
Icebreaker Process Flow

As Biehle and Goodman have eloquently stated, “The purpose of the Icebreaker meeting is twofold: To share important information about a child and to be the first step in building a relationship between the child’s birth parents and the new caregivers. Both of these purposes are critical in reducing the trauma the child has experienced as a result of placement. Icebreakers open the door for communication.” *

Process: When a child enters licensed foster care homes, the Placement team will send notification the next business day to the *Icebreaker Specialist(s)* with child’s name, parent’s name and current placement information. (Please note if a child is being served through ECC some timeframes may be expedited or eligibility for an icebreaker may be expanded)

Once information has been received, the Icebreaker Specialist will copy and paste the needed information into the Icebreaker Tracking log. The *Icebreaker Specialist(s)* will research the case in FSFN to obtain the parent’s contact information, case ID number, and review the appropriateness of parent-to-parent contact. The CPI or DCM may need to be contacted for further assessment and information.

An Icebreaker Meeting will not be held if:

1. The goal is expedited TPR or adoption
2. There is a No Contact order between parent and child
3. The parent(s) is/are incarcerated
4. The child is placed with a relative/non-relative
5. The child is placed in a group home
6. The foster parent and biological parent have already initiated communication and do not desire a formal meeting

Within two business days of being notified of the child being placed into foster care, the *Icebreaker Specialist* will make the first contact with the foster parent(s) and then the birth parent(s). The *Icebreaker Specialist* will introduce his or herself, discuss the goal of the co-parenting initiative, and attempt to coordinate a face-to-face Icebreaker meeting as soon as possible.

The *Icebreaker Specialist* will find a mutually agreed upon time and date for the Icebreaker Meeting with the foster parent(s) and birth parent(s). (The location of the meeting is TBD, it could take place in the community based care office or possibly off sight (such as the family visitation center, a church or the court house.) A conference call may be considered as a last resort to overcome transportation/schedule/discomfort concerns. The Icebreaker Meeting

should be held no later than 14 days from date of placement. The child(ren) may attend, but it is preferable if they do not. If the child(ren) attend, it is imperative to ensure the parent is authorized visitation and that the foster parent is approved to supervise.

The *Icebreaker Specialist(s)* will facilitate the Icebreaker Meeting;

- The *Icebreaker Specialist* will explain the purpose/goal of the meeting, as well as the agenda. It is imperative that an introduction of the participants occurs and roles and responsibilities are addressed.
- The foster parent(s) should initiate the conversation to relieve the birth parent's anxiety of not knowing where or who the child is with. (How the child is doing, description of home, rules, family, expectations, etc.)
- The birth parent will share information about their child using the "About My Child" questionnaire as guide (the *Icebreaker Specialist* completes the forms as information is discussed).
- The birth parent(s) will also complete the "Eco-Map" for each child with the assistance of the *Icebreaker Specialist*.
- If the child is present (and age appropriate), he/she will share information about his/herself and express any desires or ask questions they may have.
- The *Icebreaker Specialist* will facilitate a discussion on the plan for communication going forward. The court ordered visitation plan will be discussed and the biological parent will be asked to provide a contact number to the foster parent. (A conversation with the foster parent(s) should occur prior to the meeting to determine his/her level of comfort providing contact information to the biological parent, as well as his/her willingness to supervise visitation.) The communication plan will be documented on the Icebreaker Meeting template.
- The *Icebreaker Specialist* will clarify any outstanding questions and wrap up the meeting. (Total time 45-60 minutes)

For documentation purposes; the *Icebreaker Specialist* will create a meeting in FSFN under "other meeting". The *Icebreaker Specialist* will upload the meeting template, the "About My Child" or "All About Me" (if applicable and the child attends the meeting) forms, the "Eco-Map," and any other applicable documentation into the meeting icon. The *Icebreaker Specialist* will also document that an Icebreaker Meeting has occurred in a note to file-general in the FSFN case. The note should reference that the meeting and attachments are located in the meeting tab.

All Icebreaker information is tracked through an extensive tracking log which encompasses child specific information as to every child that has been placed into a foster care home with

the date of the meeting held or reason why meeting was not held. The Icebreaker data is tracked and calculated on a daily basis.

The data collected will be available to community partners (for example; at the QPI and other Foster Parent Meetings, Co-parenting Initiative Calls and Early Childhood Court Meetings).

The self-imposed goal is to facilitate an Icebreaker meeting at a minimum 75% of qualifying foster homes entered for the given timeframe (month, quarter, year, ongoing).

This is calculated using the formula:

$$\frac{\text{Icebreakers Held}}{(\text{Total FH entered} - \text{\# of Homes Not Qualified} - \text{Already Coparenting})}$$

Additional Information:

Already Coparenting:

If it is determined that the foster parent(s) is already communicating with the birth parent(s), and the foster parent(s) does not feel a formal Icebreaker Meeting is necessary, *Icebreaker Specialist* will ask the foster parent(s) to fill out the "About My Child" form with the parent(s) as soon as possible and return it to the *Icebreaker Specialist*. The form will be uploaded into the Meeting tab of FSFN.

Unable to be Reached:

If the birth parent(s) cannot be reached during the tracking process, a letter will be sent to the last known address asking for the parent to call the *Icebreaker Specialist*.

Foster Parent Unwilling:

If the foster parent(s) is unwilling to meet the birth parent, the *Icebreaker Specialist* will contact the Licensing Supervisor(s) as needed to explain the reason why the foster parent reported they are not comfortable participating. All attempts will be recorded. Beforehand, the *Icebreaker Specialist* will attempt to educate the foster parent on the importance of co-parenting, the structure of the Icebreaker Meeting, and offer to conduct the meeting via phone instead of face to face in effort to assist them at feeling more at ease.

For additional information please visit The Annie E. Casey Foundation:

<http://www.aecf.org/resources/icebreaker-meetings/>

* <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-IcebreakerMeetingsToolkit-2012.pdf#page=9>)