



Touchpoints

Preparing Children
for Transitions



Touchpoints



FOR CHILDREN

Honesty to children throughout the permanency process is difficult but helps them understand each step of what they are going through. Remember to “Listen, Listen, Listen to the child’s expression of their needs.”

There are universal messages that need to be addressed at each point in the continuum (always frame questions age appropriately):

- ♥ What do you want?
- ♥ What do you need?
- ♥ Will I be safe?
- ♥ You’re not in trouble, it’s not your fault
- ♥ How to keep contact with people with whom you want to maintain connections?
Who are the important people in your life?

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Key Discussion Times

Ongoing Discussions throughout placement

ENTERING OUT-OF HOME CARE

These questions should be phrased in first person.

* See last page for kids entering transracial/trans-cultural foster care and adoption

Key Points to Discuss

- Why did this happen?
 - Why am I being moved?
 - Will my birthmother and dad be ok?
 - Where am I going?
 - Will I be safe?
 - Will I ever go home again?
-
- Most kids are really scared when they moved to a new home. Open the door to let the child express their feelings
 - Talk with the child about school assignments that could be potentially troubling
 - Validate feelings

Who Should be Involved

Primary: CPS/social worker, and ideally birth parents, relatives, foster parents

Supportive: Police, Grandparents, other relatives, other significant relationships

Helpful Materials

Tools:

- Backpack
- Stuffed animal/favorite blanket
- Birth parent/legal parent/parenting parent diagram
- Photo album from foster families—keep at the agency
- Doll House
- Gather information about child's routine i.e. foods, sleep routines, bathing, games and books they enjoy
- What comfort items do they need?
- Develop the "child's public story"

Zachary's New Home (ages 3-5)

Why Me?(ages 3-5)

My Foster Family (ages 3-5)

Maybe Days (ages 3-5)

Adrian (ages 6-10)

What's a Foster Family Anyway

The Star (ages 3-8)

All Kinds of Separation (ages 3-8)

Life Book - A Work Book That Helps Kids Adjust to Foster Care

Keeping It Secret: Teens Write About Foster Care Stigma

The Kissing Hand (ages 4-8)

Finding the Right Spot: When Kids Can't Live With Their Parents

When Do I Go Home?: Intervention Strategies for Foster Parents and Helping Professionals

Key Discussion Times

Ongoing Discussions throughout placement

BIRTHPARENT VISITATION/ INTERACTIONS

- How long can I see them?
 - Where will I see them?
 - How often will I see them?
 - Can we talk on the phone/e-mail?
 - Why are visits supervised?
-
- Help birthparent give child permission to emotionally connect to the foster parent
 - Help child define their desires re: content of visits

Key Points to Discuss

Who Should be Involved

Primary: On-going case worker, family, foster family

Supportive: Other relatives, therapists

Helpful Materials

Tools:

- Disposable camera (take a picture at the first visit after out of home care placement, if the child doesn't have a picture of the birthparent)
- Calendar with visitation dates/important dates noted

My Foster Family (ages 3-5)

A Place in My Heart (ages 3-8)

Adrian (ages 6-10)

Finding the Right Spot (ages 11-14)

When Do I Go Home

Momma Loved Me From Away

Visiting Day (ages 4-8)

Let's Talk About When Your Parent Is In Jail (ages 6-11)

My Daddy Is In Jail (ages 5-10)

A Visit With Daddy

A Visit With Mommy

Wishing You Were Here: When a Parent Is In Prison

Loving Through Bars - Children With Parents In Prison

Key Discussion Times

Ongoing Discussions throughout placement

SIBLING VISITATION

Key Points to Discuss

- How long can I see them?
 - Where will I see them?
 - How often will I see them?
 - Can we talk on the phone/e-mail?
 - Why can't we live together?
 - Why do I have to see them?
 - Will my siblings be OK?
-
- Consider "parentified child" issues

Who Should be Involved

Primary: On-going case worker, family, foster family

Supportive: Other relatives, therapists

Helpful Materials

Tools:

- Phone cards
- Birthday cards
- Cameras
- Calendar with important dates noted
- Sibling photos

Let's Talk About Foster Homes (ages 3-5)

The Visit (ages 3-5)

Key Discussion Times

Ongoing Discussions throughout placement

COURT EVENTS:

- **REVIEWS**
- **TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS**
- **APPEAL PROCESS**

Key Points to Discuss

- What will happen?
 - Who will be there?
 - Will I have to say anything?
 - What happens next?
-
- "This is an adult event, here's what happens"
 - You're not in trouble
 - "Is there anything you want me to tell the Judge?"
 - Recognizing/helping with grief and loss issues

Who Should be Involved

Primary: On-going caseworker, GAL, child's attorney, therapists

Supportive: Foster parents, significant relationships

Helpful Materials

Tools:

- Visit to court room
- Calendar with court dates noted

Zachary's New Home (ages 3-5)

Thirsty Moves to a Foster Home (ages 6-10)

Adrian (ages 6-10)

What's Happening in Court?

