

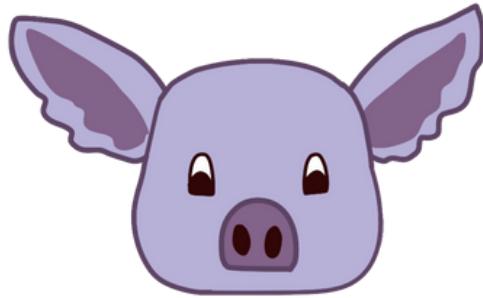
# "Hamlette and Their Perfectly Imperfect Egg"

## eBook

## User Guide

### Meet Hamlette!

An adorable pig who uses a supervised visitation center to see their "perfectly imperfect" family.



Our eBook for young people, "Hamlette and Their Perfectly Imperfect Egg," follows a young pig through their journey into supervised visitation services. This fun, interactive eBook is a new way for you to connect to children and youth using supervised visitation services.

Hamlette is here to help normalize and validate the feelings of children and youth and aid in building rapport and relationships with the children you are getting to know.

You can find the eBook "Hamlette and Their Perfectly Imperfect Egg" in both English and Spanish through our website:  
<https://exploration.inspireactionforsocialchange.org/hamlette/>

**We are so glad you're here and thrilled to introduce this tool! This eBook was designed to enhance your potential for connecting with young people, particularly at the critical moment when they begin supervised visitation for the first time at your center. “Hamlette” is informed by equitable trauma-informed approaches, child development, and best practices for children exposed to violence.**

### **Why Hamlette?**

For individuals and families, navigating trauma, abuse, complex family dynamics, and complex systems, easing into a new intervention or service can be challenging. This is especially true for children. “Hamlette” offers a fun and gentle approach to helping young people understand supervised visitation.

Additionally, if children have been exposed to violence and are experiencing trauma, the imagination and engaging qualities of Hamlette may help ease some of their overwhelming feelings and help to normalize the experience of supervised visitation. For visitation providers, Hamlette can serve to aid you in building a trusting relationship with a child you are just getting to know.



Children and young people often process trauma and complicated experiences through storytelling, play, and creative expression. Processing grief, big changes, and painful experiences is not often linear, does not fit into a tidy box, nor is it always verbally processed. The "Hamlette" eBook can ease children into the new visitation experience and serve as a springboard for conversation and connection.

### **Using a tool like “Hamlette” can help young people by:**

- Providing a visually and emotionally engaging “container” for the new experience of supervised visitation.
- Establishing routine and predictability for visitation.
- Supporting the adults within the visitation experience (you!) to be grounded and guided in kicking off the orientation process with a young person.
- Offering a buffer between the child and all that’s happening; offering a safe transition.
- Aiding them in seeing themselves in the world around them and helping them feel less alone.
- Adding some lightness and fun to a challenging situation.
- Giving them a road map and expectations about supervised visitation.
- Creating a unique experience that may also aid in speaking with their caregivers about visitation.
- Promoting a child/youth centered environment.
- Giving the adults in their lives an ongoing metaphor/concept to reference throughout the visitation experience.
- Providing a tool for supervised visitation staff to broach the newness of visitation with parents by sharing the story of “Hamlette.”

# Before Implementing “Hamlette” with Young People

**Before you implement the “Hamlette” eBook experience, we invite you to prepare by considering how this tool can best support the children and parents accessing your center.**

## Preparing Your Supervised Visitation Program for “Hamlette” by considering:

- How and where will “Hamlette” be accessed?
- What supporting technology will you use to share the story of Hamlette? The Hamlette eBook has an audio feature for the story to be read aloud - this will require speakers on the device used. Ensure you have access to a printer so each young person is able to print out a Hamlette coloring page and the avatar they create.
- Ensure the space you use to share the story is private and allows staff to sit with the young person and facilitate a conversation.
- It may also be helpful to have pictures of the Hamlette character available, integrating them in key places such as in your child check-in space or near a welcome sign, staff photo wall, or a snack area, etc.
- Make sure all staff have practiced before using the eBook and understand the story of Hamlette.

