



PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE OF PARENTING TIME DOCUMENTATION: FROM NOTES TO BEST PRACTICES

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WHAT WE DOCUMENT IN NOTES

- Interactions/Observations
- Interventions
- Critical Incidents/SOR
- Terminate/Suspend
- And more...

Program staff

Parents

Legal Professionals (judges, attorneys, etc)

Therapists/SW/OCL

IPV Advocates

Child Protective Services

**WHO USES THE
DOCUMENTATION
PROVIDERS
CREATE?**

HOW HAVE OUR NOTES BEEN USED?

- Expectations of our referral sources?
 - Has this evolved our documentation procedures?
- Vary via jurisdiction?
- Disclaimer on notes (on cover letter or on the note pages)



MINIMUM
DOCUMENTATION



EXPANDED
DOCUMENTATION



DETAILED
DOCUMENTATION



SUMMARY
REPORTS

THE MANY FACES OF DOCUMENTATION

MINIMAL PRO/CON

PROS

- Factual information only; requires no judgment or decision about what to document.
- Critical incidents are documented, including reasons for stopping a visit in progress.
- Maximizes client privacy and helps ensure confidentiality.
- The least amount of training and supervision is required.
- Time-conserving and cost-effective method.

CONS

- Contains no information about parent-child contact during visitation.
- Only negative information about parent-child contact is included; it may be perceived as inherent negative bias.
- Lack of information limits the value as a decision-making tool for Judges or CPS.

EXPANDED PRO/CON

PROS

- Some information is recorded, creating a picture of interaction over time, which helps ensure continuity of care when a change of provider occurs, and is useful as a decision-making tool.
- The structured format provides some measure of consistency.
- Protects providers and visiting parents against false allegations.
- Custodial parents can access some information about the visit.

CONS

- May lose some objectivity; lends itself to subjectivity and inclusion of provider opinion and/or bias.
- May unintentionally encourage more records requests.
- May unintentionally encourage more requests to review records.
- More staff training and supervision are required.
- More time-consuming and less cost-effective.

DETAILED PRO/CON

PROS

- Most extensive information about parent-child contact is recorded, creating a more comprehensive picture of interaction over time; it helps ensure continuity of care when a change of provider occurs, useful as a decision-making tool or for continuity of mental healthcare purposes.
- Shows change/progress (or lack thereof) over time.
- Useful for litigation purposes.
- Staff develop higher-level skills; greater competency.

CONS

- May lose objectivity; content is dependent on staff discretion/judgment about what to record; lends itself to more subjectivity; greater potential for bias or inaccuracy exists; may be perceived as intrusive; unless typed, legibility of notes can be problematic; volume alone discourages extensive review.
- May unintentionally encourage more requests of records.
- May unintentionally encourage more frequent subpoena of records.
- More comprehensive staff training is required, and ongoing supervision required.
- Most time-consuming and least cost-effective method.

SUMMARY PRO/CON

PROS

- Provides a comprehensive summary of factual information about parent–child interactions.
- Encourages review and analysis by decision-makers; serves as a useful decision-making tool.
- Highlights notable behavioral changes over time.
- Promotes staff skill development and higher competency.
- Managerial review and approval support quality control and oversight.

CONS

- Risk of inaccurate aggregation of information.
- Relies heavily on staff discretion and judgment, adding an additional layer of inference—increasing the risk of bias or misinterpretation.
- Potential to damage provider–client relationships if conclusions are perceived as unfair.
- Requires comprehensive staff training and ongoing supervision.
- Time-consuming and costly to prepare due to the need for managerial review and approval.

CHECK LISTS: USE CAUTION!

-
- May contain subjective language
 - Requires staff to make a judgment or state an opinion
 - Cannot capture the nuance or detail of parent-child interaction
 - Important information is omitted
 - Might contain and perpetuate bias
 - Do not allow for cultural or ethnic variances

BASICS OF DOCUMENTATION

Parenting Time Documentation should answer the key questions of Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How to ensure clear, factual, and professional records.

