

## TRANSITIONS

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### MOVING FROM ONE CAREGIVER TO ANOTHER

#### Placement Changes For Infants and Toddlers

“Develop a transition plan for any change in placement. Arrange for the sending and receiving caregivers to exchange information and spend time together with the infant or toddler. Make the change in placement gradually as the baby’s behavior is monitored.”

Cohen & Youcha, *Zero to Three: Critical Issues for the Juvenile and Family Court*, (Spring 2004) *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, p. 17, <[www.ncjfcj.org/images/stories/dept/ppcd/pdf/spr%2004\\_2%20cohen%20&%20youcha.pdf](http://www.ncjfcj.org/images/stories/dept/ppcd/pdf/spr%2004_2%20cohen%20&%20youcha.pdf)> [as of December 28, 2011].

#### Transitions Between Caregivers

“If a placement change is determined to be best for the baby, or if the family is ready for reunification, advocates should negotiate or obtain a court order for a thoughtful transition process, even when the move is an emergency. If the baby or young child does not know the new caregivers, there should be a visitation period in which the foster parent and relative are both present. New caregivers should be prepared by the caseworker for some resistance or distress by the child at visits as well as when first moved to their home. The new caregiver, along with the case manager, should meet or speak to the former caregivers before the first visit to discuss the child’s needs, habits, behaviors, personality, likes/dislikes, etc. Attorneys should ensure that, when safe and appropriate, the former caregivers will remain a resource for the child and the new caregivers. A more gradual and considered approach increases the likelihood of a successful, secure transition for the child and reduces the impact of losing the relationship with previous caregivers. If the move is predicated on a safety-related emergency, transition planning can include several supervised or therapeutic visits with the previous caregiver that allow the child to ease out of the relationship and feel secure in the new placement. Similar transition planning should occur when a child is moved between child care providers, classrooms, or preschools.”

Maze, *Advocating for Very Young Children in Dependency Proceedings: The Hallmark of Effective, Ethical Representation*, (October 2010) *ABA Practice and Policy Brief*, p. 42, <[www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child\\_law/ethical\\_rep.pdf](http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/child_law/ethical_rep.pdf)> [as of December 28, 2011].

#### Helping Foster Children Handle Transitions

“Transitions are never easy for children, especially those in foster care.

- Children in foster care need time to adjust.
- Children in foster care face many changes all at once: A new home, a new school, new friends—the loss of all that is familiar can be scary and overwhelming.
- New problems may come up after the first month or so. As children settle into their new home, they may start feeling more comfortable. Problems with behavior are common around this time.
- Children crave routine and structure. All children do better when they know what to expect. Having a consistent routine can be comforting to a child in foster care.
- Post a schedule to explain household routines. Transitional objects (for example, a favorite blanket or stuffed animal) can help make transitions easier.
- Encourage your child to share feelings as a way to cope. Name emotions so he will know what to say next time. “Sometimes kids feel worried before a visit”, “You look nervous,” or “You look worried.”
- Prepare for changes by talking about it ahead of time.”

Indiana University School of Medicine, *Helping Your Child in Foster Care Handle Transitions*, 2010, <[www.aap.org/fostercare/pdfs/iu-transitions.pdf](http://www.aap.org/fostercare/pdfs/iu-transitions.pdf)> [as of December 28, 2011].

### Helping Foster Parents Cope with Loss

“A well-planned, cooperatively executed transition from one home to another elicits less intense and less complicated grieving in all parties than an abrupt, unexpected move, or a move about which the foster parents have serious misgivings or conflicts. In some instances, a child may be moved quickly from a foster home because of allegations of abuse or neglect; such transitions lack preparation, clarity, participation, and closure for the parties most affected. With the increasing emphasis on safety for children, such moves are not uncommon in family foster care. Even in situations when the foster parents are the ones requesting the child's re-placement because the placement was not successful or because of illness, transfers, or other changes in the foster family, complications in the process of grieving can arise. In such situations, grief is more intense because the foster parents not only grieve the loss of the child, but also grieve the loss of the sense of being competent caregivers, in their own eyes and in the opinion of others... Without a place to express and put these feelings, the foster parents may be overwhelmed and unable to participate in a gradual, cooperative, supportive transition with the agency and the new caregivers. The anger and turmoil surrounding the unwanted transition both short circuits and intensifies the necessary grieving and mourning for the foster parent and the child.”

Edelstein et al., *Helping Foster Parents Cope with Separation Loss and Grief*, (2001) *Child Welfare*, Vol. 80, #1, Child Welfare League of America, pp. 14-15.