

1. Building the Relationship

Birth Parent	Foster Parent/Kinship Caregiver
Suggested ways to build a strong relationship with the foster parent/kinship caregiver through comfort calls and other introductory meetings to share your knowledge about your child, maintain a close bond and keep in regular contact with your child.	Suggested ways to build a strong relationship and support the birth parent in comfort calls and other introductory meetings to help you understand the experiences, culture, traditions and routines of the child so that you can better respond to the needs of the family.
Here are some ideas you may want to share or discuss during a comfort call or an in-person family introductory meeting: ☐ I really love and care about my child. ☐ I am hoping that my child will be able to come back home to me. ☐ I want to know how my child is doing. ☐ I want you to know about my child's medical information. ☐ I want you to know what my child really likes. ☐ I want you to know what my child doesn't like. ☐ I want you to know that my child needs this routine for bedtime. ☐ I would like to know what school my child will attend. ☐ I would like to know how many children you have cared for in your home. You may wish to ask questions about where your child is placed and information about the foster parents/kinships caregivers such as: ☐ What does your home look like? ☐ Are there any other children in your home? ☐ What does an average day in your house look like? ☐ How will my child fit into your family? ☐ How do you handle discipline in your family? It would be valuable for you to share your child's sleeping habits, food preferences, likes and dislikes, medical issues, school progress and other relevant information to help the foster parent/kinship caregiver provide a smooth adjustment for your child.	Here are some ways that you can introduce yourself during the comfort call or in-person family introductory meeting: ☐ "Hi - I am Betty, the foster parent taking care of your son for now. I can tell that he really misses you and his dad. I wanted to make sure that you knew who was taking care of Tommy and I would love for you to help me to do this." The foster parent/kinship caregiver may ask the birth parent questions such as: ☐ Do you have any ideas how I can help your child tonight? ☐ What is your child's favorite toy? Likes? Dislikes? ☐ What is your child's favorite song that he/she likes? ☐ Does your child have a bedtime routine or any sleep habits? ☐ How are you doing? ☐ Do you have anyone who can support you right now? ☐ Can I tell your son or daughter that you are doing okay to help him or her feel more comfortable? If you are comfortable doing so, you might share information about your family size and the ages and gender of the other children in your home. You may also want to describe a little about what your home looks like and the general neighborhood where you live. If the birth parent does not want to talk during the first comfort call, you may say you understand why they may be upset and ask if it would be okay to call back. Explain that you would like to share how their son or daughter is doing and also obtain ideas from the parent about how best to support their child at this challenging time.
Some suggested ways to talk with the foster parent/kinship caregiver about topics to recognize the individuality of your child: ☐ You may wish to share information about how your child looks forward to certain religious holiday celebrations. For example, your child may wish to light Chanukah candles during this Jewish holiday. You may wish to ask to take your child to the synagogue to celebrate this time together. ☐ You may wish to share how you help your daughter braid her hair. You might ask to arrange a weekly time to help her do this. ☐ You might want to share your child's likes or dislikes about different activities (e.g., playing in snow, riding a bicycle, etc.). ☐ You may wish to talk about cultural opportunities for your teen such as participation in Tribal gatherings, LGTBQ and other support groups that meet regularly.	Some suggested ways to talk with the birth family about topics to recognize the individuality of their child: ☐ You may be unsure about how to assist a child/youth with their grooming, haircare or hygiene due to their cultural upbringing. You might ask the birth parent: ☐ "Do you have any advice on how to best help your child with their grooming and haircare - does she/he have any special clothing preferences?" ☐ "Does your child have a favorite way of bathing - does he or she prefer a shower or bath?" ☐ You may learn that the child or youth wishes to attend weekly religious services. You may wish to talk with the birth parents to make arrangements for this.