

**Keep Me Safe Parenting Time Center
Parent Handbook**

Mission Statement

To provide a positive, healthy and nurturing environment where children and their parents can be assured that the supervised parenting time will be conflict-free.

Services Offered

Keep Me Safe (KMS) is a program of CADA, Inc. It provides a safe and nurturing place for children to visit their non-custodial parent, without the fear of experiencing or witnessing violence. It is also a place where children can get re-acquainted with their parent when there have been periods of separation.

Three main services are provided to the clients of Keep Me Safe:

1. Supervised parenting time. A parent will be directly monitored when visiting with his/her child(ren); *
2. Supervised exchanges. These will be done only Monday-Friday between the hours of 9:00 am – 5:00 pm; and
3. Provide information and referrals to community agencies and resources.

All services by appointment only

Business office: 100 Stadium Court
Mankato, MN 56001

Telephone: 507-625-3966

Program Manager: Tammera Wachtel

Visitation Monitor: Emmy, Marcia, and Julie

COURT ORDERS Keep Me Safe will adhere to all court-ordered parenting time within correlation the program's business hours. If KMS cannot accommodate specific restrictions or court orders, services will not be provided until the issues are resolved.

* Hereafter, we will use the term child, but please be aware we also mean children when appropriate.

Benefits of Parenting Time

Sometimes a custodial parent may question the benefits of the child visiting a non-custodial parent. This concern may come from past experiences and/or a history of lack of contact between the parent and child.

In most cases, children benefit from having a continuing relationship with the non-custodial parent. Seeing the visiting parent can provide the following benefits:

- ❖ Decreases the child's feelings of rejection
- ❖ Helps decrease the child's fear of not seeing the parent again
- ❖ Decreases the child's self-blame
- ❖ Allows the resolution of some issues the child may have with that parent
- ❖ Helps continue the parent/child relationship

We truly hope that this service will help eliminate children from being caught in the middle and help to strengthen relationships between the children and both parents. We encourage both parents to make this an enjoyable time for the child.

Preparing Children for Supervised Parenting Time

It is important to talk to your child prior to the first visit, explaining whom they will be going to see. Be sure to reassure your child that a parenting time monitor will be present at all times. Allow the child to express any concerns and ask any questions. This is especially important if the child has not seen the non-custodial parent in a long time. If you are unsure how to answer, staff at Keep Me Safe may be able to help. If the child has a special toy or blanket, feel free to bring that along to help comfort the child.

After The Supervised Visit

It is quite common for children to act out after a visit with a non-custodial parent. Children may feel many things after a visit, such as confusion, anger, hurt, grief and loss. Young children do not have the capacity to label their feelings and may act out their feelings in other ways. These may include aggression, whining, clinging, and/or temper tantrums. Although these expressions are bothersome, please do not assume that they do not want visit with their parent.

If your child is acting out and you feel concerned, please take the time to talk with your child about the feelings they are having. Staff can refer you to resources to help you and your child if needed.

Intake Process

Requirements:

- ❖ Copy of current driver's license; (must provide a copy of new license when old one expires.)
- ❖ Copy of current driver's license for all other authorized individuals that will be transporting the child.
- ❖ Copy of current court order. Must provide new orders when there are changes.
- ❖ Current phone numbers and addresses where you can be reached.
- ❖ Emergency contact information.

Keep Me Safe will conduct a separate intake interview with each parent or guardian prior to the start of services. The process will take approximately an hour and consist of going over the program's policies/procedures, answering any questions, a tour of the facility, and discussion of parking arrangements.

To help the child better understand our services, Keep Me Safe staff will provide a time for introductions, explanation of services and a tour for the child. We feel that this may lessen possible anxiety that the child may have.

Service Fee

Visits must be prepaid. Fees are based on sliding scale. Payment must be received five days before a scheduled visit. Payments can be sent to CADA, 100 Stadium Court, Mankato, MN 56001.

Yearly Income

Public Assistance Recipients (GA, SSI, MFIP, etc.):	\$5 per visit
Income up to \$15,000/annually:	\$10 per visit
\$15,001-\$25,000/annually:	\$12 per visit
\$25,001-\$50,000:	\$15 per visit
Income + \$50,000:	\$20 per visit

Court orders may state who is responsible to pay. If parents are ordered to split the cost, each parent will pay based on his/her individual income; and the fee will be split for each parent. If not stated by the courts, the visiting parent will pay. If visits are ordered through an Order for Protection, the Respondent will pay: unless stated otherwise in the Court Order. If parents have mutual Orders for Protection, payment will be split unless stated otherwise in the Court Order.

Confidentiality

The privacy of all clients will be respected. No information shall be released regarding a client, unless there has been a Release of Information completed. There are certain instances where privacy may not be protected. Staff is mandated by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect, homicide or suicide threats to the proper authorities.

Staff will not release the phone numbers or address of one party to another party.