## Introducing “Hamlette” to Parents

As with any new tool or approach that you utilize with children and youth in your center, we recommend that you share with both the custodial parent and the visiting parent. You will need to use your best judgment, as always, to ensure that how and what you share centers on the safety of the adult and child survivor - an ongoing process of continual reflection. There is always nuance when we engage with parents in visitation. And, we know that engaging parents as much as possible in our work with kids can be the most dynamic healing and supportive action we can take. After all, parents will be in a relationship with their children far longer than we will be; parents should be treated as the experts in their own families, even when they have room to grow (like we all do).

Giving parents the chance to learn about the “Hamlette” eBook can empower them to engage with the content with their children in ways that can support the whole family's well-being throughout the visitation experience. Below we offer some steps and scripting you can use, though these are suggestions and not a requirement. Ultimately, your authentic voice and approach, responsive to the family's needs, is most important.

**1.** Ideally, introduce the “Hamlette” eBook to parents during their orientation processes before introducing it to children. You can share it with them via your device (tablet, laptop, desktop) or show them a picture and explain the story of Hamlette verbally.

**2.** If you have concerns about adult and child survivor safety before you introduce “Hamlette,” we recommend you check in with colleagues about your concerns and problem-solve together. If you have relationships with local DV or batterer’s intervention providers, seeking consultation from them can also be helpful.

**3.** Remind parents that “Hamlette” is a tool available to all children and that you share the story with all parents in case they want to use the character of Hamlette in their conversations and visitation planning.

**4.** Share with parents the goal of “Hamlette” by saying something like: “The ‘Hamlette’ eBook experience is a tool that can help us explain the concept of supervised visitation and help normalize the experience with your child(ren) as they begin visitation. It can give them a chance to process all that’s happening through storytelling, imagination, and visual engagement. We have found that when kids are navigating big changes or something unfamiliar or unknown, ‘Hamlette’ can be a fun buffer of sorts, making it feel more normal and manageable. Do you have any questions or thoughts you’d like to share?”

**5.** Draw from the “Using a tool like ‘Hamlette’ can help young people by” list in the “Why ‘Hamlette’” section above.

**6.** You could read or share both developmental options with the parent and invite conversation about which version they think will best match their child. Walk them through other key features, such as the avatar development, the printable coloring page, and the picture of Hamlette their child may choose to keep.

**7.** Engage the adult survivor parent in a conversation about safety, and remind them you can revisit this conversation at any time. You can ask questions like:

- *“How do you feel about us using this eBook experience with your child?”*
- *“What do you think your child needs from us as they begin visits?”*
- *“What do you think your child needs from you as they begin visits?”*
- *“Can you imagine referring to ‘Hamlette’ with your child as you all prepare for visitation? Do you think it could be helpful? Is there anything we can do to make it more helpful for you as a parent?”*

**8.** Engage the parent who used violence in a conversation about their child's needs, reminding them you can revisit this conversation at any time. You can ask questions like:

- *“How do you feel about us using this eBook with your child?”*
- *“Is there anything you think we should know before we use ‘Hamlette’ with your child?”*
- *“What do you think your child needs from us as they begin visits?”*
- *“What do you think your child needs from you as they begin visits?”*
- *“Can you imagine referring to ‘Hamlette’ with your child as you all prepare for visitation? Do you think it could be helpful? Is there anything we can do to make it more helpful for you as a parent?”*

**9.** Share with parents how and when you will use ‘Hamlette’ with their children and anything else about child/youth orientation that is relevant. For example, you can also share the concept of lid-flipping and emotional regulation during this time.

## Introducing “Hamlette” to Young People

Though it’s impossible to predict the developmental and emotional needs of each young person you work with at your center, you can always take a few steps to prepare them for anything you have planned for your time together, including “Hamlette.” You should use your best judgment, authentic connection, and relationship with the young person (even if it’s just newly developing) to ultimately determine what will be in service to their healing and well-being. Even when you are just getting to know a child, you can be responsive to their communication and cues, essentially letting them lead. With “Hamlette” and any other supportive tool or intervention, it’s important not to push young people to engage in processes when they express clear discomfort. “Hamlette” is not a must-do; it’s a tool for your tool belt that you can use or not use as you see fit.

