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Supervised Visitation Program Annual Report

Federal Fiscal Year 2016

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Administrative Director of the Courts**

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I. INTRODUCTION

This annual report on the Supervised Visitation Program (Program), is submitted to the Governor, the Legislature and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2A:12-11. It covers the period of October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016 (FFY 2016) and was prepared by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). It reflects data gathered from the visitation programs operated in the counties that are overseen by the AOC Family Practice Division.

In 1984, the Legislature enacted the Supervised Visitation Program (codified at N.J.S.A. 2A:12-7 et seq.), recognizing that “the inability of a parent to spend time with a child poses serious psychological problems to both the parent and child and prevents the growth of a normal, healthy relationship.” The Legislature sought to preserve the benefits of bonding between the child and the absent parent while ensuring the safety and welfare of the child.

Since 1997, the New Jersey Judiciary annually has received Federal Access and Visitation grant funds to maintain the Program. That grant requires the funds to be used to establish and/or continue programs that support and facilitate non-custodial parents’ access to and visitation with their children. The funds are distributed to the counties to fund their local programs based on need and the number of litigants served. Twenty of the twenty-one counties participate in the funded program; only Bergen County does not, instead providing county funded visitation services.

The Program offers both supervised visitation and neutral exchange services by identifying safe facilities in local communities for visitations to take place and by enlisting volunteers to monitor these often difficult cases. Neutral exchange services are the supervision of the transfer of a child from one parent to another. The supervision is limited to the exchanges. The Program is a part of the New Jersey Judiciary’s effort to deliver effective services to children and parents.

Training has consistently been an important part of continuous program improvement. For example, in November 2016, the court staff and volunteers received training from Dr. Mercedes Ebanks, founder of the MECCA Group in Maryland. The topic of the training was *Forgotten Fathers: Examining the Experiences of Diverse Fathers*. The training included current research in the area of fatherhood and made recommendations to participants to improve practices when working with fathers through a better understanding of issues and concerns. Participants engaged in a discussion about the contributing factors that have made parenting difficult for fathers.

The New Jersey Judiciary will continue to maintain effective communication and interaction between internal and external stakeholders in the supervised visitation process. This will ensure the existence and application of effective standardized practices throughout the state with a focus on fairness and quality service.



Glenn A. Grant, J.A.D.
Acting Administrative Director of the Courts

Dated: September 5, 2017

II. Administration of the Program

A. Administrator

N.J.S.A. 2A:12-7 et seq. designates the Administrative Director of the Courts as the Administrator of the Program. The legislation sets forth the specific duties and responsibilities of the Administrator, which includes arranging for technical assistance to Program Coordinators in the counties.

B. State Coordinator

The State Coordinator of the Program, as part of the staff of the Administrative Office of the Courts, serves as the Program's statewide manager, ensuring compliance with the legislation, Court Rules and the Procedures Manual. The State Coordinator also provides technical assistance to the counties.

C. County Coordinators

In each county, a Supervised Visitation Program County Coordinator (hereafter referred to as County Coordinator) manages the Program at the local (Superior Court) level, reviews all cases referred for program participation, schedules sites and volunteers to meet visitation schedules, and submits statistical data to the State Coordinator. The County Coordinator ensures that the screening, training, supervising, and managing of all staff and volunteers in the Program comply with approved standards. County Coordinators report matters specific to the Program to the Vicinage Family Division Manager. (Note: Bergen County is the only county that does not participate in the funded program. However, they also must report matters specific to the program to the Vicinage Family Division Manager.)

III. Community Involvement

The Program depends on the involvement of the community in providing this critically needed service, both in terms of volunteers and community sites.

A. Volunteers

Volunteers are a key component of the Program. Volunteers provide supervision not only during the day, but also during evenings and weekends so that visitation may occur at times convenient to the families. The volunteers serve as neutral observers, ensuring the safety of the child; they intervene only when necessary.

All volunteers must complete a training course before beginning supervision. The County Coordinators conduct the training under the oversight of and with technical assistance from the Administrative Office of the Courts.

B. Community Sites

Community sites make the Program possible by donating the use of their facilities for the visitations. Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2A:12-7 et seq., the Administrative Director of the Courts must approve all external sites. Sites must be accessible, functional, comfortable, and safe.

