actually see the person.

In both cases, the noncustodial fathers are suggesting alternative methods of supervision. In another case, a noncustodial father talks about how much he hates having someone watching him.

I don't like people following me up to the gym and that. That is what gives the sense of someone is watching you and I hate that.

He goes on to say:

It could be me but being observed like that really — I think it would bother anybody if you asked anybody they would tell you the same thing.

With respect to being watched, another noncustodial parent says that it is a funny feeling.

I do feel kind of a little bit uncomfortable being supervised. These are my kids you know . . . it means to be watched what I'm doing with my own kids. It is a funny feeling.

A noncustodial father who is visiting his two year old daughter talks about being watched as well.

. . . the only thing that maybe that I don't feel comfortable with is people watching me You just know they are there. So, it is good and as long as the observation doesn't collide with the child's happiness or the child's ability to play, I think that is no problem.

A noncustodial father who has been using Child and Parent Place for the last two years states:

I feel like I'm in a prison area. You can't go anywhere. Sometimes I dream that the moms or the dads and the ladies who work here just go up to McDonalds and have a burger. Just something that you have done all your life and you know about it and now you can't do it.

One noncustodial father describes one experience:

This room was occupied, that room was occupied and it was so noisy. There were kids running around. I like to be alone with them to talk with them and play with them and have a good time. I don't want any extra confusion.

Another noncustodial father states:

You guys can look and see probably know or have an idea what type of relationship it is going to be happening

From these comments, one can sense that noncustodial fathers who visit their children at Child and Parent Place view staff as assessing or observing and making conclusions about their relationships with their children. Essentially, what noncustodial parents are asking in some cases is to expand staff's role and make recommendations to the courts based upon the staff's observations.

Finally, even though the noncustodial parents recommended changes, they were satisfied with the programme. They were happy with the staff overall except in one case where the noncustodial father requested more accurate documentation of the exchanges. The noncustodial parents stated they are "grateful" for the service because they realize they would not have access to the children without it. One noncustodial father states:

It is a good programme. It is a good thing that it is there. I would be out of luck.

Another noncustodial father states:

I think the people here are super.

In another case, the noncustodial father adds:

You guys — Child and Parent — have always been good to me. You can get a coffee, everybody is friendly and helpful. I'm grateful.

A noncustodial father states:

The people who are running it are wonderful.

From these comments, it appears that overall the staff are doing a good job. However, the recommended changes to the programme centred around programme format. Perhaps it is time to re-examine

programme policy and objectives. This will be discussed later in the report.

Noncustodial Parents' Proposed Changes to Child and Parent Place

There were two noncustodial parents who thought if supervised access was not available it would be a step in the right direction. This family has been involved in this process since their daughter was six months of age; this child is now four years old. They conclude that

If Child and Parent Place withdrew their services from us, it would be a step in the right direction.

However, they do want to see additional services available to help in progressing out of the programme. In another case, the noncustodial parent is a mother who also states that the programme prevents the family from moving on. When this noncustodial mother was asked about not having a supervised access programme, she stated:

I think my daughter would benefit from it.

These families who use Child and Parent Place for supervised exchanges view the programme as an obstacle from moving out of the programme or simply communicating between parents. In each case, the noncustodial parents recommended changes to facilitate moving out of the programme. These changes will be discussed later in this section. In relation to progression, the noncustodial fathers who visit their children at Child and Parent Place believe there should be some type of progression and a maximum length of stay in the programme.

The average length of stay in the programme, according to the noncustodial fathers, should be between six months to one year. Their attitude is that staff can determine whether the noncustodial parent is

harmful to the child or what type of relationship will result. One noncustodial father thinks:

Now I have been here seven months and it is getting a little bit obnoxious for me After three months, I mean — it all depends I think in my case where I only see them twice a month, every second weekend. Say a maximum of six months. For some people who see their kids every Saturday and they are not having a problem like I am with my wife Three months would be good because you are seeing them 4, 8, 12 times

In this case, the noncustodial father has been involved with Child and Parent Place for the last eight months. Another noncustodial father talks about being in the programme for a maximum of 52 weeks. He states:

I would think a normal 52 week period would be fine. Because I think after 52 weeks you would have some sort — supervised access change in the sense that this particular type of area after the first six months and after that there would be excursions After that the judge should come to some type of understanding based upon the reports — whether or not this should be continued. If there is any hint of a wrongdoing, it should automatically be stopped . . . but even if you put a man in jail they have different levels of parole. There is light at the end of the tunnel.

In this case, a maximum length of time is proposed for the programme. In addition, a noncustodial mother wanted workshops to be available for families who are using CAPP. She requested:

Communication between divorced and separated families, between exchanging families. We are having a workshop on this end and we would like you to attend and there will be mediators there and we feel that you would benefit from it because everybody will be there. You will be able to express how you feel, communicate, and whether it will work or not work or whether you can change your situation to something different.

Essentially, the goals of these changes is to enhance the communication between the parents. Another noncustodial father talks about having counselling available in order to help the other parent to move on and leave Child and Parent Place. He states:

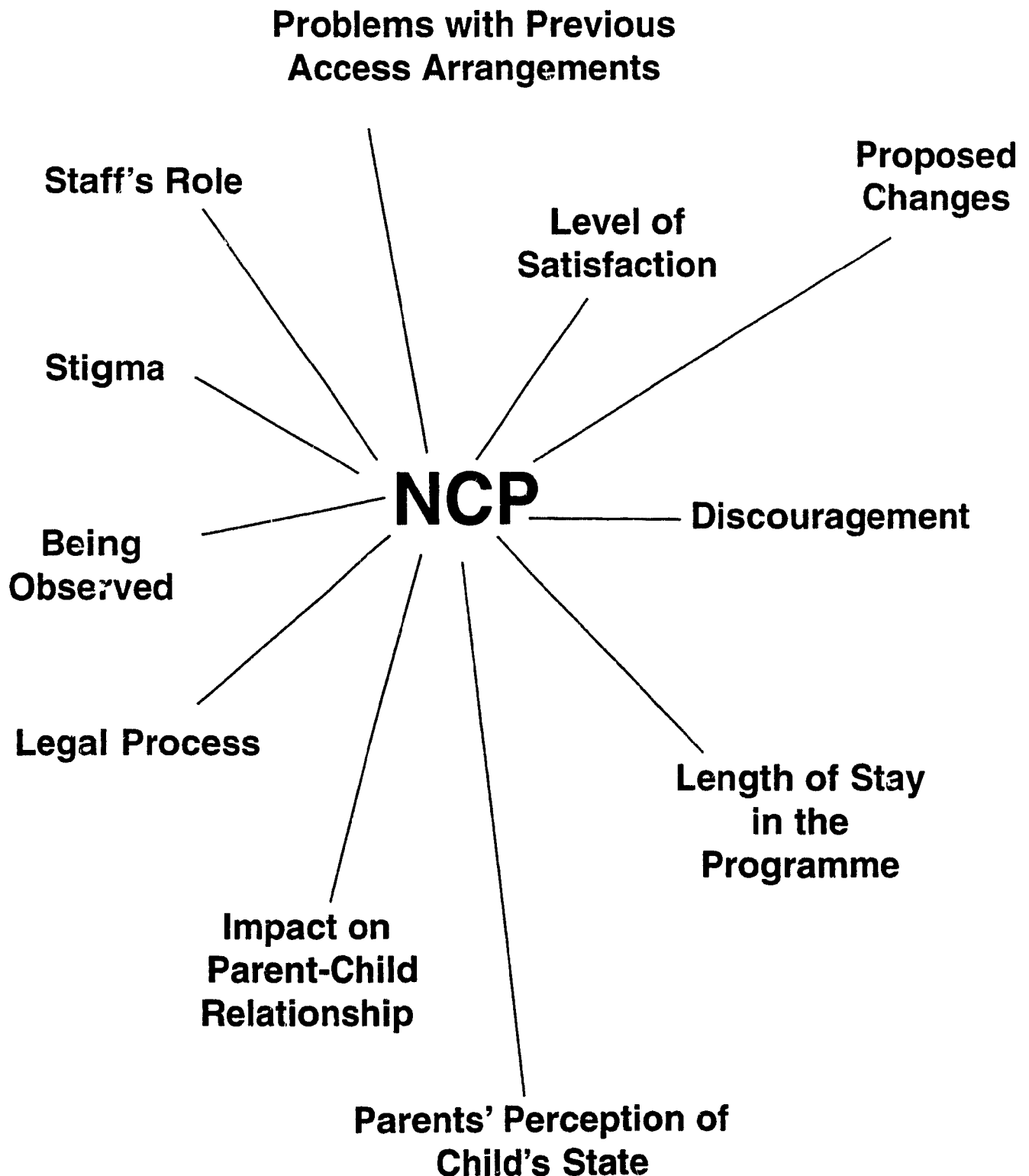
The changes that I would like to see not only involve you they involve the whole legal system. As we said, a time limit and this organization taking on a dual role of educating the parents or some other organization take over the responsibility of educating what is in the best interest of the child and this place is coming to the end as far as usage goes and get them ready for the next step . . . counselling, something to get the parents to put it to bed.

These additional services would allow the families to help in renegotiating their roles during the transition of separation or divorce. In another case, the noncustodial father who volunteered to see his daughter under supervised conditions stated that there should be categories of people who use CAPP. He goes on to say:

This may sound rude but I would categorize the people . . . those who volunteer to come to CAPP and those who really have to be here . . . I think you, CAPP, should separate those two groups if possible.

From these changes, it appears that supervised access would expand its role. The new format would attempt to lessen the stigma that appears to be attached when a noncustodial parent is using a supervised access format and help the family move out of the supervised access programme. These proposed changes appear to meet the needs of the family in a way that would enhance their functioning during the process of separation, divorce and settling access.

Figure 5
NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS'
THEMES



Children's Perspective

At the time the interviews were completed, each child had been involved in the programme for at least three months. The question the children were asked was: "What is it like for you to come here and visit your daddy or mommy?" With respect to the children, all the children except one were visiting their fathers at Child and Parent Place (CAPP). The exception is a child who is involved in exchanges, and her mother was the noncustodial parent.

The themes that the children discussed were: their relationship with their parents, the relationship between their parents, and the programme. The children did not discuss aspects of their past relationship with their parent. However, the children did talk about their present and future relationship with their parent.

Child's Experiences with Noncustodial Parent at CAPP

When the children talked about their relationship with a parent, their focus was on the noncustodial parent and what happens during the visit. A five year old boy stated:

He plays with the toys and there are toys and stuff.

This five year old boy also enjoyed the fact that he could go and play outside during the visit. This little person's brother stated:

Just to play around with him.

He goes on to add:

Just like playing with the toys He brings things and stuff and he buys — he gives us money and he buys us toys for Christmas, Easter, and birthdays . . . I always like to see him.

When asked what would make a bad visit, this little person stated:

If Dad didn't buy us stuff. Like McDonalds. Like I would be disappointed if he didn't buy us stuff.

In another family, a four year old boy talks about "silly stuff." When he was asked to describe what was "fine" about visiting, he stated:

When my daddy does silly stuff . . . today he holded me by my feet.

