

Why do We ask the Questions We do? (Compiled from foster parents themselves)

Basic as it sounds **"What can you tell me about this Child?"** As the Social Worker talks, just listen and take notes and it gives you time to think of questions. Also remember that most of the time the social worker calling is not the ongoing worker and doesn't have much information.

"Who is the worker?" always good to know who you'll be calling for follow up stuff and working with.

"Is the child new to the system?" Are you the child's first placement or 13th?? Are they coming out of STAR or residential treatment? The answers to these questions beget their own series of further questions.

"Do they have a Mass Health card/number so I can take them to the Dr. tomorrow???" If not - say you will need it when they drop the child off. Also, if you travel a lot request that you will need a travel letter in order to take the placement.

"Can you bring me a placement letter?" Even if you don't travel - a letter saying they are in your care with your name and address is needed for WIC or to register for school, if you ever need it for Dr., police, lost at the mall, runs away, screams you aren't their parent...etc...Copy it and keep one in your purse, each car and one in their file (which you should take when you go away).

"What formula/meds are they on? Are they coming with a supply of the formula/meds? Why are they taking that formula/med?" (Often times meds are used for other things: Blood pressure med isn't for blood pressure, but to lower response to PTSD, etc....It can take over a week to get a WIC appointment...and baby formula is expensive)

"Are they on birth control and if so, will they have their pills?" (For teen girls who may be pulled from their homes unexpectedly, skipping a few pills can have SERIOUS long term consequences... then you would know to get to a Dr. ASAP)

"Tell the ongoing worker you'll need a birth certificate and letter that they are in your care to register them for school." If they are not already going to school in your town, you could have them home with you for a week until the social worker gets these to you.

"Any behaviors you need to know about?" When the worker is done telling you ask more clarifying questions. Tell the worker if you have pets (to protect my pets from kids who have a history of hurting animals). Also tell them what kids you have in the house and what behaviors your kids have going on so they can decide if it would be a good fit.

"What do they have for stuff?" The answer you get usually lets you know if the child has even been pulled yet or if they are in the lobby with 5 suitcases, etc. or just what they are wearing and you'll be spending the night shopping at Wal-Mart for basics or calling the neighbors for hand-me-downs in their size.

"Any allergies? Or asthma? We have 2 cats and 2 dogs." Better they don't come than leave in 3 days with rashes and hives but always offer the heads up that you have pets in case the child is ultra sensitive to pet allergens.

"What kind of visitation schedule are they on?" This is for a child already in the system...You want to know how your daily routine will be disrupted. Some children's bio families live an hour or so away and visits can take up an entire afternoon....a baby can have several visits a week and most times you will be asked to assist in the transports.

"Any regularly scheduled upcoming appointments you need to know about or drive them to?" Like Orthodontist, or the orthopedic specialist they've been waiting six months to see... it's better if you can just drive them there than start from scratch with new Dr.'s and appts.

"Who can they call? How long? Speaker phone or not...Will they have a cell phone? What kind of access can they have to their cell phone?" It is very hard to monitor once a week speaker phone calls to Dad when they go to sleep with their cell phones and take them to school....

"If siblings are being sent to different homes" Can you have the name and phone # of the other foster families. If it is appropriate, is it OK for kids to just call to say goodnight tonight and let each other know that they are OK?

You have to **"ask every question that pops into your head"** even the tough ones. Nothing is off limits. If this child is coming you need to know if it is going to be a good fit not only for the child, (no one wants to move that child once they're placed) but for your family as well. The duty worker often doesn't know the answers to many of these questions, but you should try to get answers from the Case Worker as soon as possible.