

Role of the Resource Family

Handout 4-4

BEFORE A CHILD COMES TO YOUR HOME, plan ahead!

- Talk to and prefer your entire family about foster care.
- Prepare space for a child (bed to sleep, place for clothes, age appropriate toys and activities, car seats/booster seats)
- If you need child care, start looking for a safe appropriate licensed setting.
- Complete your Core Training for Resource Families.
- Complete your licensing requirements.

AT TIME OF PLACEMENT, get the information you need.

- Ask questions when contacted for a placement and get as much information as you can to make the decision of if this will work for your family. Find out where child is going to school.
- Ask for the Red Placement Packet for the child which will contain: EPSDT/Immunization schedule, Consent for Emergency and Routine Medical Care, Clothing Inventory, Medication Log and information specific to the child such as tribal information if known. Fill out Clothing Inventory.
- Ask about any appointments or assessments or visits that are already scheduled. Find out who the current medical provider is. Ask about siblings in care.
- If the child does not have a current medical provider, identify a Medicaid approved provider. If the child is Alaska Native or American Indian, identify a provider with your local tribal health organization.
- If this is the child's first time in placement, schedule an EPSDT exam within the first 30 days in your home.
- If a change in placement has occurred, schedule an EPSDT exam within the first 30 days if the child is over the age of 3 and has not seen a doctor in the past year or if the child is under the age of 3 and has not seen a doctor in the past 3 months.
- The Medicaid Card should arrive in the mail if not in the packet. In some cases, the Medicaid information is included on the Consent Form. Direct questions to the OCS Eligibility Unit in your region.
- Ask for an "Icebreaker" meeting with the birth family if appropriate.
- Help the child transition into your home and feel comfortable.
- Make a recordkeeping file for the child to keep records and include a calendar to track appointments. Note the caseworker's name and contact information. Find out name of Guardian ad Litem (or call Office of Public Advocacy.)
- Ask about Family Contact—often visits begin soon after placement.
- If the child does not come with adequate clothing, use your local resources or request Clothing Voucher from the worker. You will be asked to submit the Clothing Inventory to document.

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WHILE A CHILD IS WITH YOU, stay organized and meet the child's needs.

- Keep required records (Fire Drills, Visit/Medication/Injury Logs, Educational Records).
- Follow the EPSDT schedule for physical exams, immunizations, dental exams, etc.
- Honor the Confidentiality of birth parents and foster children.
- Provide Transportation to visits, school, medical, and therapy appointments.
- Sign school and club permission slips for routine events and transportation. Help kids participate in normal, developmentally appropriate activities. Use a Reasonable and Prudent Standard to decide if involvement in an activity is appropriate.
- Ongoing communicate with caseworker about what child needs, ongoing behavior problems, progress. Include the GAL as Appropriate.
- Communicate with OCS if not receiving the foster care stipend or if needed Special Funds to assist with additional needs or events.
- Support a child's education and schooling.
- Be prepared for monthly caseworker visits (every other visit should be in your home).
- Use good judgement when supervising children, selecting others to supervise your children, allowing adult contact with children, or selecting child care.
- Follow the contact plan for visitation and contact with birth parents. Help a child remember birthdays and Mother's/Father's Days.
- If a child is separated from siblings, set up play dates or visits so siblings can keep in touch.
- You should be invited to Court Hearings and may be invited to Administrative Meetings.
- Keep up with licensing expectations (notify worker when changes to household or emergencies or absences, complete yearly training requirements).
- Allow time to obtain permission when needed (leaving home over 72 hours, trips out of state or country, non-emergency treatment and medical care, elective and psychotropic medications).
- Follow all safety measures (car seats and seat belts, life preservers, safe sleeping practices, bike helmets).
- Keep a life book or scrapbook for a child of pictures, school papers, mementos, letters, and papers that keep a record of a child's life.
- Be respectful of a child's religious history and honor the birth parents' preferences or the child's preference if over nine years of age.
- Be aware that if complaints come in on a foster home (child protective system complaints or licensing regulation violations complaints) these will be investigated by licensing or initial assessment or both. You are expected to cooperate with the investigations—this is where communication and documentation is helpful. Read the Handout given in this class for more information or contact the Alaska Center for Resource Families for More information.

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WHEN A CHILD LEAVES YOUR HOME, support a good transition.

