

HANDOUT 3: SUPPORTING A CHILD THROUGH THE REUNIFICATION PROCESS

Being away from their parents and family is understandably hard on a child. It can also be hard for parents who are fostering to know what to say and how to support the child through the process. Below are examples of ways to talk about reunification with the child and to offer support.

HOW TO TALK WITH A CHILD ABOUT REUNIFICATION:

- “You are here with me so that your parent can work on some things right now. I know that is hard for you. Do you have ideas on how we can make it a little easier for you?”
- “I know you miss your family. Let’s create a calendar that shows you when visits and calls are scheduled.”
- “Sometimes grown-up problems and rules can be so frustrating for kids. Do you have any questions that I can try to answer? If I can’t answer them, we can write them down to ask your parent or your caseworker?”

SUPPORT THE CHILD’S CONNECTIONS IN DAILY LIFE:

- “What’s your favorite food your dad makes you?”
- “Let’s remember to tell your mom about how well you did in school today.”
- “That’s a good question, let’s asked your grandma about that. I bet she would know.”
- “Wow, you did so much better on your spelling test, let’s add this to your visitation backpack so that you can show your parents. I know they will be proud.”
- “That is such a fun game. Let’s remember to add that to your backpack so you can play it when you see your dad.”
- “Let’s put that picture of you and your mom and your sister on the table beside your bed.”
- “I know it’s been a rough day. Do you think you were feeling kind of down because the visit was cancelled yesterday? Do you want to write your parents a letter?”
- Provide the child with a journal for them to express their feelings in writing. Let them know their thoughts are private. They can share them if they choose or elect not to share them with anyone.

EASING TRANSITIONS AROUND VISITATIONS *

- Create a routine around saying goodbye when time for visitation to end.
- Set up a time for the child to talk with parents by phone or social media.
- Take a picture of the child and parent together to share a copy with each.
- Have the child write a letter or draw a picture to give send or give to parent.

LET THE CHILD SEE YOUR RESPECT FOR THE PARENT:

- Promote and support visits between the child and parent(s)
- Let the child see you openly sharing information about them with the parent
- Seek out the parent’s advice regarding the child



HAVE A PLAN IF A VISIT IS CANCELLED OR THE PARENT DOES NOT SHOW UP:

- “I know it is hard when visits get canceled. Do you want to talk about it or draw a picture about it?”
- It’s been a hard day and I know you are upset. Let’s pull out the feelings chart we made, and you can point out some of the feelings you have right now.
- It’s been a hard day. I think it’s a pizza and movie night.
- Ask them if they would like to call their sibling if they are not placed together.
- When in-person contact cannot be reliable, arrange for other contacts such as letters, phone calls, FaceTime, texts, etc.

TIPS FROM EASING TRANSITIONS AROUND VISITATIONS FROM RIGHT-TIME VIDEO- *MANAGING VISITATION

