

Supervised Visitation & Exchange Program



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SERVICES

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/juveniledomesticrelations



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One of the first and most important things to know about the program is

how we make decisions...

All decisions about service conditions are made after the intake and orientation of both parents and the child and in accordance with the court order. Neither parent has final decision-making authority about issues related to scheduling visitation or conditions of the visit with regard to pictures, gifts, guests or food. Decisions are made with staff in accordance with safety considerations, parental input, and current court-ordered requirements. The program must have availability for visits or exchanges and decisions must follow program procedures. Decisions about service conditions may be updated to address safety or schedule concerns. Collaboration between parents and staff is key to a successful visitation arrangement.



The Supervised Visitation and Exchange Program is a family setting that provides the opportunity for safe contact between parents and children designed to assist families in building healthier relationships.

Welcome

Supervised visitation and exchange services are designed to allow children consistent contact with a non-custodial parent (parent they do not live with) while avoiding complicated adult conflicts and safety issues. The services support parents as they navigate stressful issues related to concerns over safety and consistency around visitation planning.

The primary policy of the program is to provide safe and supportive services that encourage healthy contact for court-ordered visitation and exchanges. Safety is our paramount concern and the program is designed to encourage relationship opportunities that strengthen parent-child bonds while avoiding any unnecessary stress.

All families served must have a court order from a Fairfax County Court.

The program is designed to be a temporary measure as families work with the court toward a more permanent solution.

This booklet provides important information about our services, what you can expect from us, and what we expect from you. This information will be reviewed with you and clarified, if necessary.

As you review the booklet, remember that individual procedures will be adjusted for the needs of your family to provide the safest, most successful experience possible.

Our Services

Guiding Our Services



We provide services that follow these supportive principles:

- ❖ A regard for physical and emotional safety of children and adults
- ❖ Valuing culture and diversity of families using the program
- ❖ Respectful and fair interactions for parents and children
- ❖ Commitment to understanding issues of family dynamics, child development, domestic violence, trauma, mental health challenges, dynamics of substance abuse, and parenting conflicts
- ❖ A commitment to community collaboration

Parental Support and Information



- ❖ We provide information for parents and children helpful in navigating visitation
- ❖ We support parents by facilitating positive family connections
- ❖ We provide information and referrals to community services including: private visitation programs, counseling and advocacy opportunities, food pantries, shelters, support groups, legal clinics, and parenting programs

We provide services in a family friendly visitation center including:



Monitored Small Group Visitation



- ❖ Provides a setting for several families at once
- ❖ Allows non-custodial parents the opportunity to visit with their children
- ❖ Monitoring provides safety for children without being intrusive
- ❖ Staff and volunteers are available in the room for supportive interventions
- ❖ Allows activities and opportunities for families that encourage positive communication and family connections
- ❖ Allows safe parenting time to take place without direct contact between the custodial parent or guardian and the non-custodial parent

- ❖ Increases accountability and consistency of court-ordered contact
- ❖ Allows for children to be exchanged between two households with no direct contact between the parents or guardians
- ❖ Reduces conflict as center staff assist the parents during the transition of allowing the children to visit off-site



Safe Exchanges

Locations and Hours

SUPERVISED VISITATION

- ❖ Approximately 90 minutes long. Up to 30 minute wait before and after visit for pick up/drop off
- ❖ Intakes are by appointment only Monday through Friday