In the same family, the seven year old daughter described what made it fun for her during the visits:

The way we always get to play together . . . being with Mandy, Daddy, my brother, and Brian because it is fun because you get to be with other people who you don't get to see very much.

This seven year old girl was referring to her stepbrother and sister. At one time the children were having unsupervised access with their noncustodial father and this child was having consistent contact with her stepbrother and sister. When asked what would make the visits more fun, she stated:

If my stepmother could come all of the time.

However the most fun she has is:

When Daddy comes here and we can run and hug him. And when sometimes he lets us go on his shoulders.

In another case, a six year old girl reported that the visits would be better if:

My mom and my cat were here.

However, there was one exception to this major theme. This particular five year old wanted to have more places to visit with his dad. He states:

I want more time — like more places where I can play with my dad and sister.

There was one situation where a ten year old boy felt pressured to visit with his dad. This boy talked about what makes a "good or bad visit" and he related this to the amount of pressure he feels when he is forced to come to the visits. He states that a bad visit is:

When I'm forced by my mom and when my dad is not very nice to me.

When this ten year old visits with his dad, there are two younger brothers visiting at the same time. This seems to impact the quality of the visit between this ten year old and his father. He states:

Sometimes it is fun when it is just me and Dad are playing a game and my brothers are somewhere else they are playing a game. It is usually an okay visit.

He goes on to say:

It would feel good because I get to see Dad because I don't get to see him very often and my brothers are not bugging me. So, I'm with my dad."

With respect to private time, the issue came up with an eleven year old boy who was visiting his father. This eleven year old wanted to have some private time to talk with his father, but also have other kids around. Overall, he saw the visiting as nice because he had made friends with other parents and children. He states:

. . . I like having them and sometimes I don't like having them there.

So, what is created is a visit which is made up of play time and private time for this eleven year old boy.

In addition, this same eleven year old goes on to say that he did not want to hurt his dad because he is spending a lot of time with the custodial parent's new boyfriend. He states about hurting his dad:

Sometimes I don't feel comfortable because there might be things I don't want to tell him. Like when we went to Michigan with ---- and I don't want to hurt his feelings . . . if my sister — she always butts in sometimes and then she might say we went to Michigan and then that blows it all and I feel sad and stuff.

This impacts his level of comfort in coming to see his father to a point where he becomes anxious.

Child's Wish for Changes to Present Relationship With Noncustodial Parent

When the children did discuss their views about what they wished for, a five year old boy wanted to have more places to visit with his dad. He states the following:

I want more time — like more places where I can play with my dad and sister.

These comments indicate there needs to be a change to better meet the needs of this particular child. This child's wishes can be linked to a change in the present programme format or a change in the dynamics between the parents.

The Children's View of Their Parents' Relationship

There were a number of children who discussed their parental relationship and how this impacted them. For example, a nine year old girl stated that the lack of communication is something that does not make her happy. She recalls the following situation:

One time my mom was here just talking with me and my dad walks in and he walks right back out. He just walked

right in and saw my mom talking to me and giving me a kiss and walked right out and waited until my mom was halfway down the street to come back in.

She adds:

Oh, shoot they are not talking, they aren't even communicating with the communications book any more. This is so humiliating.

When asked what would help her parents communicate, she stated:

If one day my dad didn't see my mom and he walks in and someone locks the door and makes them start talking. I would jump to them this time . . . I would be so happy, I would start crying.

From these comments, the issue of separation and divorce seems to impact the children even though they are involved in a supervised access/exchange programme. In this case, the friction between the parents was not as apparent because of the lack of contact between the parents. However, this particular child is still experiencing the impact of two parents who do not communicate.

Child's View of CAPP

When the children talked about the programme, they discussed what they enjoyed about the programme, the staff's role and, finally, what would make the programme better.

One ten year old when asked: "How do you like coming here?" responded by saying:

I used to like it a lot because of the computers, two Marlee (a volunteer with CAPP) and for three like when I see Dad because he is nice to us here and now since there is no computer and no Marlee, it is still quite fun because Dad is still really nice to us and we usually do puzzles . . .

From this boy's comments, we can see that the volunteers and activities added to the visit. When the children talked about what it was like for them to visit, there was discussion focusing on the staff's role.

Child's View of the Staff's Role

When the children were asked about the staff's role, one seven year old boy stated:

You watch the people just in case you get hurt or something. If somebody gets hurt you don't want them to cry.

He adds:

Just in case like if my brother hurted me or something in the stomach. I would come to you and you would see what happened.

A six year old girl saw staff as being:

You take care of people so they don't get hurt.

An eleven year old boy's perspective of the staff's role centred around friendship and someone to talk to. He stated:

If I don't like what is happening in the visit or if I feel uncomfortable I come to you.

With another boy, his understanding of the staff's role centred around protection. He sees the staff's role as:

I think we have good people who monitor us. Keep us protected here.

When asked what he meant by protection, he stated:

It means Daddy won't do that again.

In this particular case, there were allegations of sexual abuse and, therefore, the noncustodial father needed to be supervised while visiting his children. A ten year old boy sees the staff's role as:

So I can — so it is safer and so if Dad does something you can help me out with it.

Child's Proposed Changes

When reviewing changes to the programme, a five year old wanted to have more places to visit with his dad. He states:

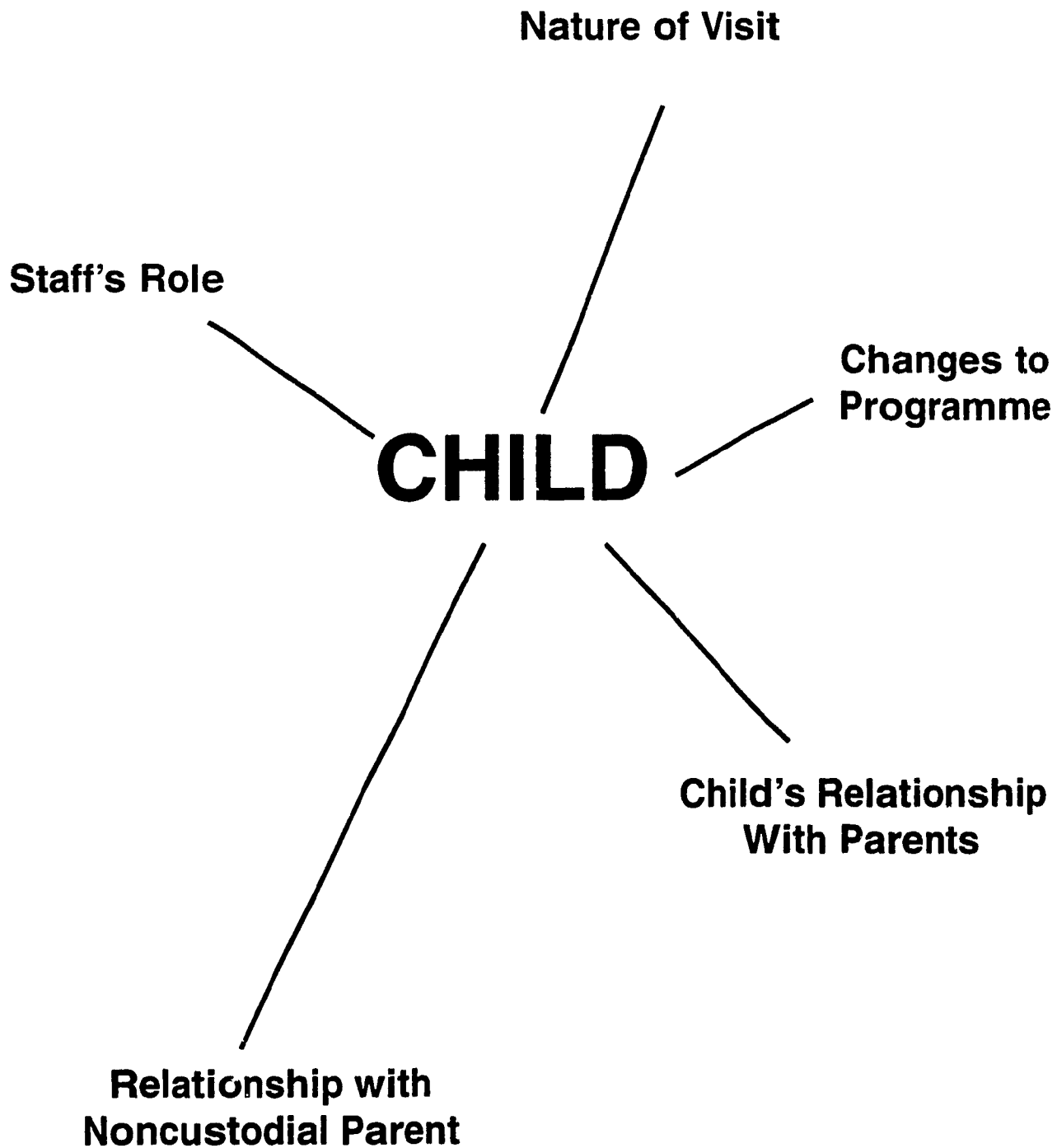
I could have more time with my father and I want more time with my father and bigger rooms and more rooms so we can play together. Like a separate room for art work, crafts, playing and doing all sorts of stuff that is what I would like.

The issues of separation and divorce, however, impacted the children. The children do understand the role of the staff. This role involved a sense of protection for the children in some cases in relation to the noncustodial parent and siblings. Their understanding was if somebody did get hurt, they were able to go to the staff. As well, the staff was seen as a friend or someone they could talk to. There was one child who stated: "

I want more time — like more places where I can play with my dad and sister.

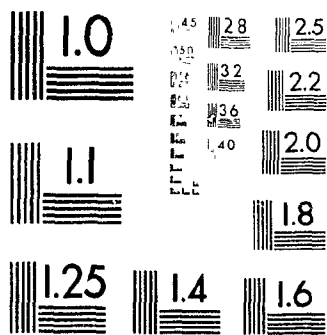
Perhaps the issue is not being involved in a supervised access programme but rather what the facility has to offer the children (such as computer, toys, outside playground) and the format of supervised access off-site versus on-site supervised visit. In addition, having other children visiting at the same time are major issues for these children. As well, there is the issue of safety and parent conflict.

Figure 6
CHILDREN'S
THEMES



2 of /de 2

PM-1 3½"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT



PRECISIONSM RESOLUTION TARGETS

DISCUSSION

This qualitative programme evaluation is of a supervised access programme, Child and Parent Place (CAPP). It involved examining the perspectives of both parents and children who use Child and Parent Place. From conducting forty-three interviews (thirty-one parents and twelve children), commonalities and differences were found among the themes which were discussed by the parents and children.

There were a number of differences in the themes discussed by the parents. This was apparent in the areas of the staff's role, impact on the parent-child relationship, length of stay in the programme, level of discouragement and stigma felt by the noncustodial parent. As well, the types of proposed changes by both custodial and noncustodial parents were different.

With respect to the staff's role, the custodial parent perceived the staff as a person who the child could run to if there was a problem. As one custodial parent stated:

If the guy is going to turn around and belt that kid — you are going to intervene — you are not going to let that happen.

In this case the custodial mother perceived staff as being a replacement for her. On the other hand, the noncustodial parent did not want staff to be that "set of eyes" for the custodial parent. The noncustodial parent wanted to be that person who the child ran to if there was a problem. According to the majority of the noncustodial parents that did not happen. One noncustodial parent states:

So, the people who are working, they are seen as "safe people." So, that meant I wasn't safe.

