



SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT FIELD-BASED RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM

Please carefully read the instructions you received as part of this packet. **To complete this form electronically, click on the § icon (it will appear §) and simply type in the information.** Include all items (a)-(e) with your submission (see the instructions for details on these items):

- (a) This completed form with original signatures (no copies) in an envelope; also submit an electronic copy of this form via the Blackboard drop box.
- (b) Attach the "Informed Consent" form(s) you will use for the study.
- (c) Attach the certificate verifying completion of required IRB training
- (d) Attach annotated bibliography of references
- (e) One sample of each data collection instrument you plan to use for the study. E-mail scanned electronic copies if possible.

Submit all materials to:

Valerie L. Radu, Ph.D. Social Work Department Head Dept. #3133	Telephone: 423-425-4266 Facsimile: 423-425-5564 E-mail: Valerie-Radu@utc.edu
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Date of First Draft : 9-27-07

Part I. Overview

A. Principal Investigator Information

Name: <u>Regina Dorsey</u>	Date Submitted: <u>10-18-07</u>
Email: <u>Regina-Dorsey@utc.edu</u>	Phone: <u>423-425-4266</u>

B. Field Agency Information

Agency:	<u>Four Points, Inc.</u>
Address:	<u>P.O. Box 1212</u>
	<u>Lafayette, Georgia 30728</u>
Field Instructor Name/E-Mail Address	<u>Melissa Holcombe, mholcombe@catoosa.k12.ga.us</u>
Telephone:	<u>423-605-307</u> Fax: <u>706-937-2483</u>
Can you receive confidential information on the fax number and E-mail address provided above? <u>E-mail – yes</u>	
<u>Confidential fax # 706-937-5022</u>	

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM (*continued*)

Part II. Information About the Study

Study Overview

Study Title:	Implications of Supervised Visitation Programs on Child Adjustment and Permanency
Area of Study:	<u>Supervised Visitation</u>
Specific Topic:	<u>Program evaluation</u>

If “cut-and-pasting” text to complete the items below, make sure the text appears as Arial 10pt, line spacing 1.5.

1. Abstract—including (but not limited to) the nature and rationale of the study, its primary supporting references in the literature, its need and expected applied or theoretical value (attach annotated bibliography of references):

Literature reveals a trend of improved attachment with parents upon reunification when children had participated in supervised visitation during foster care. In recent years, it has come to the attention of courts and law enforcement agencies that an improvement of interventions for children exposed to domestic violence was needed. As part of this effort, there has been an increased emphasis on supervised visitation facilities. This research will attempt to identify the impacts this type of service has had on children and families exposed to domestic violence. Through individual interviews with parents who have received services in the past, it addresses if the program offered by the agency was beneficial to the family from the parent’s point of view. Issues of improvement by suggestion of the past clients will also be explored. Literature reveals a trend of improved attachment with parents upon reunification when children had participated in supervised visitation during foster care (McWey,Mullis, 2004).

2. Major hypotheses/questions to be investigated:

Does documentation of supervised visitation assist child welfare agencies in assessing the permanency needs of children? Does regular visitation between parent and child maintain the family bond and assist in the transition of the child from placement to permanency?

3. Population(s) or data desired (describe in detail):

The interviewees will be selected from the closed case files of the years 2006, 2005, 2004 of Four Points Inc. The cases representing minority cultures will intentionally be selected for review first because of the lack of diversity in the case population as a whole. The remainder of the cases will be selected using the nth sampling method, choosing every 10th case, with an intentional over sampling to provide at least 30 valid interviews.

4. Titles of instruments (forms, questionnaires, tests, etc.) to be used for data collection; include reference page citing empirical support for instruments:

An interview in person will be conducted by myself, Regina Dorsey to obtain the data. Demographic information will be collected including age, gender, race current marital status, marital status at time of service, current family status, education level and current income level. The questions were developed after talking with the staff of Four Points, Inc. and deciding which variables would be important for a comprehensive understanding of the populations served.

5. Procedures planned for administering instruments, and/or collecting data (be as specific as possible):

A structured in person interview will be conducted using a interview questionnaire developed by the Executive Director of Four Points, Inc and Regina Dorsey and pre-approved by Dr. Valerie Radu. Potential interviewees will be contacted by phone and then sent a follow-up letter with the consent form included. There will then be another phone call made to arrange a meeting time and place in order to conduct the interview.