In the event that a staff member and a client happen to see each other outside of Keep Me Safe, that staff member will follow the client's lead. If the client acknowledges the staff member, the staff member will respond. If the staff member is not greeted, they will not initiate contact. Also, it is not appropriate to discuss Keep Me Safe outside of the office.

Scheduling Visits

The maximum length of parenting time is 1 ½ hours on Saturday and Sunday and 1 ¼ hours during evening hours during the week. Frequency of parenting time visits varies with each family.

Both parties are to provide copies of court orders as well as any changes to the court orders as they occur. Parenting time/exchange schedules will not be changed without written documentation (new order) stating that the changes are to be made.

If a request to change a schedule has been made, Keep Me Safe staff will consult with both parties. If both parties do not agree to the requested change, the change will not be made. Emergencies do arise and will be taken into special consideration.

Safety

Keep Me Safe is very concerned about the safety of clients and staff. Staff will not hesitate to call law enforcement when deemed necessary.

Situations calling for law enforcement involvement include, but are not limited to:

- ❖ A client who becomes verbally or physically abusive to the child or staff;
- ❖ A client who does not bring the child back within 15 minutes of the scheduled arrival time for an exchange and cannot be reached by phone;
- ❖ A client who chooses to take the child and staff cannot prevent this due to the forceful nature of the attempt;
- ❖ A client who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol; or
- ❖ An incident occurs, and emergency assistance is needed.

Keep Me Safe does not allow contact between the parents in the parking lots. Separate entrances and parking areas are provided.

Absolutely no weapons are allowed at Keep Me Safe. This includes, but is not limited to, any type of gun, knife, pocketknife, pepper spray or toy guns and knives. Bags may be checked with a metal detector at the beginning of the visit.

Alcohol and Drug Use

Alcohol and drug use before or during a visit/exchange will not be tolerated.

Exchanges: If use of alcohol by the parent is suspected, whether they are picking up or dropping off the child, then law enforcement and/or child protection will be notified. The child will not be released to any parent suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If law enforcement determines you are ok to drive, then the exchange will continue.

Visits: If staff suspects that a parent is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the visit will be cancelled. If testing by law enforcement determines that the parent is chemical free, then the visits will resume.

Holidays and Make up Visits

Parenting time and exchanges will not be scheduled on any holidays. No make-up visits or exchanges will be scheduled.

There will be no make-up visits scheduled for missed visits.

Arrival Times

Parents need to arrive on time to their scheduled times. Parents are scheduled so that they do not have any contact with each other. Also, many families use Keep Me Safe, so one family being early or late affects all others.

If you arrive early: Please remain in your car until your scheduled time. Staff spends the time before your arrival preparing the room that will be used.

If you arrive late: If the non-custodial parent is over fifteen minutes late, the visit or exchange will be cancelled. If either parent is repeatedly late, service may be discontinued and the referring agency or court will be notified.

If the custodial parent is, over fifteen minutes late picking up their child and several attempts have been made to contact them, law enforcement will be contacted; and arrangements will be made for emergency placement of the child.

Cancellations and No Shows

Parents are required to give Keep Me Safe a minimum of twenty-four hours notice if they cannot attend a visit or exchange. It is the responsibility of both parents to do this. If the visit is not cancelled in the above said manner, a fee will be charged.

*Cancellation 24 hours or more in advance: grace period-no fee charged.

*Cancellation less than 24 hours prior to visit: \$10 fine for the parent who cancelled.

*Cancellation less than two hours in advance: \$15 fine for the parent who cancelled and that parent is documented as a no-show with a telephone call.

We understand that emergencies do arise, so possible exceptions may be made. Please notify Keep Me Safe staff as soon as possible. We ask that families maintain at least 80% attendance. Repeated cancellations may result in termination of services and the referring agency will be notified as to the reason. If there has been two or more “no shows”, services will be terminated.

Transportation of Children

Children are to be transported by authorized persons only. If a parent cannot transport the child themselves, they must notify Keep Me Safe in advance. The driver must present a valid driver’s license and fill out an “Authorization to Transport” form. Minnesota Sate laws require each child to use an appropriate car seat, and older children must use a seat belt.

Termination of Services

Keep Me Safe has the right to suspend or terminate parenting time or exchanges if any of the policies or procedures are violated. The referral court will be notified if policies or procedures have been violated.

Failure to follow these policies may result in suspension of Keep Me Safe services for a minimum of one visit up to termination, depending on the severity of the incident. Keep Me Safe makes reports on incidents, as they occur, to pertinent authorities.

When an individual's services are suspended or terminated, the Program Manager will decide under what circumstances the parent will be reinstated.

Reasons for Termination are:

- ❖ Safety concerns or other case issues that cannot be effectively managed by the provider;
- ❖ Excessive demand on the provider's resources;
- ❖ The parent's failure to comply with the conditions or rules for participation in the program;
- ❖ Nonpayment of program fees; and
- ❖ Threat of or actual violence or abuse.

If a child refuses to visit with the non-custodial parent in such a way or for such a period of time, that it raises concerns that continuation of services may be detrimental to the child's safety or emotional well-being, then the Program Manager may suspend services pending resolution of the issue.