This issue was an important difference between the two parents. One parent wanted staff to be a "replacement" parent while the child was visiting the noncustodial parent, whereas the noncustodial parent wanted to have the same responsibilities, role, tasks, and interaction as a noncustodial parent who is not visiting under supervised conditions.

Another major difference was the length of stay in the programme. The custodial parents did not discuss how long the noncustodial parent and child should remain in the programme. Nevertheless, if we linked the length of stay in the programme with the consequences of not having a supervised access programme, one could reasonably come to the conclusion custodial parents do not see a need to place limits on the length of stay in the programme. This point stems from the issue of the custodial parents' thoughts and feelings of protecting the child. From the findings of the evaluation, custodial parents' concerns centre around the protection of the child. As long as there are safety concerns, the custodial parent will attempt to keep the visiting noncustodial parent and child in a supervised access programme. Hence, safety concerns are pivotal in determining whether there are changes in the type of access, for example moving from supervised to unsupervised access. As well, this issue could be connected to the level of conflict between both parents.

Perhaps the level of conflict is played out within the realm of supervised access. More specifically, it could be an arena where the condition of supervised access fuels the conflict between the parents. This is clearly seen when one or both parents are court ordered to use a supervised access programme.

The noncustodial parent strongly believes that there should be a maximum length of stay in the programme. This was also one of the recommended changes to the programme by the noncustodial parents. The noncustodial parents suggested that the length of time in the programme should run from six to twelve months. The noncustodial parents also stated that this should be dependent upon the monthly frequency of the visits, age of the child, and the length of separation, prior to the first visit, between the noncustodial parent and child. Basically, the noncustodial parents wanted to see an end in sight, whereas the custodial parents did not want to see the end in sight to the supervised visits. Another suggestion by the noncustodial parent is using cameras to observe the visit and having different levels of supervised visitation. Overall, the noncustodial parents are suggesting a considerable number of changes to the programme format.

The custodial parents' proposed changes focus on making the visits flow more naturally. Perhaps the custodial parents' suggestions can be linked to their desire for the continuation of supervised access. As this report highlights, custodial parents state that their children are asking questions about why they cannot visit their noncustodial parents somewhere else. The custodial parents' suggestion to make the visit more natural is intended to satisfy the child's concerns, needs and, hopefully, keeping the noncustodial parent and child(ren) visiting in a supervised access programme.

Both parents are suggesting changes; however, the noncustodial parents' suggestions involve a change that leads to termination from the programme, whereas the custodial parents' suggested change of making the visit flow more naturally attempts to satisfy the child's

needs and to ensure the child is willing to visit the noncustodial parent under supervised conditions.

In addition, one could reasonably conclude that there are two separate processes which occur with families who use supervised access. In relation to the noncustodial parents' process, it appears from the themes that there is a high level of conflict with the spouse. More specifically, they feel that it is the custodial parents' who caused the noncustodial parent to visit the child(ren) under supervised conditions when there are no child safety concerns, whereas the custodial parents' concerns focus on personal safety and the child's safety. In addition, the feelings of the custodial parent towards the noncustodial parent usually heightens and intensifies the process. The result is a conflictual process between two parents which often leads to the child's wellbeing not being taken into account.

It is this evaluator's position that based on these findings the level of conflict contributes to the families remaining stuck in this process. Even though the physical or sexual abuse allegations were not substantiated by authorities, families still remain in a supervised access programme. Perhaps the programme format has a negative element which was not foreseen or has recently developed over the last few years. A negative element of the supervised access programme which apparently was unforeseen is the difficulty of terminating the visiting arrangements even when the allegations of abuse which were the reason for using the programme are discovered to be unfounded.

One of the common themes of both custodial and noncustodial parents is providing support services which will assist the family during this transition of separation and divorce. The proposed

supervised access programme reflects the suggested service which the parents thought would assist them in making the transition from supervised to unsupervised visitation. Essentially, these parents are asking for more emotional support and direction when in the programme, a programme that will assist the parents to deal with the anger they have towards each other.

One of the major commonalities is the friction that exists between the parents. Even though these parents have been separated for a period of time, there still appears to be friction between them. The Norpark evaluation (1994) made a similar finding. According to Norpark, the second most stated reason for using a supervised access programme is unresolved conflict between the parents (p. 78).

This friction is seen when parents attempt to change the type or frequency of access between the noncustodial parent and child. It is also seen in the lack of communication between the parents. It appears from these findings that in some cases there is no real desire between parents to communicate with each other. However, there are cases where staff serve as the messenger if there is any information that needs to be passed on to the other parent. The question that must be asked is: "How constructive is this for separating and divorcing parents and especially for the children?" One can appreciate certain circumstances, such as a concern for the custodial parent's safety. However, if separating and divorcing families are locked into a state of anger, hurt, resentment, and broken dreams which all, in some cases, prevent communication, it could be said that staff being the messenger between the parents only allows this dynamic to continue as in the case of a nine year old girl who is involved in exchanges at Child and

Parent Place. One of the Ministry of the Attorney General's criteria for supervised access programmes is being sensitive to the child's needs. In this case, should we, the staff who are working with these families, not be advocating on the child's behalf or are we simply remaining neutral which is another criterion? As well, there is the case of a ten year old boy who is unable to share certain information or is afraid somehow that information will get to his noncustodial father because of the dynamics that are happening at the custodial parent's residence. Unfortunately, because of these dynamics this ten year old boy feels a high level of anxiety when visiting his noncustodial father. Perhaps what is occurring in these cases is the inability of separating and divorcing families to renegotiate their roles and, consequently, the children are caught in the dynamics, such as the two children who were previously discussed.

Emery (1994) talks about how separating and divorcing parents need to renegotiate their relationship, especially with the children (p. 18). According to Emery (1994), many parents cannot resolve access, because they cannot resolve individual and interpersonal conflicts which stem from marital distress, separation, and divorce (p. 17). Essentially, what one is dealing with are psychological issues that arise during a separation and divorce and legal issues. Perhaps when parents are requesting workshops or services to "help mend the family" or "put the past to bed," they are referring to a process that helps them define their new roles within step families or separated families. The question that must be asked is: "How well can the families realign their marital and parental roles?"

The information that needs to be passed on to parents who are locked into this high conflict process is that parents do not divorce their children; they divorce each other. However, because of the presence of a child, the parents will, in the majority of cases, continue to have contact with each other in some way. It appears from these interviews that the lack of communication between parents is connected with the inability to put aside the emotional aspects that keep families in a high conflict interaction. This is evident when noncustodial parents return to court after being in a supervised access programme for a number of months or years and the conflict between the parents escalates. As well, in some cases noncustodial parents (who are mostly fathers) view the custodial parents (who are mostly mothers) as having control over the amount of access. In addition, the custodial parents would like a greater degree of privacy from the noncustodial parent as to what is happening in their lives. This is complicated by the fact that the child often enjoys sharing what is happening in his or her life. The research indicates that continuous conflict with separating and divorcing parents impacts the child's psychological well being (Emery, 1994, p. 205). This is especially true when the conflict involves the children.

With respect to access, this is a critical issue. From my observation as a family worker, often what is occurring in families who use a supervised access programme is one parent is focussing on not using a supervised access programme while the other parent is trying to ensure that supervised access continues or that there is no access at all. This was clearly identified in the interviews. The custodial parent is saying that there would be no access at all if there was not a

supervised access programme, and the noncustodial parent is attempting to move out of a supervised access programme to being unsupervised. Personally speaking, at this point the child's well being is neglected. What should be paramount here, is the best interest of the child, not the best interest of the parents. In some cases that may mean continued supervised access while in others it will mean a move to less, or no supervision.

From my role as a family worker who has conducted supervised visits for three years, the supervised access programme has been an arena where these conflicts are allowed to continue, for example, when staff is a messenger for the parents even though they have been separated or divorced for a number of years. Essentially, what is created is triangulation. We know from family systems theory that triangulation often leads to dysfunctional process among family members (Becvar & Becvar, 1993, p. 149). It is not to say that initially when families become involved in a supervised access programme that staff do not have a role in relaying messages between the parents; this is especially true for women who have safety concerns. However, there needs to be some type of support that facilitates a degree of progression. This progression would involve the parents discussing forms of discipline; therefore, the discipline is consistent between both parents whether it is an on-site visit or the noncustodial parent is visiting the child unsupervised. Consequently, the child is not getting double messages from the parents, and the routine remains the same.

In addition, the courts may state that there is to be no verbal contact between the parents. The question is: "How helpful is this for the parents and child?" It serves the parents well; however, the child is

left seeing two parents who cannot communicate or be in the same building which is discussed by a nine year old girl during the interview. Perhaps what needs to be done within a supervised access programme is facilitate a "new family plan" for the family versus simply housing families without any progression or support that assists families during this period of high conflict (Bonney, 1993, p. 368). However, this may not be possible for all families.

Custodial and noncustodial parents need to be encouraged to make a family plan which creates an opportunity for the custodial and noncustodial parent to sit down, together or separately, and establish a plan and guidelines which will set the direction for the family while in a supervised access programme. Such a plan would set out goals, parents' roles in their children's lives, a review process, methods of communicating, or length of stay within the programme. One must realize that perhaps the process of creating a family plan will not begin immediately because of the resentment and resistance to using a supervised access programme. During the interviews with the parents, there was a clear theme which was consistent: a theme which demonstrates that these parents, in the majority of cases, are in conflict. The noncustodial parent blames the custodial parent for being in a supervised access programme, and the custodial parent strongly believes that the noncustodial parent needs to be supervised. Essentially, the parents have a problem with each other which may never be completely eliminated.

This family plan would examine the issues, set goals, and, hopefully, implement goal-oriented strategies where the ultimate goal is for the family to progress out of the programme. Nevertheless,

where there are proven child welfare concerns, the family plan must reflect a realistic plan that takes into account these concerns. If a child welfare agency has proven the allegations, then supervised access may need to become permanent for these families. In such cases direct supervision is needed, but direct supervision can be done at alternate sites. For example, the noncustodial parent and child should be able to have their visits off site, such as at the zoo and be directly supervised.

When creating this family plan, one must take into account the parents' reasons for using supervised access and the issues which confront the family. A distinction must be made between parents who are in conflict with each other and those where child welfare concerns are paramount. Parents may be court ordered to use a supervised access programme because of conflict between the parents; however, the noncustodial parent will be ordered to have supervised visits in order to visit the child. In this case, the noncustodial parent may have the necessary parenting skills, the child is comfortable with the noncustodial parent, and there are no child welfare concerns. However, this noncustodial parent can only visit the child under supervised conditions. This case illustrates that supervised access has become an arena where the original purpose of the programme is not being followed. The supervised access programme is intended to deal with noncustodial parents who have alcohol and/or drug problems, concerns about the child being abducted, parenting abilities, or there is animosity and distrust between the parents to the point where visits have become difficult, if not impossible (New Release, 1994).