6. Design and statistical techniques planned for data analysis (each data analysis step must be stated):

This will be a qualitative study utilizing a one on one interview with the researcher, Regina Dorsey and the interviewee. Demographic data will be coded and analyzed statistically using SPSS. Interview responses will be audio taped for reference during the analysis phase of the research. After this time the tapes will be securely held by Dr. Valerie Radu until they are destroyed. The interview data will be interpreted using self-understanding in which the researcher, Regina Dorsey, will express an abbreviated form of the participants responses. These responses will be categorized by question and listed on a chart consisting of various columns.

7. Expected beginning date and completion date of study: January 2008 – April 2008

8. Form in which findings will be reported:

There will be a final paper written and a Power Point presentation to Four Points, Inc. and my peers. The data collected in this research will be available to Four Points, Inc. for use in executive meetings, grant proposals and employee training purposes.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM (continued)

Part III. Signatures

(For electronic submission, this page with the original signatures must be sent also by regular mail.)

Applicant

I, the applicant, do hereby agree that I will abide by the policies and regulations of the UTC Social Work Program and will furnish a copy of the abstract and report describing the findings of the study to my field placement agency.

Signature of Applicant

§ _____
Date

Field Instructor Approval

I am familiar with the proposed study and feel that the student researcher submitting this proposal is professionally qualified to undertake the investigation. I also believe the research design to be valid and appropriate. By signing this form I agree that my agency will assist the student in obtaining the necessary sample and data required to complete this research project.

Signature of Field Instructor

Position or Title

Name of Agency

Field Instructor Comments:

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

Approved:

Denied/Resubmit:

Comments: §

Reason for denial: §

UTC Social Work Program Department Head Signature

UTC Social Work Program Field Education Coord. Signature

ASSIGNED STUDY ID: §

Attached Proposal Approval Form (date of approval/denial)

: §

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Investigator:

Regina Dorsey, Principal Investigator, (423-544-6764 / Email: Regina-Dorsey@utc.edu

I, _____, have been asked to participate in a survey for research being conducted by the Social Work Program at University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

Purpose:

I understand that the purpose of this study is to examine the impact of supervised visitation on the permanency plans of children and reunification with biological parents in addition to client's satisfaction with programs and services in the agency.

Duration and Location:

I understand the interview will take place at mutually agreeable location. Further, I understand participating in the survey will take approximately 45-60 minutes of my time on one occasion. I

Procedures:

I will be asked to answer questions about the variety of issues related to supervised visitation and services provided by the agency. Further, I understand that the interview will be audio taped with no personal identifying information and these audio tapes will become the property of UTC Social Work Department to be held by Dr. Valerie Radu until which time they are destroyed.

Risks/Discomforts:

It has been explained to me that a few of the questions may be sensitive in nature due to the politics of agency processes.

Benefits:

I understand that the benefits from participating in this study may be to help the social work program better understand the impact of supervised visitation in the lives of families and the community.

Confidentiality:

I understand that a no identifying information will be used to identify my responses from those of other participants and that my name, address, and other identifying information will not be directly associated with any information obtained from me. If results of this study are published, my name or other identifying information will not be used. In addition, I understand that my honest responses to the questions will in no way jeopardize my current family status.

Payments:

I will receive no type of financial reimbursement for participating in this study.

Right to Withdraw:

I understand that I do not have to take part in this study, and my refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of rights to which I am entitled. I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Signatures:

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM (*continued*)

I have read this entire consent form and completely understand my rights as a potential research subject. I voluntarily consent to participate in this research. I have been informed that I will receive a copy of this consent should questions arise and I wish to contact Ms. Dorsey or University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Social Work Department Institutional Review Board to discuss my rights as a research subject.

Signature of Research Subject

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM (continued)

Four Points Research Interview

Interview Number _____

Age _____

Gender 1-Male 2-Female

Race 1- African American 4-Asian
2-Caucasian 5-Bi-Racial
3- Native American 6- Middle Eastern

Current Marital Status 1 – Single 4 – Separated
2 – Married 5 – Partner
3- Divorced

Marital Status at time of service

1- Single 4 – Separated
2- Married 5- Partner
3- Divorced

What is your current family status

1-Children in your home
2-Children in foster care
3-Children in relative care

Education Level 1 – High School graduate
2- Some college – no degree
3- College degree
4- GED
5 - none

Current income level

1- 10,000-under
2- 10,000 -20,000
3- 20,000 - 30,000
4- 30,000 – 40,000
5- 40,000 – above

Overall satisfaction rating with Four Points, Inc.

1 2 3 4 5

What part did your visitation through Four Points play in the reunification with your children?

What specific skills did you learn through your visitation at Four Points?

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM (*continued*)

What community resources did you learn about through Four Points?

