

Victims Once Again: How Children Experience Placement Into Foster Care



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KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER: REMOVAL PREVENTION AND TIMELY
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Victims Once Again: How Children Experience Placement Into Foster Care



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Internal Working Models¹ Secure Relationship with Caregiver in Infancy



If caregivers are responsive to children's needs, children learn:

- Others are available to support them
- They are valuable and deserving of care
- They can impact the environment

These children have the potential to develop relationships with caregivers outside of the family, and are able to trust others and turn to them for assistance, when appropriate. They can actively cope with and confront problems because they have learned that their behavior can impact the environment.

¹Bowlby, J. (1969)

Insecure Relationship with Caregiver in Infancy



If caregivers are unresponsive to children's needs, children learn:

- Others are uncaring
- They are not worthy of attention and care
- They are unable to impact the environment

These children have not learned that adults care about them and that adults can be trusted. They don't seek out help when they have a problem. Believing they are helpless to change things, they have few effective ways to cope with problems.

¹Bowlby, J. (1969)

Impact of Trauma on Children's Lives



Relationship Problems

- Irritability
- Fear of intimacy/Difficulty trusting others
- Withdrawal
- Loss of socialization experiences

School Problems

- Impaired concentration
- Decreased interests
- Loss of learning experiences
- Impaired self image

Behavioral Problems

- Impaired control of affect/emotions
- Impulsive

Impact of Trauma on Developing Brain¹ How Fear Changes Thinking, Feeling and Behaving



Adaptive Response	REST (Adult Male)	VIGILANCE	FREEZE	FLIGHT	FIGHT
Hyperarousal Continuum	REST (Male Child)	VIGILANCE (Crying)	RESISTANCE (Freeze)	DEFIANCE (Tantrums)	AGGRESSION
Dissociative Continuum	REST (Female Child)	AVOIDANCE (Crying)	COMPLIANCE Robotic/detached	DISSOCIATION (Numbing)	FAINTING
PRIMARY Secondary Brain Areas	NEOCORTEX Cortex	CORTEX Limbic	LIMBIC Midbrain	MIDBRAIN Brainstem	BRAINSTEM Autonomic
Cognitive Style	ABSTRACT	CONCRETE	EMOTIONAL	REACTIVE	REFLEXIVE
MENTAL STATE	CALM	AROUSAL	ALARM	FEAR	TERROR

¹Perry, B. (2003)

Beliefs and Expectations of Traumatized Children Entering Foster Care



- I am worthless.
- I am powerless.
- I cannot trust anyone.
- I am always in danger of being hurt or overwhelmed.

Beliefs About New Adults in Child's Life



- You are unresponsive.
- You are unreliable.
- You are, or will be, threatening, dangerous, rejecting.
- You will betray me.

Two Critical Things Children Need on the Day of Placement



- A person who would be receptive to the burden of their pain and who would really listen to them.
- Information as to what is happening; the more information that they are given, the more they are able to manage the stress of placement.

The Day of Placement---The Child's Perspective



- Without any warning 'ripped' from parents.
- Suddenly lose everything they have ever known, i.e. family, school, neighborhood, daily routine, belongings.
- Placed in a police car or in a strange car with strangers.
- Not given any information as to why they are being taken, where they are going and what will happen to them.
- Crying during car ride and during hours waiting at agency with no one providing any comfort.

The Day of Placement---The Child's Perspective



- Left alone in an office or playroom, crying and confused, waiting for a stranger called a 'foster parent' to pick them up.
- Not told they will be separated from siblings until the first child is dropped off.
- Throughout the day, not given any validation of the fear and pain they are experiencing. Repeatedly told it will be okay, when they know it will not be.

COVERT MESSAGES CHILD RECEIVES

- You are not valued.
- There is no one here for you.
- No one wants to hear your pain.

Components of a Well Managed Placement



- Children were informed prior to removal that they were going into foster care. Adult explained to child what foster care is and checked to hear what the child heard.
- Children are able to prepare psychologically and physically for placement, e.g., able to say their good-byes, to pack their belongings.
- On the day of placement they were given accurate information by the protective service workers.

Components of a Well Managed Placement



- Children were provided concrete information by being taken to see the foster home prior to moving; at the very least children should be shown, e.g., pictures of foster parents, their children, home, dog, told of foster family interests.
- Children called their parent on the day of placement, allowing them to maintain continuity and plan for future visits.