IV. How the Program Works

A. Referral by the Court to the County Coordinator

The court refers matters to the Program. Referral is appropriate in dissolution, non-dissolution or domestic violence cases where the court is concerned about the physical or emotional welfare of the child and after third-party supervision provisions have been exhausted. Additionally, domestic violence cases awaiting risk assessments may be referred to the Program.

B. Court Order

The court order should clearly state the duration and frequency of supervised visitation, the length of visits, the names of the individuals permitted to attend the visitation, and a date to return to court for determining whether supervision should continue.

C. Pre-Screening Interview

The County Coordinator conducts a comprehensive interview of both parties. The purpose of the interview is to gather information, and, if appropriate, to arrange a tentative schedule for the visitations. During the interview, the parties are provided a copy of the rules of visitation that will govern each session. In some instances, the interview may reveal issues or concerns that call into question the suitability of the case for the Program. In those situations, the judge may reevaluate the referral of the matter.

D. Role of the Observer in the Visitation

Each visitation must include an observer. The observer can be a County Coordinator, court staff, or a volunteer. Their role is to serve as a neutral observer and to closely monitor the visitation, intervening on behalf of the child when necessary. The observer may terminate the visitation session if in the observer's judgment, the rules of the visitation are violated or if continuation of the visit is stressful to the child or threatening to the welfare of the child.

V. Access and Visitation Grant

Since 1997, the New Jersey Judiciary has been the recipient of Federal Access and Visitation grant funds to sustain the Program. The grant requires the funds be used by the states to establish and/or continue programs to support and facilitate non-custodial parents' access to and visitation with their children. In FFY 2016, the New Jersey Judiciary received \$215,863.00 in funds through the Federal Access and Visitation grant. These funds are allocated to the counties based on need and number of children and parents served.

VI. Appendices

- A. Supervised Visitation Program Statutes
- B. Statistical Data
- C. Supervised Visitation Site List

Appendix A

Supervised Visitation Program Statutes

§ 2A:12-7. Legislative findings and declarations

The Legislature finds and declares that:

- a. In the area of child visitation, a court often orders supervised visitation where there has been a history of:
 - child abuse
 - medical disabilities
 - psychiatric problems
 - or other situations where the safety and welfare of the child may be jeopardized
- b. Often court ordered supervised visitation never occurs due to the inability to locate volunteers willing to be present during the visitation and a facility in which the visitation may take place.
- c. The inability of a parent or guardian to spend time with a child poses serious psychological problems to both the parent and the child and prevents the growth of a normal, healthy relationship.
- d. The purpose of this act is to facilitate supervised visitation by making the facilities and members of local community organizations available to assist in court ordered supervised visitation.

§ 2A:12-8. Definitions

As used in this act:

- a. "Approved community organization" means a community organization, which applies to the director for participation in the program and is approved for participation;
- b. "Director" means the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts;
- c. "Program" means the Supervised Visitation Program created pursuant to this act.

§ 2A:12-9. Supervised visitation program; creation

There is created a program to be known as the "Supervised Visitation Program" which shall be administered by the Director.

§ 2A:12-10. Purpose

The purpose of the program shall be to promote court ordered supervised visitation by having approved community organizations throughout the State supply facilities and personnel to enable supervised visitation to take place.

§ 2A:12-11. Duties of director

The director shall:

- a. Publicize the existence of the program;
- b. Adopt rules for the program including among other things--(1) Standards for approved community organizations, (2) Standards for accounting and auditing, and (3) The number of approved community organizations needed throughout each county;
- c. Prepare uniform applications for community organizations to apply for participation in the program, which application shall request, among other things--(1) The name, address, county and function of the community organization, (2) The size and location of the facility where supervised visitation would take place, (3) The average number of persons available in the facility at any given time who would be present during the supervised visitation, (4) The community organization's fee for use of its personnel and facilities for the program, (5) The number of persons the facility could accommodate at one time, and (6) The general contents of the facility;
- d. Select and approve those community organizations which comply with the director's standards and which would accept the lowest fee for participation in the program;
- e. Prepare a printed list by county of approved community organizations available for participation in the program;
- f. Distribute the list to each court within the State having jurisdiction over child visitation matters;
- g. Prepare and submit budget estimates of State appropriations necessary for the operation of the program and make recommendations with respect thereto;
- h. Report annually to the Legislature and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on the activities of the program and make recommendations with respect thereto; and
- i. Do all other things necessary and proper to implement the purposes of this act.

