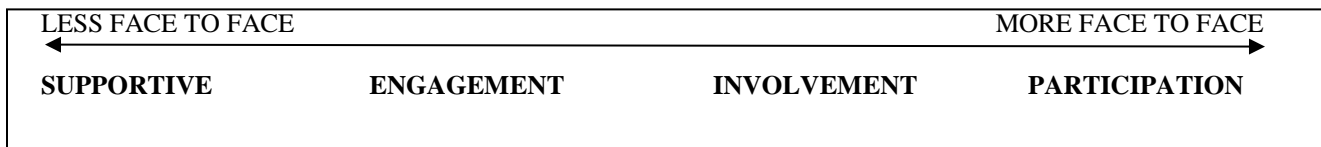


BRIDGING TO PROMOTE FAMILY CONTACT

Methods of connecting with the birth parents can be divided into four categories that spread out along a continuum of contact.



SUPPORTIVE: This is defined as providing the child and the birth parent with social and emotional connections without having face to face contact. This may be appropriate when the birth parent is still angry or hostile with the child’s placement or if the parent is dangerous.

Some examples are:

- Sending holiday cards to the birth parents.
- Sending school papers, report cards, pictures
- Allow the birth parents to send letters/cards to the child.

ENGAGEMENT: This means meeting the birth parent on neutral ground such as a visitation center or OCS. The focus of this contact is to provide the parent with limited contact on neutral ground with the hopes the child can maintain some contact.

Some examples are:

- Meeting at another relative’s home.
- Visits at the Office of Children’s Services or identified neutral place.
- Setting up email correspondence
- Allowing the birth parent to call your home
- Arranging/hosting sibling visits
- Sending a notebook back and forth between families with ideas, suggestions and stories

INVOLVEMENT: This broadens the ways in which the kin parent has contact with the birth parent. The connection is face to face and can occur in the community or the birth parents home. Involvement may be used to build a new relationship or repair a damaged birth parent-child relationship.

Some examples are:

- Transporting the child to visit in the birth parents home.
- Inviting the birth parent to attend school/church functions

HANDOUT 5-3

- Sharing a meal with the birth parent.
- Allow the birth parent to phone your home.
- Encouraging the parent to participate in normalized activities, such as going to a movie

PARTICIPATION: The caregiver is confident and secure enough to invite the birthparent to participate in various aspects of the child's life. The caregiver and birthparent can talk with and contact each other comfortably and easily around arranging contact with the child.

- Invite the birth parent to the home to participate in holiday and birthday celebrations with the child.
- The child may be able to spend the night with the birth parents. (which in turn provides you respite.)



OTHER IDEAS TO HELP A CHILD STAY CONNECTED TO FAMILY

Help Your Child With:

- Making a birthday cake or giving a birthday party for birth parents
- Making or buying gifts for birth parents
- Taking photo of the child with birth family to give to parents
- Showing parents grades, awards, etc.
- Have child make pictures or write a story to share with parents at visits
- Remembering Mother's Day and Father' Day
- Maintaining contact with siblings in other resource families
- Making allowed phone calls or allowing phone calls to child
- Help child take a picture or get a picture of birth parents to keep in room
- Help a child write letters or make pictures to send to parents
- Help a child put together a scrapbook or a life book
- Bring in a ritual or tradition from the child's family to help celebrate holidays

Other Ways To Keep Connected:

- Ask birth parents about schedule or food preference of the child
- On visits, make it a point to tell the birth parent some compliment about the child
- Invite the birth parent to dinner
- Make a family tree or scrapbook of photos for the child
- Take the child to cultural events
- Have different books, arts movies and magazines featuring the culture or race of the child
- As for parents input on clothes, toys, equipment or behavior change
- Include birth parents in school conference, Parent's Nights, school plays