

Foster Care Services: Pre-Placement

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PRE-PLACEMENT OF THE CHILD

The removal and placement of a child into foster care is a time of emotional turmoil. Pre-placement preparation eases the child's transition and lessens his/her fear and confusion. Whenever possible, the Case Manager, foster family and parents should all be involved in the placement process. Taking the time to engage in pre-placement efforts better ensures that an appropriate match between the child and the provider has been made, and reduces the likelihood of unnecessary movement of the child while in care.

PLACEMENT DISCUSSION

1008.1

Requirement

All children age 1 year and older should have placement discussed in language appropriate to their age and developmental level prior to the pre-placement visit.

1008.1 PRACTICE ISSUES

1. The pre-placement discussion includes the following topics:
 - A. An explanation of why placement out of the home is necessary. (When possible, the parent should participate in the explanation. The parent needs to express that he/she will miss the child and what he/she will do so that the child can return home.)
 - B. Information about the move including where, why, when and for how long.
 - C. A description of the home/facility that helps the child better understand what to expect.
 - D. Information about the people who live in the home/facility, showing pictures if available.
 - E. A description of the community, including the school that the child will be attending.
 - F. An explanation as to when the pre-placement visit (s) will take place and how the child will be transported to the home/facility.
 - G. If known, information on when the next contact with the parents will take place.
 - H. The identification of "transitional objects" such as toys, family pictures/mementos, stuffed animals or other familiar items that give the child some sense of security during the move.

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2. Because of the trauma of removal, the child will need help with the grieving process and its stages of shock (denial), bargaining, anger, depression, and eventually, coping with and understanding the loss. A child, who is unable to express his/her feelings about separation and loss, often acts out the pain through problematic behaviors and with physical symptoms and ailments.

PRE-PLACEMENT VISIT

1008.2

Requirement

When possible in non-emergency removal situations, a pre-placement visit should be arranged in the foster home/facility at least two weeks in advance of the placement. Such a visit should include the child, Case Manager, placement resource and the parent (or other appropriate member of the family). If removal occurs as a result of an emergency, efforts may still be made to arrange a pre-placement visit(s) prior to the actual placement of the child.

1008.2 PROCEDURES

The following steps should be taken when arranging for or conducting a pre-placement visit:

- A. Prepare the placement resource by providing as much pertinent information about the child as is readily available. Include such information as:
 - the reasons for the child being in foster care, including previous placements in care;
 - the child's history of abuse or neglect;
 - the child's relationship with his/her family;
 - the presence of any siblings in care;
 - any history of psychological/behavioral issues;
 - any significant medical history, including current health needs of the child;
 - the child's educational needs; and/or
 - the child's strengths, including special skills/talents.

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- B. Schedule the pre-placement visit at an optimal time, taking into account:
 - the child's eating, sleeping, activity patterns;
 - the parent's work schedule or other responsibilities; and/or
 - the activities going on in the foster home/facility.
- B. Have the parent (if available) to explain to the placement resource person such personal information as the child's favorite foods or nicknames, developmental history, current needs, etc.
- C. Show the child where he/she will be sleeping and where personal belongings will be kept.
- D. Conclude the visit with a discussion involving the Case Manager, the child, the parent and the placement resource person to confirm the details of the actual placement; e.g., when it will be, who will transport, who will be there, etc.