

Out-of-Home Placement Best Practices Statements

Preparing Parents

1. Parents have the right to disagree with the actions and decisions of the child welfare professional, especially with a recommendation that their child be removed from their home. By respecting the parents' right to disagree with your recommendations and encouraging them to do so in a constructive manner, the child welfare professional empowers the parent and reduces resistance that may accompany parental concerns that they have lost all control and rights in their children's lives. Encourage parents to consult with an attorney for assistance.
2. Child welfare professionals must model accountability to the parent by providing a thorough explanation for the child's removal and placement in out of home care. This explanation must include clearly communicated information about the safety threats and why it has been determined that the child is in present and/or impending danger. Even when parents appear unreceptive to hearing about the reasons, it is critical that the child welfare professional covers this information and allows the parents to react early in the process.
3. Parents should be encouraged to help explain the reasons for the placement to the child, and give the child a positive parting message, whenever possible. This practice will reassure both the parent and the child that the child welfare professional intends to cooperate with parent towards returning the child to the home.
4. Parents should be allowed and encouraged to say good-bye to their child.
5. Parents should be asked to provide in-depth information regarding the child's schedule, routines, activities, likes, dislikes, and needs to assist the resource caregivers in maintaining continuity for the child. Best practice is to support the parent providing this information directly to the substitute caregiver to promote a cooperative relationship between them.
6. Explain the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS)* and the resource parents' responsibility to apply it. Explain how the parents can support its application by offering their input into decisions regarding the child's participation in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities. (Act 75 of 2015).
7. Parents' anger and grief in response to the loss of their children should be anticipated and acknowledged with empathy as these reactions are reasonable responses in parent child separation.
8. Parents must be involved in all aspects of the planning and placement process. Parents' reasonable preferences regarding their children's placement should be accommodated whenever possible and acknowledged with empathy when they cannot be accommodated.

Out-of-Home Placement Best Practices Statements (continued)

Preparing Parents (continued)

Ways parents can be involved in planning an out of home placement for their child:

- Include parents, when the child's safety and well-being can be supported, at the hospital or doctor's office visit if a physical examination is warranted due to abuse or sexual abuse.
- Involve parents, when the child's safety and well-being can be supported, in the child's examination and in providing medical history to the examining physician, which can minimize parents' denial regarding the abuse and facilitate parents' discussion regarding how the injury/abuse occurred.
- Include parents, when the child's safety and well-being can be supported, in efforts, such as office calls to potential providers, to obtain an appropriate placement for the child, which may reduce the degree of distress experienced by parents and children.
- Always obtain from parents, and carefully consider information regarding all family members, neighbors or other interested persons who might serve as a substitute caregiver.
- Involve parents in discussions regarding potential substitute caregiver homes for the child and the availability of the homes within the child's own neighborhood.
- Involve parents in deciding and packing the clothes, toys, and other belongings that should be taken by the child to the out-of-home placement.
- Obtain detailed information regarding the child's schedule, preferences in food, needs, activities, and routines and support the parent in providing this information directly to the substitute caregiver.
- Discuss the plan for the placement with the parent and child together, if the child's safety and well-being can be supported.
- Encourage parents to accompany the child on a pre-placement visit, if the child's safety and well-being can be supported, reassuring children that parents know where they will be living and reassuring parents that the home is adequate.
- Encourage parents to give children permission to be cared for by the substitute caregiver for a short period of time.
- Encourage parents and substitute caregivers to meet, if the child's safety and well-being can be supported, to support parents' perception of the substitute caregiver as friendly, supportive, and non-threatening
- Promote direct contact between parents and substitute caregivers reassuring the parent and the child and reducing loyalty conflicts for the child.

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Best Practices Statements (continued)

Preparing Resource Parents

- Support resource caregivers and other service providers in their understanding of the dynamics of trauma and separation and encourage them to interact with children in out of home placement in a therapeutic manner.
- Encourage resource caregivers and service providers to reframe and redirect these children's problematic behavior rather than punish and blame.
- Ensure that the provision of services and interventions are delivered by professionals experienced in treating traumatized and maltreated children and related conditions (Hodas, 2006).
- Encourage resource caregivers and other service providers to recognize that restoration of children's relationships with their parents is an important component of their recovery, and in assuring their safety, permanence and well-being.
- Prepare the caregivers to meet the child's racial/ethnic identity and socialization needs.
- Support resource caregivers in aiding parents to engage in nurturing and stable relationships with their children by involving parents in (when appropriate and the children's safety, well-being and permanency is supported):
 - Medical, dental, mental health, and education appointments;
 - Activities in which the child participates;
 - Home visits within the resource caregivers home;
 - Frequent phone calls with their children; and
 - Routine decisions regarding their children's care.
- Provide the resource caregivers complete and accurate information regarding the child as authorized by the parent in a signed written release of information. In the event the parent does not provide a written release, as allowed by law or policy. (Encourage the participants to check with their supervisor and/or legal representative before disclosing information)
- Encourage parents and resource caregivers to speak directly with one another to share information to maintain continuity in the child's life while in out of home placement and to reduce the stress associated with separation. Information to be shared can include but is not limited to:
 - Daily sleeping, bathing, and eating schedules and habits;
 - Medical care needs, medications, special physical problems;
 - How the child is accustomed to being comforted;
 - The child's food preferences;
 - The child's interests, skills, and favorite activities;
 - How the child has been disciplined;
 - The child's fears, anxieties, and typical emotional reactions;

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Best Practices Statements (continued)

Preparing Resource Parents (continued)

- The child's verbal abilities;
 - Anticipated behavior challenges and recommendations for handling them; and
 - History of abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse and how it may affect the child's development and her responses to caregivers.
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- Support resource caregivers maintaining the child's positive relationships that existed prior to out of home placement, i.e. neighborhood friends.
 - Alert resource caregivers as to any anticipated challenges when interacting with parents and provide constructive strategies to minimize these challenges.
 - Involve resource caregivers in development of case plans and development of concurrent goals.
 - Provide resource caregivers an estimation of the length of time the child will be in out of home placement.
 - Explain the agency's expectation of the resource caregivers' responsibility for providing direct services to the child and managing services provided by other service providers.
 - Encourage the resource caregivers to notify the child welfare professional immediately if and when they have concerns as to whether or not they can continue to provide substitute care to a child to allow problems or issues to be identified and resolved, if possible.
 - Respect resource caregiver's decision to end the placement of the child in their home and support them in providing the child a constructive transfer to another placement.
 - Provide supportive services the caregiver might need in order to support the placement.
 - Caution resource caregivers to avoid sharing confidential information regarding the child. Caution caregivers about posting information and photos of the child on social networking sights. If an agency has a policy regarding social networking, communicate the policy to the caregivers.
 - Encourage the resource parent and support as needed to apply the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard. (RPPS)*

*The RPPS is defined as the sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a child while encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the child that a caregiver must use when determining whether to allow a child in out-of-home placement under the responsibility of the county agency to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities. (Act 75 of 2015).