What type of support did you receive through Four Points?

What have you and your family learned about family stability?

How did Four Points assist you in meeting your immediate needs?

What could Four Points have done to provide better service to you?

How could Four Points have offered you and your family more support?

What else would you like to convey about your experience with Four Points and supervised visitation?

Alpert, L. T., & Britner, P. A. (2005). Social workers' attitudes toward parents of children in child protective services: Evaluation of a family-focused casework training program. *Journal of Family Social Work, 9*(1) 33-64. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from the CSA Social Services Abstracts database.

Recent concerns regarding permanence for foster children have inspired child welfare agencies to re-focus more of their efforts on biological parents as permanent resources for children in care. The social work field has responded to this situation with family-focused training for frontline staff; one such curriculum is the Family Development Credential (FDC). Tools exist for evaluating FDC trainees' retention of material & ability to integrate FDC concepts into practice. However, the transformative nature of the program (i.e., the way in which FDC training is associated with participants' family-focused attitudes towards clients) has not previously been measured. FDC-trained & non-FDC-trained child protection workers (N = 251) in one state completed a vignette study that tapped their attitudes toward the parents of children involved in child protective services. No difference in family-focused attitudes emerged between the two groups. Implications for practice & suggestions for further research are presented. 3 Tables, 38 References. Adapted from the source document. COPIES ARE AVAILABLE FROM: HAWORTH DOCUMENT DELIVERY CENTER, The Haworth Press, Inc., 10 Alice Street, Binghamton, NY 13904-1580

Flory, B. E., & Berg-Weger, M. (2003). Children of high-conflict custody disputes: Striving for social justice in adult-focused litigation. *Social Thought: Journal of Religion in the Social Services, 22*(2-3) 205-219. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from the CSA Social Services Abstracts database.

Children whose parents experience a divorce or separation frequently do not have a voice during the legal proceedings that determine custody & visitation. This paper describes one program that serves to give a voice to the children in these situations. Heritage House, a supervised visitation & custody exchange program, was established as a way to improve the quality of parents' & children's interactions & decrease the potential for violence while maintaining parent/child ties. The initial evaluation of this program is discussed along with the implications of the program's design & operationalization for other

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM (*continued*)

programs. 33 References. Adapted from the source document. COPIES ARE AVAILABLE FROM:

HAWORTH DOCUMENT DELIVERY CENTER, The Haworth Press, Inc., 10 Alice Street, Binghamton, NY
13904-1580

Flory, B. E., Dunn, J., Berg-Weger, M., & Milstead, M. (2001). An exploratory study of supervised access and custody exchange services: The parental experience. *Family Court Review*, 39(4) 469-482. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from the CSA Social Services Abstracts database.

An exploratory outcome study to investigate the ability of a supervised access & custody exchange center to function as a safe visitation enforcement mechanism of the court was accomplished as part of a larger study investigating child well-being. During a 6-month period of program participation, frequency & consistency of noncustodial parents' access to children dramatically increased & interparental conflict significantly decreased, demonstrating that supervised visitation & custody exchange centers that function in partnership with family court during interim court processes can address the unmet needs of family court & high-conflict domestic disputant as well. 2 Tables, 25 References. [Copyright 2001 Sage Publications, Inc.]

Hardesty, J. L., & Chung, G. H. (2006). Intimate partner violence, parental divorce, and child custody: Directions for intervention and future research. *Family Relations*, 55(2) 200-210. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from the CSA Social Services Abstracts database.

Joint custody & cooperative coparenting are often unsafe for women who leave violent partners. Although certain legal protections are available, more work is needed to understand & address abused women's needs in this context. This study provides divorce scholars & practitioners with information on the interface between separation/divorce & intimate partner violence. We review existing research, policies, & programs & propose directions for intervention & research that center around the unique needs of these families. Tables, References. Adapted from the source document.

Johnson, N. E., Saccuzzo, D. P., & Koen, W. J. (2005). Child custody mediation in cases of domestic violence: Empirical evidence of a failure to protect. *Violence Against Women*, 11(8) 1022-1053. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from the CSA Social Services Abstracts database.

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Mediation of child custody disputes is mandated in several states. Investigators have averred that victims of domestic violence (DV) are greatly disadvantaged in mediation. The present study empirically evaluated outcomes & found that mediators failed to recognize & report DV in 56.9% of the DV cases. The court's screening form failed to indicate DV in at least 14.7% of the violent cases. Mediation resulted in poor outcomes for DV victims in terms of protections, such as supervised visitation & protected child exchanges. Mediator capacity to focus on the child's best interest was called into question. Child custody mediation should not be mandated in cases of DV. Tables, Figures, References. [Reprinted by permission of Sage Publications Inc., copyright 2005.]

