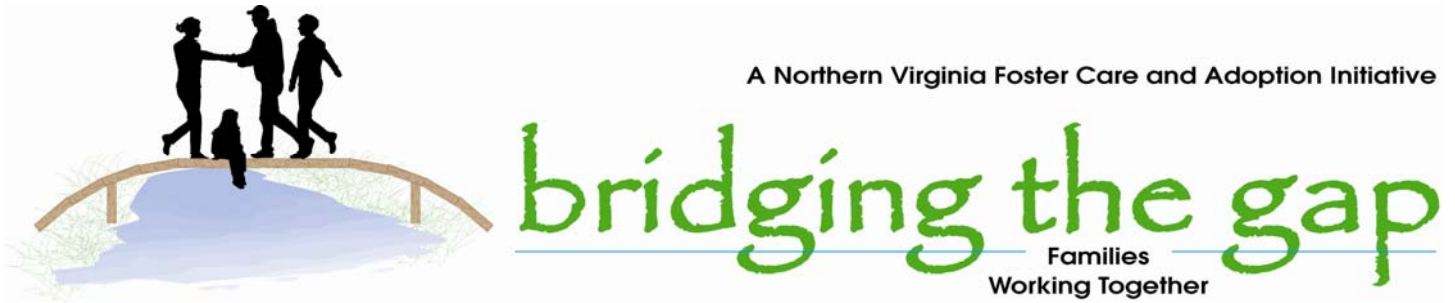


A Northern Virginia Foster Care and Adoption Initiative



ICEBREAKER MEETING PROTOCOL

- I. Icebreaker Meeting Guidelines**
- II. Meeting Process and Agenda**
- III. Icebreaker Meeting Report**
- IV. “All About Me” Questionnaire**
- V. “Fast Facts” Sheet**

I. ICEBREAKER MEETING GUIDELINES

Definition:

An icebreaker meeting is a facilitated, child-focused meeting held shortly after a child is placed (or replaced) in out-of-home care to provide an opportunity for birth parents and foster parents (or other caregivers) to meet each other and to share information about the needs of the child. This meeting is the beginning of establishing communication and building a relationship between the child's parents and caregivers.

Purpose:

- To provide an opportunity and setting for the foster parents and birth parents to meet.
- To begin establishing communication and a relationship between the child's parents and caregivers.
- To share information that will help the foster parent or other caregivers to support the child in care.
- To reduce parents' anxiety about their child's placement and well-being.
- To reinforce the parents' role(s) as "parent" and establish caregivers as part of the team working to support the child and reunify the family.
- To initiate a care team that will work together on behalf of the child(ren) and birth family.
- To reassure children that their parents and caregivers are all working together to provide for their care, giving children permission to adjust positively to their placement while maintaining their relationship with their parents.

An Icebreaker Meeting is held when:

- a child is placed in out-of-home care for the first time (foster or kinship), or
- a child is making a placement change.

Attendees:

Parent(s), foster parent(s) or other caregiver, child's social worker, child placing agency social worker, and possibly the child. The meeting is considered completed if at least one of the child's parents attend; however, it is considered a best practice for both parents to participate in the same or separate meetings.

Children:

Children may attend the meeting, as appropriate. This decision is made by the social worker in consultation with the child and other participants. Regardless of whether a child is to attend or not, he or she is to be informed of the meeting and should be helped to understanding that the meeting does not determine if the child is to return home, rather that it is focused on sharing information about the child's needs. The social worker can have the child fill out the "All About Me" form in advance of the meeting.

Issues to consider when deciding whether a child should attend:

- Child's physical and developmental age
- Child's desire to attend
- Parents' ability to stay positive and child-focused during the meeting
- Child's comfort level regarding meeting with his/her parents, including ability to separate from the parents at the end of the meeting.

