

Fostering Forward

A monthly tip sheet to navigate through foster care

Co-parenting is hard, regardless of who you are trying to co-parent with. It is easy to forget how a positive or negative relationship between parties can affect the child. You can have a positive impact not only on the child in care, but also on their family.



Benefits of Co-Parenting

When it comes to bio parents, you may think the easiest route is to avoid contact. You might be hesitant or have uneasy feelings around the child's family, which is understandable as children come into care due to safety reasons. While it may take some time building a positive relationship, there are many great benefits in doing so.

- If a child senses a positive relationship it will be easier and less stressful for them to transition between interactions.
- A positive relationship will allow children to see that their bio family is okay and loves them, which will help to alleviate feelings of grief and loss.
- Birth parents can give you insights on the child's likes, dislikes and daily routines.
- You can learn culturally-specific child care strategies from the family and can embrace the child's cultural identity.
- Foster parents can be a positive role model. Bio parents can learn effective skills by watching foster parents demonstrate positive parenting.
- Having a positive relationship can result in ongoing support once the child reaches permanency, whether the child returns home or is adopted.

Don't Take It Personally!

Foster care has changed significantly over the past few decades. Bio parents may have either heard scary stories or had unpleasant experiences themselves while being placed in foster care. Don't be afraid to contact them right away after placement to assure them that you want the best for their child, and you are here to help protect and care for them.

Assure bio parents that you are not trying to replace them. Understand and respect that they know their child better than anyone else.

Tips for Safe and Comfortable Co-Parenting

Attend an icebreaker meeting: A meeting between FCM, bio parents and the foster parents can help you learn more about the child.

Start small and work your way up: Building a relationship takes time, go at your pace.

Stay in communication: Pass a notebook back and forth between visits, send pictures via text/email and phone calls.

Establish boundaries: It's okay to say no, the child's safety is the number one priority. Consult the FCM if something makes you uncomfortable.

Transportation: Offer to transport the child to and from visits when available.

Appointments: The FCM will notify the bio parents of upcoming appointments, but personally inviting them will strengthen the relationship.

Supervising visits: As you feel comfortable, offer to spend time with the bio parents and children in the community.

Be thoughtful: When children go on visits, send them in outfits that the parents bought them or pack a toy that they provided them.

Keep the family close: Display pictures of the child's family in their room.

“In the end, the one thing we all have in common is that we love the same children and only want what is best for them.”
- Sarah Kneser

Are There Times When it is Appropriate to Not Co-Parent?

Absolutely. Co-parenting is entirely case-dependent, and should be based on when it is safe, appropriate and in the best interest of the child. There are instances where it may not be safe for the foster parents to have a relationship with the bio parents. In these instances, important information regarding the child and pictures of the child should be shared with the FCM to share with the bio parents. Regardless to the situation the bio parent still loves and cares for their child and wants to see them grow up.

Co-parenting. It's not a competition between two homes. It's a collaboration of parents doing what is best for the kids.