If you select me as someone you would like to consider working with, the following will occur. I will ask you to send me the custody and visitation orders relevant to your case, in addition to any restraining orders. I will review these before we talk next. We will then set up a time to meet to get a history of your situation, what you know about your child/ren, what you would like do with your child/ren when you spend time with them, and how you would ultimately like your relationship with your child/ren to evolve. This is called an intake visit and will take about an hour. The process of getting to know each other better allows for both of us to see if we want to work together. If we decide that we do, then I will conduct an intake visit with the custodial parent asking a lot of the same questions. I communicate with the custodial parent to learn all that I can about what will make for successful visits. This includes learning information about the child/ren’s likes, dislikes, concerns, fears, allergies, etc. During the intake visits, we will review my company guidelines. If you choose to use me as your provider, both you and the custodial parent will be asked to abide by those guidelines.

Before the first visit, I make sure that both parents and the child/ren are oriented to what the routines of the visits will be, the rules of the visits, safety protocols, etc. I take into account the age of the child/ren, any limitations of the parents or child/ren, what the child/ren enjoy doing, cost constraints, etc. Maintaining the safety of your child/ren is always my highest priority.

Once you and I decide what a good activity and location will be for a visit, I contact the custodial parent and make the arrangements for drop-off and pickup. I will let the custodial parent know what the visit will entail so that child/ren come prepared with the appropriate clothing, shoes, sunscreen, etc.

On the day of the visit, I will (depending on your situation) meet you 15 minutes ahead of when the child/ren will arrive. We will meet in a place where the custodial parent and you will not be able to see each other. You and I will chat a bit and confirm what the visit will look like. Then, a few minutes before the visit is scheduled to begin, I will walk away from you to go pick up the child/ren. Once I have picked up the child/ren, the custodial parent will then leave. If we have not done so already, I will meet briefly with the child/ren without you, to explain to them how the visit will go, what we will do, rules we all need to follow, etc. I will be sure to answer any questions or concerns that the child/ren have. The child/ren and I will then come and meet you and your time together will begin!

When your time with your child/ren begins, I fade a bit into the background and let you be the parent. You will run the visit while talking and playing with the child/ren. If the child/ren’s behavior needs redirection, that will be up to you. (I am there if you need help.) Unless other arrangements are made with the custodial parent, you will provide snacks, meals and beverages that the child/ren will need while with you. You will be responsible to bring any toys, games, books, sports equipment etc. that you will use during your time with your child/ren.

You will see me taking lots of notes on my phone. These notes are ultimately expanded to form the observation report. The observation report is intended to capture how you and your child/ren are interacting with each other during the visit. Having notes taken on most everything you say and do will likely seem awkward at first. Most clients adjust easily. The reports are emailed to you and your attorney, the custodial parent and his/her/their attorney, and possibly others relevant to the case. It is likely that the reports will ultimately be read by your family court judge.

After the visit ends, I will walk the child/ren back to the custodial parent, while you wait in an area where you cannot be seen by the custodial parent. After I drop the child/ren off, I will walk back to you. We will spend the next ten minutes or so discussing what went well in the visit and what might work better for the next visit. You and I then go our separate ways. I will write the observation report and get it to you as soon as possible. (Please feel free to ask how backed up I am and how long the reports are taking to complete and deliver.)

Getting the first visit to happen is a bit of a process! After that, however, we develop a routine and the planning for subsequent visits is easier. Please feel free to ask me any questions that you might have about the visits with your child/ren. I really want you and your child/ren to have a wonderful time spending time together.