

What is visitation or parenting time?

Visitation (visits) or parenting time is an order for how your children will spend time with each parent that is in the best interests of the child.

For information about child custody, read:

- *Child Custody Information Sheet—Recommending Counseling* (form [FL-313-INFO](#))
- *Child Custody Information Sheet—Child Custody Mediation* (form [FL-314-INFO](#))

Four Types of Orders:

1 Scheduled visitation

These are orders with a set schedule of the dates and times that your children will be with each parent. The schedule can include holidays, special occasions, vacations, and other important dates for the family.

2 Reasonable visitation

These are open-ended orders that allow parents to work out a plan on their own. This type of plan can work if parents get along very well, can be flexible, and communicate well. Generally, this type of plan is not suitable for cases with domestic violence.

3 Supervised visitation

A judge makes these orders when there are safety concerns. A parent and child have a neutral third person watching and listening during the visit. The neutral third person can be professional or nonprofessional.

Professional provider

A professional provider (or “monitor”) is a person with special training who has passed a background check. Professional providers charge a fee. They are also mandated reporters which means that they must report suspected child abuse to the local child welfare department (known as “CPS”). Your local court may have a list of local professional providers.

Nonprofessional provider

A nonprofessional provider is usually a friend or family member who is not paid and does not have special training, but must still make safety the top priority, follow the judge's orders, and be able to end a visit, if needed, to protect the child.

For more information about supervised visits, go to selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/guide-supervised-visitation.

4 No visitation

The court may make this order if visiting with a parent would not be safe for the children even if supervised.

What are virtual visits?

California law defines “virtual visits” as use of audiovisual electronic communication tools to provide contact between a parent and their children as part of a parenting plan or custody order. A parent and child must use some kind of electronic communication that allows them to see and hear each other (for example, using Zoom, FaceTime, or WhatsApp).

- Virtual visits may require access to the internet during the visit and may be supervised or unsupervised.
- For more information about virtual visitation, go to: selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/child-custody/virtual-visitation.

Are virtual visits a good option for us?

Virtual visits may be a good option if you have safety concerns, or if the other parent lives far away from the children. It can also be a good option if the other parent hasn't seen the children in a long time.

Some cases may not be appropriate for virtual visits, whether supervised or unsupervised. Your child's age may be a factor. Younger children may not be able to sit through a long virtual visitation. If virtual visits are part of the court-approved parenting plan, or part of your supervised visitation, you can use the worksheet on page 2 to help you plan for them.

What about orders for picking up and dropping off the child for visitation?

You can ask for orders that would not require you to meet the other parent, like having the other parent pick up your child from school or daycare. Or, you can ask for supervised exchanges. Supervised exchanges involve a neutral third person who will help you with transferring the children to the other parent so you don't have to meet with the other parent.



When you ask for visitation orders, give details about:

- When they should happen;
- How often they should happen; and
- Who will be responsible for transporting the children before and after each visit.

How do I ask the court for these orders?

- If you already have a family law case, you can ask the court for child custody, visitation (parenting time), and child exchange orders by completing *Request for Order* (form [FL-300](#)) and filing it in the court where your case was started. Information about how to file this and other forms is found in *Information Sheet for Request for Order (Family Law)* (form [FL-300-INFO](#)).
- If you need to start a case in family court to ask for these orders, information is available online to help you decide which type of case to file. Go to: selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/child-custody/filing-options.

Where can I find free legal help?

- Contact the self-help center in your court. Its staff will not act as your lawyer but may be able to give you information to help you decide what to do in your case and help you with the forms. Find your local court's self-help center at selfhelp.courts.ca.gov/find.
- Contact a local legal aid agency or community-based nonprofit at www.lawhelpca.org.

What if there is domestic violence or a protective order?

- If there is domestic violence or a protective order, before making a parenting plan, talk with an attorney, counselor, child custody mediator, or child custody recommending counselor, or contact the self-help center in your court.
- Read *Asking for Child Custody and Visitation Orders* (form [DV-105-INFO](#)).
- For more information and resources, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or call 211 if available in your area.

Plan for Your Virtual Visits

(You can use this as a worksheet.)

- ☐ **Before** your visit, make sure the program, like a mobile app or web app, works on your phone or computer. Make sure you have an internet connection and know how to use the app.
- ☐ **Before** your virtual visit or virtual supervised visit, make a plan. For example, have an activity ready like reading a book to your child. The length of your visit should be age-appropriate. Review the court order to be clear on how long your visit will be.

Write your plan here:

If you have virtual supervised visitation, ask the provider questions ahead of time (for example, during your scheduled orientation with the provider). You can write your questions here:

- ☐ **During** your visit, make sure you:
 - Find a quiet room or space for your virtual visits or virtual supervised visits.
 - Have any games, books, or other activity ready and in front of you.
 - Be ready to be flexible. Technical issues may come up that impact your visit.
- ☐ **During** your visit, make sure you do **not**:
 - Have another person participate in the visit unless a judge gave the person permission to do so.
 - Talk about your court case with your child.
 - For virtual supervised visitation, do not whisper or communicate in other ways that would not allow the provider to see or hear your interaction with the child.

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FL-311-INFO

What Are Visitation or Parenting Time Orders? (Family Law)

Official revision: January 1, 2026 | Library source checked: September 6, 2026

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