- Make sure your child goes with adequate clothes and toys. Use Clothing Inventory as a Minimum Guide. Children should go with the clothes you purchased with foster care stipend. Send his belongings in a suitcase or duffel, not a garbage bag.
- Update the Child Information Sheet and send the Red Placement Packet with the child.
- If you are requesting removal of a child, give 15 days' notice for OCS to find a new placement.
- Help your child with the transition.
 - Talk to the child about what is happening and prepare the child for leaving.
 - Answer questions and give information about what will happen next.
 - Advocate for some time to make the transition.
 - Have a special moment, dinner, or gift that marks the transition.
 - Write a note for the child that talks about something good that happen in your home.
 - Update a child's lifebook and make sure that it goes with him.
 - Share information with the child's birth family or new placement to help with the continuity of care for the child.
- Ask about post placement contact if you desire.
- Take care of your family's needs and feelings of loss and deal with your own grief.
- Take some time if needed and let OCS know when you are ready for another placement.



QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CONTACTED ABOUT A PLACEMENT

Adapted for use in Alaska from Foster Parents: Don't forget to ask, Social Workers: Don't Forget to Answer! **Caseworker Core Module VIII: Separation, Placement and Reunification.** Ohio Child Welfare Training Program, November 2006.

Questions To Ask About The Child

1. Why is the child being placed?
2. Previous placement experiences of the child.
3. What is the child's legal status?
4. What is the plan for the child? Expected length of placement?
5. What is the family contact plan for the child? What is the family situation and the parent's names? Where are the parents? When will the first visit or contact be?
6. Are there brother/sisters? Where are they placed? Birthdates?
7. Is the child in good health? Allergies, medication, immunizations, dental care?
8. When was the last physical and dental checkup?
9. Religion—important or not?
10. Where has the child been receiving medical care? Is there a record of immunizations?
11. What grade is the child in at school? What School? Are there any known educational or learning issues?
12. Does the child have any special behavior problems or unusual habits?
13. Does the child have enough clothing? Will there be a clothing allowance?
14. Will the foster parent and birth parent have an Ice Breaker?
15. What is the foster care reimbursement for this child(ren)?
16. What is the name and contact number for the social worker? Who is the social worker's supervisor?

Forms to Ask For Early in the Placement:

1. Red Placement Packet (Should include the forms below.)
2. Consent for Emergency and Routine Medical Care
3. Family Contact Plan or Visitation Plan
4. Clothing Inventory Form (if you are going request a clothing voucher)

CASEWORKER VISIT CHECKLIST FOR RESOURCE FAMILIES

POLICY: Caseworkers should be meeting with a child at least once a month and meet with the child where he is living (your home) at least every other month. Caseworker will ask for some time alone to talk with the child so be prepared to make a private space available for the worker and child.

Caseworker will want some time to talk with you as well. Bring the **Red Placement Packet** and any appropriate records regarding the child. Update photo of child if outdated.

Be prepared to talk about:

- Education** *If the child is school age, how is school going? Any concerns?*

- Activities** *What activities is the child participating in? (Family, Extra-curricular, Cultural, After School, Enrichment)*

- Family Contact** *What contact is the child having with parents? Any sibling visits? Anyone the child should be having contact with?*

- Health, Medical or Therapeutic Needs** *How is the child's health? When was the last check up? Are you seeing any delays, concerns or health needs? Is child receiving the mental health services he needs?*

- Other Issues?** *What do you need to take care of this child? Is there something the child needs? Any permissions, financial requests, or travel authorizations that you need? Any special training, support or resources that would help you care for this child?*

Other Questions To Consider Asking:

Important Hearings: *What important court hearings or meetings are coming up that I should put on my calendar or be aware of? Are there administrative reviews coming up? If yes, what do you need from me to share about the child at that review?*

Permanency Goals: *What's the plan for permanency? Has it changed? What can you tell me about the long range plan for this child?*

ICWA/GAL: *If the child is a tribal child or covered under ICWA, do you know who the tribe is and know how to contact the ICWA worker? If you are not ICWA preferred, is OCS looking for ICWA placement for the child? Do you know who the Guardian ad Litem is for the child and how to reach him or her?*

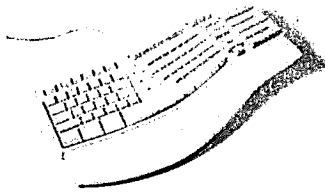
Know Who To Call

- Know the name of your licensing worker and the social worker assigned to the child in your home. Know how to reach them. Keep names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses in an easy to find place.
- In Anchorage and Fairbanks, every social worker belongs to an OCS unit led by a supervisor. Know who the worker's supervisor is in case of emergency. The Social Services Associate assigned to the unit can also be very helpful. Also, each day a Unit Coordinator is assigned to handle emergencies.
- Every resource parent should have the number of the OCS social worker for his or her child in care. Keep it in a handy place. Or call the main number and request to be connected to the person you are calling. You can also access the State Employee directory at www.state.ak.us for phone numbers and email addresses.