Key Discussion Times

Ongoing Discussions throughout placement

CHANGE OF PLACEMENTS/FAMILIES

* See last page for kids entering transracial/trans-cultural foster care and adoption

Key Points to Discuss

- Why am I moving (describe problems, discuss unmet needs which the child may have and how those might be met in the new family, etc).
- How do my foster parents feel about me leaving?
- Are the other children staying here?
- Whose decision was this?
- Who will help me move?
- Will I be able to see my “other families”?
- What’s going to happen to my stuff?

Who Should be Involved

Primary: On-going caseworker, current “family”

Supportive: Therapist, significant relationships, birth family

Helpful Materials

Tools:

- Photo album of new home

Ceremonies:

- Sending off from school, church, etc., duffle bag or suit case (no garbage bags)
- Address book
- Life book
- Doll house
- Camera for pictures

Maybe Days (ages 3-5)

My Foster Family (ages 3-10)

My Foster Care Journey

Little Heroes: Foster Care and Adoption

Soul Moon Soup (poetry-older adolescent)

FY13 – Involved, Informed, Independent (for teens) created by FosterClub

Key Discussion Times

Ongoing Discussions throughout placement

RETURN HOME TO BIRTH FAMILY

Key Points to Discuss

- What is different that makes it safe for me to live with my parents now when it wasn't safe before?
- Do my parents live in my old house?
- Does my mother still live with X (boyfriend)?
- Are my brothers/sisters going home, too? Or, are my brothers/sisters still living there?
- How does my mother feel about having me come home?
- How do my foster parents feel about me leaving? Will I still see them?
- Will I go to my old school and how will they react to me?
- Will I get [burned, hit, etc.] again?
- If I tell about abuse again, what happens?
- Who do I talk to if it happens again?
- Are you still involved?
- Why can't I live with both my foster parents and my parents?
- Why don't I have a say?

Who Should be Involved

Primary: On-going caseworker, Judge, GAL, child's attorney, birth parents, therapist

Supportive: Current "family", significant relationships

Helpful Materials

Tools:

- Address Book
- Disposable camera; use existing lifebook with pictures and information compiled while in foster care (ideally, parents were involved in putting together pre-placement information and family pictures); take picture on the day of return and add to lifebook
- Autograph doll for school friends

Thirsty Moves to a Foster Home (ages 6-10)

Adrian (ages 6-10)

Key Discussion Times

Ongoing Discussions throughout placement

DECISION TO CHANGE FROM "RETURN HOME" PLAN TO "ADOPTION"

- Why can't I go home?
- Where will I live?
- What does it mean to be adopted?
- Will all the other foster kids come too?
- Is it O.K. to still love my birth family?

* See last page for kids entering transracial/trans-cultural foster care and adoption

Key Points to Discuss

Who Should be Involved

Primary: On-going caseworker, Judge, GAL, child's attorney

Supportive: Therapist, current "family", significant relationships

Helpful Materials

Tools:

- Life Path - explaining adoption as moving to a "growing up with family" (ages 0-2)
- Aspects of Parenting tool (ages 0-2)
- Photo album/videotape of a family
- Moving Calendar (similar to Advent Calendar) where doors on the calendar display a date, when open, they reveal specific info such as "Adoptive parents will pick you up for a visit at 2:00 p.m." or "goodbye party at your foster house" (ages 3+)
- Access foster care and adoption support groups for teens

Is Adoption Right For Me: Teens Explore the Adoption Option

Key Discussion Times

Ongoing Discussions throughout placement

IDENTIFICATION OF FOSTER FAMILY AS THE ADOPTIVE FAMILY (ENSURE FOSTER PARENTS ARE MAKING AN INFORMED, FREE WILL DECISION:

* See last page for kids entering transracial/trans-cultural foster care and adoption

