

# Tips for Successful Family Visits



**A GUIDE FOR FOSTER  
CAREGIVERS**

**This guide was created by NTHSSA, the Department of Health and Social Services, Indigenous Health and Community Wellness Division and the Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories as a resource for foster caregivers preparing for family visits.**

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Page 2: Plan Your Time**

**Page 3: Clarify Roles**

**Page 4-5: Prepare Emotionally**

**Page 6: Prepare for Telephone and Video Visits**

**Page 7-9: Activity Ideas during Visits**

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# Plan Your Time

**It is important that foster caregivers, parents and social workers work together to plan visits that best support children and youth.**

## **Talk with your Social Worker about:**

- Scheduling visits based on the child's routines.
- Your household routines with other children in the home.
- Date, time, length of the visit.
- Ideas of how to make the visit fun.
- Changes with the child before, during and after visits (e.g. bed wetting, wanting to be alone, tantrums).
- How best to support the child.
- Successes, challenges, and concerns.
- Rights to privacy and limits to privacy during visits.



# Clarify Roles

**Everyone's roles and responsibilities should be understood before the visit.**

Check if the visit needs to be supervised. The Social Worker is responsible for organizing supervised visits and will share the plan before the visit.

For telephone and video visits, check with your Social Worker how to support the visit, such as:

- Being close by to help if needed.
- Helping with technology.
- Supporting the child to participate.
- Ending calls if there are safety concerns.
- Supporting positive child/parent contact.
- Setting up a comfortable environment for the child.

Discuss with your Social Worker what information they need from you before and after visits.



# Prepare Emotionally



**Foster caregivers need to pay attention to their emotions about their role in the family visit so they can better support children and youth with their own thoughts, feelings and emotions.**

Take special care to prepare the child and youth emotionally for their visit.

- Discuss the child emotional safety plan with your Social Worker and the child.
- Ask if/when the child should be told about planned visits.
- Talk about how you can support the child if the visit is cancelled.

Foster caregivers can help children and youth prepare for visits and provide emotional support during and after visits:

- Help child decide what to wear and what, if any, comfort object to bring.
- Help older children think of things to tell their parents.

- Suggest fun activities that they can do with their parents.
- Help children gather things to show their parents e.g. favourite toys, arts and crafts, etc.
- Provide transportation to/from in-person visits.
- Remind the child that you are there to help with visits.
- If you won't be there during visits, remind the child that you will be there afterwards.
- Be supportive and encouraging in interactions with parents.
- Have a routine after the visit that includes calming activities (such as reading, going for a drive/walk, having downtime in their room).
- Talk about how the child will say goodbye and help them practice before the visit.



**Some children and youth may feel anxiety and stress before and after a visit. This is not necessarily because they don't want the visit to happen. Talk to your social worker about how to recognize these signs and provide support to the child.**

# Prepare for Telephone and Video Visits

**The Social Worker will help so that everyone has what they need for telephone and video visits.**

Ask for help before the visit if you are not sure how to use the technology, such as:

- Setting up telephone or video calls.
- Internet and online safety for children.

Before the visit, test the technology to make sure it is working, practice with the child and when appropriate, teach the child how to use it on their own.

Choose a place in the home for the visit, keeping in mind:

- Child's comfort (familiar space, comfortable place to sit).
- The need for support.
- Background noise, distractions and interruptions (headphones can help).
- Privacy.
- Safety concerns.

Have a backup plan (like a phone call) if the video call doesn't work.



# Activity Ideas During Visits

Here are some examples of activities for the parent and child based on the child and youth's age and stage.

Support the child and parent as much as needed/requested during these activities.

Follow the child's lead and pay attention to what they like/find interesting.

## Infants

- Make video calls part of routines.
- Share food-including pretending play through the screen.
- Tell bedtime stories, sing songs.
- Position baby to make eye contact with the person on the screen.





# Toddlers & Preschoolers

- Visit during daily routines: have a meal together.
- Play games: Blow kisses, show and tell, I spy.
- Practice ABCs, counting, colours.
- Play with play-dough- have the child give the parent suggestions for what to make.
- Sing songs together.
- Tell stories, play with toys.
- Speak your Indigenous language together or teach your child your language.

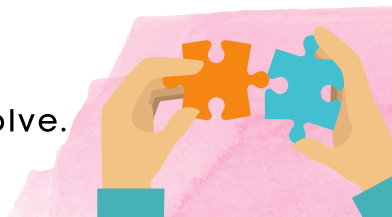


# Elementary School

- Games: would you rather? 20 questions, 2 truths and a lie, I spy, charades, pictionary, tic-tac-toe, bingo.
- Share family stories, creation stories.
- Teach child a traditional skill.
- Play freeze dance.
- Virtual field trip via websites- share a screen or visit website at the same time.
- Draw or paint together.
- Help with homework.
- Ask child to read a book out loud.

## Middle School

- If your child has learned a new skill, have them demonstrate.
- Teach them a new skill.
- Go on a virtual tour of the child's room.
- Exercise or dance together.
- Create a book club together-talk about the book.
- Help with homework.
- Give your child a riddle to solve.
- Look at maps together.



## Teenagers/All Ages

- Play multi-player internet games or apps together.
- Learn/practice Indigenous words using language apps.
- Create a book club.
- Create a vision board and share it with each other.
- Find a new hobby to learn together.
- Cooking traditional foods (e.g. cooking lesson).
- Learning traditional teachings (e.g. Dene laws, smudging).
- Start a sewing or beading project.
- Drumming lesson

# IMPORTANT

## Contact Information

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