

# Protocol to Support Application of Trauma-Informed Caregiving (After the Training)

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**The Importance of Safety and Stabilization.**

Safety and Stabilization will be the primary focus for children living in the Emergency Foster Care homes. These youth will likely be scared, feel threatened and unsure of what tomorrow may bring. No child thrives in a chaotic environment and to be suddenly dropped into a home where they don't know anyone. Especially if they know this home is just one stop in a series of homes. There are things we must do to help children transition into the home and reduce the risk of further trauma and increase the children/youth level of functioning with the EFC placement. Safety and Stability is the focus of our interactions with the child/youth at this stage.

**It is critical for children and youth to feel safe the moment they enter your home.**

*How do we do that?*

**Establish Age Appropriate Welcoming Routine:**

- Acknowledge the difficult situation the child/youth is in without perseverating on it and use age appropriate and simple language.
  - “I’m sure this feels overwhelming and scary, you don’t know me/us and we don’t know you. We will do our best to make sure you feel safe here in our home.”
- Give the child/youth something they can take with them when they leave. Something like a stuffed animal or blanket for a younger child, let them choose what they like, what appeals to them.
  - “Sometimes it’s helpful to have something that you can hold on to when life gets overwhelming...this is yours to keep”
- Give them choices, this will help them to feel like they have control over what is happening to them.
  - “Would you like to see your room first? Or a different room? Kitchen, Family Room, etc.
- Each foster parent has items in their home to meet the “welcome” needs of a variety of ages of youth.

Infants	Toddler	School Age	Pre teen	Adolescents
Blanket Baby toys Pac n Play	Blanket Toys Stuffed animals Multi-racial dolls Books Toothbrush and toothpaste	Stuffed animals Coloring books Colors Bubbles Books Toothbrush and toothpaste	Stuffed animals Journal Pens Books Personal hygiene items Tooth brush, tooth	Stuffed animals Journal Pens Books Magazines Personal hygiene items

	Nightlight	Nightlight	paste, dental floss Nightlight	Tooth brush, tooth paste, dental floss Nightlight
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- Each foster parent has a large duffle bag in which the youth can place their items when they leave for their next placement [no young person should move their personal items in a garbage bag!]
- Once the child has been “welcomed” into the home and seems to be calm, Use a “Tell me about you” worksheet to get to know the youth. This worksheet can be used to guide a conversation and should ask non-threatening questions that covers areas like Waking, Sleeping, Bathing, Eating, etc. **See Attached Let Me Tell You About My Child Worksheets (by developmental ages)**. This form will need to be revised to reflect 1<sup>st</sup> person questions.
  - It is possible that the youth may be too scared, apprehensive or stressed to engage in this conversation when they initially arrive. With the other interventions we are putting into place, it is likely that the youth will eventually share this information.
- Many children who have experienced abuse and neglect have difficulty sleeping at night. It is best to anticipate that the overnights may be challenging when the child first arrives into the home. **See the section below for addressing the issue.**

### Routines and Rituals

- All children need routines and rituals to move through the day, anticipate what’s coming next and to prepare for transitions when they occur. Our children will likely need this more than most given their chaotic and unpredictable experiences. **Note: Routines are not schedules!** Routines establish a rhythm to life. Schedules require rigidity and fixed times.

### Bedtime

- For our children, bad things have often happened to them at night so the alarm in their brain is on and scanning the environment looking for anything threatening. Often, the children do not even know this happening! Our goal is to help them calm this alarm so the brain can quiet itself and prepare for sleep.
- Work with the child/youth to create a bedtime routine using sensory and rhythmic based approaches.
  - “Hmmm, let’s think about what might help you feel safe in your room so you can fall asleep.” Maybe a Nightlight? Let’s find a smell that makes you happy (aromatherapy/essential oils can be used instead of a candle or anything flammable). How about a rocking chair that can help soothe you and help your brain to calm? You can rock if you feel nervous or scared.”
  - If appropriate, have something that smells like someone important in their life.

- Remember to keep as much consistency with this routine as possible. First the child/youth changes into Pajamas, then brushes their teeth, washes their face, puts on a lotion that they have chosen for this particular purpose. Books, music, rocking, etc. Then transition to lights out. Each routine will be different and based on the individual child's needs and their developmental age.
- Other areas that will likely require similar routines:
  - Mealtimes
  - Morning Hygiene
  - School (if relevant given the short-term nature of the placement)
  - Transitions to other settings (on/off bus, etc.)

EFC FP Training [in addition to PRIDE, if that is necessary]

**PRELIMINARY TRAINING:**

Every person who wants to be an EFC must complete the NCTSN Resource Parent Training

The 8 Modules are completed in 4 “cohort” meetings

Each cohort has a team of facilitators comprised of one foster care staff person and one foster parent

Each training group has no more than 5 foster parents [if we are looking at 20 EFC homes, then its four groups who will go through the training]

Participants will leave the training with a “welcome ritual” and “house rules”

**SUSTAINABILITY:**

The foster parents who go through each training cohort function as ongoing support for one another. They are also connected in an ongoing way to the foster parent and facilitator that provided their training.

The cohort meets at least once each quarter to talk about how they are doing.

**SUPPORTS DURING PLACEMENT:**

The IPS clinician assigned to the home will come out to make the first visit to the home within 24 hours and will complete the assessment as noted in the EFC IPS clinician proposal.

Each IPS clinician will bring a “calming box” after learning the youth’s age and developmental stage. This will be an actual toolkit that the youth will have access to throughout their placement in EFC and will take this with them to their placement after EFC. Each agency that will have an EFC IPS clinician will receive a list of “supplies” that should go in a calming box, specific items for specific age and development

The assigned caseworker, EFC IPS clinician and EFC foster parent work together as a team throughout the young person’s placement.

**ONGOING SUPPORT FOR EFC FOSTER PARENT:**

The IPS clinician will meet with every EFC foster parent one time each week when there is not a young person placed in the home. Part of the purpose of these meetings is relationship building and part of the purpose is to build ongoing training plans with EFC foster parents, to attend to areas in which they can grow, to become more effective EFC foster parents. Another point of attention in these weekly meetings is ensuring the EFC foster parent has a self care plan they are implementing.

The IPS Clinician will also work on CAREGIVER MANAGEMENT OF AFFECT to assist the EFC foster parent to become aware of their own reactions and emotions and learn how to calm/re-regulate themselves so they can be calm and think clearly.