MONDAYS & THURSDAYS 4 PM TO 8 PM

FRIDAYS 2 PM TO 6 PM

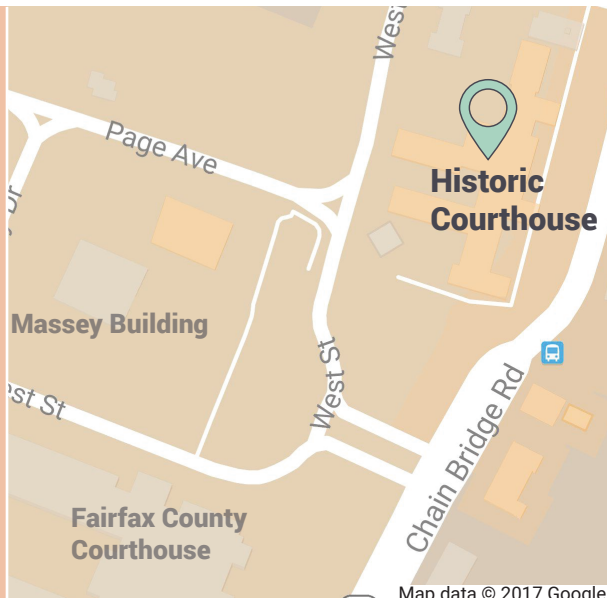
SATURDAYS 10 AM TO 4 PM

SUNDAYS 10 AM TO 4 PM



THE VISITATION CENTER

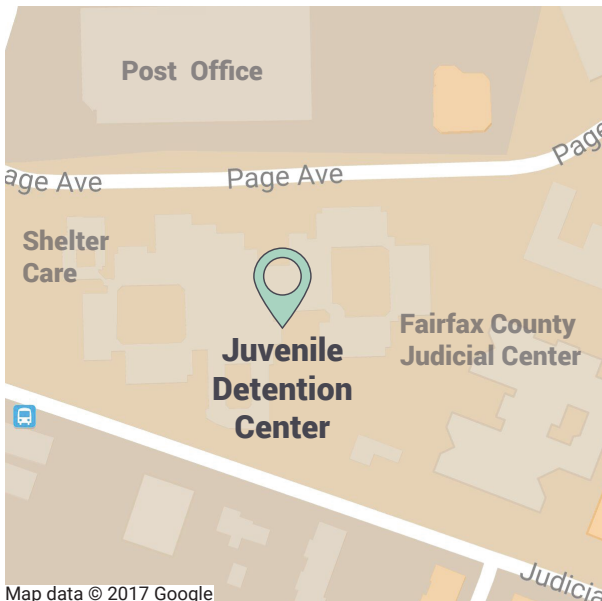
Historic Courthouse
4000 Chain Bridge Road
Fairfax, VA 22030



SUPERVISED EXCHANGES

- ❖ Approximately 30 minutes per family
- ❖ Exchanges take place at the Visitation Center except for holidays
- ❖ Special requests should be made at least two weeks in advance
- ❖ All exchanges require an appointment
- ❖ Summer vacation and holiday exchanges are available by appointment only and are dependent on staffing availability

MONDAYS & THURSDAYS	4 PM TO 8 PM
FRIDAYS	4 PM TO 6 PM
SATURDAYS	10 AM TO 4 PM
SUNDAYS	9 AM TO 6 PM



HOLIDAYS ONLY

JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER

Lobby and Parking Lot
10650 Page Avenue
Fairfax, VA 22030

Visitation Procedures



Procedures for Pick Up/ Drop Off by Residential Parent

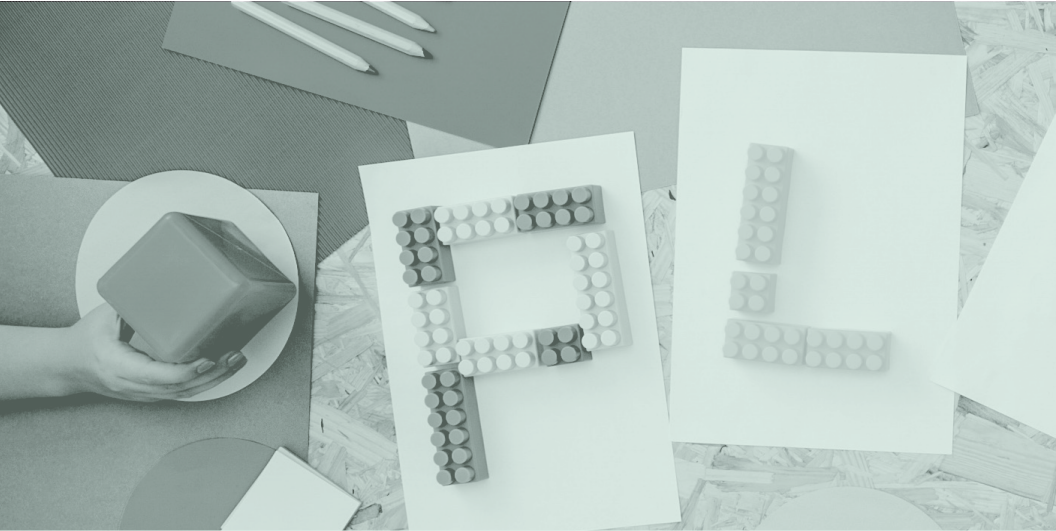
- ❖ Program staff will meet you and your child at the assigned entrance.
- ❖ You will pass through security, be signed in and pay any visitation fees.
- ❖ If you are running late, you must notify us before the arrival time. When possible, the visitation will be adjusted to allow for a full visit.
- ❖ Children are given the opportunity to check in with staff before visitation.
- ❖ Children are always escorted by staff once in the building.
- ❖ Residential parents are expected to provide all essential items for the care of the children during visitation, including clothing, diapers, wipes, formula, and medication (inhalers).
- ❖ Your patience is appreciated when dropping off and picking up your children. It sometimes takes children time to transition in and out of the visitation room.
- ❖ Residential parents are given the opportunity to check in before and after the visits. You may request to speak with a case manager when you drop off or pick up. You may wait on-site or return to the center prior to pick up time.
- ❖ Notify staff in advance of cancellations or issues with the child's schedule that will impact visitation date or time.



