

Just Checking In!

When was the last time you asked yourself this question:
Why do I foster children?

As a previous foster parent myself, coming along side others and stepping in to do something I knew I could do well was what empowered me to become a foster parent. I recognized the children were not my own, but were to be treated and cared for as if they were, for whatever amount of time was needed until their family could become healthy again.

To foster a child is an action. One of the ways foster parents can actively promote and encourage development in their foster children is to play an active role in their foster child's visitation experience.

Research identifies the following as benefits of parent-child visitation:

- Supports parent-child attachment
- Eases the pain of separation for all
- Maintains and strengthens family relationships
- Reassures a child that their parent (s) is/are alright and helps them to eliminate self-blame for placement
- Supports the family in dealing with changing relationships
- Enhances parent motivation to change by providing reassurance that the parent-child relationship is important for a child's well-being
- Provides opportunities for parent(s) to learn and try new skills
- Supports a child's adjustments to the foster home
- Enables the parent(s) to be active and stay current with their child's development, educational and medical needs, church and community activities
- Provides for opportunities or parent (s) to assess how their child is doing, and share information about how to meet their child's needs

As a former foster parent, a few of the things I did to actively participate in my foster children's visitation experience included:

- Meeting the parent(s) at the shelter hearing or their first visitation
- Provide a notebook to communicate back and forth
- Offer to supervise a visit in the community
- Allow opportunities for my child to see me interacting with their parent(s).
- Allow parent(s) to buckle my foster child in my car.
- Supervise phone calls or texts

Knowing the benefits of visitation for our foster children's development can help us decide just how we might actively engage in our foster child's visitation experience.

If you have questions, ideas, or suggestions about visitation for the child(ren) in your home or if you would like to take a more active role in their visitation experience please talk with your caseworker.

Thanks again for all your hard work and partnering with DHS to help children. If you have feedback about visitation please feel free to call our Marion Branch Visitation Unit supervisor:
Jacob Potter at 503-378-8250.

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