



Your  
Step-by-Step  
Guide  
to a thoughtful  
Transition



# Introduction



↳ Caring for a child in foster care comes with many transitions, and having the right support can make all the difference. This step-by-step guide was created through a collaborative effort by the Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) team, bringing together community partners, county representatives, birth parents, relative caregivers, and resource parents. Their shared experiences and expertise have helped shape this resource to ensure families feel informed, supported, and empowered throughout each stage of the transition process.

# Initial Communication



## Sending Family

### Discuss Transition:

- **Questions to Ask the Social Worker:**
  - How can I explain the transition to the child in a way that makes them feel safe and supported?
  - What emotional responses could I expect from children as they go through transitions?

### Acknowledge Feelings:

- **Questions to Ask the Child:**
  - How are you feeling about moving to a new home?
  - What are you most excited or worried about as you move to a new home?
- **Questions to Ask Yourself/Prepare answers for:**
  - What information about the child's personality, likes/dislikes, and fears should I share?
  - What routines should the receiving family try to maintain to help the child adjust?
  - How can I communicate openly with the receiving family while ensuring the child's stability?

## Receiving Family

### Receive Information:

- **Questions to Ask the Social Worker:**
  - What are the child's current daily routines (meals, bedtime, school, therapy)?
  - How does the child express their emotions or cope with stress?
  - Are there any medical, educational, or therapeutic needs I need to be aware of?
  - How does the child typically react to change or transitions?
  - What are the child's favorite activities or comfort items?

### Establish Communication with Sending Family:

- **Questions to Ask the Sending Family:**
  - How do you handle the child's morning and bedtime routines?
  - Are there specific triggers or calming strategies that work well for them?
  - What should we do if the child becomes upset or anxious during the transition?

# Preparation & Information Sharing



## Sending Family

### Provide Detailed Information:

Share routines, habits, and any medical or emotional needs.

#### • **Questions to Ask Yourself:**

- How have you set up your home to help provide consistency and routine for the child?
- What about your home helps the child feel settled and relaxed?

### Offer Personal Items:

Allow the child to bring familiar objects to ease their transition.

#### • **Questions to Ask the Child:**

- What personal items would you like to bring with you to your new home?
- Is there anything special from here that will help you feel comfortable in your new home?

## Receiving Family

### Create a Welcoming Environment:

Ensure familiarity through routines and preferred foods.

#### • **Questions to Ask Yourself:**

- What can I do to make the child feel welcome and secure in our home?
- Are there familiar objects or routines I can incorporate to ease the transition?
- Are there any special foods the child likes or dislikes?

### Maintain Consistent Routines:

Get insight from the social worker and sending family about key daily habits.

#### • **Questions to Ask the Social**

##### **Worker/Sending Family:**

- Can you share more about the child's current schedule and key routines (school, therapy, extracurricular activities)?
- How can I best support the child's developmental needs in my home?

# Pre-Visit Planning & Initial Visits



## Sending Family

### Support Pre-Visits:

Prepare the child emotionally for visits and help them feel safe with the receiving family.

#### • **Questions to Ask the Social Worker/Receiving Family:**

- How can I best prepare the child for these visits to help them feel secure?
- What can I do during the pre-visits to help the child feel safe with the receiving family?

### Observe the Child:

Monitor their behavior and provide additional emotional support.

#### • **Questions to Ask Yourself:**

- How is the child reacting to the visits? Are they showing signs of comfort or distress?
- How can I provide additional emotional support during this phase?

## Receiving Family

### Plan Initial Visits:

Ask about the transition timeline and structure

#### • **Questions to Ask the Social Worker:**

- What is the timeline and structure for the transition?
- When will the transition planning meeting take place?

### Observe and Learn:

Monitor the child's reactions during visits and note cues for comfort or distress.

#### • **Questions to Ask the Sending Family During Visits:**

- What should I look for in the child's behavior to gauge their comfort level?
- How can I best continue the child's familiar routines while they're visiting?
- Are there any specific cues that show when the child is feeling overwhelmed?

# The Transition



## Sending Family

### Support a Gradual Process:

Read the Transition Planning Meeting Documents

Attend the transition planning meeting

#### • **Come prepared with:**

- A blank calendar
- A list of upcoming appointments for the child
- A list of all available dates/times you can offer for transition visits and reverse transition visits

#### • **Questions to Ask the Social Worker:**

- How long will the transition take? What happens if the child needs more time to adjust?
- How will I be updated on the child's progress during the transition?

### Ease the Child's Worries:

Answer the child's questions and provide reassurance.

#### • **Questions to Ask the Child:**

- What can I do to help you feel more comfortable about the move?
- Do you have any questions about your new home that I can help answer?

## Receiving Family

### Work with Social Worker:

Understand the full transition timeline and available support services.

#### • **Questions to Ask the Social Worker:**

- What is the full transition timeline? How flexible is it if the child needs more time to adjust?
- What support services are available (e.g., therapy, respite care) during and after the transition?

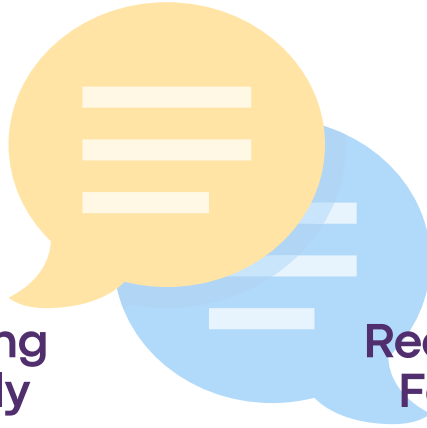
### Gradual Transition:

Learn from the sending family about previous transitions and best practices.

#### • **Questions to Ask the Sending Family:**

- What has worked well in previous transitions, and what hasn't?
- How can I maintain continuity in the child's emotional, social, and cognitive development during this gradual process?

# Ongoing Communication



## **Sending Family**

### Stay Connected:

- **Update your Social Worker:**
  - halfway through the transition with any feedback.
- **Questions to ask yourself:**
  - Does this feel to fast/slow?
  - Is the child responding well/ having difficulty?

### Offer Assistance:

- **Questions to Ask the Receiving Family:**
  - Is there anything I can help with regarding the child's care or routines as they adjust?

## **Receiving Family**

### Stay Connected with Sending Family:

- **Questions to Ask the Sending Family (if appropriate):**
  - How is the child feeling about the transition from your perspective?
  - Are there any specific behaviors or routines that I should continue to support the child's emotional health?

### Monitor Development:

- **Questions to Ask Yourself and Support Team:**
  - How is the child adjusting emotionally and behaviorally?
  - Are there any signs of regression or emotional distress I should report to the social worker?



# Post-Transition Support & Self-Care

## Sending Family

### Process Your Emotions:

#### • Questions to Ask Yourself:

- How am I feeling about the transition, and do I need additional support?
- Am I giving myself space to process the emotional impact of the transition?

### Places that offer support:

CPI

Wayfinder Family Services

Our Village Closet

## Receiving Family

### Build a Support Network:

#### • Questions to Ask the Social

#### **Worker/School/Support Team:**

- Who should I contact if I need additional support or guidance with the child's adjustment?
- What are the next developmental or emotional milestones we should focus on together?

### Adapt and Adjust:

#### • Questions to Ask Yourself:

- How is the child settling into their routines, and do I need to make any adjustments to better support their development?