

Foster Parents and Social Workers: Allies and Advocates for Youth in Care

Foster parents and social workers play essential roles in ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of the children entrusted to their care and supervision. By working together as allies and advocates for youth in care, foster parents and social workers can effectively identify, address, and successfully fulfill the needs of children in care.

Following are some tips for foster parents and social workers to work together to ensure that the best interests of children in care are met.

- **Develop and maintain a mutually respectful and cooperative working relationship with one another.**

Youth in care rely on their foster parents and social workers to form a partnership to ensure that their needs are being met.



- **Establish open and consistent lines of communication.** Just as communication is vital for maintaining healthy relationships, it's essential for meeting the needs of children in care. When foster parents and workers can be open with each other, the potential for misunderstandings is often avoided.

Open, honest, and frequent feedback is needed to ensure a strong continuum of

care. Foster parents have relevant information to share, and your input is valuable; most workers appreciate it greatly.

Conversely, social workers have the responsibility of sharing information regarding a child who needs placement; however, that information is not always available to the social worker. For example, when an emergency placement occurs, the social worker is not always able to get all of the information at that time due to many factors (time constraints, having the key people available, etc.).

It is imperative to share information, feedback, and input throughout the child's placement in care.

- **Comply with the guidelines that are outlined in the case plan.** Foster parents have a natural advocacy role in all areas, and we encourage you to fully consider the goals and objectives outlined in the case plan throughout your advocacy efforts.

Again, open communication is essential to ensuring the case plan's ultimate success. Be willing to share your opinions and suggestions with the social worker.

- **Work effectively with birth parents and extended family members.** In

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foster care, the goal is to reunite children with their families when appropriate and in the child's best interest. Therefore, the child's family plays an integral role throughout the placement.

- **Teach and model positive parenting skills to the birth parent(s) by being supportive, consistent, respectful, and flexible regarding their child.** Family interactions are a priority unless the court deems otherwise.
- **Keep information about the child/youth in care and their families confidential.** Wisconsin Statutes, Chapter 48—Children's Code and Chapter 938—Juvenile Code, and "Rules for Licensing Foster Homes" prohibit sharing confidential case information with unauthorized people. We encourage you to talk with your Foster Care Coordinator if you have additional questions regarding confidentiality issues.
- **Collaborate with community groups and local and state resources to provide assistance and support to the child and their family.** Community groups and organizations are valuable resources for you, the child, and the child's family. The child's worker may be able to provide available and appropriate opportunities.
- **Seek guidance and training opportunities through local and state foster and adoption support groups, associations, and resource centers.** These associations provide guidance, support, training, and mentoring/peer network support opportunities and are highly recommended resources.



Resources

Training From [Champion Classrooms](#)

- [Foster Parents Supporting Birth Parents: Considerations for Success](#)
- [Seasons Change: Understanding Transition & Change for Foster Parents](#)

From the [Resource Library](#)

- *The Foster Parenting Toolbox: A Practical, Hands-On Approach to Parenting Children in Foster Care*, edited by Kim Phagan-Hansel

Additional WiFCC Resource

- [Family Resources & Support](#)

Additional Resources

- [A Social Worker's Heartfelt Tips for Foster Parents](#)
- [Foster & Adoptive Support & Preservation Program \(FAASP\)](#)
- [Surviving Allegations of Abuse and Neglect](#)