

TRANSITIONS

REMOVAL FROM THE BIRTH PARENT'S HOME

Reducing Trauma for Infants and Toddlers Through Frequent Visitation With the Parent(s)

“Because physical proximity with the caregiver is central to the attachment process for infants and toddlers, an infant should ideally spend time with the parent(s) daily, and a toddler should see the parent(s) at least every two-to-three days. To reduce the trauma of sudden separation, the first parent-child visit should occur as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the child is removed from the home. [p. 10-11]”

Smariga, Visitation with Infants and Toddlers in Foster Care: What Judges and Attorneys Need to Know, July 2007, ABA Practice & Policy Brief for the ABA Center on Children and the Law and Zero to Three Policy Center, p. 11, <http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/Visitation_with_Infants_and_Toddlers_in_Foster_Care.pdf?docID=3981> [as of November 2, 2011].

Helping Older Children Adjust to Loss:

“Integration is a way of helping children cope with the painful realities of the separation from their birth families that often impact their future behavior and can create extraordinary stress...The five step integration process... is an effort to clarify the child’s permission to be in foster care, to live with new parents, to be loved by them, and to love them back:

Steps in the Integration Process:

- **Create an accurate reconstruction** of the child’s entire placement history. Creating a lifebook, lifemap, or eomap with a child helps a child to see and understand his or her own history.
- **Identify the important attachment figures** in the child’s life... These attachment figures might be parents, but they could be siblings, former foster parents, or other family members.
- **Gain the cooperation of the most significant of the attachment figures** available. If possible, parent...grandparent or relative to whom the child was attached... Even if not family...there is likely to be one important person (a teacher or former neighbor) who will be willing to work...to make a child’s transition...easier.
- **Clarify the permission message.** It is important for children to hear and feel from people who are important to them that it is all right to love another family....
- **Communicating it to the child**...it is important that children hear from that person that it is not their fault they are in foster care [or being moved] and that it is all right to love another family. This ‘permission’ will go a long way to helping a child relax and transfer his/her attachment to the new family.”

US Dept H & HS Child Welfare Information Gateway, *Helping Your Foster Child Transition to Your Adopted Child*, (2005), <www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_transition.cfm> [as of December 28, 2011].