§ 2A:12-12. Court with jurisdiction; order for visitation at approved community organization.

Any court having jurisdiction over a child visitation matter, which orders supervised child visitation, may direct in the order that the visitation take place at an approved community organization.

Appendix B

Statistical Data

(reported on a federal fiscal year basis)

This data is required to be reported annually to the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Note: These appendices reflect data only on the twenty counties that accept Program funds. Bergen County provides visitation services with county funds and thus is not included in these data

**TABLE ONE
SUPERVISED VISITATION PROGRAM
FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2016**

NEW CASES

This chart reflects the number of new cases added to the Program in FFY 2016.

County*	New Cases
Atlantic	36
Burlington	53
Camden	6
Cape May	4
Cumberland	16
Essex	73
Gloucester	32
Hudson	46
Hunterdon	1
Mercer	55
Middlesex	73
Monmouth	19
Morris	5
Ocean	14
Passaic	26
Salem	0
Somerset	4
Sussex	0
Union	15
Warren	3
Total	481

*Note: Bergen County does not participate in the Program.

**TABLE TWO
SUPERVISED VISITATION PROGRAM
FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2016**

CLIENT INFORMATION

This chart reflects the visitation participants in each county and their relationship to the child.

County*	Non-Custodial Parent Father	Custodial Parent Father	Non-Custodial Parent Mother	Custodial Parent Mother	Grandparent/ Legal Guardian	Children in Common
Atlantic	25	8	11	22	6	52
Burlington	40	9	13	39	5	89
Camden	5	0	1	5	2	7
Cape May	1	0	3	1	2	5
Cumberland	12	4	4	12	0	23
Essex	61	10	14	56	5	96
Gloucester	21	9	9	22	3	46
Hudson	37	8	10	37	2	54
Hunterdon	0	1	1	0	0	1
Mercer	40	9	12	34	15	59
Middlesex	55	15	14	56	6	102
Monmouth	11	4	6	13	4	28
Morris	2	3	3	2	0	7
Ocean	10	3	4	7	4	25
Passaic	18	7	2	24	1	39
Salem	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somerset	3	0	1	4	0	4
Sussex	0	0	0	0	0	0
Union	13	2	2	13	0	21
Warren	3	0	0	3	0	3
Total	357	92	110	350	55	661

*Note: Bergen County does not participate in the Program.

**TABLE THREE
SUPERVISED VISITATION PROGRAM
FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2016**

MARITAL STATUS*

This chart reflects the number of visitation participants in each county within the stated categories at the time of entering the Program.

County**	Never Married to Each Other	Married to Each Other	Separated from Each Other	Divorced from Each Other	Data Not Reported
Atlantic	64	2	0	6	0
Burlington	56	22	22	6	0
Camden	12	0	0	0	0
Cape May	8	0	0	0	0
Cumberland	26	0	0	6	0
Essex	98	0	38	10	0
Gloucester	42	14	0	8	0
Hudson	62	12	12	8	0
Hunterdon	2	0	0	0	0
Mercer	94	2	4	10	0
Middlesex	96	18	20	12	0
Monmouth	34	2	0	2	0
Morris/	4	0	4	2	0
Ocean	16	0	6	6	0
Passaic	32	10	0	10	0
Salem	0	0	0	0	0
Somerset	6	2	0	0	0
Sussex	0	0	0	0	0
Union	22	4	0	4	0
Warren	4	2	0	0	0
Total	678	90	106	90	0

*Note: The data includes Civil Unions and Domestic Partnerships

**Note: Bergen County does not participate in the Program.

**TABLE FOUR
SUPERVISED VISITATION PROGRAM
FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2016**

RACE/ETHNICITY

This chart reflects the number of visitation participants in each county that voluntarily self-identify as the stated race/ethnicity.