Calling On The Phone



- Try to call early (between 7:30 to 9 a.m.) before social workers are caught up in court and visits.
- If a social worker is not available, you will reach his or her voice mail. If you get voice mail, listen carefully to the message. It may tell you the social worker is on vacation or in training.
- Realize a social worker may not have time to chat over a long period of time. Be direct and precise in what you need so problems and concerns can be solved quickly.
- Leave a message! Be very specific. State the reason you are calling and give an idea of how urgent the message is. Indicate if you need to be called back and what time is a good time to call and indicate any deadline to receive the information needed. The more specific you are the better. Lots of time can be lost playing "phone tag" when a social worker could be using that time to work on your request.
- Realize social workers may not be able to call back the same day. Be patient! Social workers often have dozens of phone calls to return upon returning to the office. Do not leave more than one message the same day.
- Give the social worker a reasonable amount of time to return calls. Utilize the Unit Coordinator if it is an emergency and the social worker has not returned your call in a reasonable amount of time.
- *Voice mail is your friend!* Leave an update on the child just for information sharing so the social worker knows more about day-to-day issues. State your questions clearly so a social worker can call back if necessary. Speak clearly and leave your phone number so the social worker doesn't have to look it up.



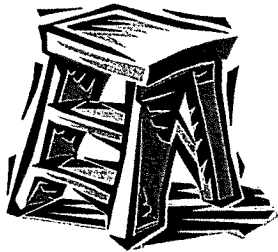
Using E-mail

- E-mail is another option for contacting social workers with information. Social workers can often answer an email faster than return a phone call. If you have access to email, use it whenever possible.

- All social workers have an e-mail address. But talk to your workers about what they prefer. Some social workers don't use email as much as others. All state employees have the email address of *firstname.lastname@alaska.gov*.

- Just as in a phone call, be precise and clear about what you are asking for. Be brief and be patient for a reply.

- Emails can be printed and included in the child's file. So use it as a way to update the social worker on a child's progress. Indicate in your message that you are keeping the social worker up-to-date and that you don't need a reply. Be professional. More people than your social worker may see your communication.



THE LADDER OF COMMUNICATION

1. Contact the social worker first. Leave a clear message and a way to contact you. Allow a reasonable amount of time before calling again. Or try some of the suggestions given in the box to the right.

2. If you don't get a return call after leaving several messages, or if it is an emergency and you cannot wait for an answer, call the main number and ask for the Unit Coordinator for your social worker's unit.

3. If you still can't get what you need, contact the Unit Supervisor. (In some areas, the Unit Coordinator is the social worker on call for that day.)

4. If you still can't get what you need, contact the Staff Manager or call the reception desk and ask to talk to someone in person.

Who Do You Call With Questions?

Late Foster Care Payments

- Social Worker
- OCS State Provider Payments 1-877-465-2215

Problems With Medicaid Coupons

- Social Worker
- Social Services Associate
- In House Eligibility Techs

Clothing Vouchers?

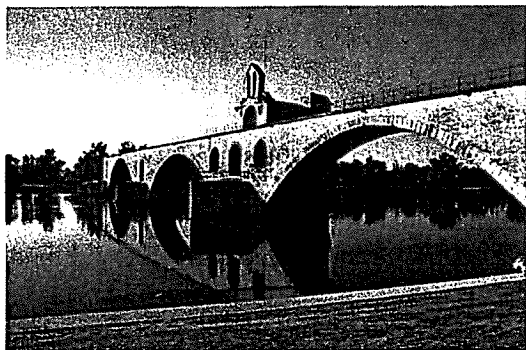
- Social Services Associate
- Social Worker

Still Can't Get What You Need?

- Supervisors
- Staff Managers
- Children's Services Manager
- Unit Coordinators

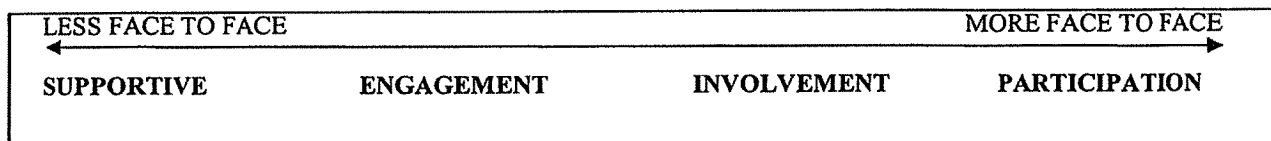
Questions About Training?