Laakso, J. H., & Adams, S. (2006). Noncustodial fathers' involvement with their children: A right or a privilege? *Families in Society*, 87(1) 85-93. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from the CSA Social Services Abstracts database.

This study explores the key determinants of noncustodial fathers' involvement with their children. The stereotype that fathers have little interest in parenting their children is contradicted. The findings reveal that fathers are committed to parenting; however, actions on the part of the mothers & what the participants perceive to be bias on the part of the courts prevent fathers from having the relationship with their children they desire. Even fathers who have been committed early in the relationship to their children, pay child support, & give no justification for being denied parental rights do not necessarily get to spend time with their children. Parenting plans should be negotiated at the same time as child support orders & revisited periodically. Tables, References. Adapted from the source document.

Lemon, N. K. D. (1999). The legal system's response to children exposed to domestic violence. *Future of Children*, 9(3) 67-83. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from the CSA Social Services Abstracts database. Highlights four key areas of case law in which the courts have begun, in varying degrees, to examine the effects of domestic violence on children: child custody & visitation, restraining orders, failure to protect a child from harm, & termination of parental rights. A survey of appellate cases (N not specified) since 1990, though not representative of all cases, shows an ongoing need for mandatory judicial training on domestic violence & its effects on children, greater clarity about how to interpret relevant laws, changes in the laws to better serve children, & the renewal of national funding for legal aid

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM (*continued*)

programs. Courts & law enforcement agencies in some locales have implemented innovative programs to improve their interventions with children exposed to domestic violence. These programs include coordinated court responses, child development training for police officers, multidisciplinary team approaches, & supervised visitation centers. However, few of these programs have been evaluated for overall effectiveness. Better evaluation is needed, as is ongoing funding for the replication of successful programs nationwide. 3 Photographs, 93 References. Adapted from the source document.

Levin, A., & Mills, L. G. (2003). Fighting for child custody when domestic violence is at issue: Survey of state laws. *Social work, 48*(4) 463-470. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from the CSA Social Services Abstracts database.

This study presents national data on each state's legislative approach to custody cases involving allegations of domestic violence. Battered women's advocates have successfully lobbied in some states for rebuttable presumption statutes that direct judges to deny sole or joint custody to abusive parents unless they present persuasive evidence establishing their suitability to obtain custody. Other states -- at the behest of fathers' rights advocates -- have adopted factor tests in which judges consider domestic violence as "one factor" in determining custody. Our findings suggest that each regulatory schema has strengths & weaknesses, but that these approaches have been developed without the benefit of intensive study. 1 Table, 45 References. Adapted from the source document.

McWey, L. M., & Mullis, A. K. (2004). Improving the lives of children in foster care: The impact of supervised visitation. *Family Relations, 53*(3) 293-300. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from the CSA Social Services Abstracts database.

Our purpose was to test a model explaining the quality of attachment of 123 children in foster care receiving supervised visitation with their biological parents. The results indicated that for families in which reunification is a goal, children who have more consistent & frequent contact with their biological parents have stronger attachments than children who have less contact. In addition, relationships between attachment & indicators of adjustment were examined. Children with higher levels of attachment had fewer behavioral problems, were less likely to take psychiatric medication, & were less likely to be termed "developmentally delayed" than were children with negative levels of attachment.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM (*continued*)

Implications of these findings for case workers & other family service providers are discussed. 4 Tables, 2 Figures, 36 References. Adapted from the source document.

McWey, L. M. (2002). *Attachment theory and foster care visitation: An exploratory study*. Dissertation Abstracts International, A: The Humanities and Social Sciences, 63 (2), 757-A. (Available from UMI, Ann Arbor, MI. Order No. DA3042026.)

The purpose of this dissertation was to conduct an exploratory study wherein a model explaining the quality of attachment of children in foster care with their biological parents in relation to frequency and consistency of supervised visitation was hypothesized then tested with the observational data. Then, the relationships between quality of attachment and indicators of adjustment were examined through the construction of cross-tabulation contingency tables. The sample consisted of 123 children in foster care between the ages of eight months and six years who were participating in supervised visitation at a family visitation center, located in a metro-Florida county. The quality of attachment was assessed using the Attachment Q-Set. The data supported the hypothesized model of attachment. Results indicated that children who have more frequent and consistent contact with their biological parents have stronger attachments to their biological parents.