Key Points to Discuss

- Will my name change?
 - How does my relationship with the family change?
-
- Child might think that grandparents/aunts/uncles will now treat him as part of the family: foster/adoptive parents should be able to help confirm or modify expectations
 - Signing of an adoption placement agreement (be careful not to pressure families into an adoption decision)

Who Should be Involved

Primary: Recruitment worker, on-going caseworker

Supportive: therapist, current family, significant relationships

Helpful Materials

Tools:

- Claiming Behaviors
- "Changing Hats" curriculum
- Distinguish between birth parent and "legal"/adoptive parent
- Life Maps
- Body Collages
- Story Lines
- Journals
- House pages, house maze

Key Discussion Times	Key Points to Discuss	Who Should be Involved	Helpful Materials
<p><i>Ongoing Discussions throughout placement</i></p> <p>RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you like your family to be like? • What would you like people to know about you? 	<p><i>Primary:</i> Recruitment worker, on-going caseworker</p> <p><i>Supportive:</i> Therapist, current family, significant relationships</p>	<p><i>Tools:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the child write or draw a picture depicting what kind of family they want. • Videotaping • Journals • Pictures • Photolisting • Television • Radio • Newspapers • Other outreach activities/tools
<p>INTRODUCTION TO SELECTED FAMILY</p> <p>* See last page for kids entering transracial/trans-cultural foster care and adoption</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you like to say to the family? • What would you like them to tell you? • What would you like to do on your first visit? • Are you comfortable staying overnight? • Do I move in right away? <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss after child visits - Worker presents information to potential family 	<p><i>Primary:</i> Recruitment worker, on-going caseworker, current family, birth family,</p> <p><i>Supportive:</i> Therapist, current family, significant relationships</p>	<p><i>Tools:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videotapes, written materials • Play telephone to ask new questions <p><i>Zachary's New Home (ages 3-5)</i> <i>I Miss My Foster Parents (ages 3-5)</i></p>

Key Discussion Times

Ongoing Discussions throughout placement

WHEN A SELECTED FAMILY BACKS OUT OF THE ADOPTIVE PLAN

Key Points to Discuss

- Is it my fault?
 - Why did this happen?
 - Where will I live?
-
- Blind date analogy
 - Reframe past discussion on the process of family identification
-
- Can you think of special people in your life who you would like to live with?
 - What would you like in a family?

Who Should be Involved

Primary: Recruitment worker, on-going caseworker, current family, therapist

Supportive: Therapist, current family, significant relationships

Helpful Materials

Tools:

- Have the child write or draw a picture depicting what kind of family they want.
- Videotaping
- Journals
- Pictures
- Photolisting
- Television
- Radio
- Newspapers
- Other outreach activities/tools
- Lifebooks
- Video of child
- Have the child create a power point presentation of themselves

The Boy Who Wanted a Family

Key Discussion Times

Ongoing Discussions throughout placement

PRE-PLACEMENT VISITS

Key Points to Discuss

See questions under Intro to Selected Family

- Considerable contact between foster and adoptive parents before move (7-10 days); it is OK to like, to take from and to get close to adoptive parents
- After some initial visits, ask child: Is it going to be easy or hard to do things with the dad? Easy or hard to follow the rules? How about giving and receiving affection, how will that be?
- Give child permission to talk about birth parents & foster parents
- Understand and assist in the processing the child needs to go through

Who Should be Involved

Primary: Recruitment worker, on-going case-worker, current family

Supportive: Therapist, current family, significant relationships

Helpful Materials

Tools:

- Family book—photo album
- Lifebooks—include information on foster family and pictures of every foster family; includes pictures of school, important social workers, CASA

I Miss My Foster Parents (ages 3-5)

So You're Adopted (teen)

* See last page for kids entering transracial/trans-cultural foster care and adoption

Key Discussion Times

Ongoing Discussions throughout placement

MOVE DATE

* See last page for kids entering transracial/trans-cultural foster care and adoption

Key Points to Discuss

- Can I go back to my foster family?
 - Can I go back to my birth family?
 - Can I bring my things?
 - Are you feeling scared, angry, etc.?
 - Will my birth family know who my adoptive family is?
 - Will I ever see my birth family?
-
- Reassuring child that it's not his/her fault (if it's not)
 - Recognize and validate any feelings of apprehension and anxiety

Who Should be Involved

Primary: Both sets of parents help pack, load the car

Foster parents' role to physically hand over the child

A-parents encouraged to have some sort of celebration: cake and ice cream, a celebration that could be repeated on the anniversary, go out to dinner, have a family picture taken, religious ceremony