Power of the Caseworker



From the child's perspective, the caseworker decides:

- If and when birth parents visit
- If and when they see their siblings
- In which foster home they are placed
- When they are removed
- If and when they return home
- What services are provided
- Whether to terminate parental rights
- Whether to place them for adoption, and with whom

One of the first things children learn is a sense of helplessness—that they have no control over anything in their lives!

Empowering Children



- Providing Necessary Information
- Telling Children Their Rights¹
- Teaching Children Grievance Procedures¹
- Involving Children in Decisions
- Using Children and Youth as Resources
- Conducting exit interviews¹

¹Information on this topic can be found in Snapshots.

How Providing Information Helps Traumatized Children



- Reduces children's ongoing feelings of fear and anxiety.
- Gives them some control over their lives.
- Teaches them that they can trust adults when they need help.

Information that is Withheld

- Why they are being removed
- Where they are going
- Where there siblings are
- How to contact loved ones
- What their rights are
- How to make a complaint
- How the system or agency works
- That they have a lawyer
- How the court works

Parental Loss and Trauma

How well the child handles parental loss and trauma will depend on:

- Where and what the child is told
- What opportunities the child is given to ask questions about the loss
- Whether accurate information is given appropriate to child's age level.
- Whether child's perceptions and feelings are validated
- Whether others correct the child's distorted fantasies
- Whether the child is given permission from adults to grieve
- Whether adults assure the child that they can tolerate their pain and crying so children will not be flooded by their own grief

Emotional Neglect Occurs When an Adult in a Caregiver Roll



- Overlooks a child's signals for help or attention or comforting
- Ignores a child's emotional needs
- Doesn't provide emotional support or caring
- Does not (try to) understand the child
- Does not validate the child's thoughts and feelings
- Has no time to spend with the child
- Rejects a child

To Avoid These Costs



Adults modify their processing of the child's signal of need by either:

- Ignoring it
- Determining that the need state is non-severe, non-urgent or irrelevant
- Concluding that the child is able to deal with the problem unassisted

Lack of Validation



EXPERIENCED BY CHILDREN AS

- Denial of their existence
- Rejection of who they are
- Confirmation that there are no adults who can help
- Another abandonment

Lack of Validation



END RESULT

- Children learn to operate in two worlds
 - One that accepts the adult's view
 - One that is hidden

Assessing Whether an Immediate Removal is Necessary



Prior to removal, lawyers, referees and judges need to ascertain whether in fact there is a crisis in the child's home necessitating immediate removal.

They should ask:

- Did anything change in the past few days in the child's home to make it an emergency situation? If so, what?
- Has it suddenly become a life or death situation which it wasn't before? If so, how?
- Has there suddenly developed a high risk of the child being hurt? If so, how?
 - If the worker answers no to the above, then why is removal from the home suddenly an emergency?

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Assessing Whether an Immediate Removal is Necessary



If it is because the children are home alone, ask:

- How long has it been this way?
- Is there a parentified child (9-10 years old) who has been caring for the children?
 - If there is a parentified child who has been caring for the children, one more day will not hurt. However, an immediate removal can traumatize the children.
- If an immediate removal is necessary, ask for the worker's plans for handling the removal.

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Making the Removal Process Less Traumatizing for Children



- Have parent and/or children gather children's belongings, e.g., stuffed animals, pictures, clothes.
- Ask the parent or children for phone numbers to contact parent, grandparent, extended family, and friends.
- Encourage the parent to come along with the children to provide needed support.
- Tell the parent and children that they will be able to visit as soon as the children are settled in their foster home.

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Making the Removal Process Less Traumatizing for Children



- Tell the parent about the court process.
- Provide the children with the necessary information as to what will be happening and then ask the children what they heard.
- If they are not being accompanied by the parent, one of the workers should sit in the back with the children to comfort them and provide ongoing information as to what is happening.
- When you drop them off at the agency, see to it that they are okay before you leave them.
- Tell them that you will call the next day to see how they're doing and to show them that you care (say this only if you plan to follow through). They need to know that they matter. Say good-bye.