Therefore, there has to be a thorough understanding of what brings a family into a supervised access programme. If the child's

safety is in jeopardy, supervised access is appropriate. On the other hand, if the issues which bring the family to a supervised access programme are spousal issues, animosity and distrust, this needs to be taken into account when deciding whether there should be supervised visitation or supervised exchanges. Not all noncustodial parents who use the supervised access programme are said to have allegedly abused their children or have alcohol and/or drug problems or psychiatric problems. Based on the family workers' observation and, in some cases, custodial parents' view noncustodial parents as having effective parenting skills. The question that must be asked is: "Why do these families remain in a supervised access programme if child welfare agencies, police, and family assessors are unable to substantiate the allegations? Perhaps the answer lies with the anger, resentment, and hurt that the parents have towards each other. What could support this point is what the parent discussed during the interviews of how the other parent is "getting even": the "me" versus "you" dance. Essentially, who has the most to lose in this dance? From my experience examining what is beyond the presenting problem is a key element in determining supervised visitation or exchanges, the length of time in the programme or whether supervised access is appropriate for the family.

If families are remaining within a supervised access programme for an average of 7.76 months or longer (Norpark, 1994, iv), would this not be an opportunity for parents to receive the necessary services, so that they can develop a degree of communication or develop a "new family plan" and, therefore, establish a healthy transition for the child as well as themselves. Furthermore, if custodial parents are asking for

services such as mediation, parenting classes, workshops, reviews and counselling, and desiring to create a more natural flow to the visits, why not create an opportunity which will allow the parents to receive a more comprehensive service while being involved in a supervised access programme?

To support the argument that additional services can facilitate the family during this transition, is a case where the family was involved in Child and Parent Place for a total of eight or nine visits over a three month period. This family was also involved with a counsellor whom they saw during this time. The counsellor saw the parents for issues surrounding access, the father's parenting skills, the mother's lack of confidence in the father's parenting skills, and relationships issues. This can support the point that with additional supports such as counselling families can move onto the next stage of the transition and move out of a supervised access programme more quickly than a family who is not involved with supportive services during this transition. From my experience, parents who are encouraged by staff to communicate with each other during their time at a supervised access programme and have additional support services appear to spend a shorter period of time within a supervised access programme. Therefore, perhaps, in some cases, staff should be encouraging communication between parents instead of being a messenger, especially if the information is concerning the children's health or needs. As well, the benefit is the child sees his or her mom and dad as two parents who may not have the same relationship as before, but who still love and care for the child.

Parents who took part in the Norpark Evaluation also expected that counselling and mediation would be part of the services offered by the supervised access centre (Norpark Evaluation, 1994, p. 89). Perhaps clients are looking for services which will deal with their needs systematically, that is those of all family members. However, Norpark attributes this finding to the lack of understanding of what supervised access is before the family's first visit (Norpark Evaluation, 1994, p. 89).

According to Norpak's evaluation (1994), other main reasons parents used supervised access were the abuse of the child, concerns regarding parenting ability, wife assault, and request of the custodial parent (p. 78). These reasons ranked lower than unresolved conflict between parents. If there is an issue of parenting ability or abuse of the child, how are we helping the family resolve or improve these issues with the present supervised access format? These reasons are consistent with the reasons why families become involved with Child and Parent Place. Furthermore, the legal system does not often recommend families pursue support services that would aid the parents in improving their situation. Rarely, is there a court order where it is recommended that the noncustodial parent complete a parenting course. As it stands, supervised access programmes had to comply with the following criteria:

- 1) The centre must provide a safe, neutral, unstigmatized setting in which visits can occur;
- 2) The service must be accessible to the public both in terms of location and hours of operation;
- 3) The service must be delivered in a contained and safe physical space;

- 4) Services must remain limited to providing supervision of access visits as opposed to providing mediation, therapy, counselling, parenting skills, etc. If the centre provides services other than supervised access, it must be demonstrated that they are provided separately from supervised access services;
- 5) Factual written reports regarding the visits must be provided;
- 6) There must be no limit to the length of time that clients can use the service (Norpark Evaluation, 1994, p. 5).

Basically, the mandate of the programme is limited. From Norpak's evaluation (1994), the reasons why families become involved in supervised access programmes are complex and multiproblematic. In this evaluation, it was discussed by a number of parents that the supervised access mandate should be expanded. One of the messages that parents were stating was the fact that they were grateful for the programme; however, they feel that the way the programme is delivered and what is offered by the programme needs to be changed. The question that must be asked is: "Are they grateful because there is no other alternative available at this point other than hiring a person which can be extremely costly?" In addition, the custodial parent stated that if the government is spending money on supervised access, it should also be spending money mending the families who are involved in the programme.

Among various questions, the research asked what changes to the present supervised access format would the users of this programme like to see? From the custodial and noncustodial parents' interviews, there is an indication that changes need to be made to the present supervised access format. For example, staff should be making

recommendations to the court about terminating services and staff should be conducting assessments during an on-site visit or upon completion of an exchange. As well, there should be an interview every three months with the staff and parents to see how the programme is meeting the parents and child's needs or areas that the family needs to work on. Based on the suggested changes made by families who use Child and Parent Place, the following recommendations are proposed to better meet the needs of custodial and noncustodial parents and children:

- 1) The intake process would become more formalized. The intake worker would take some basic information about the client and determine if the client's needs could be effectively met by the programme. This point is important especially if the family is self referred.
- 2) A biopsychosocial assessment would be completed to determine what dynamics are impacting family members. As well, is there or was there violence (spousal or child abuse) in the family and if so the description of the types of abuse encountered, last incident of abuse, injuries encountered, etc. This will allow the other support services such as mediation to know the history and the issues that the parents and children are experiencing or have experienced in the past. The assessment will allow parents to highlight their concerns about their parental relationship and concerns for the child's well being. For example, if the custodial parent has the fear the noncustodial parent will abduct the child, or the noncustodial parent needs assistance with his or her parenting skills. On the other hand, the noncustodial parent may have concerns that the custodial parent is sabotaging his or her visits with the children.
- 3) The programme would involve a systemic progression in the degree of supervision. The degree of supervision would range from direct to indirect. In addition, there would be off-site supervised visits which would allow the noncustodial parent and child to visit in a different environment.

- 4) The programme would provide transitional services which would support custodial parents when there are changes in access or custody. This is clearly seen when courts order the noncustodial parent to go from supervised visitation to unsupervised visitation. To effectively implement this change, there needs to be a supportive component when court orders do not reflect what the wants and needs of the parents and children are.
- 5) The length of stay in the programme would be based upon the needs of the family. During this time, the goal is to assist the family during the transition of separation and divorce and the settling of access or custody. With the support of the programme, clients are involved in goal setting and creating a plan of action which results in a family that is better able to cope with the transition of a separation or divorce and leaving the supervised access programme.
- 6) Among the services offered will be psychoeducational courses (parenting, impact of separation and divorce on the parents and children, anger management). In addition, mediation and clinical services (counselling, therapy) will be available for the clients. This service is *voluntary*. It will be offered to the clients, but it will not be a mandatory process to be involved in, unless it is court ordered. However, it is anticipated, based upon this programme evaluation, that parents would use these services.
- 7) There will be three month contacts with the parent and child while involved in the programme. This will allow staff to become aware of how the clients' needs are being met or not met and highlight the next level of progression for the family, whether it be termination, a lesser level of supervision than the custodial parent is comfortable with, or what other areas the family needs to work on to cope better with the arrival of a new partner, or stepbrother or sister.
- 8) Staff would be making recommendations to the court as to the need for the family to continue supervised visitation or not. Staff could also provide family and parenting assessments for the courts. The programme would still maintain the factual reports of each visit between the noncustodial parent and child.

- 9) The issue of neutrality would need to be better defined. Furthermore, does neutrality truly serve the well being of the parents and, especially, the children? The programme format would focus more on the child's well being while being involved in a supervised access centre. The programme would be more child focused than it is now. This is a critical issue for older children who need to visit their noncustodial parent under supervised conditions. Essentially, what is in the child's best interest? Is it in the child's best interest emotionally to continuously visit the noncustodial parent under the same conditions or at the same facilities or witness their parents not having any contact with each other? The questions are: "Can neutrality truly be achieved or maintained in order to effectively service these families?" and "How can a mandated service be neutral?"
- 10) The programme would also refer clients to outside agencies if there are issues with which the programme cannot effectively intervene; for example, drug and alcohol abuse.
- 11) The issue of the noncustodial parent's experience of being stigmatized is a difficult issue to counter. Staff can attempt to facilitate in ensuring the quality of the visit between the noncustodial parent and child; however, simply being involved in a supervised access programme seems to contribute to the stigma. This issue still needs to be addressed in some way.
- 12) Supervised access programmes could come under the umbrella of the Unified Family Court programme. Essentially, the Unified Family Court programme could offer supportive services as well as supervised access. The family could receive mediation, be referred to other outside agencies or receive clinical services which are deemed necessary.
- 13) The policy division of the Attorney General's office must review their policies and procedures. It is hoped that the review process will incorporate the notion that the present supervised access programme's format needs to be changed in order to better meet the consumers' needs.

Accordingly, the new format would involve a number of services which include mediation, counselling, therapy, parenting courses, and supervised access. This new programme design will emphasize the change process and the notion of what is in the child's best interest versus the rights of the individual. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the following programme format will save time and money for parents, judges, and lawyers. However, to verify this point, a cost/benefit analysis would need to be conducted after a trial period of three years, as well as the consumers' satisfaction with the new programme format (Love, 1991, p. 132). Finally, the goal of the programme is to provide a comprehensive service which supports and enhances the parents and children's well being during separation and divorce and not to foster dependency. To conceptualize such a programme, I will use a programme logic model format which could serve as the basis for programme development, delivery, and evaluation (Rush, 1991, p. 102).

Proposed Programme Format

The programme logic model allows for evaluation of the programme, and the design and improved delivery of a programme. As well, it is a tool for programme planning (Rush, 1991, p. 103). The model involves specifying main components such as activities and resources, establishing implementation objectives, creating a measurable output which the programme will provide, planning short-term outcomes and, finally, identifying long-term outcome objectives, the overall goal of the programme. This model was used because the format allows a service provider to concisely map out a

programme, the method of delivery and an instrument which can be used for programme evaluation purposes. (Refer to Figure 7.)

The following section highlights the Ministry of the Attorney General's position with respect to the process of mediation. From the proposed new supervised access programme format, mediation is a tool that is intended to assist families in settling access or other issues. Consequently, the proposed new supervised access programme format may be challenged by the Attorney General's office because of the proposed implementation of mediation.

