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## Visiting with Your Children

*Although you look forward to visiting with your family, its important to realize that your visit can also be stressful, especially for children. In order to have a visit that everyone enjoys, consider the following:*

- When sharing the visit with adults and child/ren, pay attention to child/ren **first**. If you don't, they may "act out" for your attention. If you're holding a baby, include other child/ren by making eye contact, touch (if permitted) or by asking them direct questions.
- If possible, **plan** the visit with your family ahead of time. Children like routine and do best when they know what to expect. Greet them in the same way; sit in the same arrangement. Watch the time and slowly wind down your visit so that it doesn't end abruptly.
- At the **beginning** of the visit, tell the child/ren the visiting room rules and what will happen if they forget. For example: *"It's not safe to climb on the chair. If you forget, mommy will help you down."*
- Talk quietly to your child/ren if they test the visiting room rules. If your child/ren become loud or disruptive, the visiting adult should take the child/ren outside until they are ready to behave appropriately. **Work this out in advance** with the caregiver.
- **Reward success!** Point out how your child is cooperative. For example: *"Thank you for sitting quietly while I talk to mommy; I really like the way you help your brother"*.
- Make an effort to **connect** with your child/ren. DO NOT use the visit to discipline, criticize or lecture. You only have a short period of time together to work on your relationship. If your child/ren express negative feelings through actions do the following: 1) look them in the eye 2) hear what they are telling you....*"you feel left out when daddy talks to mommy...you're sad we have to say good bye for now"*. Most child/ren will respond in a positive manner if they feel you understand what they are going through.
- Talk to your child/ren in a **respectful** way.
- It's hard for children to sit and talk for a long period of time. Mix up the visit. Play "thinking games" and involve everyone. Try the following: "Let's name everything in the room that is the color red...take turns. You can also name animals, states, streets, etc....you can make up a round robin story by having each person add a line. **Children bond through play.**

*If you or any member of your family needs help call or write Families in Crisis, Inc.*