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Reducing the Trauma at the Agency



I: While the worker tries to find a foster home:

- Have someone stay with the children throughout the wait, listening to their fears, providing information, correcting their distortions, answering the questions that they are too frightened to ask and always listening to what the children heard you say.
- If siblings are to be separated, as soon as you have the information, tell them where they will be going, how they can contact one another and when they will be seeing each other again
- Arrange for a phone call to parent or other family member to reconnect.
- If CPS worker did not obtain phone numbers of family and friends, do so while waiting for a foster home. At least, obtain the names of people the children want to contact and try to obtain the numbers when meeting with the parent.

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Reducing the Trauma at the Agency



II: Things agencies might do to lessen the trauma

- Create scrapbooks of foster families. Have foster families provide pictures of their families, personal narratives on who lives in the home, things they like to do for fun with the kids, etc. This lets the children see these are real people and not ogres who are going to hurt them.
- Make a video of children in foster care talking about how they too were frightened at first, that they have visits with their parents and siblings and other things they want to share about foster care. New foster children can watch the video while waiting for a foster home.
- Train other foster children to be buddies to children entering care—talking to them on the phone, meeting with them and just being available to answer their questions.

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Follow-up After the Child is Placed



Call or visit the children within days after they enter care to find out from them what they were told regarding:

- Why they were placed in care
- Where their siblings were placed
- How to contact their family (including siblings)
- Access to telephones to reconnect with family
- Their right to have contact with nuclear and extended family and friends
- When they will be seeing their parents and siblings

Give them your card and telephone number. Make sure they know how to contact you and that they know it is perfectly all right to do so.

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Questions?



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SNAPSHOTS

Hurtful Practices You Need to Know About

and

Suggestions for Bringing About Change

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OVERVIEW

The enclosed snapshots represent just a sampling of the many day to day practices in the child welfare system and the legal system that are hurting the children in their care. They are done because both workers and lawyers are so overwhelmed with work that they do not have the time to serve the children as well as they would like to.

The theme that pervades all of the practices is that as soon as children enter the foster care system, how to serve the children becomes a choice between the best interests of the new adults in the children's lives vs. the best interests of the children. To put it more concretely, a choice between what is easier and more convenient for the adults vs. what will facilitate the development of the children. Far too often the children lose out. What happens is that the adults' seemingly harmless efforts to avoid short term inconveniences often result in long term negative consequences for the children.

While there are different consequences for different hurtful practices, the theme that pervades all of them is that these practices further reinforce the children's internal model of the world as being one in which adults do not care about children, that they are of little value and that they are helpless to change anything.

The aim of foster care must be to change the way children view the world and this must be put into practice in every aspect of foster care, e.g., in the courts, foster home, agency.

While there are different solutions for each hurtful practice, there is again one pervading theme, that without changes in practice being recommended or ordered by 'the court and officers of the court'¹, monitored to see that the recommended or ordered actions were carried out and perhaps consequences for not doing so, there will be no change.

¹ From hereon in 'the court' will refer to 'the court and officers of the court'.

WITHHOLDING IN FORMATION

Hurtful Practice: Information about their families, how the system works, how the courts work, what will happen to them, and how decisions are made are too often not provided to the children.

Consequence: The failure to provide this information results in much of their energy being wasted on trying to figure out the confusion around them and filling in the unknown gaps with fantasies that are much more frightening than reality.

“I’m so scared to take my spelling test tomorrow because if I do badly I might have to go to a new home (8 year old boy)

“I’m scared because my time is almost up in this foster home. The last boy left when he was here two years and I’m here almost 2 years” (11 year old boy)

Also, much of the children’s energy is diverted into feelings of anxiety and helplessness caused by the ‘vacuum of information’, all of which undermines their ability to master normal developmental tasks

Long term consequences: The loss of control and predictability resulting from not having any information leads to a situation that even when the children have control over an event, they still feel helpless. They reach a point when they can no longer tell the difference between what they can and cannot control, so that all new things lead to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. This sets them up for failure both as children and adults

In addition, if children are not given information and, hence, do not know where they are going and when or what will happen to them, they are less able to project themselves into future. This impacts their ability to develop goals and ideals. This takes its toll in adolescence when they should be thinking about their futures.

Conversely, providing children with information empowers them and gives them a sense of control. Being in control of one’s life is a criterion for health.