Arguments and Counterarguments for Mediation within a Supervised Access Programme

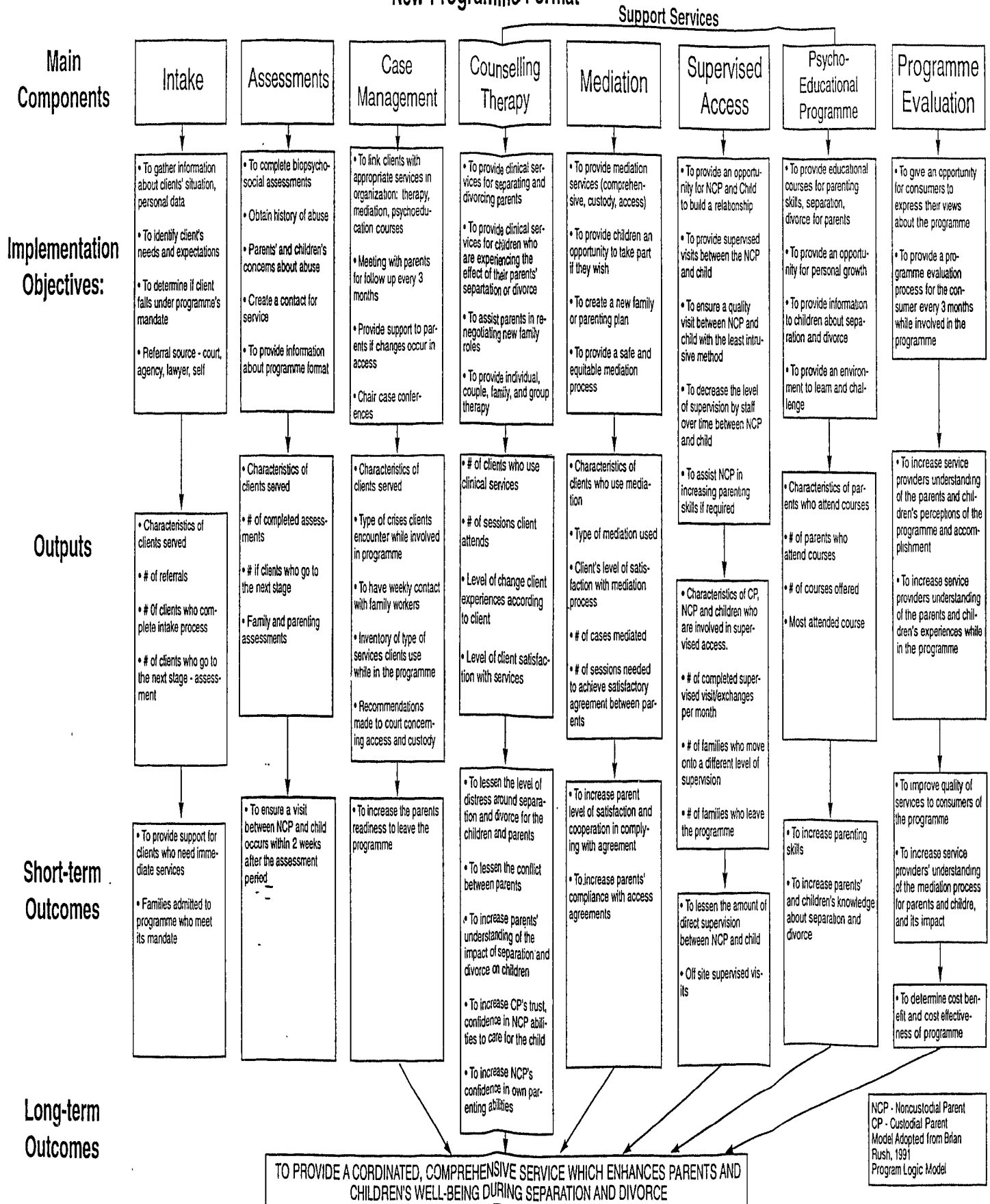
In a discussion paper focusing on family mediation, the Policy Division of the Ministry of the Attorney General examined the role of mediation in Ontario (Ministry of the Attorney General, 1994, p. 1). The discussion paper examined the role of mediation in cases of spousal abuse, what issues should be mediated, the standards and qualifications of mediators, which services should be offered with the mediation process, what mediation service models should be used when delivering mediation and, finally, user fees.

With respect to spousal abuse, the issue of power imbalance is of major concern for the Ministry (Ministry of the Attorney General, 1994, p. 2). As well, there are concerns relating to the woman's willingness to disclose present or past incidences of abuse. The issue of training for mediators which focuses on identification and effective management of these spouse abuse issues is another concern. The remaining concerns centre on full protection of an individual's rights under the

FIGURE 7

Programme Logic Model For A Supervised Access Programme New Programme Format

105



**Figure 8
PROPOSED FLOW OF
SERVICES**

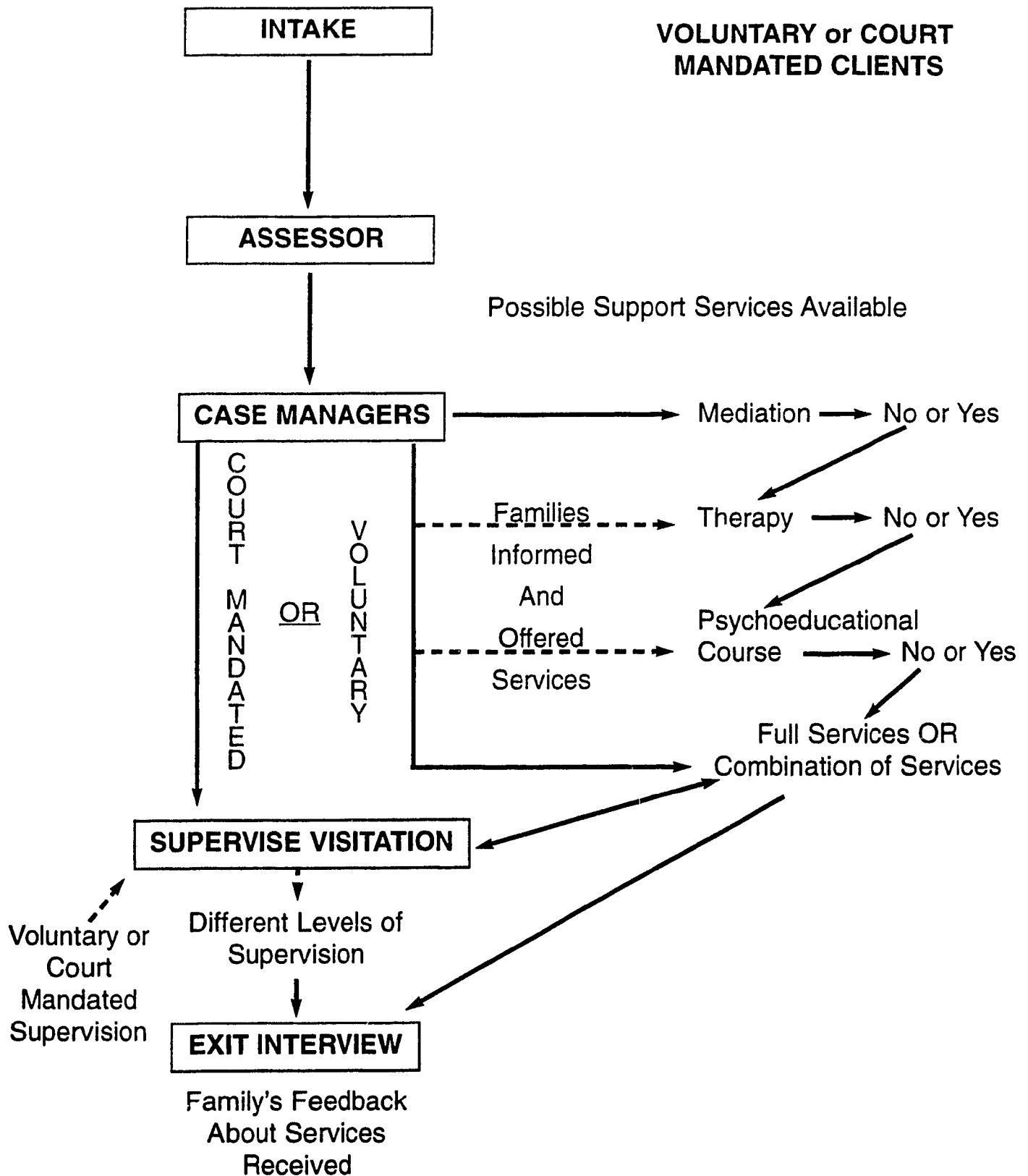
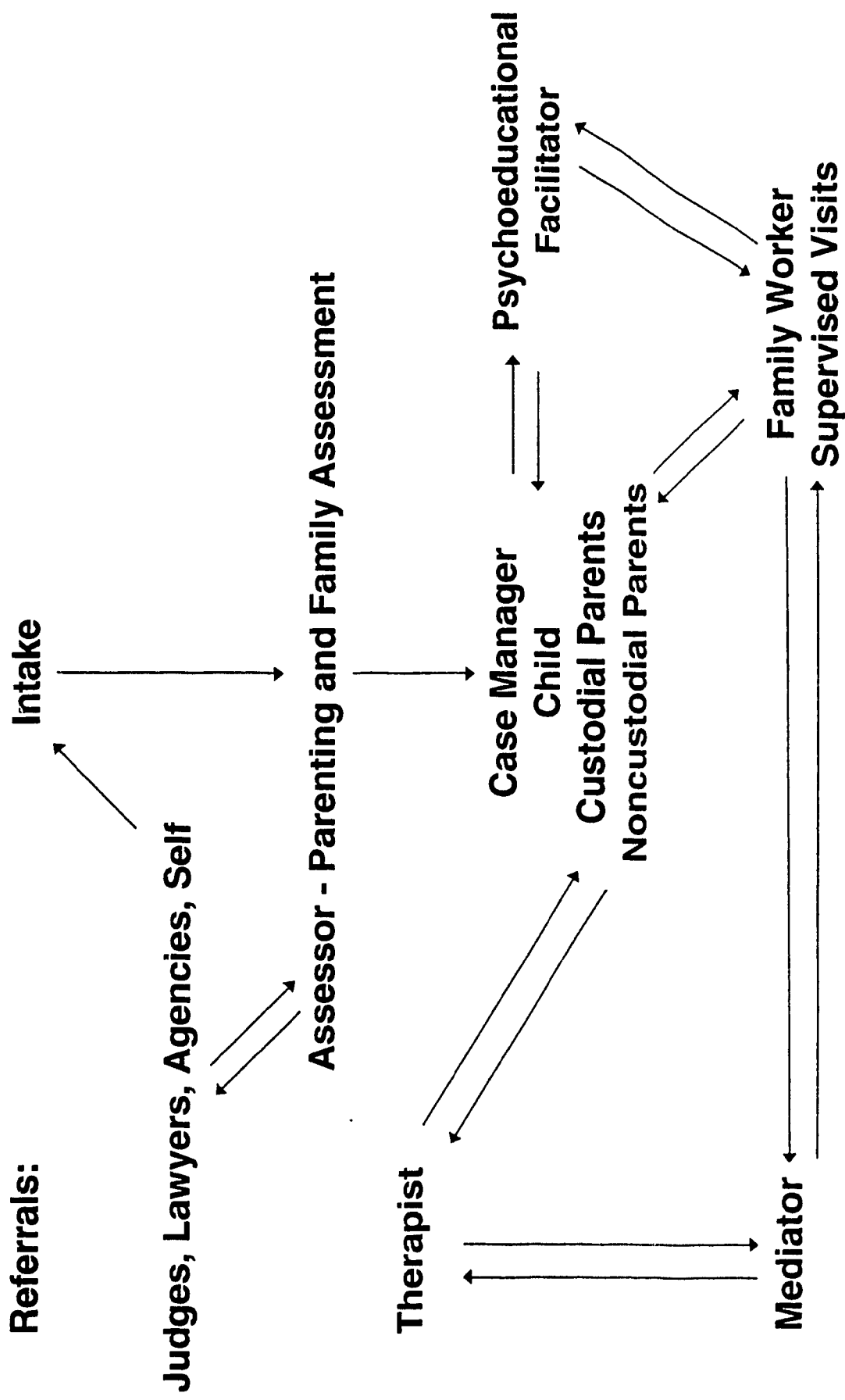


Figure 9
PROPOSED INFORMATION SHARING PROCESS
BETWEEN CONSUMERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS



law, and mediation does not necessarily quicken the process of settling legal issues or save money for the parties involved. However, there is a Unified Family Court in Hamilton, Ontario which implemented a pilot programme that involved comprehensive mediation.

