



Welcome to Our Family

1. When approached about a potential placement, ask questions to help discern if your family is a good fit for this child.
2. Don't be afraid to say "no" to a proposed placement if it doesn't feel right. There will be another opportunity to say "yes." Be honest with the caseworker about what you can and cannot do to support the placement. For example, if the placement will require 3 visits a week and realistically you can only transport the child for 2 visits a week, say so. The caseworker can then either work on finding a solution through their resources or elect to place the child in another home. Either response is appropriate.
3. A child entering your home was placed in foster care through no fault of his own. Children are placed due to police holds, a court order after being in imminent danger or voluntarily when a parent decided to place their child in the care of another for a variety of reasons. Strive to provide the child a sense of safety and empathetic care.
4. Before arriving at your home, in most cases, the caseworker has talked with the child to explain why he or she is being placed in another home.
5. As the child transitions to your home, you can expect:
 - a. Discussions with caseworker regarding why the child is coming to your home
 - b. Transfer of information about family service plans
 - c. Ongoing supervision plans
 - d. Birth parent visitation plan
 - e. Discussion about ways you can support the child
 - f. Discussion about the services the child will need and the role you will have in ensuring those services are provided
6. This season of life is a time of great uncertainty for the child.
7. You will work with a team in caring for the child. Get to know the people involved with children in foster care.



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8. As a foster parent, you may have to facilitate the child's scheduled visitations with the biological parents. The younger the child, the more frequent the visits (infants can be up to three times per week).
9. The child should come with a medical passport (documentation of the child's medical history) and placement agreement (identifying the child is being legally placed with you). If they don't arrive with the child, ask the caseworker for those documents.
10. You may experience a "honeymoon phase." Take advantage of that time to build relationship. The honeymoon phase can last from minutes to months. When the child does begin to express anger, consider it a positive sign. Most children don't show anger with people until they've developed some level of trust.
11. Simplify your family schedule as much as possible the first few days to free time for building initial relationships. Many families find shortening work days, taking vacation days and saying no to outside activities makes the initial placement period easier. Your child will be facing many new people and situations.
12. Create a photo album of family members, neighbors and close friends. Include names and relationships. Leave space for the child to add personal photos.
13. Offer something to eat and drink. Food is a simple way to welcome and relax your child. If possible, discover the child's favorites so you can offer something familiar.
14. Depending on the child's age, share your family's schedule. Give opportunity for the child to give input and ask questions. Keep the schedule accessible. It takes time to establish new routines.
15. Show school-age children the school or schedule a tour. Help your child acclimate to the school and neighborhood by exploring the area together. Make introductions to school staff and neighbors.
16. Clarify with the caseworker who the child can communicate with while in your home (family, siblings, former caretakers, etc).
17. Communicate when the child will see the parents next and what visitations will be like. Be honest with the child and tell them *you do not know* if you truly don't have information to share.
18. If family visits are scheduled, consider creating a Back and Forth Book for the biological family to receive updates about how the child is doing.

19. Listen carefully to your child's words for indications of whether or not he is feeling like a part of the family.
20. Keep directions simple and coach them through the process. For example, to a younger child, *get ready for bed* may be broken into small steps like change into your pajamas in your bedroom, brush your teeth, go to the bathroom, pick out a book we can read together from the books in your bedroom and then, let's say bedtime prayers together. Remember, each family has their own language and code words for what a direction means and these are likely unfamiliar to the child new to your home.

Tips for Communication with Family, Friends and Others Involved

1. Set aside family time with current children to talk through expectations before a new child transitions into your home.
2. Talk to your caseworker, asking questions you may have regarding the transition. Your caseworker may not have all the answers, but often can offer ideas to smooth the transition.
3. Communicate with family and friends regarding the situation and your expectations.
4. Utilize your support team and alert them of what needs you have before and during the transition. Appoint a person to organize and communicate with those who want to help

Tips for Communicating Expectations

1. Establish clear expectations from the beginning.
2. Communicate rules in a positive light.

Example: "We value honesty, so we do not lie in this home" or "We value generosity and respect, so we do not steal."
3. Have both the rules and schedule on display for each family member to see and refer to them. Keep the rules simple, such as, *safety of self, safety of others, and safety of property. Or no hurts, stick together, and have fun.* Too



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many rules are overwhelming for children. Almost any situation that may arise can be addressed by one of those three rules.

4. Determine what the child will call you (your first name, Momma *name*, Uncle *name*, etc...) It may be some time before the child uses that name. If there are other children in the home referring to you as mom and dad it is possible a younger child will do the same as they are trying to fit in. Do not expect the child to call you mom or dad.

Tips for Building Trust & Relationship

1. Give yourself and the child grace, time and patience. This is an adjustment for everyone and like any relationship, it will take time to build trust.
2. Have one family activity planned for the first day. Your child may also need down time or time to rest.
3. Reassure the child it is okay to ask questions.
4. Ask questions to get to know your child as well as what might help ease the transition.
5. Give the child a few age-appropriate responsibilities to build confidence and promote a sense of belonging.
6. Create a sense of safety and comfort in your home.

Allow the child to become familiar with the layout of your home

A game like "I Spy" is a fun way to give a tour of the home

Make sure the child knows where you will be sleeping in case they need you during the night. Let them know whether or not they should knock before entering

Help with unpacking and making the room comfortable for your child

Depending on the age of the child, show them where they can access food or drinks, or leave out a basket of healthy snacks the child is free to access

7. Avoid inundating the child with too much stuff initially. It can be overwhelming to walk into a completely new home, a new family and all new stuff. Start with



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the basics and together you can select additional items as needed to make your foster child feel at home.

Tips for Child's Adjustment

After your foster child is placed in your home, you can expect that it will take him a while to settle into your home and for you to get used to him. Common types of behavior during the child's adjustment period include:

- Testing of the rules and limits at home and at school

- Running away

- Withdrawing—extreme quietness and timidity

- Eating a lot or not enough

- Aggressiveness

- Bedwetting

Sometimes this behavior develops immediately after placement. In other cases a *honeymoon* period exists and the behavior problems start a month or so after placement. In either case, it can be a most trying time for both the foster child and the family. This is a time when you will want to work very closely with your placement worker.