Recommendation: It must become standard practice that information is provided to the children on how the system works, e.g., about the decision making process, the types of information agencies use to make decisions, e.g., replacement; placing siblings in separate home, TPR, reunification; the roles of the new adults in their lives; their rights. This must be done at a level that they can understand. It is also very important that the adults listen to what the children heard.

This information can be provided verbally, in booklet form, via a workshop for entering children or via a videotape which explains how the system works, with adults present to answer questions.

It may be necessary for the court to intervene and monitor that workers are following through.

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DENIAL OF RIGHTS²

Hurtful Practice: Children are not told what their rights are in the foster care system. To the contrary, very often the implicit message to children is that as foster children they have no rights.

Examples of practices that deny foster children their rights³:

Children are not told they have a right to complain if they are being mistreated or how to make a complaint⁴.

Consequence: The adults can say or do anything they want to the children without any fear of consequence for they know that most children will silently endure the mistreatment, whether by foster parents or caseworkers. The more resilient children will speak up, but are often ignored. They then feel forced to resort to anti-social behaviors (e.g., breaking a window) so that foster parents will demand their removal or they make false abuse allegations against foster parents so they can be removed. Often, these behaviors, which are effective coping mechanisms in this non-normative environment, result in the children being wrongfully medicated or placed in more restrictive settings.

“Workers don’t listen to children, only to foster parents. I told my worker a thousand time to get me out of that home, but she did nothing. So when my foster mom said no TV, I blasted the TVs in every room in the house. She then called my worker and said she didn’t want me in her home no longer. I said hallelujah, I’m getting out” (10 year old girl)

Recommendations: It must be mandatory that caseworkers tell the children of their rights and make sure they understand them, provide them with written and verbal information on how to make a complaint, respond to their complaints and when leaving a foster home administered exit interviews⁵. For this to be done, the court may need to intervene and monitor that workers are following through.

Children are not told they have a right to maintain contact with extended family, friends, former foster families or others with whom they had caring relationships.

“My worker told me that I couldn’t have any family visits over the summer because he was going to summer school and had no time for them” (10 year old girl)

“I told my worker that my foster mother wouldn’t let me call my sister. She said that’s her right. She doesn’t have to.” (12 year old girl)

Consequence. Not knowing it is their right, children are afraid to ask to contact loved ones or to complain when they ask and it is denied. Instead, they silently long for these important people in their

² See enclosures on National Center for Youth Law’s Foster Children’s Rights and Maine paper on Foster Children’s Rights and Responsibilities

³ Included are just a few examples. Most of the rights listed in the FC’s Rights are denied.

⁴ See enclosed form on How to Make a Complaint from ME Youth in Care Handbook

⁵ See enclosed Exit Interviews. These interviews were mandated by the FL courts after a foster child was killed by a foster parent following a warning from a child, previously removed, that this would happen. The warning was ignored by the caseworker.

lives while simultaneously learning not to invest in any type of relationship. They also learn once again, as they did in their birth homes, that their needs and feelings do not matter.

Recommendation: Again, children need to be given written and verbal information on their right to maintain contact with the important people in their lives, unless the individual is considered a danger to the child. Workers, lawyers, CASAs, and L-GALs need to inquire as to whom the children want to contact, and who cared about them and then actively assist the child in reconnecting with them, e.g., friends, former foster families, extended families. If foster parents will not allow children to use the phone (a very common “hurtful” practice), then workers must make other arrangements at the agency for children to reconnect with the caring people in their lives.

Children are not told that they have the right to participate in caseworker conferences, decision making or even to know what the decisions are that are made regarding their lives and why they were made.

Consequence. This disempowerment of the children further exacerbates the sense of helplessness they learned in their abusive home, increases their distrust of adults and their belief that they do not matter. This takes its toll on emancipation when youth, never having learned to negotiate, make decisions and participate in their lives, are unable to function in the real world.

Recommendation: The court may need to intervene and monitor whether children are being notified of conferences about them, being invited to attend and being given the necessary information and support to do so. These practices became law in England in 1989 and have been successful, benefiting both the children and the workers. It can be done!!

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DISEMPOWERMENT BY THE LEGAL SYSTEM

Hurtful practice: Children are not given any information as to how the court works, how decisions are made, what their rights are in the legal system as stated in FC's rights (#'s 1-8, 10, e.g., attend all court hearings, meet with an attorney before each court hearing) or even told that they have an attorney.