- Alaska Center for Resource Families, 479-7307 in Fairbanks, 279-1799 in Anchorage or 1-800-478-7307
- www.acrf.org



BRIDGING TO PROMOTE FAMILY CONTACT

Methods of connecting with the birth parents can be divided into four categories that spread out along a continuum of contact.



SUPPORTIVE: This is defined as providing the child and the birth parent with social and emotional connections without having face to face contact. This may be appropriate when the birth parent is still angry or hostile with the child’s placement or if the parent is dangerous.

Some examples are:

- Sending holiday cards to the birth parents.
- Sending school papers, report cards, pictures
- Allow the birth parents to send letters/cards to the child.

ENGAGEMENT: This means meeting the birth parent on neutral ground such as a visitation center or OCS. The focus of this contact is to provide the parent with limited contact on neutral ground with the hopes the child can maintain some contact.

Some examples are:

- Meeting at another relative’s home.
- Visits at the Office of Children’s Services or identified neutral place.
- Setting up email correspondence
- Allowing the birth parent to call your home
- Arranging/hosting sibling visits
- Sending a notebook back and forth between families with ideas, suggestions and stories

INVOLVEMENT: This broadens the ways in which the kin parent has contact with the birth parent. The connection is face to face and can occur in the community or the birth parents home. Involvement may be used to build a new relationship or repair a damaged birth parent-child relationship.

Some examples are:

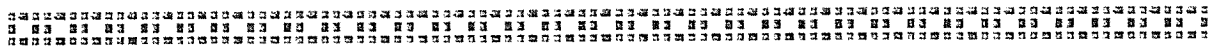
- Transporting the child to visit in the birth parents home.
- Inviting the birth parent to attend school/church functions

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- Sharing a meal with the birth parent.
- Allow the birth parent to phone your home.
- Encouraging the parent to participate in normalized activities, such as going to a movie

PARTICIPATION: The caregiver is confident and secure enough to invite the birthparent to participate in various aspects of the child's life. The caregiver and birthparent can talk with and contact each other comfortably and easily around arranging contact with the child.

- Invite the birth parent to the home to participate in holiday and birthday celebrations with the child.
- The child may be able to spend the night with the birth parents. (which in turn provides you respite.)



OTHER IDEAS TO HELP A CHILD STAY CONNECTED TO FAMILY

Help Your Child With:

- Making a birthday cake or giving a birthday party for birth parents
- Making or buying gifts for birth parents
- Taking photo of the child with birth family to give to parents
- Showing parents grades, awards, etc.
- Have child make pictures or write a story to share with parents at visits
- Remembering Mother's Day and Father' Day
- Maintaining contact with siblings in other resource families
- Making allowed phone calls or allowing phone calls to child
- Help child take a picture or get a picture of birth parents to keep in room
- Help a child write letters or make pictures to send to parents
- Help a child put together a scrapbook or a life book
- Bring in a ritual or tradition from the child's family to help celebrate holidays

Other Ways To Keep Connected:

- Ask birth parents about schedule or food preference of the child
- On visits, make it a point to tell the birth parent some compliment about the child
- Invite the birth parent to dinner
- Make a family tree or scrapbook of photos for the child
- Take the child to cultural events
- Have different books, arts movies and magazines featuring the culture or race of the child
- As for parents input on clothes, toys, equipment or behavior change
- Include birth parents in school conference, Parent's Nights, school plays

WHAT DOES A FOSTER PARENT DO? QUIZ

1. Although not a party to the case, a resource family is actively involved in a child custody case between the State of Alaska (or Tribal courts) and a child's primary caregiver. **True False**
2. A resource parent should report bodily injury of a child in their care only if it happens in their home. **True False**
3. A resource family may share their stories on social media or with close friends and family, as long as they get the parent's permission. **True False**
4. Resource parents are expected to support the family contact plan even when they don't agree with it or think it harms the children. **True False**
5. Resource parents should plan to provide transportation for the child placed in their home, even if it means transporting the child to a different school in the district. **True False**
6. Resource parents are not expected to have any engagement with the birth family, the social worker will do all the communication between the two families. **True False**
7. Resource parents may use corporal punishment on their birth children, but not their foster children. **True False**
8. Resource parents should document all attended meetings, phone calls, emails, appointments, family contact, hearings; clothing inventory, medication and challenging situations while a child is placed in their care. **True False**
9. Resource parents need training hours only if they have a placement in their home. **True False**
10. Resource parents should document only the prescription drugs that are given to a child in their care. **True False**