Prior to the establishment of the comprehensive mediation programme, the Hamilton Unified Family Court provided custody and access mediation since 1977 (Ministry of the Attorney General, 1994, p. 5). To give the reader the sense of the degree that this programme was used, there were a total of 306 cases that were referred to the Unified Family Court Clinic in 1992. Out of the 306 cases, thirty-one percent involved comprehensive mediation (i.e. settling custody, access, division of property, and child and spousal support), and sixty-nine percent were matters involving custody and access. Of the 306 cases, 121 followed through with mediation and the remaining 185 cases spent on average 2.1 hours in interviews before leaving the service. The referrals to this programme came from the courts (36%), lawyers (26%), and self referrals (38%) (Attorney General Discussion Paper, 1994, p. 5). The issue that still remains, which can be an obstacle in increasing the use of mediation, is the issue of woman abuse.

The Ontario Association for Family Mediation created and accepted its own policy and procedures relating to mediation and the abuse of women (Ministry of the Attorney General, 1994, p. 8). However, these policies and sets of procedures are still at the discussion level within the Attorney General's office. It appears that mediation has been delivered in a limited fashion and is still under discussion at this point by government policy makers and analysts. Therefore, the fact that mediation in cases of women abuse is not accepted by the

Ministry of the Attorney General would have a direct impact on the new supervised access format. In addition, the Ministry of the Attorney General is also involved with the Ontario Women's Directory. It is my opinion that the policy of having no limit to the length of the time that clients can use the service is destructive for most families, especially for custodial parents who are mostly mothers. This issue of aiding women is important and should have an impact on the programme policy and design. Nevertheless, my argument against the unlimited use of the programme involves many counterpoints.

First, the programme's caseloads are continuously increasing due to the lack of a format which promotes progression for the families. Consequently, family workers are supervising more families at the same time and are unable to provide direct, consistent supervision. In addition, in the Waterloo region there has been no waiting list up to the present.

Second, in cases where the children are becoming dissatisfied with the facilities because of age inappropriateness, these children are continuously asking their custodial mother to change the location of the visit to more age appropriate facilities and activities. The question is: "How supportive is this programme for a mother in this situation?" This particular mother could be involved in the programme for one or two years. During this time, the mother is not supported in a way which facilitates her becoming less dependent on the programme. The mother may then be put in a position where she has to have contact with the children's father, perhaps jeopardizing her safety, scramble for alternatives, or results in a level of friction between

the children and the mother because of their dissatisfaction. How effective is this programme in a situation like this? In some cases the mother is forced by the courts to change access conditions before she is ready or willing to. The lack of supportive services complicates this issue even more. Essentially, the mother is isolated because she is dealing with this on her own. As well, children who enter the programme at a young age grow up wanting different things at different times which the programme sometimes cannot provide because of its mandate.

Third, with respect to mothers who are noncustodial parents, how does this programme serve the best interest of these women, especially when these mothers are losing time with their children due to the centre's hours of operation and the present supervised access format which promotes dependency and the lack of progression?

Fourth, is keeping children involved in the programme for a number of years healthy for the child? It was discussed by custodial mothers that their children hear other children of divorced families talk about what their weekend plans are when visiting their dad at his house. It can be said that as these children grow older while being in a supervised access programme, they will change and perhaps the level of acceptance and willingness to visit their father at the same location and facilities will become less. This often places the custodial mother in a difficult situation. The mother is torn between the children's needs and her peace of mind knowing that the children are safe.

Fifth, the Ministry of the Attorney General wanted the service to provide an "unstigmatized" setting (Norpark, 1994, p. 5). From these interviews, the "unstigmatized" setting was not achieved. This is

especially true for the noncustodial parents who are mostly fathers. According to the noncustodial parents, they were stigmatized by the public because they had to visit their children under supervised conditions. Essentially, since they need to be supervised, the public concludes that they have harmed the children in some way and that the threat still exists; they are bad parents and a danger to other children. In some cases there is a child welfare issue, but unfortunately the real issue may involve unresolved conflict between the parents; however, sometimes the public does not see that side.

Overall, how supportive and proactive is the present programme format? The programme essentially creates a level of dependency. The present day format does not help families draft a "new family plan" (Bonney, 1993, p. 367). This programme format does not assist families through the transition of post divorce and settling child access. Basically, this format locks families into a stagnant pattern: a pattern that remains stable unless there are challenges or changes to the visitation schedule by either the courts or the parents or the arrival of a new partner, marriage, stepbrother or sister. When these changes arise, the family system becomes unstable and the level of conflict and acting out between the parents usually increases.

This new programme format is proactive and provides prevention and education for the families. The key issue today in social service programmes is prevention through education. This new programme format can do this. It can prevent mental health issues for children which are caused by poor adjustment during separation and divorce. It can also assist parents in understanding the impact that separation and divorce has on children. Parents need to know that

continuously high conflict between parents impacts the child's behaviour (Kitzmann & Emery, 1994, p. 156). As well, Emery (1994) found that four to eight hours of mediation increased the parent's satisfaction and compliance with child support (p. 191). Kelly (1981) states that the clinician must take the initiative in promoting post divorce arrangements which enhance the child's development (p. 357). As well, there is a need for education programmes and programme development that is specific to the stage of divorce (Kelly, 1981, p. 358).

A study was conducted that examined the impact of separation and divorce on elementary school-age children (Johnston & Campbell, 1988, p. 151). It was found that as the children grew older, their coping and defensive response to conflicting parents involved becoming enmeshed with the parents in the parental conflict and playing a role in the situation (Johnston & Campbell, 1988, p. 151). Furthermore, the attitude towards the children's parents who argued involved one which attempted to make sense of the dispute and determine who was right and who was wrong (Johnston & Campbell, 1988, p. 157). The conflicting stories from each parent ("Your daddy hit me" or "She is lying") confused the children, and they tried to find out who told the truth. This study involved parents who were not involved in a supervised access programme. Nevertheless, this is clearly seen during a visit between the noncustodial parent and child under supervised conditions. Often the child will say something negative about the noncustodial parent, claiming the custodial parent made the comment. This creates a situation where the noncustodial parent tries to portray him or herself as a good parent. Therefore, during this situation the noncustodial parent is trying to counter the negative comments which

are allegedly made by the custodial parent to the child. Consequently, the child walks away with a double message and is caught in the middle. These dynamics could lessen if parents could put their emotional needs aside and consider what is in the best interest of the child. Negative talk about the other parent in front of the child creates more distress for the child. By providing supportive services such as therapy, conflict resolution, mediation and education specific to divorce, perhaps these dynamics could lessen.

The programme needs to be more child focussed. Essentially, assisting parents during the transition of separation and divorce can help the child adjust to the transition effectively and maintain or improve the child's mental health. This has been supported by Wallerstein and Kelly (1980, 1993), Bonney (1993), Emery (1994), and others. Based on these researchers' perspectives, there needs to be clinical interventions and supports. In addition, Kelly (1993) suggests that the higher the emotional functioning of the custodial parent at the beginning of the divorce proceedings, the less hostility she feels towards the father several years later. Related to this point, the noncustodial parent's pattern of visiting the children at the beginning of the divorce proceedings is related to access as the years go by. Therefore, she is recommending that a parenting plan be created and implemented immediately after separation (Kelly, 1993, p. 41). In addition, when mothers allow or encourage access between the father and the child and the children have a positive relationship with their fathers, then frequent and predictable contact with the father can result in benefits for the children (Kelly, 1993, p. 41). In addition, research indicates that when parents use comprehensive divorce mediation,

they experience less conflict during the divorce process and have a higher level of cooperation, less conflict surrounding visitation and decision making, and more communication relating to the children's concerns in the year after divorce than parents who involved lawyers and the adversarial system (Kelly, 1993, p. 41). Essentially, the quality of the relationship at the time of separation and the amount of disagreement over custody, visitation, and support is a factor when there are problems or when the noncustodial parent has difficulties achieving or maintaining access to the children (Pearson & Anhalt, 1993, p. 151). These factors further prove Kelly's notion of the impact conflict has on parents during divorce and, consequently, the children. In addition, another factor involved the presence of allegations against either parent.

By providing mediation and counselling, the programme can intervene in a growth-promoting, supportive and empowering manner for parents and children. The feminist critique states that mediation does not effectively take into account power imbalances due to financial resources, is exploitative and puts the woman in a disadvantaged position (Regehr, 1994, p. 361). However, if mediation was not mandatory and the woman had a choice whether to pursue either the litigation or the mediation process, women would then be empowered. As well, in situations where the custodial mother received a judgement from the court which she considered to be detrimental, how then is the legal process protecting this woman's rights or best interests? The feminist critique also states that since women are less empowered, they need the formal legal system and aggressive legal representation to protect their rights and pursue new

legal safeguards (Regehr, 1994, p. 363). In the above case, did the legal system effectively protect the rights of this woman? In addition, one custodial mother stated: "My lawyer does not have my best interest at heart." This is only one case, nevertheless this is one woman's perspective who has allegedly been physically and emotionally abused by her ex-spouse.

An evaluation was conducted in 1991 to examine the Hamilton Unified Family Court, mediation pilot project. This particular evaluation comes to three general conclusions (Ministry of the Attorney General, 1994). The first conclusion was the fact that compared with lawyer negotiations and court processing of their cases, court based mediation in conjunction with court processing is somewhat more costly to the public. The second conclusion is that compared with lawyer negotiations, the process of mediation is as satisfying to participants as court processing of their cases. It is also more effective in enabling participants, especially women, to obtain the support outcomes they want, and less effective in enabling them to obtain the custody outcomes they want. The final conclusion reports that compared with lawyer negotiations, mediation makes a greater contribution towards preventing the abuse of separated women after reaching a settlement with their ex-spouse.

Another study conducted in the United States found that 74% of women who completed comprehensive mediation indicated they would definitely recommend mediation to another person (Kelly, 1989, p. 87). Early research did not reflect the effectiveness of mediation. However, more recent research indicates that mediation may be a more satisfactory process for many divorcing couples and may lead to more

positive post-divorce outcomes for parents and children (Kelly, 1989, p. 87). The biggest difference between the litigation and mediation processes is the counselling component in which the mediator attempts to help the parents realize that while the spousal relationship has ended, the parental relationship will always continue (Hayes, 1988, p. 29). There is no doubt that the debate will continue; however, to empower women they should have the choice of deciding which route they would like to pursue. In the Ministry of the Attorney General's discussion paper (1994) study, it was found that equal proportions of male and female clients reported being able to stand up for themselves "better" than their partners (38.5% versus 35.9%) "as well as" their partners (43.9% versus 38.5%) and "less well than" their partners (17.5% versus 25.6%). From this finding, perhaps the feminist critique of the mediation process is not giving women enough credit to stand up for themselves and use their skills and knowledge.