Feedback from a study by the CA Youth Connection, a youth in care network, indicated that youth felt that⁶:

- ◆ they were generally left in the dark about the court process.
- ◆ their opinions were not taken seriously
- ◆ their attorneys did not represent their interests in court
- ◆ they lacked information about what was going on.
- ◆ no one involved in the court made any effort to consider how the process affected them
- ◆ they were left out of the whole thing.

Children in my study talked of judges as people who made decisions arbitrarily, without really knowing anything about their lives, their families or them.

Consequence: The disempowerment by the legal system not only increases their sense of helplessness, but once again confirms their views of adults as not caring about children, of themselves as not mattering and their view of the world as one that is chaotic

They may have no clear idea of the role of the court, but the court will nonetheless determine their future, reinforcing their feeling that they are helpless and their lives are out of control.

Recommendations: (1) Talks by lawyers, L-GALS, CASAs, referees, or judges about what they do; how referees/judges make decisions. They also need to be told that the court is interested in hearing their thoughts and feelings. By allowing them to provide input, you let them know that they matter. Providing information and allowing input gives them a much needed sense of control over their lives.

(2) Workshops on the court process. You may want to consider having a question and answer session with children and youth which is video taped and shown to other children when they come into care. Older children and youth should be informed enough to choose whether or not to attend hearings.

⁶ See enclosed suggestions in Youth Focus Groups on the Courts
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TRIVIALIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS

Hurtful practice: Children are cut off from all caring relationships. For these children, whose parents were abusive and/or neglectful, relationships with extended family, neighbors, friends, and teachers, may have been the only caring relationships they had. Once in care, former foster families as well as friends, teachers and neighbors that the children had while in these previous foster homes may have provided these same protective factors. For those children who were fortunate enough to have people who cared about them, this is their protective factor. Yet there is no attempt to reconnect children with these people and children are too afraid to ask.

Hurtful practice: Relationships are also trivialized in the manner in which caseworker turnover and foster home replacements are handled. In both instances, often there is no preparation, no explanations as to why the relationship is ending, and in the case of workers leaving, there is often no good-byes to the children.

Consequence: For abused and neglected children, achieving a capacity for relatedness may lessen the adverse effects of maltreatment. This opportunity is denied them. Instead the implicit message that is given to the children is not to invest in relationships, not to make any commitments, not to make any meaningful connections and not to develop any support network.

This loss of connection with roots and with caring relationships is devastating to them. It interferes with their identity development, sense of worth, and sense of belonging. It also undermines their chances of adjusting in a permanent family and of benefiting from the protective factors that “permanency” is intended to provide.

Recommendation: Workers must make every effort to help children maintain connections. Upon entry, workers need to inquire as to who were the important caring people (family, friends, neighbors) in the child’s life and find out how to contact them. Likewise, prior to replacement or soon after, every effort should be made to obtain the names and numbers of those people who were important to the children while in that placement and to assist them in reconnecting.

It also must become standard practice that all workers, prior to leaving, meet with the children on their caseload, to explain that they are not leaving because of them, to reflect on their time together and to say proper good-byes.

To help this to become standard practice, intervention and monitoring from the court may be necessary.

THE CONFIDENTIALITY EXCUSE: A MEANS OF MAINTAINING CONTROL OVER ALL INFORMATION

Hurtful Practice: In order to maintain control⁷ or because workers/agencies do not always understand how and why information should be shared, information is withheld about the children from the very people e.g., foster parents, teachers, who, if provided the needed information on children's history, behaviors, etc. have the potential to effectively help the children.

Consequence The new caregivers in the children's lives (e.g., foster parent, teacher) have the potential to function as secondary or alternative attachment figures which can act as a protective factor against negative developmental outcomes by providing children with a feeling of being cared for and of being valued and understood. They also have the potential to provide children with empathy and a new way of caring.

However, if, because of lack of information, they cannot understand the children's behavior, they cannot empathize or show compassion, further alienating the children. Also, without this needed information, they cannot have appropriate expectations, often resulting in frustration and disappointment in the child. This results in these new caregivers responding with anger and punishment instead of compassion and, eventually, in replacement into another foster home or suspension from school.

