**Between Families Training Newsletter April 2023**

**Tips for Helping Children and Teens Before and After Visitation**

**By: The American Academy for Pediatrics**

Children and teens in foster care have court-ordered, regularly scheduled visits with their birth parents, siblings and/or other members of their family, if such visitation is deemed safe for the child. Both physical and emotional safety should be considered. Visitation should be sufficient in frequency, duration, and quality for the birth parent and child to maintain and strengthen their relationship.

**Before Visitation**

Some reasons for extreme distress before visits include:

* The visit is disrupting the child’s daily routines. Some children do not deal well with breaks in routine.
* The child is feeling overwhelmed by desire to see the birth parent.
* The child is fearful that going to a visit means never returning to his foster/kinship home.
* The child is reliving trauma during visitation (this can be quite subtle so the person supervising the visit must be very attentive).
* The child is reliving the trauma of separation, but this time he is fearful of separation from his foster/kinship parent or from his birth parent.
* The child is picking up on the foster/kinship parent’s distress or on that of the birth parent.
* The foster/kinship parent is undermining the birth parent in front of the child, creating confusion and distress.
* The child is fearful of an unfamiliar person who is providing the transportation.

**Foster and Kinship Parents Can Help Prepare Children and Teens for Visits By:**

* Insisting that visits be scheduled around the child’s schedule (i.e., not during school hours, not late at night, not during after-school activities, not during naptime if possible)
* Suggesting that the child be picked up from and returned to the foster home (and not childcare or school) if possible.
* Helping the child decide on a transitional object (e.g., stuffed animal, blanket) and what to wear to the visit.
* Sending a healthy snack with the child
* Helping the child draw a picture or make something to give their birth parent as a gift at the visit.
* Reminding the child that you will be there to welcome them when they return after the visit.
* Transporting the child to the visit, when possible

**After Visitation**

Some reasons for extreme distress after visits include:

* Visits are chaotic with multiple siblings present, and the child is not getting sufficient attention from the parent.
* The child is having difficulty in managing transitions.
* The birth parent displays rejecting behaviors or a lack of warmth towards the child.
* The parent is not sufficiently attentive because of his own mental health or other problems.
* The child is reliving trauma during visitation (this can be quite subtle so the person supervising the visit must be very attentive).
* The child is reliving the trauma of separation and he is fearful that he will not see his birth parent again.
* The child is picking up on the birth parent’s distress.
* The birth parent is undermining the foster/kinship parent in front of the child, creating confusion and distress.
* The child is fearful of an unfamiliar person providing transportation.

Sometimes children are transported to and from visits by a hired driver and not by foster/kinship parents or caseworkers. This creates an initial point of distress for children. Whenever possible, children and teens should be transported by someone who cares about them and can be a source of comfort during the transition in and out of visits—ideally their parent (foster or kin). Alternatively, the caseworker with whom the child is familiar may provide transportation.

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**April 2023**

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONNAIRE AND RETURN TO YOUR ASSIGNED FOSTER CARE WORKER FOR ½ HOUR CREDIT

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Children should have regular visitations when it is deemed\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**
2. Appropriate
3. Necessary
4. Safe
5. All the above
6. **Some reasons for extreme distress before visits include: The child is picking up on the foster/kinship parent’s distress or on that of the birth parent.**
7. True
8. False
9. **A child may relive \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ during a visit.**
10. Good memories
11. Trauma
12. Sadness
13. **Having a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ object can help a child as they prepare for a visit.**
14. soft
15. Transitional
16. Small
17. **Name one example from the article that a foster parent/kinship provider can do to help prepare a child for a visit?**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Sometimes children experience distress following a visit. Sometimes it is due to the child is reliving the trauma of separation and he is fearful that he will not see his birth parent again.**
2. True
3. False
4. **What is one thing you can do to help a child not experience distress following a visit?**

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