County*	Am. Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian	Black/ African American	Hispanic Or Latino	Native Hawaiian/ Pac. Islander	White	Two or More Races	Data Not Reported
Atlantic	0	0	12	11	0	12	0	37
Burlington	0	1	12	6	0	34	0	53
Camden	0	0	0	4	0	8	0	0
Cape May	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
Cumberland	2	0	6	8	0	12	2	2
Essex	1	1	51	23	0	30	8	32
Gloucester	0	0	2	2	0	26	0	34
Hudson	0	2	16	44	0	20	10	2
Hunterdon	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Mercer	0	0	29	11	0	19	1	50
Middlesex	0	1	20	21	1	29	0	74
Monmouth	0	0	7	0	0	8	0	23
Morris	0	0	0	4	0	6	0	0
Ocean	0	0	2	6	0	20	0	0
Passaic	0	0	7	15	0	2	0	28
Salem	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somerset	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	2
Sussex	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Union	0	0	12	10	0	4	0	4
Warren	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	0
Total	3	5	176	171	1	242	21	345

*Note: Bergen County does not participate in the Program.

**TABLE FIVE
SUPERVISED VISITATION PROGRAM
FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2016**

PARTICIPANTS ANNUAL INCOME

This chart reflects the number of visitation participants in each county that voluntarily identify as having an income within the stated range.

County*	Less Than \$10,000	\$10,000 - \$19,999	\$20,000 - \$29,999	\$30,000 - \$39,999	\$40,000 and above	Data Not Reported
Atlantic	4	8	4	1	4	51
Burlington	14	6	3	5	6	72
Camden	6	0	2	2	2	0
Cape May	0	0	0	0	0	8
Cumberland	4	2	2	0	4	20
Essex	30	6	4	5	17	84
Gloucester	8	6	6	1	3	40
Hudson	30	12	10	2	2	38
Hunterdon	1	0	0	0	0	1
Mercer	9	7	15	7	8	64
Middlesex	2	7	6	3	11	117
Monmouth	3	2	1	0	0	32
Morris	2	2	2	2	2	0
Ocean	2	8	8	4	4	2
Passaic	0	0	0	0	0	52
Salem	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somerset	2	2	0	0	4	0
Sussex	0	0	0	0	0	0
Union	0	0	0	2	0	28
Warren	4	0	0	0	0	2
Total	121	68	63	34	67	611

*Note: Bergen County does not participate in the Program.

**TABLE SIX
SUPERVISED VISITATION PROGRAM
FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2016**

SERVICES PROVIDED

This chart reflects the number of visits funded through the Access and Visitation Grant.

County*	Supervised Visitation
Atlantic	72
Burlington	106
Camden	120
Cape May	40
Cumberland	32
Essex	146
Gloucester	64
Hudson	94
Hunterdon	2
Mercer	110
Middlesex	173
Monmouth	38
Morris	10
Ocean	28
Passaic	52
Somerset	84
Sussex	0
Union	30
Warren	6
Total	1207

*Note: Bergen County does not participate in the Program.

**TABLE SEVEN
SUPERVISED VISITATION PROGRAM
FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2016**

CHILD SUPPORT CASES

This chart reflects the number of parties in the Program that voluntarily identified as receiving or paying child support.

County*	Non-Custodial Parent Father	Custodial Parent Father	Non-Custodial Parent Mother	Custodial Parent Mother	Grandparent/ Legal Guardian
Atlantic	18	4	7	16	5
Burlington	0	0	0	0	0
Camden	4	0	1	4	1
Cape May	2	0	1	1	2
Cumberland	7	4	4	7	0
Essex	122	0	24	0	0
Gloucester	21	10	9	21	2
Hudson	0	16	0	74	4
Hunterdon	0	1	1	0	0
Mercer	37	3	5	31	7
Middlesex	1	0	0	2	0
Monmouth	1	0	0	0	0
Morris	2	2	2	2	0
Ocean	9	3	4	8	4
Passaic	18	5	1	23	1
Salem	0	0	0	0	0
Somerset	2	0	0	2	0
Sussex	0	0	0	0	0
Union	13	2	2	13	0
Warren	2	0	0	2	0
Total	259	50	61	206	26

*Note: Bergen County does not participate in the Program.

