

# BIRTH PARENT AND CAREGIVER PARTNERSHIPS: WORKING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT REUNIFICATION

When birth parents and caregivers work together, it makes a fantastic difference. Not only does it help everyone involved feel more comfortable and supported, but most importantly, it creates a stable and loving environment that puts the child's well-being at the center. Here's how working together can benefit everyone:

- Builds trusting relationships and reduces conflicts between birth parents and caregivers
- Minimizes feelings of divided loyalties for the child
- Supports placement stability
- Encourages a focus on progress toward case goals
- Lowers anxiety and stress levels for the child and makes adjusting to placement transitions smoother and less traumatic
- ***Promotes successful reunification***

Ultimately, these partnerships are instrumental in creating and maintaining a supportive environment so that a child can return home to their birth family. The following chart includes strategies and examples of how birth parents and caregivers can work together to support reunification.



<b>BIRTH PARENTS</b>	<b>CAREGIVERS</b>
<b>Maintain Open, Honest, and Respectful Communication</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ask to connect regularly with caregivers to stay informed of your child's well-being and progress.</li> <li>✓ Talk through concerns and share progress towards reunification.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Actively engage in a regular cadence of check-ins with the birth parents.</li> <li>✓ Share relevant updates about their child, including progress and challenges.</li> </ul>
<b>Celebrate Milestones and Acknowledge Efforts</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Acknowledge the caregiver's efforts in a meaningful way.</li> <li>✓ Express gratitude for their dedication and commitment to your child's well-being and supporting reunification.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Offer encouragement and recognition to birth parents for their growth and progress throughout the reunification process.</li> <li>✓ Celebrate milestones, no matter how small, to boost confidence and motivation and build positive rapport.</li> </ul>
<b>Respect Boundaries</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Recognize their role as primary caregivers when they are responsible for providing care for your child.</li> <li>✓ Respect the personal boundaries of caregivers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Respect their role as the birth parent while maintaining a supportive relationship.</li> <li>✓ Maintain confidentiality and privacy of shared personal or sensitive information that does not impact safety or well-being.</li> </ul>
<b>Share Resources and Information</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Share relevant information with caregivers to support your child's care and development. This could include medical records, educational information, or insights into the child's background and history.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Share information and resources with birth parents that may support their journey towards reunification. This could include information about parenting classes, support groups, or community services.</li> </ul>

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<b>BIRTH PARENTS</b>	<b>CAREGIVERS</b>
<b>Express Understanding and Empathy</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Show empathy and understanding towards the foster parent's role and experiences.</li> <li>✓ Recognize the challenges they may face and offer support and encouragement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Show empathy and understanding of the birth parents' situation.</li> <li>✓ Acknowledge the challenges birth parents may be facing and offer support without judgment.</li> </ul>
<b>Promote Positive Relationship</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Maintain a positive attitude. Focus on cooperation, collaboration, and the shared goal of supporting your child's best interests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Maintain a positive and supportive relationship with birth parents, focusing on the common goal of reunification and the best interests of their child.</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusive Decision Making</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Invite caregivers to attend meetings and discussions about your child's care and well-being. This could include case conferences, family team meetings, or other planning sessions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Whenever appropriate, involve birth parents in decision-making processes related to the child's care. This can include discussing the child's needs, goals, and preferences.</li> </ul>
<b>Support Successful Visits</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Consistently show up and actively participate in scheduled visitations with your child.</li> <li>✓ Communicate any scheduling conflicts or barriers early to try and arrange an alternate plan with caregivers and social workers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Advocate for increased visits or volunteer to facilitate additional visits between the child and their birth parents.</li> <li>✓ Help coordinate schedules, transportation, and logistics when you can.</li> </ul>

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<b>BIRTH PARENTS</b>	<b>CAREGIVERS</b>
<b>Consistency and Reliability</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demonstrate consistency and reliability in your actions and commitments. Following through on agreed-upon visitation schedules, keeping appointments, and communicating promptly can help foster trust.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Create a stable and consistent caregiving environment for the child where they feel safe, supported, and valued. Consistency in routines, expectations, and relationships can help foster a sense of security and belonging.
<b>Maintain Important Connections</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Identify and have a plan to maintain connections with supportive adults in your child's life, such as former caregivers, teachers, coaches, or family friends. These relationships can provide additional stability and support during transitions and post-reunification.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Facilitate and encourage regular contact between the child and their birth family members, including parents, siblings, grandparents, and extended family. This could involve visitations, phone calls, video chats, or exchanging letters and photos.
<b>Work Together To Prepare the Child for Reunification</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Keep your child's well-being and best interests at the heart of all decisions and actions. Prioritize their safety, stability, and emotional needs throughout the reunification process.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Work with the birth parents to encourage joint conversations to help their child prepare for reunification. Discuss the process to help ease any fears and anxieties they might have.

By working together collaboratively and respectfully, caregivers and birth parents can create a more positive reunification experience for the child. This can lead to a successful reunification and lay the groundwork for an ongoing cooperative and supportive relationship.