Below we offer some steps and scripting to aid in how you introduce the eBook, though these are suggestions and not a requirement. Ultimately, your authentic voice and approach, responsive to the family’s needs, is most important.

**1.** Introduce “Hamlette” to children during the orientation process, remembering that time should be taken to meet the young person’s pace and developmental needs. A sample script you might use, adapting your language based on developmental appropriateness:

*“I want to show you a story about Hamlette. They are a cute and funny pig who loves scrambled eggs. Isn’t that funny? Hamlette also sees one of their parents at supervised visitation, just like you are going to do. Hamlette can tell you all about it, and it’s a little bit like watching a cartoon and playing a video game.”*

*We show Hamlette to the kids who come here if they want to see it. Would you like to see the story of Hamlette?”*

**2.** Let children know that you can take a break or stop engaging with the eBook at any time.

**3.** Let children know that they can ask any questions along the way. As you progress through the eBook, notice any verbal and non-verbal cues the young person may be giving you, and ask engaging questions as you go, being responsive to the apparent needs of the child.

**4.** Be mindful of how culture and specific experiences of the child may shape how they perceive and interact with “Hamlette.” Think in advance about how you can enhance the eBook with what you know about the child and their family. For example, you might say something like: “*Do you think Hamlette celebrates the same holidays your family celebrates?*” or “*What language do you think Hamlette’s grandparents speak?*”

If the conversation flows naturally, you can follow up with questions about the child’s family; preparing in advance by thinking about making these links can be helpful.

**5.** If you have any “Hamlette” memorabilia or pictures in the room or your program, referring to it before you start the eBook can be a nice transition. You can find printable images in the “Preparing Infants, Children, and Youth for Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Services” course on our eLearning dashboard: <https://learning.inspireactionforsocialchange.org/>

**6.** If you have any nerves or reservations about utilizing “Hamlette,” we encourage you to seek support from colleagues before you begin.

Inspire can also provide additional support. You can email us at [info@inspireactionforsocialchange.org](mailto:info@inspireactionforsocialchange.org) or contact us through our website at <http://www.inspireactionforsocialchange.org/contact>

## During Implementation: Tips & Approaches

**As you utilize the “Hamlette” eBook with young people, please remember that it’s meant to aid and support youth and your relationship with them as they adjust to supervised visitation. There’s no perfect equation for implementation and no pressure to “get it right” or finish it within a specific timeline.**

On the following pages, we offer some steps and scripting to aid in how you implement the eBook, though these are suggestions and not a requirement. Ultimately, your authentic voice and approach, responsive to the family’s needs, is most important.

**1.** Ideally, after holding a conversation with each parent, determine which developmental version of “Hamlette” you will share with the child.

**2.** There are a variety of options for how the child can take in “Hamlette.” If they are a reader, they can read the story aloud to you, which might feel empowering and promote a sense of mastery. For some young people, this won’t be a good fit. You can read the story aloud to them as well. There is also an option for the platform to read the story aloud (press the “audio” button).

We recommend that you utilize a combination of your best judgment and direct communication with the young person to determine the best fit. When deciding what will be the best fit for the child, there’s no right or wrong answer and no need to belabor the decision. If you are responsive to the cues of the child, you can adapt as needed.

**3.** As the child engages with “Hamlette,” remember to pause occasionally to check in about the story and see how it relates to them. As we mentioned in the “Introducing Hamlette” section, you should also weave in potential moments of connection about the child’s culture and specific life experiences. You can say things like: “How do you think Hamlette is feeling right now?” or “What do you think Hamlette needs right now?” or “If you could ask Hamlette any question about visitation, what would it be?” or “What kind of egg would your family be?”

You can also ask light questions about eggs (“Do you like to eat eggs?”, “What is your favorite way to have eggs?”, “Have you ever put ketchup on scrambled eggs?”), and make jokes as appropriate.

Many children respond well to a combination of light-hearted, imaginative comments mixed with more substantial comments or inquiries about their feelings and experiences.

