



Tips for Tots



Strategies

Tip #3: Welcoming A Foster Child Into Your Home

Did you know?

Infant/Toddler:

Infants and Toddlers can often feel uncertain and frightened when moving to a new placement. Planning ahead for the child's arrival will ease the transition phase and greatly reduce stress and anxiety. Prepare for the child's arrival in the home by providing a peaceful environment. Upon arrival, the child may be fussy and distressed for several days. Newly placed children may have disrupted sleep patterns and decreased appetite. They will need time and support to adjust to their new environment and will need much support, comfort, and reassurance. It is important to provide consistent routines and caregivers.

Preschool:

Give Preschoolers time to adjust to the new environment; he/she will be experiencing some level of trauma. Expect that the child may withdraw or exhibit some very concerning behaviors such as aggression, hoarding items, hiding, screaming, etc. Understand the strong emotions behind the behavior & the purpose of the behavior so that meaningful strategies can be put in place. Establish a support plan well before the child arrives, to include foster parent support, counseling, and a quality preschool setting such as Head Start. Provide a loving & secure environment to support the child's healthy development & attachment.

Infant/Toddler:

- Infants /toddlers need to feel safe & secure. Caregivers can provide a loving and nurturing environment by responding to the child's needs in a way comfortable for the child. Children need caregivers to be responsive and emotionally available to them.
- Gather details from the DCF worker of how the previous caregiver responded to the child & a list of comfort items and words.
- It takes time for a child to feel safe & connected to a new environment. When young children feel secure they begin to explore their environment more. Encourage this independence, but remain close by. Child-proof your home to keep the child safe and provide toys for their developmental level.
- It is natural for a caregiver to want to embrace & hold the child. Babies may resist physical contact. Pay close attention to ways the baby responds to different soothing techniques.
- Infants/toddlers may look to connect to the caregiver through babbling and simple words. Engage with the child by acknowledging their attempts, ex. smiling or repeating their sounds. Read to the child often and teach him/her basic words such as bye-bye.

Preschool:

- Caregivers are encouraged to introduce themselves to the child and explain their role, give the child a tour of the home, and show him/her where their own personal space is.
- If other children are in the home, assure them of your love for them and their role in the family. Allow children time to get used to each other and understand this will be difficult for all involved.
- Expect that limits will be tested. Review family rules & acceptable behaviors & support the child with these. Learn of the child's previous routines and maintain consistency where ever possible.
- Be patient & understand the child has been through some adverse experiences that are often confusing and are very stressful.
- Know that the child may need alone time & extra supports.
- Practice ways the child can express his/her emotions through feelings books or a feelings wheel.
- Practice relaxation techniques ex. deep breathing & stretching.
- If determined helpful, frame a photo of the child's biological family and place it near the child's bed.
- Answer any questions simply and honestly; avoid negative talk about the child's parents.
- Understand how important the connection to their parents is.

Resources:

www.app.org/fostercare
Maybe Days by Wilgocki, Wright&Geis
www.nationalfosterparentassociation.blogspot.com

Contact your area ECCP Consultant for free Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation services.

To learn of the consultant in your area visit www.eccpct.com or call: ECCP at (860) 704-6378

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