- **Who:** Identify who was present (child, visiting parent, custodial parent, supervisor).
- **What:** Describe what occurred during the visit or exchange—use objective, factual observations.
- **When:** Record the date, time, and duration of the visit or exchange.
- **Where:** Note the location of the visit (e.g., center, park, home, virtual).
- **Why:** Explain the purpose of the visit **if relevant** (e.g., court-ordered, reunification).
- **How:** Describe how the visit was conducted and any interventions or supports used.

KEY AREAS FOR OBSERVATION

-
- **Time of arrival of parents and children** — Record punctuality and any noticeable delays or early arrivals.
 - **Separation behaviors of adult and child before and at start of visit** — Note emotional or physical reactions (e.g., crying, reluctance, comfort-seeking).
 - **Child(ren)'s reactions to the visit** — Describe observed behaviors objectively (avoid assumptions or interpretations).
 - **Custodial parent's behavior in response to the child's participation** — Observe tone, language, body language, and emotional responses.
 - **Greeting between child(ren) and visiting parent** — Detail level of enthusiasm, hesitation, physical contact, or avoidance.

KEY AREAS FOR OBSERVATION (CONTINUED)

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- **Proximity of parent and child(ren) during visit** — Note closeness, distance, or movement patterns during interaction.
 - **Indicators of child(ren)'s comfort** — Look for signs such as relaxed posture, laughter, eye contact, or play engagement.
 - **Parent's behavior** — Observe responsiveness, communication style, and appropriateness of interaction.
 - **Separation behaviors of parent and child(ren) at end of visit** — Note the emotional reactions and transitions of both parent and child.
 - **Supervisor interventions** — Document any interventions required and reasons for them.
 - **Child(ren)'s statements indicating knowledge of litigation** — Record exact words used—avoid interpretation.

THE ANATOMY OF DOCUMENTATION THE 5 C'S

- CLEAR
- CONCISE
- COMPLETE
- COHERENT
- CHRONOLOGICAL

CLEAR

- Legible and easily understood
- Straightforward and unambiguous

CONCISE

- Short and to the point
- Relevant to the matter at hand

COMPLETE

- Include all information needed to capture the context of the behavior being recorded
- A team member or other professional should have no questions after reading the recording

THE ANATOMY OF DOCUMENTATION

COHERENT

- Well laid out and easy to follow
- Shows progression of the visit greeting to parting