Procedures for Visiting Parents

- ❖ You will arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of the visit. If you are running late, you must call staff immediately. Late arrivals may result in a canceled visit or loss of time in the visitation room.
- ❖ Leave cell phones in your car or at the security desk. If you must have your cell phone in the room, please discuss this with staff during the intake.
- ❖ Parents pass through security, are signed in and pay any visitation fees. All items brought into the program are subject to examination.
- ❖ Once children are in the building, program staff must be able to see and hear them at all times.
- ❖ You are expected to remain in the visitation room with your child and follow staff requests.
- ❖ Five minutes before the end of the visit, you will be given a prompt to assist in preparing to say goodbye.
- ❖ At the end of your visit, you are expected to remain in the visitation room while the children are escorted out to the residential parent.
- ❖ You are expected to make sure that the visitation room is clean and orderly after the visit.
- ❖ After the residential parent and children have left the premises, staff will check in with you and may make suggestions regarding the visit.

During Visitation



- ❖ Program staff will be present to support your visit and provide assistance when needed.
- ❖ You are encouraged to help make the visit enjoyable for the child. Special crafts, activities, or food may be helpful.
- ❖ Do not make promises or discuss plans for visiting outside of the program until an agreement has been reached through the court.
- ❖ Children and staff are not to be used to pass information, child support payments, or other items between parties involved in the case.
- ❖ Parents may not discuss the current legal situation or other court issues during visitation.
- ❖ If program staff suggests another activity or makes a request, parents are asked to comply and discuss concerns after the child has left the visitation.
- ❖ Children are allowed to choose games, activities and crafts to do with parents.



- ❖ Visiting parents are expected to supervise their children in the visitation waiting room at all times.
- ❖ Children are allowed to set their own boundaries during visitation.
- ❖ Parents must allow the children to set the pace of the visitation.
- ❖ All parties must dress appropriately for visitation. Please avoid wearing clothing with profanity or other clothing not appropriate for a setting with children.
- ❖ Children may take off their shoes but are encouraged to wear socks.
- ❖ Issues of bathroom safety should be discussed with staff during intake. Staff will escort the child to and from the bathroom as necessary. Parents are expected to change the child's diaper if needed with staff supervision.
- ❖ If the child becomes ill during the visit, the visit will end and the residential parent will be asked to pick up the child immediately.
- ❖ Parents must engage in conversation the staff or an arranged interpreter can hear and understand.

Exchange Procedures



Residential Parents

Each party will be assigned a location, parking lot and entrance that must be used for exchanges.

- ❖ Residential parents should arrive no more than 5 minutes prior to the exchange or after receiving a call from program staff indicating they may enter the parking lot.
- ❖ Information regarding a child's schedule, commitments, or medical care must be provided to program staff prior to the exchange.
- ❖ Program staff will meet the residential parent in the parking lot and escort the children into the building for the exchange.
- ❖ Residential parents are encouraged to send only essential items. During the intake, discuss with staff what you believe is essential for your children for the exchange.
- ❖ Medication sent back and forth must be in the original container and have instructions for use. It will need to be counted and measured.
- ❖ If you require the visiting parent to use a specific kind of diaper, formula, lotion, etc., you must provide the items to be sent with the child.
- ❖ Remember, anything you send may not come back.
- ❖ After the residential parent has left the premises, the children will wait with the visiting parent before being allowed to leave the building.



