FORENSIC COUNSELING SERVICES

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Basic Parent-Child Contact Guidelines for Reunification Therapy

- We listen to understand, rather than listening to respond. Children's feelings are real and when they are able to hear us understanding their feelings, we are able to engage on the same level.

- We avoid debate with children. We acknowledge we cannot change the past, and that past action (and inaction) did not always produce positive outcomes.

- We apologize when we have caused harm, either intentionally or otherwise. Our apologies speak to responsibility for our actions and what we did, not others' feelings or responses.

- We set healthy boundaries. Just because we understand our children's experiences and do not debate with them does not mean they are in charge. We are the adults and must act like it.

- We promise only what we are able to deliver. We can review what future plans and desires are, but if we lack parental agreement or court orders permitting potential future events we do not commit to those events as a certainty.

- We deliver on our promises and make amends when we make mistakes. No one is perfect, and to pretend we do not make mistakes is both foolish and sets us up for conflict.

- We focus on positive and supportive interactions. Our children already carry tremendous burdens; our job is to lighten their load.

- We pay attention to redirection from the reunification therapist. Listening not only to our children, but the professionals who are there to help with those interactions is an important step to achieving our goals.

- We follow the protocols established by the reunification therapist. Different families will have different circumstances and needs. The setting and timing of parent-child contact is designed to maximize positive outcomes for the family.