Meeting Logistics:

- Scheduled by the child's social worker.
- Takes place within 7 days of the ongoing placement.
- For temporary/emergency placement, a supervised conference call is held within the first 72 hours.
- Takes place at the agency or a neutral location.
- Lasts about 30 minutes.
- Meeting is scheduled to be held before the placement when the placement is a planned transition.
- Alternate form of a meeting (phone, in writing) is arranged if a face to face meeting is not viable.
- "Fast Facts" or a similar informational form will be completed within 48 hours of any placement.

Safety:

The social worker will implement alternate methods for sharing information if there are serious safety concerns for any party.

Participant Participation:

The social worker (public agency/CPA) is responsible for preparing participants for the content of the meeting, including information they may not want to share, prior to it being held. Issues to be discussed include:

- Purpose of the meeting.
- Importance of staying child-focused.
- What the meeting is not (not a discussion of the allegations or whether or not a child will return home).
- The meeting is an opportunity to share vital information about their child and for all parents to form a partnership.
- Specific information parents may want to share. (Parents may want to fill out the "All About..." questionnaire prior to the meeting.) Parents may wish to bring a favorite toy or book for the child.
- Short-term visitation plan.

II. MEETING PROCESS AND AGENDA

Meeting Introduction

Facilitator

Review the purpose of the meeting

Introduction of Participants

Facilitator

Introduce each participant and clarify roles and responsibilities of each

Foster Parent Information

Foster Parent

The foster parent is invited to share information with the birth parent including:

- How the child is doing in their home so far
- Assurance that, “I am not trying to take your place”
- Other adults and siblings (birth/adoptive/foster) in the home
- Where the child sleeps.
- What the child calls the foster parent
- Basic structure/rules of the home
- Daily routine
- Experience or goals as a foster parent.

Child Specific Information Sharing

Parent / All

The parent(s) will be invited to share information about the child using the “*All About My Child*” questionnaire as a guide.

Opportunity for Questions from the Child

Child

The child will be given an opportunity to ask questions or to express his/her desires regarding on-going activities and contact with important people.

Communication and Short-term Visitation Plan

Social Worker

The social worker and participants will discuss a communication plan that is appropriate and is comfortable for all parties, including the method(s) of communication. The arrangements for the short-term visitation plan will be discussed.

Meeting Evaluation Form

The social worker distributes the evaluation form to the birth parents and foster parents and asks them to complete it before departing.

III. ICEBREAKER MEETING REPORT

(Provide to all attendees at completion of meeting)

Case Name: _____ **Case Number:** _____

Date of Meeting: _____ **Social Worker:** _____

Names of Child/Children: _____

Attendees (name/title/role)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Items Discussed:

Follow-up Needed:

Visitation Arrangement:

Communication Plan:

Attach the “All About...” questionnaire(s) to this report.

Attach any other notes from the meeting to this report.

ALL ABOUT ME

<p>My name is:</p>	<p>My Birthday is:</p> 
<p>I like to eat:</p> 	<p>My favorite toy/activity is:</p> 
<p>I don't like:</p> 	<p>I am good at:</p> 
<p>I need help with:</p> 	<p> Please don't:</p>
<p>My family members:</p> 	<p>My House:</p> 

V. CONFIDENTIAL “FAST FACTS”

(Information social worker needs to present regarding child/children to prospective parents)

Name of Children

Birth Dates

Race

Why are children being placed?

What type of placement is this?

Is placement confidential?

Parent information: (are the parents violent? Can the parents contact the child, etc.)

Are there brother and sisters?

Where are they?

Will they visit?

Will there be pre-placement visits?

Previous placement experiences of the children

Visitation Plan

Special transportation needs

Are there any immediate appointments scheduled?

What is the plan for the children/length of placement?

Religion of children

Do the children have health issues, if so what?

Explain medications or allergies

What grade are children in school?

What school?

Are there any school problems?

Do children have any special behavioral problems or unusual habits? Bedwetting/fire setting, sexual acting out, etc.

Collateral Services? Wrap Around, Mental Health, CASA, Early Intervention, drug & alcohol, etc.

What will make children feel most at home (food likes, dislikes, favorite toys etc.)?

Does the child have enough clothing?

Will there be a clothing allowance?

Social Worker
Phone #

Supervisor
Phone #