Visiting Parents

Any concerns from either parent should be discussed with staff away from the child.

- ❖ When returning children, visiting parents will arrive with the children 15 minutes prior to the exchange.
- ❖ If the child receives any medical care during the visitation, parents should notify program staff right away. Staff will contact the other parent immediately and pass along any medical documents when the child is returned.

If there is any concern regarding the safety or well-being of a child during the exchange, the visit will be canceled.

Items to have during exchanges:

- ❖ Clothing, supplies, and toys necessary to keep the children busy, healthy, and happy during the time they are with you.
- ❖ The proper car seat when leaving the Visitation Center.
- ❖ If you give the child a gift or an item to take back after an exchange keep in mind that it may not come back at the next visit. All gifts should be brought to the attention of the program staff prior to exchange. No weapons (including pocket knives) may be sent with the child.
- ❖ Please do not send electronic devices, including cell phones, back and forth with the child unless this has been agreed to prior to the exchange.

Safety Considerations

- ❖ Anyone transporting children is expected to comply with all Virginia laws and arrive with children in the proper car seat and seat belts.
- ❖ All parents must arrive at the center at their assigned time and location. Each parent will have the opportunity to check in with staff, if needed, before and after visits.
- ❖ If a child needs to take medication, including EPI pens, it must be given by a parent, not program staff.
- ❖ Program staff will be present at all times when children are in the visitation room.
- ❖ Staff should be notified if a child has a developmental or medical concern so support may be provided as needed. Children may not be allowed to attend visitation if they are showing signs of illness. Contact staff immediately with medical-related issues that may impact visitation.
- ❖ Notify program staff ahead of time about who will be dropping off and picking up children from visitations or exchanges.

Following program
procedures
supports **safe**
visitation





Safety Involves Everyone Working Together

- ❖ Abusive behavior, harassment, verbal or non-verbal threats, shouting, profanity, or intimidation toward any person on the property will not be tolerated. Engaging in any of these activities may result in immediate termination of the visit and may result in program termination, law enforcement involvement or other legal action.
- ❖ Suspected child abuse will be reported immediately to Child Protective Services, to all parties, and to all attorneys of record.
- ❖ Serious incidents will be documented in the case notes and may result in suspension of the visit or exchange.
- ❖ Concerns, safety issues, or other information that may be important to the visitation regarding your child should be shared with program staff prior to the actual visit.
- ❖ Drugs and alcohol are not allowed at the Visitation Center. Parties believed to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be asked to leave the premises and the scheduled visit or exchange will not take place.
- ❖ Parents are expected to supervise children during the visits and choose toys and activities that are safe and age appropriate.

Expectations



THE PROGRAM

- ❖ Treat you with respect
- ❖ Make safety a priority
- ❖ Schedule services after intake has been completed for parents and children
- ❖ Establish visitation schedule that best meets the availability of all parties
- ❖ Respect the uniqueness of your family's situation
- ❖ Make recommendations only with your child's best interest in mind
- ❖ Address parent's suggestions and concerns
- ❖ Keep the visitation area clean, safe, and friendly
- ❖ Document significant occurrences
- ❖ Provide only minimal documentation of visits
- ❖ Comply with court orders pertaining to services as availability allows
- ❖ Give you an opportunity to process information and your progress

PARENTS

- ❖ Complete the face-to-face intake process after receiving a court order
- ❖ Provide a copy of the court order at intake
- ❖ Provide honest and accurate information
- ❖ Cooperate with program procedures
- ❖ Have respectful interactions
- ❖ Arrive on time for appointments
- ❖ Use assigned parking lots, the proper entrance and exit at each visit
- ❖ Make scheduled visitations a priority
- ❖ Contact staff as soon as possible regarding cancellations or late arrivals
- ❖ Avoid profane or abusive language
- ❖ Respect the privacy and confidentiality of the other visiting families
- ❖ Attend any necessary meetings regarding the case progress
- ❖ Make any efforts to create a positive experience for your child