Appendix C

Supervised Visitation Site List

Atlantic:

A Chance for a Real Change

1040 Neumark Avenue
Pleasantville, NJ 08232
(609) 727-9335
Patricia Miles-Jackson, Director

The Alcove Center for Grieving Children and Families

376 Tilton Road Rear
Northfield, NJ 08225
(609) 727-9335
Mindy Shemtov, Executive Director

Bergen:

Division of Family Guidance

One Bergen County Plaza, Second Floor
Hackensack, NJ 07601
(201) 336-7398

Burlington:

Burlington County Superior Court (Wednesday evening)

49 Rancocas Road
Mount Holly, NJ 08060
(609) 518-2517
Andrea Kearney, Program Coordinator

Catholic Charities (Tuesday/Wednesday evenings; Saturday morning)

115 West Pearl Street
Burlington NJ 08016
(609) 394-5157
Amilia Gallagher, Supervising Monitor

The Fatherhood Connection (Tuesday evening)

Willingboro, NJ 08046
(609) 877-1076
Tashon Jackson, Director

Camden:

The Center for Family Services

584 Benson Street
Camden NJ 08103
(609) 463-6645
Doris Vidal, Program Coordinator

Cape May:

Families Matter, LLC
899 Bayshore Road
Villas, NJ 08251
(609) 886-8666
Patricia Campbell, Director

Cumberland:

Cumberland County Courthouse
PO Box 866
Bridgeton, NJ 08302
(856) 453-4553
Stephanie Shaffer, Program Coordinator

Robin's Nest
42 South Delsea Drive
Glassboro, NJ 08028
(856) 881-8689 ext. 190

Essex County:

Essex County Veterans Courthouse
50 West Market Street
Newark, NJ
(973) 693-5521
Gloria Brown, Program Coordinator

Living Logo Christian Assembly Church (Saturdays)
227-229 Clinton Place
Newark, NJ
(973) 923-0817

Gloucester:

Gloucester County Courthouse (Wednesday evenings and during court hours)
70 Hunter Street
Woodbury, NJ 08096
(856) 686-7504
Chastity Robinson, Program Coordinator

Hudson:

Superior Court of New Jersey, Family Division

595 Newark Avenue
Room 218
Jersey City, NJ 07306
(201) 795-6740

Hunterdon County:

Hunterdon County Family Division

65 Park Avenue
Flemington, NJ 08822
(908) 237-5922
Christine Reilly, Program Coordinator

Mercer County:

El Centro (Catholic Charities)

327 S. Broad Street
Trenton NJ 08608
(609) 954-7487
Robert Hernandez, Director

Mercer County Courthouse

209 South Broad Street
Trenton, NJ 08690
(609) 571-4377
Paula Andrews, Program Coordinator

Middlesex County:

Middlesex County Family Court Building

120 New Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08903
(732) 519-3286
Wilda Robinson, Program Coordinator

Monmouth County:

Monmouth County Superior Court

PO Box 1252
71 Monument Park
Freehold, NJ
(732) 677-4050

Morris County:

Center for Evaluation and Counseling

1719 Route 10 East
Parsippany, NJ 07054
(973) 829-6960

Ocean County:

Ocean County Justice Complex

PO Box 2191
120 Hooper Avenue
Toms River, NJ 08754-2191
(732) 929-2037 ext. 3124
Terri A'Hearn, Program Coordinator

Preferred Children's Services

1200 River Avenue
PO Box 2036
Lakewood, NJ 08701
(732) 905-5106 ext. 101
Stacy M. Welch, Program Director

Saint Francis Counseling Center

4700 Long Beach Boulevard
Brant Beach, NJ 08701
(609) 494-8861 ext. 182
Lori Tomaro, Program Director

Passaic County:

Paterson YMCA

128 Ward Street
Paterson, NJ 07505
(973) 247-8858
Blanca Bravo, Program Coordinator

Salem:

Family Intake

PO Box 233
Salem, NJ 08079
(856) 935-7510 ext. 8576

Somerset County:

Catholic Charities

540 Route 22 East
Bridgewater, NJ 08807
(908) 722-1881
Esther Iannetta, Program Coordinator

Sussex County:

First Baptist Church (NJCCR), (*Neutral Exchange Only*)

4 East Main Street
Sussex, NJ 07461
(973) 875-9451

Center for Evaluation and Counseling

61 High Street
Newton, NJ
(973) 300-1900

Union County:

Union County Superior Court

Superior Court, Family Division
Union County Courthouse
New Annex Building
Elizabeth, NJ 07207
(908) 659-4604
Nancy Yurek, Program Coordinator

Warren:

Catholic Charities

Phillipsburg Family Service Center
700 Sayre Ave.
Phillipsburg, NJ 08865
(908) 454-2074
Susan Reimer, Supervisor