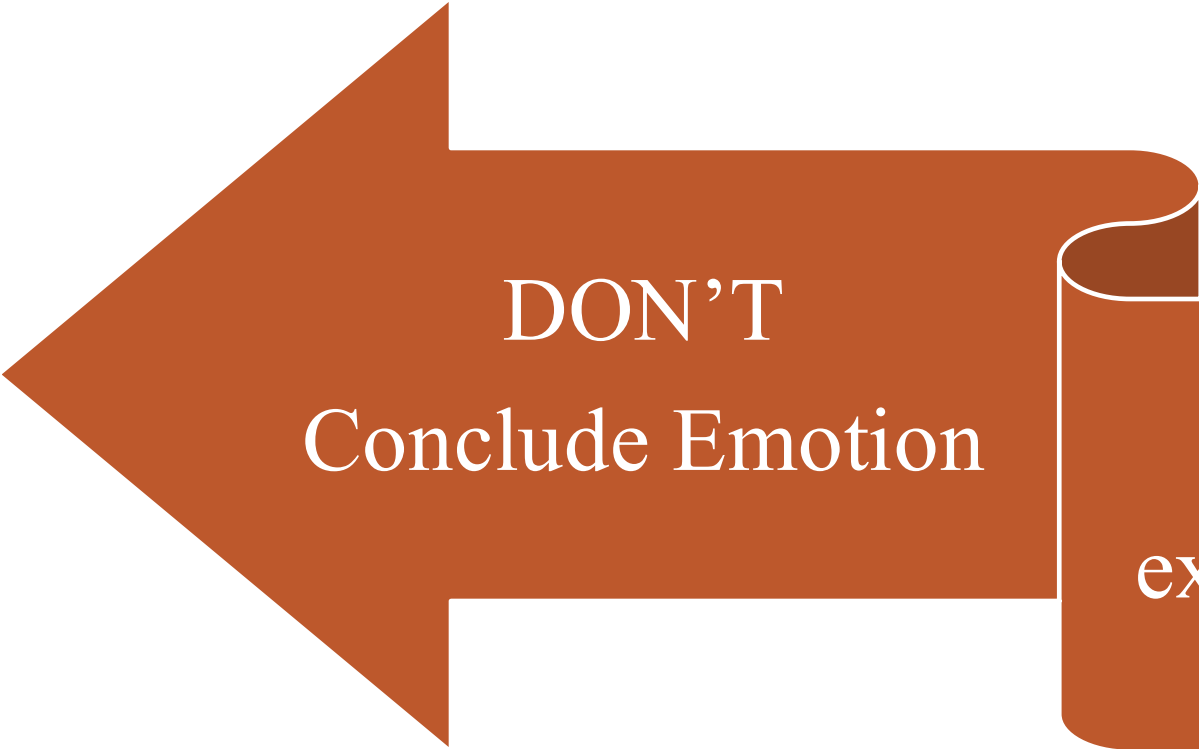
CHRONOLOGICAL

- Completed during or immediately after contact
- Include date, time, and signature when notes are completed in documentation