Perkins, D. F., & Ansay, S. J. (1998). The effectiveness of a visitation program in fostering visits with noncustodial parents. *Family Relations*, 47(3) 253-258. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from the CSA Social Services Abstracts database.

This investigation provides initial information about the effectiveness of a supervised visitation program to maintain the relationship between parent(s) & their adjudicated child(ren) through supervised visits. Through comparative analysis, this study examines families participating at a visitation center with those non-participating families. Participating families are more likely to have visitations occur & have several visits than non-participating families. These results provided evidence for positive impacts of the program on the families it serves (eg, closing cases more quickly). 4 Tables, 26 References. Adapted from the source document.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM (*continued*)

Sheeran Maureen, & Hampton Scott. (1999). Supervised visitation in cases of domestic violence. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, 50(2) 13-25. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from the Criminal Justice Abstracts database.

An essay and review examines the risks that perpetrators of domestic violence pose to their children, especially after spousal separation. Also addressed are the ways in which U.S. states are attempting to take account of domestic violence in arrangements for parent-child visitation. While visitation centers and services are becoming important pieces in a coordinated response to domestic violence, cautions include: visitation centers are not a guarantee of safety for vulnerable family members; they do little to improve the ability of a batterer to parent in a responsible, nonviolent way; and funding for the centers and services is uncertain.

Sugarman Norman, & Byalin Kenneth. (1993). Meeting the family court's need for mental health and human services. *Journal of Psychiatry and the Law*, 21(3) 319-336. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from the Criminal Justice Abstracts database.

A report compares the experience of the Staten Island (NY) Family Court Service (SIFCS) with 2 alternative methods of providing mental health and human services. The direct service approach encourages the expansion of court-related mental health services, while the community organization approach urges the stimulation of community agencies to better serve the needs of the court population. The SIFCS staff's successful development of an array of ancillary programs (victim counseling, services

D'Andrade, A., & Berrick, J. D. (2006). When policy meets practice: The untested effects of permanency reforms in child welfare. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 33(1) 31-52. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from the CSA Social Services Abstracts database.

The Adoption & Safe Families Act (P.L. 105-89; ASFA) passed into federal law in 1997. ASFA emphasized child protection over family preservation, & introduced reforms intended to increase the likelihood & the speed with which children in the child welfare system attain a permanent home. This article details two provisions of the law, concurrent planning & reunification exception, & explores challenges in their implementation. These provisions have the potential to shift the nature of how child

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM (continued)

welfare services are delivered, & which families will receive them. An examination of implementation in the state of California suggests there is a need for further research regarding the application & effectiveness of these reforms to ensure they produce their intended effects. Tables, References.

Adapted from the source document.

Freundlich, M., Avery, R. J., Gerstenzang, S., & Munson, S. (2006). Permanency options and goals:

Considering multifaceted definitions. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 35(5-6) 355-374. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from the CSA Social Services Abstracts database.

This qualitative study examined permanency goal-setting and permanency outcomes for children in the New York City foster care system. Interviews were conducted with young adults formerly in foster care, birth parents of children formerly and currently in foster care, adoptive parents, and child welfare professionals. Findings indicated the need to individualize permanency goals, emphasize the emotional and relational aspects of permanency, and engage youth and parents more fully in permanency goal-setting. Recommendations are advanced for improving permanency services to better meet the needs of children and families. Adapted from the source document.

Kohl, P. L., Edleson, J. L., English, D. J., & Barth, R. P. (2005). Domestic violence and pathways into child welfare services: Findings from the national survey of child and adolescent well-being. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 27(11) 1167-1182. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from the CSA Social Services Abstracts database.

Domestic violence (DV) & child maltreatment co-occur in many families & this may lead to involvement with child welfare services (CWS). This study explores the role of domestic violence in CWS using data from the National Survey of Child & Adolescent Well-Being, a large, national probability sample of families investigated for child maltreatment. It relies on child welfare worker report of active DV or a history of DV to examine the association of DV with child maltreatment type, substantiation, & placement of children into out of home care. Maltreatment type classification was similar for children with & without exposure to DV. Families with active DV were substantiated for child maltreatment at higher rates than other groups, but DV was not a powerful contributor to the CWS decision-making process. Families with co-occurring DV & maltreatment often had high levels of cumulative risks, &

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM (*continued*)

children in families with the highest level of cumulative risk were 10 times more likely to be placed into foster care than children in families assessed with low levels of risk. The policy & practice implications of these findings are discussed. 5 Tables, 19 References. [Copyright 2005 Elsevier B.V.]