

## PLACEMENT STRATEGIES

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### Preparing for Placement

- H** = Help child have a voice in the situation to identify their needs/hopes.
- E** = Empower child to take a role in planning their future.
- A** = Acceptance by child that they have roles in more than one family and encourage the exploration of how roles blend and are different for child.
- L** = Lower level of loss and trauma of a child by facilitating continued relationships of child with previous caregivers, communities, and connections.

- Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013

### Assessor Actions

- Complete a thorough review of case history (Jones, Ritter & Affronti , 2016).
- Be in direct communication with the child, caregiver, and adoptive family.
- Explore with the current caregiver their vision of commitment to child in the transition process.
- Create a list of questions with the child for the adoptive family.
- Get to know the adoptive family well.
- Prepare the entire family for transition, not just the adoptive parents.
- Help the adoptive family and child create and share documents about themselves.
- Know the rules regarding placement as well as your agency's practices and policies.
- Collaborate with caregivers and adoptive family to create a pre-placement visitation schedule (Hahn, 2017).

### Caregiver Actions (From Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012):

- Talk to the child about the potential schedule and approximate dates of change.
- Be available to answer questions that the child may have in the transition.
- Help the child address separation and loss issues through the change of all environments.
- Assist the child in transferring the attachments to new adoptive parent(s).
- "Own" the decision to not adopt. Children know when adults they care about say one thing and do another. Help them understand the importance of their role in helping the child AND adoptive family through the transition.
- Give the child "psychological permission" to move on to the adoptive family and make new permanent parent relationships.
- Send the child's personal possessions, toys, and clothing to visits while transitioning to adoptive family. Communicate to the family what are the child's comfort items, schedule, likes and dislikes, etc. This is important for all ages and developmental stages of children, not just infants and toddlers.
- Send the Life Book at the time of placement. If possible, go through the Life Book with the family, sharing stories about what is in the Life Book.
- Be sensitive to "adult talk" around the child regarding the adoptive family, transition planning, etc. Children are often hyper-vigilant during transition and may be more sensitive to discussion or misinterpret information.
- Assist with the transition by providing transportation, engaging in visits, etc.

**Adoptive Family Actions** (OCWTP, 2015):

- Daily expectations
  - Help the child become familiar with the home and community.
  - Go over expectations, privileges, and rewards of being in the family.
  - Establish Routines so the child knows what to expect.
  - Visit the school and meet with teachers prior to starting.
  
- Communication practices
  - Help the child maintain connections (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013).
  - Use family books and Life books (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013).
  - Ask the child what makes her feel safe (Fostering Perspectives, 2013).
  - Be honest and open in regards to her adoption (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015).
  - Discuss relationships, roles and names for all family members (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015).
  - Create a plan with the assessor regarding introduction of child care/preschool, school and neighborhood adjustment (EAC, Inc., 2015).
  - Minimize introductions of new people in the first days and weeks of placement (Borchers, 2016).
  
- Mindfulness
  - Give the child opportunities to express themselves freely (play, art) (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015).
  - Be mindful of triggers and emotional regulation techniques that work for child (Family & Youth Services Bureau, n.d.).
  - Gather as much information about a child so their needs can best be met (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012).
  - Help children attain emotional safety or “felt” safety within the adoptive family as well as physical safety (Ludy-Dobson & Perry, 2010).
  - Work to develop concrete ways to incorporate the child’s history into family life (Sellick & Thoburn, 1996).
  - Use “claiming” or other entitlement words and actions to help child adjust to new role (Jones, Ritter & Affronti, 2016).
  - Remember that children seemingly coping and adjusting well to these new settings may not truly reflect feelings (AdoptUSKids, n.d.).
  - Be honest with the assessor about your true feelings and intentions regarding interactions with birth family and significant others in child’s life.
  - Allowing adoptive family to express concerns related to adoptive placement prior to placement may resolve adoptive family’s concerns.
  - Develop a communication plan for adoptive family to talk to adoptee regarding birth family and other significant connections to the child.
  
- Self-Care (NCTSN, 2010)
  - Get enough sleep, eat well, and be physically active;
  - Take regular breaks from stressful activities;
  - Use alcohol in moderation or not at all;
  - Laugh every day and express yourself;
  - Let someone else take care of you;

- Be open to help even if it is therapy.