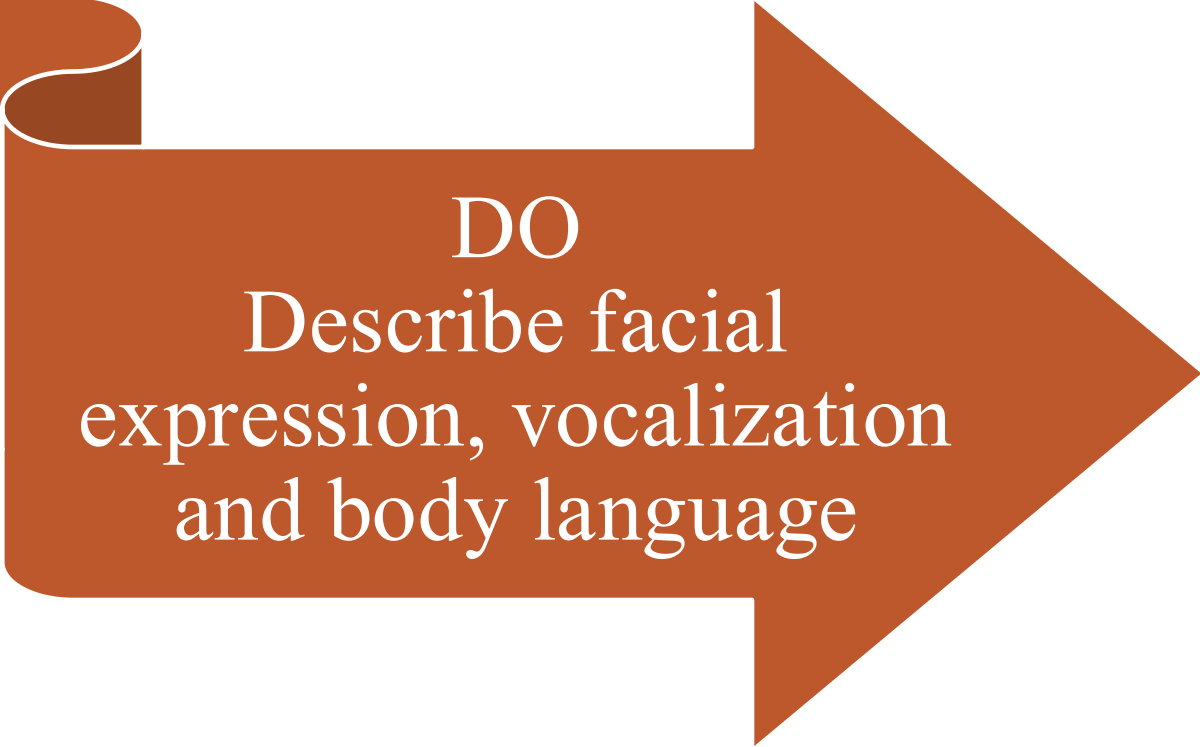
THE ANATOMY OF DOCUMENTATION

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR RECORDING OBSERVATIONS

- Be objective and report behaviors, not make inferences, offer opinions or draw conclusions.
- Do not assign diagnostic or clinical labels to family members
- Be careful when recording observations being sensitive to cultural differences which may affect observations.
- Take care not to violate confidentiality when documenting conversations between parents and children that occur during the visit.
- Take notes discreetly so that the parent and child are not distracted.
- Be aware of how their emotions, thoughts, and behavior may impact the parties' behavior.



DON'T
Conclude Emotion



DO
Describe facial
expression, vocalization
and body language

When others read our
documentation, they
don't see what we saw
or hear what we heard
— they only
experience what we
describe in writing.

TRUTH IN THE SILENCE ACTIVITY



ACTIVITY QUESTIONS

- What words would you use to describe what you saw?
- What assumptions did you find yourself making?
- How might our word choices in documentation shape how others interpret behavior or events?



Documentation is not
storytelling — it's evidence.
Describe what you see, not
what you assume.



WHAT COLOR ARE YOU?