Long term consequences: If these children do not come to see the importance of family and education, a permanent home is not going to mean more than a permanent address. Conversely, being understood, accepted and valued will help them to become part of a permanent family while an education will help make them a permanent part of society.

Recommendation: Not only must it become standard practice for workers to share (verbally)⁸ information with the adults in the children's lives, but failing to do so must have consequences.

For this to become standard practice it may require intervention and monitoring from the courts.

⁷ See Foster Children's Rights. "Information can be shared with people who need to know in order to provide the child with care and services.

⁸ Currently, some agencies provide foster parents with a legal form telling them they have the right to read their children's records. The majority of the foster parents I interviewed did not understand the form and were totally unaware that they were given this right. In addition, reading worker records is often confusing to most professionals. It is even more confusing and incomprehensible for many foster parents whose reading abilities are poor.

FOSTER CHILDREN'S RIGHTS⁹

Foster Children have the right to

- attend all court hearings concerning the child
- be told in advance of all the hearings in the case if the child is ten years old or older
- be represented by an attorney in court
- meet with the attorney before each court hearing
- have the attorney tell the court the child's wishes
- have an attorney who will do what is necessary to protect the child
- call witnesses to testify for the child, whether or not the child has an attorney, the child can ask the judge to require the witnesses to come to court
- go to court and tell the judge what the child thinks about any placement or placement changes that are proposed for the child
- confidentiality, but information can be shared with people who need to know in order to provide the child with care and services
- call to court witnesses to testify for the child. Whether or not the child has an attorney, the child can ask the judge to require witnesses to come to court.
- meet at least once a month with the social worker assigned to their case to get birth control, prenatal care, or an abortion

⁹ National Center for Youth Law

- have placement with a relative be the first placement alternative
- live in a foster home rather than a group home
- live with siblings
- visit with family
- be treated with dignity and respect
- live in a home that is safe, healthy, and comfortable
- live with a reasonable degree of freedom as long as house rules are followed
- practice any religion
- participate in plans for child's well being and future
- be provided with adequate and nourishing food, shelter, free time, and clothes
- keep the child's stuff, including toilet articles, in the child's own storage space
- keep the money the child earns and saves
- keep the money received from a lawsuit if it is in a blocked trust account
- be free from abuse
- not be forced to take medication unless prescribed by the child's doctor, and approved by the court
- receive confidential telephone calls and unopened letters. Calls and letters to and from the child's social worker, parents, and attorney may not be restricted

- a list of personal rights and house rules
- participate in an Independent Living Skills Program if the child is 16 years old or older
- file a complaint about the care they are receiving. The facility may not take action on the child for filing such complaint
- file a complaint with the child's social worker, and licensing agency if the child is placed in a licensed facility
- file a complaint about the child's placement, care, or services with the State Foster Care Ombudsperson
- receive prompt medical care and treatment for any illness or disability
- talk to a counselor or therapist if the child wants or needs to
- be in a special program where the child can receive counseling, medical care, and a place to live if the child is pregnant
- get birth control, prenatal care, or an abortion and if the child is 12 years old or older, care for a sexually transmitted disease, without adult consent
- get care for mental health problems and alcohol or drug use without adult consent if the child is 12 years old or older
- go to school and receive any special help that is needed, meet with the principal, and discuss the situation before the child is to be suspended
- be given a hearing before the child can be expelled
- receive written notice of the charges against the child at least ten days before the hearing on whether the child should be expelled

SUGGESTIONS FROM YOUTH FOCUS GROUPS ON THE COURTS

In focus groups on the court system conducted by the California Youth Connection with youth in care across CA, the youth suggested that:

When there's a court hearing they should be sent the exact information to kids and parents. Right now they get the date but nothing else.

They should be educated about the importance of attending their court hearings.

They should be given a formal orientation on the court process and a CASA worker to help guide them.

