

4. Keeping the Relationship Strong after the Family Leaves the Child Welfare System

After the child(ren) or youth and parents are reunited, it usually takes some time for the family to readjust to living together. In many situations, it is the positive and supportive relationship that the birth parent experienced with the foster parent/kinship caregiver that helped the parent gain the necessary skills and tools to successfully provide a nurturing and stable home for their children. We often see parents and caregivers continue to keep in contact with each other and provide support to each other. Many foster families/kinship caregivers stay closely connected with the birth family and

build long-term relationships for the children and family. Some foster parents become known as “aunts” and “uncles” to the children. During post reunification, a birth parent may wish to continue having contact and communication with foster parents/kinship caregivers to keep them involved as a support. The birth parent may ask the foster parent/kinship caregivers to attend family celebrations or to help with babysitting or respite care as is done in an extended family system.

Birth Parent	Foster Parent/Kinship Caregiver
Suggested ways for continuing your relationship with the foster parent/kinship caregiver during post reunification and beyond.	Suggested ways for continuing your relationship with the birth parent and children during post reunification and beyond.
☐ Share that you wish to continue to have contact and communication with the foster parents/kinship caregivers as way to keep them involved as a support for you and the child or youth. ☐ Talk with the foster parent/kinship caregiver about helping out with child care or respite care. ☐ Invite the foster family/kinship caregiver to join family outings, birthday parties, school events, holiday events and other special celebrations. ☐ Continue to share pictures of your family and children with the foster family/kinship caregivers and let them know how much you appreciate their help. ☐ Talk to your children about their foster family/kinship caregivers so they know that they are still loved by them too. ☐ Ask the foster parent/kinship caregiver if he/she will partner with you to share how your positive relationship with each other helped your family be strong and reunite to help make the child welfare system be as strong as possible for other parents.	☐ Continue to include the birth family in special family events, celebrations and holidays. ☐ Provide assistance with child care or respite care. ☐ Let the birth parents know that you are available to them and will support them as they gradually learn to readjust to their role as the main caregivers. ☐ Remind birth parents that they do not need to be perfect and that everyone may need time to adjust and learn their new roles. This is especially important during the beginning stages of post reunification. ☐ Let the birth parents know that you would be happy to participate in family outings, birthday parties and other events whenever you are invited by the birth family. ☐ Talk with the birth parent about both of you sharing your positive collaborative experiences with other child welfare workers, foster parents and other birth families still involved with the system.

“At the end of the placement, as long as it is safe, a child should have everyone who they love in their life.”

Jody Rodgers, birth parent (California)

Jody is raising her three children and working at a dream job as a parent mentor. She has struggled with substance use and domestic violence challenges and her children were placed in out-of-home care. She is grateful for the journey because without it she would not be the strong woman, friend, mentor and mother that she is today. Today, she is a nationally recognized parent advocate.

