



Openness in Adoptions from the Foster Care System

Practitioner Check List

- ✓ Encourage kinship caregivers and foster parents to develop working relationships with birth parents early in a child or youth's placement to promote future continuity of relationships whether permanency is achieved via reunification or adoption.
- ✓ Before adoption, help older children and youth consider and express their wishes regarding continuing relationships with their extended families. As appropriate to age and development, provide youth with information on what is legally possible as well as the role of adoptive parents in determining the parameters of continuing contact.
- ✓ Educate youth, birth families and prospective and current adoptive families on the broad array of contact options that are possible on the continuum of openness.
- ✓ Prepare prospective adoptive parents that the type and level of openness that best meets the needs of child/youth must be determined on an individual basis and may change as child or youth develop and family relationships unfold. Create opportunities for prospective adoptive families to speak with current adoptive parents who are successfully managing continuing contact after adoption.
- ✓ Make suggestions or recommendations as appropriate, but bear in mind that the ultimate "ownership" of post adoption relationships belongs to the children, youth and adults directly involved.
- ✓ When continuing contact is possible, assist all parties to build relationships and develop a plan for future openness. Refer birth and adoptive families to agency or community mediation services, where available, for assistance in creating formal contact agreements.
- ✓ Assist adoptive families in planning how they will guide and support their children in seeking extended family members. With the availability of social media, it is not a matter of if but when.

Coaching Tips for Supervisors

- Stay current on laws and policies regarding openness in adoption and post-adoption contact.
- Act as a conduit to share with less senior staff the knowledge you have gained regarding openness practices.
- Network with community organizations and advocates to create ongoing supports to assist children, youth and families with post-adoption relationships.
- Promote continuity of relationships throughout the out-of-home care process.
- Seek out education and training opportunities for yourself, staff and families regarding the rapidly evolving landscape of openness in adoption.