Therefore, the debate as to whether mediation should be used where there is domestic violence will always exist. Maybe the key issue is empowering women through educated choices which they can make for themselves. As mediators and service providers dealing with mothers who are settling access, custody, or distribution of assets, we have an ethical obligation to ensure that all parties have the necessary support, information, knowledge, and personal strength to pursue either mediation or litigation.

In concluding, the time has come to re-examine the policies which impact supervised access. The programme with these proposed changes will facilitate families who are finding it difficult to reach a family plan. These families can be reached earlier in the transition

stage of separation and divorce and, therefore, are less isolated and less likely to be locked into a vicious cycle of continuous high conflict. These families will be able to receive the necessary support services which will aid them in enhancing the parents' and children's well being during this potentially painful and distressing time. This format is preventative programming in that it can save court time, money in court costs, and child and adult mental health dollars, as well as considerable distress on the part of all parties.

CONCLUSION

This programme evaluation of a supervised access programme has highlighted its strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the evaluation highlighted the families' level of satisfaction with the programme. There is no doubt that the parents were grateful for the programme. Nonetheless, they had suggestions on how the programme could be improved. From the deeper understanding of how custodial and noncustodial parents and children experience supervised access that this research provides, hopefully programme changes will occur which will consequently result in a more proactive programme format; a format that takes into account the varying family needs and facilitates their move out of a supervised access program.

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APPENDIX A



NEWS RELEASE COMMUNIQUE

Ministry of
the Attorney
General

Ministère
du Procureur
général

SUPERVISED ACCESS PROGRAM TO RECEIVE ONGOING FUNDING

October 12, 1994

TORONTO -- Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Women's Issues Marion Boyd today announced that the Government of Ontario will permanently fund the Province's Supervised Access Program.

Announced in April 1992 as a pilot project, the Supervised Access Program consists of 14 centres located across the province where children and their non-custodial parents or other family members visit in a child-focused, safe and supervised setting. Supervised Access Centres offer separated parents a neutral setting where visits and exchanges can occur under the supervision of trained staff and volunteers.

"There are many benefits related to supervised access services, including the protection of women and children, the facilitation of court-ordered and other access visits that might not otherwise have occurred, and over time, a possible reduction in the court's workload," Mrs. Boyd said.

Mrs. Boyd made the announcement at Toronto's Supervised Access Centre located in the Danforth Child Care Centre. She noted that an independent evaluation of the project, conducted by the University of Toronto's Institute of Child Studies, found high levels of satisfaction among custodial and non-custodial parents, judges and family law lawyers.

Supervised Access Centres are serving a significant number of children and parents at a relatively low cost to taxpayers. To minimize costs, all centres use existing resources in community agencies. Local community groups and businesses have donated equipment and toys and community members also volunteer time.

SUPERVISED ACCESS PROJECT

Background

- * The Supervised Access Pilot Project consists of 14 centres located across the province where children and parents can visit in neutral, child-focused settings under the supervision of trained staff and volunteers. Most of the centres have been in operation since the summer of 1992.
- * The program aims are to:
 - Provide a safe setting for visits or exchanges between a child and non-custodial parent or other family member such as a grandparent;
 - Ensure the safety of all participants, including staff;
 - Provide trained staff and volunteers who are sensitive to the child's needs;
 - Provide the court and/or lawyers with factual observations about the participants' use of the service. Supervised Access staff prepare reports of their observations of the visit or exchange. The reports are often used to help the Court in making custody or access decisions.
- * Supervised visits or exchanges are held in cases, including where:
 - A child's and/or mother's safety may be at risk;
 - A non-custodial parent has a history of alcoholism or drug abuse or psychiatric disability;
 - The non-custodial parent has been absent from the child's life for a significant period of time and requires an opportunity to re-establish a relationship;
 - There are concerns about the child being abducted;
 - There are concerns about parenting ability;
 - There is animosity and distrust between the parents to the point where visits have become difficult, if not impossible.

SUPERVISED ACCESS CENTRES

Belleville & District

Contact: Cheryl Clarke Tel.: (613) 968-7362

Brantford

Contact: Phyllis Bennett Tel.: (519) 756-4242

Cornwall

Contact: Ann Cadieux Tel.: (613) 933-1253

Durham

Contact: Sonia Kimball Tel.: (905) 668-6868

Kitchener-Waterloo & Cambridge

Contact: Rosemary Burkhart Tel.: (519) 743-1460

London

Contact: Valerie Sarkis Tel.: (519) 434-6848

Midland

Contact: Shelly St. Amant Tel.: (705) 526-1095

North Bay

Contact: Debra Geddes Tel.: (705) 472-6204

Peel Region

Contact: Sib Pryce Tel.: (905) 796-2121

District of Rainy River

Contact: Kathy Oakes Tel.: (807) 274-7787

Sault Ste. Marie

Contact: Magda Cusin-Walker Tel.: (705) 945-5050

Metropolitan Toronto

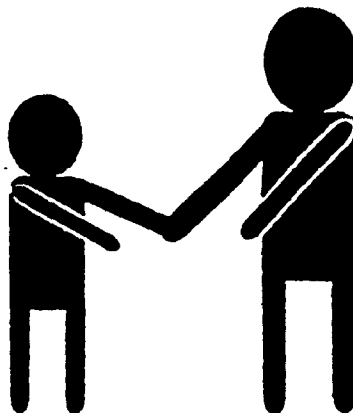
Contact: Melinda Foote Tel.: (416) 598-1997

Windsor

Contact: Dawn Ricker Tel.: (519) 252-6365

York Region

Contact: Louis Taffo Tel.: (905) 764-9722



SUPERVISED ACCESS
PILOT PROJECT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Ministry of the Attorney General

APRIL 14, 1992

HOW ACCESS IS DETERMINED

Court orders concerning custody of and access to children are based upon what is in "the child's best interests". At the time of a separation or divorce, parents can establish their own plans for custody and access arrangements. However, if they are not in agreement, the court has the power to make orders respecting custody and access. While it is usually parents who apply for custody and access, other family members such as grandparents or aunts and uncles may also apply.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF SUPERVISED ACCESS

The Children's Law Reform Act gives the court the power to order that custody of or access to a child be supervised by a third party.

This provision, which has been in place for approximately 11 years, was originally designed to allow for supervision of custody or access by a family member or other trusted person. However, in some communities such as Toronto and London, facilities began to offer what were known as "supervised access services" to families in need. This included situations where there were concerns regarding the safety and/or well-being of the child or mother, or if parents were unable to avoid conflict at the time of the exchange of the child. A third person or neutral territory reduces the tension for the child and ensures the safety of all participants.

EXISTING SUPERVISED ACCESS CENTRES

There are few existing supervised access services in Ontario. Notable among these are programs in centres such as London, Waterloo and Peel. Other jurisdictions, including Manitoba and the State of Arizona, also provide supervision of access visits.

THE OBJECTIVES OF SUPERVISED ACCESS

- To provide a safe, neutral and child-focused setting for visits between a child and non-custodial parent or other family member, whether referred by the court or used voluntarily.
- To ensure the safety of all participants, including staff.
- To provide trained staff and volunteers who are sensitive to the needs of the child.
- To provide the court or lawyers with factual observations about the participants use of the service.

THE PURPOSE OF THE SUPERVISED ACCESS PILOT PROGRAM

In addition to providing services to separated families, the Supervised Access Pilot Program will provide the government with a great deal of information about supervised access and will provide the means to evaluate different methods of delivering those services.



Supervised visits

Supervised access centres will address a number of different family situations. Supervised visits will be appropriate, for example, in cases where there are concerns about the safety of the child and/or the mother, where the non-custodial parent has a drug or alcohol problem or a psychiatric disorder, where there has been lengthy separation between the parent and the child or where there is a risk of abduction.

Supervised exchanges

Supervised exchanges may be appropriate in different types of situations. In families where there is a great deal of unresolved conflict between the separated parents, a neutral place to exchange the children for visits will make access visits easier to arrange and will reduce the tension for the child. Only the exchange is supervised; the visit occurs elsewhere.

HOW VISITS WILL BE MONITORED

Staff of the supervised access pilot centres will be able to observe the nature of the visits between the parent and child, and offer these observations to the lawyers and courts involved. These observations will allow for more informed decision making by the courts with respect to further access arrangements. Staff would not, however, make assessments of whether future visits should take place or the form of future visits.

HOW THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS WERE APPROVED FOR FUNDING

Funding for the project was announced last fall, and community groups were invited to submit proposals for supervised access centres. All applications for funding were reviewed by the Supervised Access Funding Advisory Committee, which then made recommendations to the Attorney General regarding the funding of particular sites.

The members of the Supervised Access Funding Advisory Committee come from different parts of the province and represent various organizations and community groups, including:

- The Ontario Immigrant and Visible Minority Women's Organization;
- The Canadian Bar Association - Family Law Section;
- The Ontario Court (Provincial Division) judiciary;
- The Ontario Metis Aboriginal Association;
- The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses;
- The Canadian Council for Family Rights and Fathers for Justice;
- Fanshawe College, Early Childhood Education Faculty;
- children's services organizations;
- the Francophone community.



The Ministry of the Attorney General received 55 applications from all parts of the province. Each was assessed in terms of the ability of the community group involved to provide a high quality service to the public. Attempts were made to achieve a fair geographic distribution across the province.

Ce document est aussi disponible en français.

II. SERVICE DESCRIPTION:

i) Programme Goal and Objectives:

Child and Parent Place was established to facilitate healthy and ongoing interaction with both the resident and non-resident parents, thereby avoiding the loss of any important relationship to the child.

The major objectives of the programme are:

1. To assist children and their parents, through times of great stress, to maintain the ties the children have with both parents.
2. To provide a neutral, child-focused, safe environment for on-site visits and exchange purposes.
3. To reduce the conflict and tension surrounding access to children of separated and divorced parents.
4. To function as a neutral drop-off and return point for the child.
5. To help ensure the physical and emotional safety and security of all parties including children, parents, volunteers and staff.
6. To improve the well being of children and parents.
7. To result in improved attitudes to visits on the part of all concerned, as a result of the programme's neutrality with respect to parents and its focus on the child's needs.
8. To reduce the concerns about the safety of children when interacting with their non-resident parents.
9. To allow separated parents time to work through their feelings so that C.A.P.P. is no longer needed for supervision of access.
10. To reduce the number of police contacts concerning access disputes.

Supervision of access is not considered a long-term solution. It is an interim measure to rectify some concerns, eliminate some stressors, allow a continuance of access and encourage movement toward a more natural, independent visiting situation. It should also be noted that Child and Parent Place recognizes that access is not appropriate under all circumstances.

Services To Be Provided

Parents will be able to use Child and Parent Place when supervised access is ordered by the court or by voluntary mutual agreement.

