



A Northern Virginia Foster Care and Adoption Initiative

bridging the gap

Families Working Together

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN BRIDGING THE GAP (11/29/07)

Bridging the gap is the process of building and maintaining relationships and communication between the birth and foster families involved in the child/youth's life with the goal of supporting family reunification or another permanency plan.

**Note: This chart is not intended to cover all of the roles and responsibilities of the parties but, rather, focuses on those that relate specifically to the communication, contact, and relationship between the foster parent and birth parent. Many of the responsibilities of the birth parent or prior custodian will apply to other relatives of the child who have contact and a relationship with the foster parent. This chart does not address the communication and relationship between the foster parent and adoptive parent, although many of the responsibilities will be similar.*

	Social Worker (SW)	Child Placing Agency Social Worker (CPA)	Foster Parent (FP)	Birth Parent (BP) or Prior Custodian	Child
Ice Breaker Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Prepare and debrief BP/FP/child by discussing purpose/benefits of meeting and roles/relationships of participants. Answer their questions and concerns. ▶ Prepare agenda with input from CPA and other players. ▶ Prepare foster parent (i.e., how FP can show support and encouragement of birth parent achieving goal of return home). ▶ Schedule meeting - location/time/place/transportation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Prepare foster parent (i.e., how FP can show support and encouragement of birth parent achieving goal of return home). ▶ Tell the foster parent that there will be an evaluation of the icebreaker meeting. ▶ Attend/ensure attendance by FP and child. ▶ Assist with meeting facilitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Attend and participate. ▶ Be open and accepting of the BP. ▶ Verbally recognize the concerns the BP may have. ▶ Be supportive and encouraging of the BP in accomplishing their goals. ▶ Find creative ways to help keep the BP connected with the child; information sharing (photos, letters, journal-activities, follow up on school/medical information). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Attend and participate. ▶ Think ahead of time and be prepared with specific questions; give honest information. ▶ Be open and accepting of the FP. ▶ Bring useful information that will be helpful to the FP (child's likes/dislikes, medical history, educational information). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Attend and participate as deemed appropriate by the SW. ▶ Think ahead of time and be prepared with specific questions; give honest information.

	Social Worker (SW)	Child Placing Agency Social Worker (CPA)	Foster Parent (FP)	Birth Parent (BP) or Prior Custodian	Child
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Tell the FP that there will be an evaluation of the icebreaker meeting. ▶ Facilitate meeting. ▶ Debrief as needed with the BP, FP, and CPA after the meeting. Ask what could have been improved. Communicate with anyone who did not attend. Follow up as needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide information to the BP on the CPA's program services (i.e., child's participation in CPA after school program, treatment plan protocols) and CPA contact information. ▶ Follow up and debrief as needed with the SW and FP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Be prepared with specific questions and give honest information. ▶ Share information about your family and household. ▶ Communicate the child's concerns/questions. ▶ Be realistic with agreeing to future contact between the FP and BP (nature, frequency, type, coordination). 		

	Social Worker (SW)	Child Placing Agency Social Worker (CPA)	Foster Parent (FP)	Birth Parent (BP) or Prior Custodian	Child
Foster Care Service Plan Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Elicit feedback from the BP, FP, child and CPA on content of plan and progress. ▶ Ensure that the BP, FP, and child are fully understanding of the plan. ▶ Periodically review the plan with BP and FP together; include the CPA. ▶ Make sure the BP and FP are informed of the final arrangements (how, when where) for how services will be provided and their expected participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ensure that the FP and child are fully understanding of the plan. ▶ Encourage the FP to support the service plan. ▶ Make sure the treatment plan addresses the communication and relationship between the FP and BP and is aligned with the service plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Be flexible and honest in assisting in the development of the FP's responsibilities in the service plan, and promise only that which can be delivered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Actively participate in developing the service plan by identifying needs and possible sources of help. ▶ Be flexible and honest about ability to honor the FP's requests in regard to the service plan. ▶ Provide accurate information and history about the child or self including past services and service providers. ▶ Share information about relationships that are important to the child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Share your opinions about relationships that you need to sustain. ▶ Ask any questions you have about how your BP and FP are communicating and carrying out visitation.
Foster Care Service Plan Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Monitor the compliance with the service plan as it relates to the BP and FP communication and cooperation. ▶ Periodically review the plan with the BP and FP together; include the CPA. ▶ Elicit feedback from the BP, FP, child, and CPA on the content of the plan and the progress; make sure any of the questions or concerns about the communication and relationship between the BP and FP get addressed. ▶ Publicly give credit to the BP and FP for their work/progress on the plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Make sure that the FP's questions/concerns about the communication and relationship with the BP get addressed. ▶ Publicly give credit to the BP and FP for their work/progress on the plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Updates BP on child's progress, activities and questions when visitation occurs or through other contacts. ▶ Encourage the BP's efforts. (pat on the back, "way to go!") ▶ Discuss next steps in building the relationship with the FP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Discuss next steps in building the relationship with the BP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ask any questions you have about how your BP and FP are communicating and carrying out visits.