**4.** Talk to the young person about taking a tour of your center just like Hamlette did, and offer affirming comments like “We also have spaces like this at our center,” or “I can show you our toys after we’re done reading the story.”

**5.** As you are moving through the “Hamlette” experience with children, there are some things to look out for. When you notice these things, consider slowing down, checking in with the child, and adjusting as needed. The list below offers some considerations for what might come up for children, but be open to all cues that children may give you. Any of these cues are information that can help you connect with the child and develop a deeper understanding of what they need. Nothing on this list is better or worse. And, as always, remember to check in with yourself about assumptions and biases that may be at play as you perceive and interpret how a child is responding.

Connecting and communicating directly with the young person about what you observe and assume is a best practice, adapting to the child’s developmental stage.

- If the young person appears checked out, numb, despondent, highly distracted, or absent. This is an important sign that the child may be overwhelmed. We recommend a simple question or statement like: *“Would you like to take a break?”* or *“Let’s take a break and try again later.”*
- If the young person appears increasingly amped, agitated, or dysregulated in their demeanor. It’s important to remember that being “calm” is not a requirement. But noticing if a child is amped can be another time to pause and check-in, asking if they would like to take a break. You might say something like: *“It seems like your body is saying you have big feelings right now. What do you think?”* and *“It’s not bad to have big feelings, but I always like to ask kids what they need along the way.”*

- If the young person is visibly sad or distressed. If you notice this, please pause and connect with the child. You might say something like: *"It looks to me like you are feeling sad. If you are, that's ok. I feel sad sometimes, too. Let's take a break?"* or *"It seems like you might be feeling worried. It's okay to have any feelings right now. Hamlette feels sad and sometimes worried, too. What do you think Hamlette needs when they are sad? What do you think Hamlette needs when they feel worried?"*

- If the young person is engrossed in the experience! When this happens, enjoy the moment, lean into the imaginative and creative process, and be present.



## After Initial Implementation: Tips & Approaches

After you work through the eBook experience with children, there is a myriad of ways to engage with the child and the content in the short and long term.

We encourage you to be responsive to the unique needs of the children and youth that you work with as you use this tool. It is meant to aid in the orientation process for young people accessing your center. It may not be a fit for every child; we encourage you to use your best judgment, as well as your compassionate communication skills, to determine when "Hamlette and Their Perfectly Imperfect Egg" will be a helpful tool. All of the information in this guide will support you in that decision-making.

As an adult committed to the health and well-being of children impacted by family violence, your role is significant. Thank you for doing the work you do and for being important in the life of a child!

Below we offer a variety of options to consider for follow-up after you've completed the eBook; use your best judgment and relationship with the child to determine the course of action that feels right for them.

**In the short term after “Hamlette,” you might ask the child follow up questions and/or make affirmative statements:**

1. *“Do you have any questions about how Hamlette was doing during supervised visitation?”*
2. *“Do you have any questions about what visitation will be like for you?”*
3. *“Just like Hamlette had adults to help him through visitation, I am here to help you. It’s okay to talk with me about anything on your mind.”*
4. *“Would you like to see more of our center now, the way Hamlette got to see their visitation center?”*
5. *“We can come back to Hamlette anytime.”*
6. *“If you had to pick a type of egg for your family, what would you pick?” You can share what YOUR family’s egg type would be, too.*
7. *“Would you like to have a picture of Hamlette? We can print it out so you can color Hamlette and add your own fun things to the page.”*

As you continue the orientation process, pay attention to moments when you can refer back to “Hamlette” for continuity. Also, having this imaginative buffer can be really helpful for young people navigating complex experiences and feelings.

When you notice a child not wanting to engage about what they want or need during times of distress, you can try shifting to “Hamlette” based talking points, such as: “I wonder what Hamlette did when they were worried about visiting their mom. What do you think?” or “Remember when Hamlette said their family was all mixed up? Maybe that’s how it feels for you?” You can do this anytime, in an ongoing fashion.

# Thank you for taking the time to read this User Guide to the eBook "Hamlette and Their Perfectly Imperfect Egg"!

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For other resources, publications, and eLearning materials, please visit our website:

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Questions? Email us:

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