

# Cultural Competency and Child Visitations

Cultural diversity is a permanent feature of life in Los Angeles County and its surrounding areas. Cultural competency involves understanding and respecting cultural diversity as it applies to any profession. In dealing with families, as supervised visitation does, cultural competency is especially important. Good visitation monitors must recognize and understand differences in race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation in order to provide a service that is respectful and useful to families who are referred to supervised visitation. Understanding how cultural diversity affects the work we do as monitors is critical to providing an effective service. While an understanding of domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and child abuse is important, the cultural component is equally important.

Monitors must learn to challenge their own biases and prejudices to do effective work in such a culturally diverse environment. Training for monitors in multicultural competency is crucial. When monitors fail to take into account the cultural aspect of their clients' lives, it can lead to detrimental impact on the visitation and the client family. Monitors must learn about the strengths of a variety of cultures to maximize the visitation experience for families who have a different cultural background than their own. Stereotypes are prejudiced perceptions about another culture; these often false perceptions can be detrimental to the monitor in observing the interactions between a parent and child. Monitors must have specific knowledge about ethnic identities, child-rearing practices, rituals and celebrations, parent-child relationships, and roles and family structures in order to serve their clients effectively. Viewing cultural differences requires an in-depth perspective that takes into account not only the race and language of the client, but also the cultural heritage.



Most non-custodial parents are thrust into the world of supervised visitation against their will; it is an involuntary and unwanted requirement of the Court. They often feel trapped in the middle—they want to see their children but they do not want to be supervised. Being supervised means abiding by rules and limitations. If they come from a culture that has experienced discrimination or domination, they may be especially sensitive to being told what to do or abiding by restrictions and rules. A well-trained monitor can recognize this sensitivity and have empathy for the parent, while still maintaining the appropriate boundaries. Rejection of the concept of supervision can lead to problems during the visitations. A good monitor can help the parent adjust to the system and comply with the rules and restrictions.

The monitors at Family Visitation Services are chosen with a special eye to their background; we hire only those with education and experience in fields that have training in cultural competence, such as social workers, therapists, and teachers. Every aspect of a visit—from discipline to physical affection—is dependent upon the cultural context of the client family. You should always select a monitor that is culturally aware to ensure the best possible experience.

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