

Ice Breaker Meetings: A Tool For Building Relationships Between Birth and Foster Parents



The initial meeting between birth and foster parents is a real opportunity for caregivers to connect over their mutual concern for the child's wellbeing. The focus of the meeting is to share information about the child, ask questions, and come up with a communication agreement based upon both parties' preferences.

Ice Breaker meetings should ideally occur when a child enters protective custody early on in the case and should last no longer than 45-60 minutes. A trained facilitator will be present during the meeting to prompt a parent-to-parent conversation about the child and the many ways in which the adults can work together to ensure that the child's needs are met.



The Benefits. Studies have shown that when there is contact between the foster family and the birth family, children have more stable placements, are more successful in school, experience better emotional development and, as a result, return home sooner. Birth parents begin to build a relationship with the foster family and feel more at ease about their child's placement, safety, and wellbeing after meeting the foster family.

Birth Parent's Role:

Share information about your child. Including medical or allergy information, hobbies, bedtime routines, health or school concerns, etc. Provide important personal items for your child. This can include favorite toys, blankets, pictures, etc.

Foster Parent's Role:

Talk about why you became a foster care provider and some basic rules in your home. Ask questions that will help in understanding the child's needs such as cultural or religious traditions. Ask for specific information such as medical conditions, school requirements, routines, personal habits, etc.



Facilitator's Role:

Coordinate the meeting and ensure the safety and comfort of all participants. Keep the discussion focused on the needs of the child. Ensure the participants of their role in the meeting and what is being discussed.

Tips for an effective meeting: Be on time and focus on the needs of the child. Respect the feelings, ideas, opinions and cultural differences of others. Recognize the importance each person has in the life of the child. Keep what is shared confidential.

Your Ice Breaker meeting will be on _____ at: _____

The Ice Breaker program is a system-wide effort to promote communication and shared parenting practices between foster and birth parents for the benefit of children in the dependency system.

For more information call (850) 522-4485 ext. 8302 or (850) 747-5411 ext. 1460