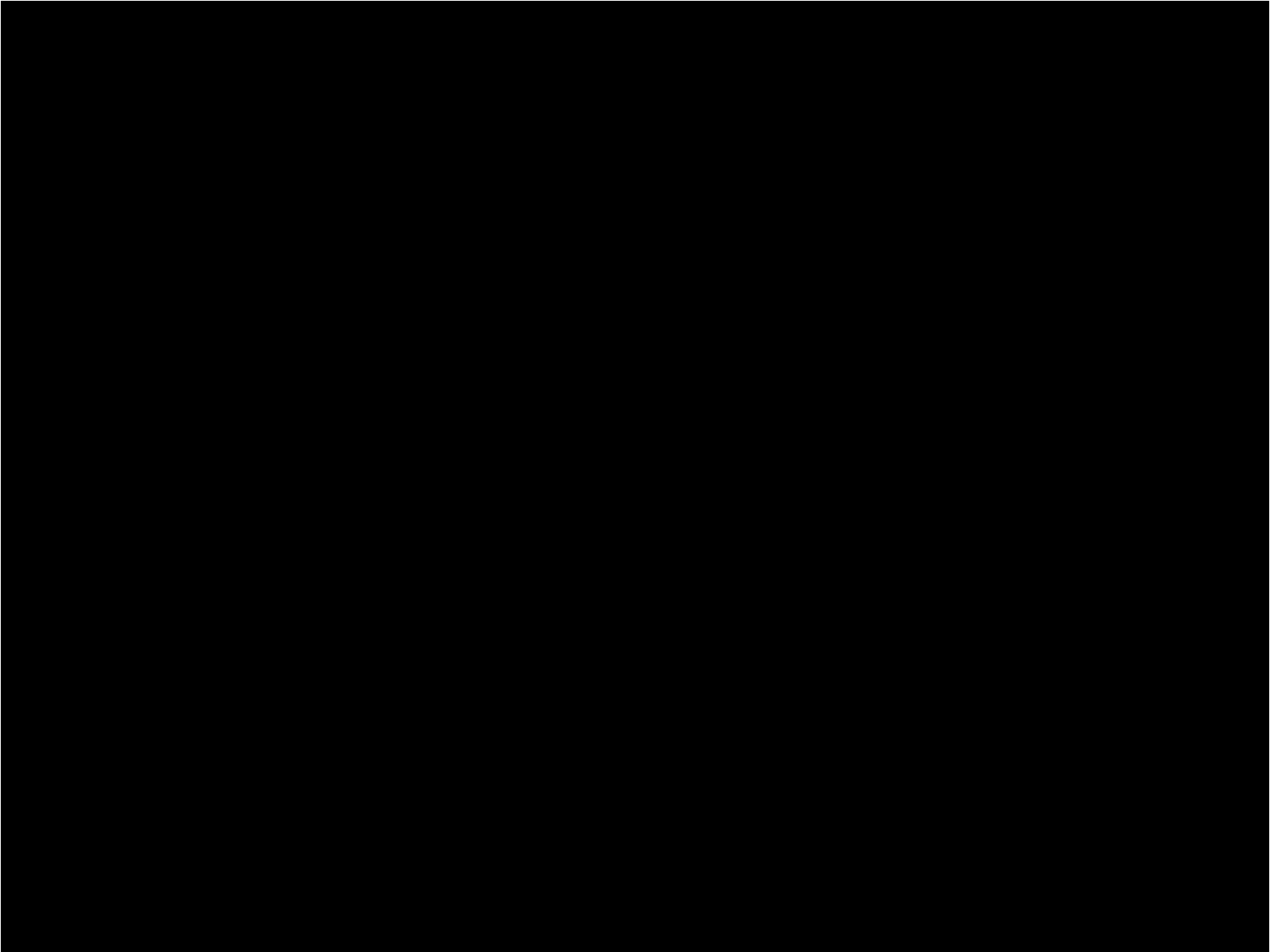
Green for written

Pink for electronic

Blue for hybrid



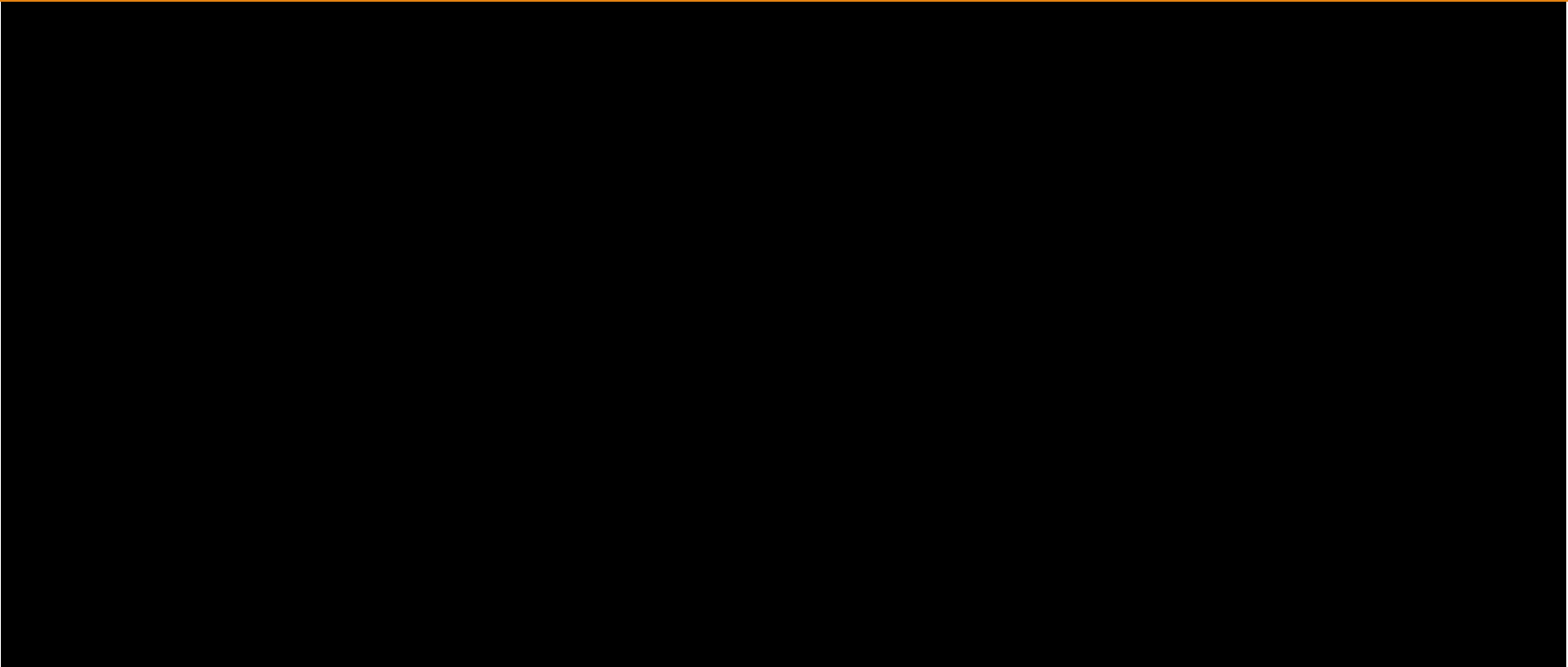
IN THE
BEGINNING...