Lawyers should meet with them before and after court hearings

they should receive all court papers so they can be fully informed about outcomes for themselves and their biological siblings

LAWYERS MIGHT CONSIDER RUNNING FOCUS GROUPS WITH YOUTH TO HEAR FOR YOURSELVES WHAT THEY FEEL THEY NEED

**DIRECTIONS FOR THE FAMILY SAFETY AND PRESERVATION
REPRESENTATIVE CONDUCTING**

AN EXIT INTERVIEW FOR

FOSTER CHILDREN: AGES 5 - 7

- ◆ This foster child exit interview does not need to be completed unless the child has resided in the home thirty (30) days or more.
- ◆ This is an interview that is to be conducted by a Family Safety and Preservation staff member with the foster child. Explain to the child the purpose of the interview is to make sure children are living in safe homes, to help foster parents do their best and to find a home they will feel good about.
- ◆ Prior to the interview, the Family Safety and Preservation representative will select the time and location of the interview. The interview should be done in a location that provides the Family Safety and Preservation staff member and child an opportunity to talk privately without placing the Family Safety and Preservation staff person at risk for allegations.
- ◆ The interview **cannot** take place in the home the child has just exited.
- ◆ The Family Safety and Preservation representative may want to use the attached smiley face chart with a young child to encourage the child to express feelings about the home.
- ◆ The Family Safety and Preservation representative conducting the interview should read the questions to the child and write the responses on the interview form. An audio tape of the interview may be made with the child's consent in order to facilitate a complete transcription of the child's responses.
- ◆ If the child is non-verbal or unresponsive, the interviewer may gently persist but should reschedule the interview if the child becomes upset or exhibits other behaviors of concern.
- ◆ Interviewers must be careful not to influence or lead the child in answering the questions through positive or negative facial expressions, body language or comments. Thanking the child for answering the question will encourage the child to answer but not bias the responses.
- ◆ Interviewers should record enough detail regarding a child's comments to ensure it is in the context of the child's age and individual circumstances regarding things such as bedtimes, chores, privileges, etc.

- ◆ Children who have medical or mental conditions that prevent them from being able to comprehend or answer all of the questions will be exempted from this interview process. However, efforts should be made to determine the quality of their care in any home they leave through other means, such as, unannounced visits to the home. This also is true for children under 5 years of age.
- ◆ Interviewers may record any additional observations about the child's physical appearance or emotional state (positive or negative) that seem important.
- ◆ If during the interview the child reports an event that would require a call to the Hotline, the interviewer, as a Family Safety and Preservation employee, is mandated to report it to the Hotline.
- ◆ The Family Safety and Preservation representative should ensure that the original interview form is placed in the foster parent licensing file, with one (1) copy going to the child's case record and one (1) copy to the designated Family Safety and Preservation Administrator in the district.
- ◆ *If a child who is three or four years of age is considered to be a good candidate for this interview, the interview may be conducted.

Thank you for your time, effort and cooperation in obtaining valuable feedback for foster parents and the department.

Name of Person Conducting the Interview: _____ Date _____

Location of Interview: _____

Name of Foster Parent(s): _____

Child's Length of Stay in the Home: _____

Date of Removal from This Home/Placement: _____

Number of Foster Home Placements: _____

District and County of Foster/Shelter Home: _____

Date of Removal from Biological Home: _____

Child's D.O.B.: _____



EXIT INTERVIEW FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

AGES 5 - 7

1. How happy were you living in this foster home?

Circle: Very Happy Happy Neither Happy or UnHappy Unhappy Very Unhappy
Why?

2. Were there other kids in the home?
If yes, were they nice to you?

Circle: Yes No

3. What did you do for fun when you lived with _____ and _____?
(foster parents' name)

4. What kinds of food did you eat? When and where did you eat?

5. Tell me something about bedtime?

6. What did you like the *best* about living in this foster home?

7. Was there anything you did *not* like about living in this foster home?

8. If you did something good, like pick up your toys, what happened?

9. If you did something you were not supposed to do, what happened?

10. Why did you leave the home of _____ and _____?
(insert foster parents' names)

11. Do you think this home is a good place for children? Circle: Yes No

12. Did you feel safe living with the other people in this foster home? Circle: Yes No

13. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about living in this foster home?