Cancellations

Whenever possible, excused cancellations will be rescheduled

- ❖ Notify program staff at least 24 hours in advance if a visit needs to be canceled due to vacation, work , or other non-emergency conflicts.
- ❖ If an unforeseeable emergency arises causing an absence or late arrival, the party must contact the program staff as soon as possible.
- ❖ A record will be kept of the residential parent's tardiness. The visit will be extended to accommodate a full visitation when possible.
- ❖ Visiting parents who arrive more than 5 minutes late for a visitation risk having the visit canceled.
- ❖ Chronic late arrival and pick-ups may result in the family being dismissed from the program.
- ❖ If a party is not complying with the visitation schedule, a meeting may be requested to discuss whether it is appropriate to terminate services.
- ❖ All parties and your attorney(s) will be notified of cancellations or terminations.

Holidays and Inclement Weather



- ❖ The program will be closed when Fairfax County Government closes for holidays. Evening visitation will not occur on those dates. Make-up days are set as available.
- ❖ The program follows Fairfax County Public Schools in regard to closings due to inclement weather or emergencies. If evening school activities are canceled due to the weather or an emergency, the program will not be available for visitation to ensure the safety of the children.
- ❖ When possible, families will be notified in advance of a possible emergency or holiday closing. Families may call the office and the voice mail will have information regarding any closing or visitation schedule changes.
- ❖ Clients should call 703-246-4642 to confirm closings due to holidays or inclement weather.



Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can I bring food to the visitation?

Sharing a meal or snack is a wonderful way to bond with a child. Any food brought in should be cleared with staff ahead of time so that we may check with the residential parent regarding allergies or other concerns related to food. Parents are encouraged to avoid foods that may be high in sugar or caffeine. If a residential parent has specific requests regarding what a child may or may not eat, they may provide food.

2. Can I bring gifts?

If gifts are for the children and do not pose a safety risk, they will be allowed. Notes, messages, or gifts for the other parent are not permitted. Please avoid gifts that are not age appropriate or represent weapons.



Gifts must arrive unwrapped and are subject to search. Concerns about gifts should be raised during intake. The residential parent has the right to refuse to take gifts with them.

3. Can I bring cards and letters?

Cards should be simply signed love mom or love dad. Letters to the child should not come through the Visitation Center as this violates the procedure to avoid passing messages back and forth.

4. Why does the staff pass along requests for gifts, guests, food, and schedule changes?

Program staff must process all requests with each parent. Each parent may refuse to grant a request. Staff does not make final decisions until each parent has been heard on the issue. Allowing gifts, guests, food and an occasional schedule change may be helpful in building a more positive experience. Safety concerns, program availability and the reasonableness must be considered with each request.

5. Can I bring a family guest to the visitation?

Both parents must agree that a guest may attend and the Visitation Center must be able to accommodate the guest.

Guests may visit on an occasional basis by agreement of all parties unless otherwise court ordered. All guests require careful consideration and prior approval. The program requests at least 72 hours of notice in order to arrange permission for guests to attend visitation.

6. Can I take pictures of my child during visitation?

Cameras and audio/video recording equipment are not allowed in the Visitation Center out of respect for program staff and the other visiting families.

There is a camera on-site and staff can take pictures during the visitation. Pictures are emailed at a later time. It should not be expected that photos will be taken at every visit. If the residential parent has concerns about photos, the issue should be raised during the intake.

7. What if I think my child is being abused or neglected?

Staff must report any suspected child abuse or neglect immediately to Child Protective Services. It is not up to staff to investigate allegations of abuse or neglect or to determine if concerns are valid. Allegations of abuse or neglect may be reported by the parents to the staff or directly observed by staff.

Visits are about play and healthy interaction. Parents are reminded not to interrogate

the child or to undress the child looking for signs of abuse during the visit.

8. Can I review the records in my case?

You may review your records with a staff member present. You may not review intake information provided by the other parent.

9. Can program staff testify for me in court and make recommendations?

The program staff prefers not to testify in court. Staff is unable to make recommendations regarding custody or visitation. Subpoenas are required if staff is to appear at a court hearing.

Staff may communicate with your attorney or guardian ad litem regarding visitation progress. Staff may submit a written report only if it has been directly requested by the JDRDC judge that ordered visitation.