Supportive: Therapist, significant relationships, foster parents, birth parents

Helpful Materials

Tools:

- Luggage, address book, Lifebook, disposable camera
- Creating Ceremonies
- Claiming Behavior

I Miss My Foster Parents (ages 3-5)

How Micah Helped Build a Family

Key Discussion Times	Key Points to Discuss	Who Should be Involved	Helpful Materials
<p><i>Ongoing Discussions throughout placement</i></p> <p>FINALIZATION DATE – ADOPTION CEREMONY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you feel today? • Do you wonder about contact with birthparent or foster parent? • Do I need to live with this family for six months before I become adopted? • Will my name change? • Will I need to move out when I'm 18? • What happens in court? • Will my birth certificate be changed? 	<p><i>Primary:</i> On-going caseworker, Judge, adoptive family</p> <p><i>Supportive:</i> Therapist, significant relationships</p>	<p><i>Tools:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating Ceremonies and Special Days • Photograph to celebrate day <p><i>Real For Sure Sisters</i> <i>Two Birthdays for Beth</i> <i>A Place in My Heart</i></p>
<p>PLANNING FOR POST-ADOPTION SERVICES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for visitation • School and name change • Sad/mad/glad feelings • Post-Adoption Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support Groups - Celebrations - Family Activities - Activities with other adoptive families - Backpacks 	<p>Therapist Family PARC Representative Supportive Friends</p>	

Key Discussion Times

Ongoing Discussions throughout placement

PLANNING FOR VISITATION AFTER ADOPTION WITH BIRTH FAMILY/SIBLINGS

Key Points to Discuss

- Will I see my siblings and family?
 - Will I be able to talk about my birth family with my adoptive family?
 - Will I still be a sister or brother to my birth siblings?
 - Can I see friends and birth family?
-
- Discuss ground rules for visitation
 - Discuss feelings related to visitation

Who Should be Involved

Helpful Materials

Momma Loved Me From Away (ages 4-8)
Visiting Day (ages 4-8)

Key Discussion Times

Ongoing Discussions throughout placement

TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENT LIVING

Key Points to Discuss

- Will I have to move out when I turn 18?
- How will I live?
- Do I get help to go to school or get a job?

Who Should be Involved

Helpful Materials

Breaking Away: Teens Write About Leaving Foster Care

Foster Youth Money Guide Series

Is Adoption Right For Me? Teens Explore the Adoption Option

Money Talks - A video-based curriculum for teens on DVD - Managing Money

Key Discussion Times

Ongoing Discussions throughout placement

***MOVING CHILD INTO A TRANSRACIAL/ TRANSCULTURAL ADOPTION**

Key Points to Discuss

- Will they love me even though I do not look like them?
- Are their kids in their neighborhood/school that look like me?
- Why would they want a child of a different culture in their home?
- Who will do my hair?
- Will they prepare the special foods that I like?
- What if someone makes fun of me?
- Can I practice my faith?

Who Should be Involved

Primary: Recruitment worker, on-going caseworker, current family, birth family,

Supportive: Therapist, current family, significant relationships

Helpful Materials

Tools:

I am Brown and My Sister Isn't

A Mother for Choco

Brown Like Me

Anthony's Surprise

Is That Your Sister

A Place In My Heart

Growing Up Black

SUGGESTED READING FOR PARENTS

- ♥ *Twenty Things Adopted Children Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew*, by Sherrie Eldridge
- ♥ *A Child's Journey Through Placement*, by Vera Fahlberg, M.D.
- ♥ *Adoption and the Family System*, by Miriam Reitz and Kenneth W. Watson
- ♥ *Telling the Truth to Your Foster/Adopted Child*, by Betsy Keefer and Jayne E. Schooler
- ♥ *Troubled Transplants*, by Richard Delaney, Ph.D. and Frank R. Kunstal
- ♥ *Inside Transracial Adoption*, by Gail Steinberg and Beth Hall
- ♥ *Birthmarks: Transracial Adoption in Contemporary America*, by Sandra Patton
- ♥ *I'm Chocolate, You're Vanilla: Raising Healthy Black and Bi-racial Children in a Race-Conscious World*, by Marguerite Wright
- ♥ *Always on the Move: Changing Homes and Saff*, by Youth Communication
- ♥ *On the DL: Teens Write About Foster Care Stigma*, by Youth Communication



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