



Communication & Visitation for Parents & Family Members

Policy Owner(s): Residential/Day School

Effective Date: September 25, 2013 | **Revised Date:** December 4, 2023

1. Policy Objective

It is Heartspring's philosophy to provide parents and family members with opportunities to visit and communicate with their child in person and on campus. This policy outlines appropriate visitation times and authorized methods of communication.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Heartspring residential/day school staff, students, their parents/guardians, other family members, and approved visitors.

3. Policy Statement

Parents and family members are always welcome to visit their child on campus. Family members/approved visitors (other than parents) must be listed on the Heartspring Visitation and Communication Authorization form. The first 30 days after the student's enrollment day are reserved for "no physical" visitations. Heartspring believes this time is critical for the student to become acclimated to their new environment and for Heartspring staff to get to know the student. Parents may call, email, or have video calls with their child. It is helpful if phone calls and/or video calls are scheduled prior with the student's team.

As best practice, the student's team encourages parents/guardians, family members, and other approved visitors to discuss upcoming visits with them. This is ideal for many reasons. The team can offer recommendations for the upcoming visit to help make it more successful. This can also ensure better alliance and consistency with behavioral strategies, communication outcomes, prompting and waiting, and more. These visits are also a good time to request training(s) with one or more team members or even a meeting with one or more team members, which typically require advanced notice.

3.1 Weekday Visits

Monday through Friday, the classrooms and group homes have a (4) hour visitation limit.

- Visitation hours during the weekdays in the classrooms begin at 9:00 AM and run until 3:00 PM.
- Visitation hours for the group homes begin at 3:45 PM and run until 8:00 PM.
- This combination gives the parents up to four hours per day of visitation time with their child. If parents desire more visitation time, they can take their child off-campus. Heartspring staff will not accompany any off-campus visits. Families are not allowed to stay overnight on Heartspring's campus during their visit.

3.2 Weekend Visits

There is a four (4) hour limit in the homes on Saturday, Sunday, and holiday visits. This time frame usually works best if divided into two, two (2)-hour sessions.

- The visitation time frame will be from 9:00 AM until 8:00 PM. This will allow students and staff to complete morning and bedtime routines.
- If parents want to observe their child's morning or bedtime routine, please make arrangements with the team in advance. Families are not allowed to stay overnight on Heartspring's campus during their visit.

Times away from your child, such as team meetings, scheduled meetings with a team member, administration, or parent training time do not count toward the visitation hours.

3.3 Other Recommendations

- Heartspring strongly encourages families to follow the recommendations of the student's team (if applicable) when planning visits to Heartspring. There may be times when the team may recommend that visits remain on campus for safety/behavior (or other) reasons. The team may also provide additional recommendations based on the individual student/family needs.
- Heartspring recommends that students attend school while parents visit to limit program/routine disruptions and ensure that IEP services/minutes are provided as scheduled. This is not a mandatory Heartspring visitation requirement but something that should be discussed with your child's teacher and/or your child's Local Educational Agency (LEA) (or school district), as some school districts may not want the child to miss any portions of the day where IEP services/minutes are provided.
- Parents are advised to contact their child's Local Educational Agency (LEA) (or school district) to make sure they agree on the amount of time that the student is away from Heartspring. This is particularly important if the child will be going home for a visit and he/she will be missing several days of school. Some school districts have very strict policies and limitations in place

regarding how much time a student can be away from a residential school program. Therefore, always check in advance with the appropriate school district/LEA in these situations.

- When students have multi-family units involved (step family, blended family, and/or complex familial relationships) it is advised that family visits are coordinated among all family members. Numerous visits and back-to-back family visits can be disruptive to programming and cause limited (or a lack of) progress. Should this become problematic, the student's team and/or School Leadership Team members may become involved.

4. Policy Violations

Any employee found to be in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. If family members/approved visitors are found to be in violation of this policy, a member of the School Leadership Team may contact them and discuss it.

5. Definitions

- Local Education Agency—a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a state for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a state, or for a combination of school districts or counties as are recognized in a state as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools.

6. Forms or Related Policies

- Residential/Day School Parent Handbook
- Visitation and Communication Authorization Form

7. Applicable Laws/Regulations

- CARF Medical Rehabilitation Standard 2.E.2
- [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#)

REVISION RECORD

DATE	VERSION	REVISION DESCRIPTION
12/4/23	v.2	The following section(s) was updated: sections 3, 3.1, 3.2 3.3, 5, and 7.