10. What can staff report to the court?

Staff can only testify to the following:

- ❖ What services were provided
- ❖ The number of visits that occurred
- ❖ Canceled visitations
- ❖ Information on serious incidents
- ❖ Information on how parties are complying with court order related to services
- ❖ Whether or not the program is able to continue to provide visitations if ordered



Any observations or testimony in court made by staff are based on information obtained in an artificial environment and may not reflect how visitation would occur outside the program.

11. What if there is an emergency issue I need to let the other parent know about?

Program procedures do not allow for passing most messages back and forth between parents. If there is an urgent issue that will impact visitation such as a medical issue, or death in the family, you may request we share the information with the other parent. Staff must be contacted before the visit and given enough time to make a decision about sharing the information.

12. My child is asking questions about the situation. How can I address his concerns?

Children may wonder about why the visitation is taking place at the center or may become confused by what has occurred in the family. The most important thing that parents can do when these issues arise is to listen to the child without becoming reactive.

Parents are reminded that they should not make negative comments about the other parent or the situation. Responses should be age

appropriate. Giving too much information before the child is ready to process the situation is usually not helpful. Try to remind the child that the adults are working together to figure out good solutions to difficult issues. Children need to be reminded they are loved and that the adults will figure out the solutions. Staff may be helpful in addressing these issues. Outside counseling may also be helpful.

13. What if I have a concern or a complaint about the program?

Staff is available to answer questions and address parent concerns.

The intake process is designed to allow all parents an opportunity gain a clear understanding of program procedures.

As the visitations or exchanges begin, the case manager and/or program counselors will meet with the parents to address concerns regularly.

If you feel concerns have not been addressed, please contact the program manager at 703-246-2378.

If the program manager is not able to fully address the issue, the unit director for Domestic Relations may meet with clients and program manager to facilitate a solution. The Domestic Relations unit director's contact number is 703-246-3040.

Grievances put in writing will be addressed, and an appointment will be scheduled to review the issues with all involved parties within 14 days.

14. How can I provide other feedback?

Clients receive customer service surveys and may be asked to participate in a voluntary roundtable to assist the program in improving the services provided during visitation. The program manager is always open to processing concerns and questions with parents about the process.

15. What is a serious incident?

A serious incident is anything that causes harm or could potentially cause harm to any of the parties directly involved in a visit. This includes:

- ❖ Abuse or neglect of a child observed by staff
- ❖ Deliberate defiance of program requests
- ❖ Suspicion of substance abuse, alcohol use, or criminal activity during visits
- ❖ Aggressive behavior and/or threatening verbal or behavioral outbursts directed at anyone before and during visits or exchanges
- ❖ Threats to harm self or others
- ❖ Going to the wrong entrance/parking lot in an attempt to contact the other party before or after a visit or exchange

16. Why would services be terminated or suspended?

The program has the right to deny, suspend, or terminate services in the following situations:

- ❖ Repeated rule violations have occurred and efforts to address or correct the behavior have not been successful

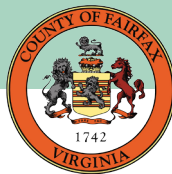
- ❖ Staff determines that there is an increased risk or safety issue that goes beyond the program's ability to manage and serve the family effectively
 - ❖ One or both parties will not agree to follow visitation schedule or procedures
 - ❖ Lack of participation
 - ❖ Maximum benefit has been reached before or after a visit or exchange
-

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Fairfax County is committed to non-discrimination on the basis of disability in all county programs, services, and activities. You have the right to request a reasonable accommodation or modification under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Please ask the staff for assistance during intake.

CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLIANCE

The Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Services Supervised Visitation and Exchange Program is in compliance with the non-discrimination requirements contained in various federal laws. It is the policy of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Services to comply with all aspects of the goals and objectives for the Fairfax County Diversity Plan and the One Fairfax Initiative. To accomplish this end, this policy statement affirms our intention to ensure non-discrimination in all employment and client service delivery. The practices for all clients, employees, and applicants is fair and respectful treatment regardless of race, color, creed, religion, age, disability, national origin, sexual orientation, veteran status, political affiliation, marital status, genetic information, or union affiliation, and to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Families utilizing the program have access to interpreters and special cultural accommodations when necessary and reasonably available.



For more information and to
request this information in an
alternate format call
703-246-4642 TTY 711

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