Service Evaluation

Every three months, Keep Me Safe will send out an evaluation survey for participants to complete and return. The survey is one of the tools we use to improve and meet the needs of the individuals using our service. This survey is confidential.

Grievance Procedure

Individuals of the Keep Me Safe Program shall take all complaints to the Program Manager. If the Program Manager is unable to resolve a complaint, the individual should submit a written complaint to the Executive Director.

An individual may also follow the grievance procedure in response to termination from the program. However, the grievance procedure does not prevent or forestall an immediate termination, as deemed necessary by the Program Manager.

Documentation

Keep Me Safe staff documents all in-person or telephone conversations, arrival and departure times, and the content of parenting time in a factual and non-opinionated manner. Staff also documents any inappropriate actions or comments that occur during an exchange or a visit. Both parents are allowed to have copies of the logs. Let staff know if you would like copies.

Supervised Parenting Time

Non-custodial parents are to arrive ten minutes prior to the start of the visit. Staff will greet the custodial parent and child and escort them to the room. The custodial parent needs to leave the property.

Keep Me Safe enforces a no hitting policy. This includes birthday spankings. If a child misbehaves, a time out will be given, if necessary. No physical or verbal abuse is allowed. Keep Me Safe staff is legally required to report all alleged child abuse to child protection.

Parents are allowed to bring snacks, meals and age appropriate videos, if they wish.

Gifts may be brought, if the other parent agrees, only if the child is allowed to take it home after the visit. We can make an exception if the parent would like the gift to remain at Keep Me Safe for future use at visits. Gifts are not to be used to force the child to come future visits. Please check with the Program Manager beforehand to ensure that space is available. If storage becomes a problem, we will ask that all gifts go home with the child at the end of the visit.

If you want to stay close, you can park at the Elks Nature Center, next to CADA. Please do not park at the church, or on Stadium Road.

If your child is in diapers, please bring a bag and extra wipes and diapers. If they are potty training, please bring an extra set of clothes in case of accidents.

Ten minutes prior to the end of the visit, the non-custodial parent will be alerted that time is almost up. Staff will escort the child to the custodial parent. After the child leaves, the non-custodial parent must stay an additional ten minutes. This is a good time to ask questions and address any concerns.

During the visit, staff will attempt to prevent a client from talking about a subject or participating in an activity that is prohibited by Keep Me Safe policies.

Prohibited subjects include, but are not limited to:

- ❖ Racist, sexist, harsh, vulgar language
- ❖ Negative discussion of the other parent
- ❖ Adult topics (jail, court, legal issues, marital problems etc)
- ❖ Court hearings
- ❖ Social services
- ❖ Violent topics (including movies)
- ❖ Sexual topics
- ❖ Past events that may make the child feel bad
- ❖ Making promises about future living arrangements
- ❖ Whispering
- ❖ Rough housing

- ❖ Excessive tickling
- ❖ Hitting/spanking
- ❖ Threats
- ❖ Pumping for information
- ❖ Name calling

Clients will receive a verbal warning for any violations. If the behavior continues and the parent has not tried to correct the behavior, the visit will end immediately.

Concerns and Messages

Any issues, concerns, upcoming activities, etc. which one parent needs to convey to the other parent, must be in writing and passed through Keep Me Safe staff.

- The written information must be positive and non-confrontational or it will not be passed.
- Passing notes/letters through the child is not permitted.
- Sealed envelopes are also not acceptable.
- A copy of the information will be retained in the client's file.

Please refrain from verbalizing any issues/concerns in front the child. If it is necessary to speak with staff regarding issues/concerns, wait until the children are not present or call Keep Me Safe prior to or after the visit/exchange.

If a child refuses to attend three visits, the matter will be referred back to the courts or professionals involved with the family.

Still cameras are allowed, unless prohibited by the Guardian Ad Litem. Video cameras and tape recorders are prohibited. Please turn off cell phones while at the visit. No pictures will be taken using cell phones.

There is no smoking at Keep Me Safe.

There are no pets allowed (with the exception of trained guide animals).

Additional visitors are not allowed except under special circumstances which are determined by staff and collaborating professionals.

Keep Me Safe staff does not dispense any medication. An authorization form must be signed and dated if it is necessary for the visiting parent to dispense meds at a visit. Verbal instructions will not be relayed.

The visiting parent is responsible for changing all diapers. If a child needs to use the bathroom, the visiting parent will escort the child, and the door will remain open. The visitation monitor will escort the child if there has been an allegation of sexual or physical abuse.

One parent must remain in the building at all times with the child.

Once a visit has started, the visiting parent may not leave the building.

Supervised Exchange Procedure

The custodial parent must arrive ten minutes prior to scheduled exchange time. When the non-custodial parent arrives, staff will take the children to greet them. At this time, the custodial parent will leave. Any notes or letters can be passed at this point. At the pick up time, the custodial parent will arrive early again. When the child is back the custodial parent and child can leave, the non custodial parent will remain for ten minutes.