Interviewer's Observations:

Interviewer's Signature

Date

**DIRECTIONS FOR THE FAMILY SAFETY AND PRESERVATION
REPRESENTATIVE CONDUCTING
AN EXIT INTERVIEW FOR**

FOSTER CHILDREN: AGES 8 - 18

- ◆ This foster child exit interview does not need to be completed unless the child has resided in the home thirty(30) days or more.
- ◆ This is an interview that is to be conducted by a Family Safety and Preservation staff member with the foster child. Explain to the child the purpose of the interview is to make sure children are living in safe homes, to help foster parents do their best and to find a home they will feel good about.
- ◆ Prior to the interview, the Family Safety and Preservation representative will select the time and location of the interview. The interview should be done in a location that provides the Family Safety and Preservation staff member and child an opportunity to talk privately without placing the Family Safety and Preservation staff person at risk for allegations.
- ◆ The interview **must not** take place in the home the child has just exited.
- ◆ The Family Safety and Preservation representative conducting the interview should read the questions to the child and write the responses on the interview form. An audio tape of the interview may be made with the child's consent in order to facilitate a complete transcription of the child's responses.
- ◆ If the child is non-verbal or unresponsive, the interviewer may gently persist but should reschedule the interview if the child becomes upset or exhibits other behaviors of concern.
- ◆ Interviewers must be careful not to influence or lead the child in answering the questions through positive or negative facial expressions, body language or comments. Thanking the child for answering the question will encourage the child to answer but not bias the responses.
- ◆ Interviewers should record enough detail regarding a child's comments to ensure it is in the context of the child's age and individual circumstances regarding things such as bedtimes, chores, privileges, etc.
- ◆ Children who have medical or mental conditions that prevent them from being able to comprehend or answer all of the questions will be exempted from this interview process. However, efforts should be made to determine the quality of their care in any home they leave through other means, such as, unannounced visits to the home. This also is true for children under 5 years of age.

- ◆ Interviewers may record any additional observations about the child's physical appearance or emotional state (positive or negative) that seem important.
- ◆ If during the interview the child reports an event that would require a call to the Hotline, the interviewer, as a Family Safety and Preservation employee, is mandated to report it to the Hotline.
- ◆ The Family Safety and Preservation representative should ensure that the original interview form is placed in the foster parent licensing file with the child's name redacted, with one(1) copy going to the child's case record and one(1) copy to the designated Children and Families Administrator in the district.

Thank you for your time, effort and cooperation in obtaining valuable feedback for foster parents and the department.

Name of Person Conducting the Interview: _____ Date _____

—

Location of Interview _____

—

Name of Foster Parent(s): _____

—

Child's Length of Stay in the Home: _____

—

Date of Removal from This Home/Placement: _____

—

Number of Foster Home Placements: _____

—

District & County of Foster/Shelter Home: _____

—

Date of Removal from Biological Home: _____

—

Child's D.O.B.: _____

—



EXIT INTERVIEW FOR FOSTER CHILDREN

AGES 8 - 18

1. Did the foster parent make you feel welcome and help you to feel comfortable when you arrived in the home/placement. Circle: Yes No

How? _____

—

—

2. Do you believe you were treated fairly in this home/placement? Circle: Yes No

(For example: treated like a family member, able to express your concerns, treated about the same as other children, keeping in mind age and other individual factors.)

Why? _____

3. Do you think living in this foster home/placement helped you in any way?

Circle: Yes No

Why? _____

4. What was the best thing about living in this home/placement?

5. If there was one thing in the foster home/placement you could change, what would it be?

6. Did you feel safe in this foster home/placement? Circle: Yes No

(Did you feel safe living with the other people in the home?, Did you feel safe in the neighborhood?)

Why/Why not? _____

If you did not feel safe, did you tell anyone? Who? _____

7. Give me an example of discipline/punishment that your foster parent(s)/this placement used.

8. Give me an example of rewards or praise you received from your foster parent(s)/this placement.

9. How did your foster parent(s)/staff show concern for you?

10. How were other children treated in this home/placement?

11. Did you ever ask to call your parents or other family members and were told no?

Circle: Yes No If yes, explain: _____

12. Did you ever ask to call your Family Safety and Preservation counselor and were told no? Circle: Yes No

If yes, explain: _____

13. Did you want to leave this home/placement? Circle: Yes No

Why? _____

Why do you think you are leaving the home/placement? _____

14. Was there anything Family Safety and Preservation could have done to make this home/placement better?

15. Do you have a Guardian Ad Litem? Circle: Yes No

If yes, go to Number 16. If no - go to 17.

16. Did you ever ask to call your Guardian Ad Litem and were told no? Circle:

Yes No

If yes, explain: _____

17. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your time in this home/placement?

18. How you were prepared or made ready to leave this home/placement?

Interviewer's Observations:

Interviewer's Signature

Date