	Social Worker (SW)	Child Placing Agency Social Worker (CPA)	Foster Parent (FP)	Birth Parent (BP)	Child
Medical/Dental Appointments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Communicate with all parties (CPA, FP, BP) about medical/dental needs and appointments. ▶ Ensure that FP keeps accurate and up to date information on medical/dental care in order to elicit BP's feedback about the care. ▶ Offer transportation to the BP in order to participate in the appointments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ensure that the FP keeps accurate and up to date information on medical/dental care in order to elicit the BP's feedback about the care. ▶ Encourage the FP to include the BP in attending the appointments and to prep and debrief with the BP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Invite/request that the BP accompany child to an appointment. ▶ Take into account the BP's schedule when setting appointments. ▶ Share medical information with the BP and SW. ▶ Elicit the BP's feedback about the child's medical care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Share needed medical history information with the FP. ▶ May request to accompany the child along with FP to a medical appointment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Tell your SW and FP if you want your parent to participate in the appointments.
School Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Encourage the BP and FP to communicate about and participate in school related activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Encourage the FP to be open to communicating with and participation by the BP in school related activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Share school information, grades, and class assignments with the BP. ▶ Invite the BP to school functions including teacher conferences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Attend/participate in school meetings and activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Keep the BF and FP informed of school progress.
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Educate themselves about different, appropriate discipline strategies in order to serve as a support to the BP and FP. ▶ Assure that the FP and BP understand how each other is disciplining the child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Assure that the FP and BP understand how each other is disciplining the child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Inquire of the BP what discipline methods that have worked well in the past. ▶ Share their discipline methods (rules, restrictions, consequences, rewards) with the BP. ▶ Share with the BP any discipline problems experienced. Problem solve with the BP when new discipline issues arise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Share their discipline methods (rules, restrictions, consequences, rewards) with the FP. ▶ Share with the FP any behavioral/discipline problems experienced during visitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ If there is any question about the rules in the BP or FP home, ask for clarification.

	Social Worker (SW)	Child Placing Agency Social Worker (CPA)	Foster Parent (FP)	Birth Parent (BP) or Prior Custodian	Child
Ongoing Relationship and Information Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Serve as a clearinghouse of information for the BP and FP. ▶ Ensure that all parties have the necessary and required information and are updates on the progress of the case. ▶ Support information sharing between and FP and BP. ▶ In consultation with the CPA, provide direction to the FP and BP on modifications that need to be made to their communication, contact, and relationship. ▶ Coach the FP with any of their mentoring activities with the BP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide needed names, numbers, etc., including changes to the FP, and BP. ▶ Support information sharing between the FP and BP. ▶ In consultation with the SW, provide direction to the FP and BP on modifications that need to be made to their communication, contact, and relationship. ▶ Coach the FP with any of their mentoring activities with the BP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Form a friendly relationship with the BP that can help them feel that they are important people who are valued. ▶ Encourage the BP to do the hard work when they feel like giving up. ▶ Take time out at least once in a while to meet with the BP over lunch, coffee, or some other arrangement to communicate with, mentor, and encourage the BP's continued efforts. ▶ Give the BP a pat on the back when able to. ▶ Share information and reports about the child's progress with the BP at least before or after visits. ▶ Share stories of times when the FP has struggled or made mistakes to give BP hope and a sense that they are not all "bad", but are human too. ▶ Raise any questions, concerns, or comments about the communication and relationship with the BP so that they can be addressed. ▶ Maintain confidentiality of the BP's personal information and background. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Be open to forming a relationship with the FP. ▶ Share information and reports about child and his background with the FP. ▶ Update FP on any changes in family circumstances that would be helpful for FP to know. ▶ Raise any questions, concerns, or comments about the communication and relationship with the FP so that they can be addressed. ▶ Be open to the FP who is mentoring them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Bring forward any questions or confusion about the communication and contact between the BP and FP. ▶ Keep the FP's contact information private unless given consent to share.