THE DIGITAL
AGE
BEGINS...

SOMEWHERE
IN THE
MIDDLE





AI MARCHES IN

OPEN AI VS CLOSED AI

Open AI refers to AI systems that are:

- Publicly available
- Often trained on large, publicly sourced datasets (from the internet, books, websites, etc.).
- Frequently hosted and maintained by third parties (e.g., ChatGPT) Usually updated continuously and connected to external servers (cloud-based).

Closed AI refers to AI systems that are restricted, secured, and often custom-built for a specific organization or network.

They operate within private infrastructure (on-premises or secure cloud) and are designed to keep all data confidential.

Open AI

Amy was happy to see her Mom and jumped eagerly into her arms. As the visit progressed it was clear that she loves her mother. They played board games and mom did a great job interacting with her daughter frequently saying I love you. Is this in line with how a supervised visitation note should be written

Your note is a good start, but it could be more objective and detailed, focusing on the specific observations that are relevant to the purpose of supervised visitation. In general, a supervised visitation note should document facts and observations without interpreting emotions or drawing conclusions beyond what was directly observed. Here's how you might refine the note:

Supervised Visitation Report:

- **Participants:** Amy and her mother
- **Observation:**

Amy arrived at the visitation location and immediately showed excitement, jumping into her mother's arms.

Throughout the visit, Amy appeared comfortable and engaged with her mother. They played board games together, and Amy's mother provided positive interactions, frequently expressing affection with phrases like "I love you."

The overall tone of the visit was warm, with both participants appearing to enjoy the time spent together. Amy and her mother communicated openly, and Amy was cooperative throughout the session.

- **Additional Notes:**

No signs of distress or discomfort were observed from either party during the session. The interaction remained positive and nurturing.

This revision keeps the focus on what happened during the visit without speculating too much on their emotions. It also provides specific details (like playing ard games and the repeated "I love you" statements), which would be useful for anyone reviewing the report. Would you like help refining other



Closed AI

Hi Sven, I am a provider, help adjust this paragraph from a visit report to meet SVN's standards on objectivity and neutrality: Amy was happy to see her mom and jumped eagerly into her arms. As the visit progressed it was clear that she loves her mother, frequently gazing happily into her eyes and hugging her intensely. They played board games and mom did a great job interacting with her daughter frequently saying 'I Love You'

Thank you for clarifying that you are a provider. I'm happy to help you adjust your visit report to align with SVN's standards for objectivity and neutrality. According to SVN standards, provider reports should be limited to facts, direct observations, and statements made by participants, without personal conclusions, suggestions, or opinions.

Here's a revised version of your paragraph:

Amy greeted her mother by running toward her and hugging her. During the visit, Amy and her mother played board games together. Amy was observed looking at her mother and hugging her several times. The mother was heard saying, "I love you," to Amy on multiple occasions.

This version:

- Uses only observable behaviors and direct quotes.
- Avoids subjective language (such as "happy," "eagerly," "it was clear that she loves her mother," "happily," "intensely," "did a great job").
- Focuses on what was seen and heard, not interpretations or assumptions.

If you'd like further examples or have more paragraphs to review, just let me know!

WHY SVEN MATTERS

Because AskSVEN deals with **supervised visitation documentation, family court matters, and safety-sensitive details**, a **closed AI system** is far more appropriate. It ensures:

- Client and family information never leaves your secure environment.
- Only authorized SVN staff or partners can access the system.
- Outputs follow your terminology, legal standards, and ethical framework.

WOULD YOU EXPLORE A NEW WAY?

Green for written

Pink for electronic

Blue for hybrid

And yellow for the plan to change

QUESTIONS?