1. Supervision of visits within physical limits of the programme's facility.

Visits will be supervised by staff who are assisted by trained volunteers. Their basic task is to ensure that the child(ren) is/are safe and comfortable. The volunteer will greet the child(ren) on arrival and care for him/her until the access parent arrives. Volunteers will be trained to support and assist the child(ren) and parent who need help in getting interaction going. They will also be able to play or talk with one child while the parent spends some one-to-one time with another child of the family. They will assist with the setting up of equipment and serve some snacks during the visit. For court-ordered supervised access, the staff and/or volunteer will, throughout the visit, stay close enough to the parent and child(ren) to be able to observe distress in the child(ren) or his/her possible removal from the premises.

2. Assistance to non-custodial parents in establishing or re-establishing communication and interaction with the child(ren), during supervision.

Parents who may not have been the primary care-givers or who have not seen the child(ren) for some time, may experience difficulty in interacting with the child(ren). Volunteers will assist in setting up an activity around which more comfortable communication can take place. Assistance and modeling in the area of ordinary child care, such as infant care, will also be offered where parent skills are lacking.

Staff will be available to discuss the progress of visits with the parent who wishes to do so. Again, the focus of these discussions will be the interaction between parent and child(ren), not the relationship between the parents. Information will be given about the appropriate services if other kinds of support or counselling are needed.

3. Assistance to custodial parents to accept and deal with access.

Through staff, the custodial parents will be given factual information about the visits that have taken place. Custodial parents will have the same opportunity to discuss the progress of visits, again centered around the child(ren)'s needs and any changes in the child(ren)'s attitude toward the visits, including for example, the child(ren)'s anxiety level, expression of feelings of guilt or anger, and reaction toward the other parent. The information provided will be factual observations of behaviour only.

Where indicated, support will be offered to the custodial parent in the form of information about other needed services.

4. A pick-up and return point for visiting in cases where custodial and non-custodial parents do not wish to meet.

Staggered arrival times will permit volunteers to check in with each child(ren) participating in this aspect of the programme, and clarify with the parents details of return times, etc. The child(ren) would then be picked up by the non-custodial parent with whom needed information would be shared. Staggered times of arrival for pick-up and return will reduce the likelihood of confrontation between parents.

5. Assistance to children so that they may experience the visit positively.

All services to parents described above are intended to benefit the child(ren). Part of the benefit to children will be the opportunity to observe other children experiencing the same anxiety and the same conflicts. An atmosphere in which maintenance of parent/child ties after separation is seen as important, normal, and very positive, and where this message is made explicit to both parents, will reduce some additional anxieties for the child(ren).

It is not intended that staff will enter into prolonged staff-initiated discussion with the child(ren) about the visits, or in any way put pressure on the child(ren) to express his or her feelings about them. At the same time, staff will by actions and words encourage a positive approach to the child(ren)'s situation, acceptance of the child(ren)'s natural parent ties, and encourage the expression of feelings about the visits in order to relieve anxieties.

6 Resolution of conflict.

As stated earlier, staff/volunteers will express empathy and encouragement: they will provide factual information about the visit. If either parent presents significant problems, staff/volunteers will encourage the client to seek help from a social service agency or legal counsel. Staff/volunteers will not offer any formal mediation counselling.

It is inevitable that some parents are chronically late or will not appear for visits. As a first step, staff/volunteers will phone the absent parent to ascertain the reasons and, where possible, facilitate alternative arrangements. Failure of either parent to appear for the transfer would be a problem referred to the parents and their lawyers to act on. A record will be kept of such an event. Specific policies have been developed with respect to lateness and parents who do not show up for appointments.

If a child(ren) shows distress due to, for example, persistent direction of the conversation toward criticism of the other parent, the staff will intervene and redirect the interaction. If the distress continues, the visit may be suspended for that day. Should the child(ren) continue to be upset over several weeks and talks with both parents do not result in any improvement, staff will advise the parents, and where appropriate, a referral agency, that in the best interest of the child(ren) Child and Parent Place can no longer support the visits. A policy for dealing with a critical incident should it occur, is also in place.

In cases of risk, a non-custodial parent (or other relative) may visit the child(ren) under supervision only, as ordered by the court under the Family Law Reform Act. For such supervision orders, Child and Parent Place can provide this function.

ii) Hours/Days of Operation:

The programme operates from two sites, one in Kitchener and one in Cambridge.

The Waterloo Centre is open:

Friday evening	6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Total Hours Of Direct Service = 15
Saturday	9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	
Sunday	1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	

The Cambridge Centre is open:

Saturday	10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Total Hours Of Direct Service = 10
Sunday	1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.	

Family Workers will arrive 1/2 hour in advance of the programme beginning and leave 1/2 - 1 hour after it finishes, to accommodate programme preparation and report writing. Additional Family Worker hours are used for Advisory Committee meetings, supervision meetings, ad hoc meetings regarding policy/procedure development, office work, training, etc.

Office Hours

Tuesday to Friday - 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

APPENDIX B

Form 14 Court file no. _____

2. Pending return of the Application, the Respondent father shall have access to the aforesaid child as follows:

- a) If the Respondent father qualifies for temporary day passes from the correctional facility where he is incarcerated, he shall be allowed access one Saturday or Sunday per month for a period of two and a half hours, which access is to be supervised and take place at Child & Parent Place. The Respondent shall give ten days notice to the Applicant of his intention to exercise access;
- b) A copy of this Order shall be delivered to Child & Parent Place.

3. The Application herein is adjourned to the 5th day of August, 1993 at 1:30 p.m.

CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE AND
CORRECT COPY OF THE ORIGINAL
COPIE AUTHENTIQUE CERTIFIÉE
ET CONFORME À L'ORIGINAL
THIS 26 DAY OF May 1993
FAIT LE 26 May 1993
W. Isclihant
DEPUTY CLERK OF THE COURT
CH. J. ADJOINT DE LA COUR
COURT OF QUEBEC (JUV. DIV.)
COURT DE QUÉBEC (DIV. JUV.)

a line through any blank space left on this page)

MAY 26 1993

Date of signature

W. Isclihant

Signature of judge or clerk of the court

EXAMPLE OF COURT ORDERS

1. This court order and adjudges that the Plaintiff shall have access to said child upon following terms and conditions:

Alternate Saturdays, commencing July 18/92 to be exercised at and under supervision of CAPP in Cambridge, Ontario between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. subject to any scheduling changes requested by CAPP.

2. Interim access by the Applicant shall recommence on the first Saturday that counsel for the Applicant can arrange at "Child and Parent Place" in Waterloo for a duration of three hours. Interim access shall continue for the next two Saturdays for three hours and four hours in succession respectively. The fourth Saturday, the Applicant is to pick-up the child at Child and Parent Place for a four hour visit. The Respondent is to deliver the child fifteen minutes before and arrive fifteen minutes after the visit. The Applicant is to obtain and use an appropriate car seat for the child.

Form 14

Court file no.

3. THIS COURT FURTHER ORDERS that access be arranged at Child and Parent Place, Cambridge for consecutive Saturdays weekly visits commencing Saturday January 2, 1993 or the first available Saturday of operation of Child and Parent Place in January.

Date of signature

Signature of judge or clerk of the court

APPENDIX C

Child and Parent Place

165 King Street East,
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 2K8
Telephone (519) 743-1460

December 20, 1994

INFORMATION LETTER

Dear Parent:

I am writing to invite you to discuss your experiences using this programme.

In addition to being a Family Worker at Child and Parent Place, Cambridge, Bonnie Gagné is presently a Master of Social Work student at Wilfrid Laurier University. As part of the requirement for her Master of Social Work Degree, Bonnie decided to examine the experiences of families who are involved at Child and Parent Place. By conducting this research, Bonnie will hopefully gain ideas about how we might better meet the needs of parents and their children.

To collect information about your experiences, Bonnie has prepared a few questions which will be discussed during an interview which lasts approximately one hour. Furthermore, the Family Worker, Debbie McKinnon, who works in the Kitchener-Waterloo Child and Parent Place, will interview the families who use the Cambridge site. Bonnie's role will be interviewing the families who use the Kitchener-Waterloo programme. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. In addition, the information which will be gathered during the interviews will be confidential. This means that Bonnie would not write the final report in a way that would identify you or your family.

Furthermore, Bonnie would appreciate the opportunity to speak with your child about his or her experiences while at Child and Parent Place. This, once again, is voluntary. If your child feels uncomfortable during the interview, the interview will automatically be stopped. It is both the mother and father's decision as to whether the child participates in the interview. As well, it is requested that the child be interviewed without the presence of either parent. The children will have the opportunity to communicate their experiences through the use of art, toys, or simply talking with the Family Worker.

This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Anne Westhues, Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University. Should you have any questions about the research, you can contact Debbie McKinnon or Bonnie Gagné at (519) 743-1460 or Dr. Westhues at (519) 884-1970, extension 2474.

If you consent to take part in the research, please sign the following consent to participate form. Also, if you agree to have your child interviewed, please sign the parent consent form.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "RoseMary Burkhardt", written over a series of horizontal lines.

RoseMary Burkhardt
Co-ordinator
Child and Parent Place

Encl./File

capw/et/rmb150

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

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I agree to participate in the study being conducted by Bonnie Gagné which focuses on exploring supervised access at Child and Parent Place.

I understand that:

- a) My participation in this research is voluntary.
- b) I have the right to terminate my involvement at any time.
- c) I have the right to refuse to answer any questions with which I feel uncomfortable.
- d) The sensitivity of the subject matter is appreciated by the researcher, and the intent is to treat the interview process with the utmost respect.

Furthermore, it is also my understanding that;

- e) There are no known risks associated with participating in this study.
- f) There are no direct personal benefits associated with participation.
- g) There are no personal negative consequences associated with refusing to participate.

Finally, I further understand that:

- h) All information collected for the purpose of this study will be treated in strictest confidence;
- i) Any reports/papers, either published or unpublished, that result from this research will preserve codes of confidentiality and anonymity;
- j) Publications may involve verbatim quotations from the interviews.
- k) Despite codes of confidentiality, close associates or family members may recognize me through anecdotes or concrete details which might appear in a published version of this research.
- l) Participant's permission will be required if direct quotes are used.
- m) All interview transcripts will be confidential and appropriate care taken to safeguard them by securing them in a safe place;
- n) All records will be destroyed within an agreed upon time period.

Name (please print)

Signature

Witness

Date

CONSENT TO AUDIOTAPE

I give permission for my interview to be audiotaped. I understand that I have the right to turn off the tape recorder at any time during the interview.

Signature

PARENT CONSENT

I _____ allow _____
Name of Parent Names of Child(ren)

to take part in an interview discussing his/her experiences at Child and Parent Place. The information that is discussed between your child and myself will be confidential. This means that I will not release the information to either parent or any other party except when allegations of abuse are disclosed.

Date

Parent's Signature

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Custodial and Noncustodial Parents:

1. Tell me what it's been like for you being in a supervised access programme at Child and Parent Place?
2. How do you think supervised access is affecting your child?
3. How do you think supervised access is affecting your relationship with your child?
4. If supervised access was not available, how would this affect:
 - a) you
 - b) your child?
5. What changes would you like to see made to the present supervised access format?
6. Are there any other comments about the programme, or your experiences with the programme?

Children:

1. What is it like for you to come here to visit your mommy or daddy?
2. Would you like to draw what it is like for you to come here?
(Drawing would be an option for the child if he or she wishes.)