

What Foster Parents Should Know

Being a foster parent is not easy. Each time a youth is moved to a new foster home, the youth and the foster parents must adjust. Establishing a relationship and ground rules early is crucially important to both the youth and parent.

Below are tips from the OCFS Youth Advisory Board to help create a foundation in establishing a meaningful and healthy relationship.



1. I am not 'just' a 'foster kid.'
2. The first few nights are going to be hard for both of us, so let's give each other a break.
3. Get to know me. I am not perfect, so please don't judge me based on my record or paperwork. I am so much more than what is written about me.
4. I don't know much about you so maybe take another second to introduce yourself.
5. Sometimes it can be overwhelming and exciting when I am being placed in your home. Some things might trigger me. Smells, shouting or a certain song. Your tone of voice can become heightened. Be mindful that I may have had negative experiences that involved heightened voices. Keeping a calm and collected voice can be helpful in making me feel comfortable.
6. Please don't make me feel bad for my circumstances.
7. Be positive and kind. In return, I will be respectful and kind, but it may take time.
8. Ask me what I want to be called. Some of us like to be called friend, foster child, niece or nephew.
9. Treat me like your own child so I feel welcome in your home.
10. Communication is key. I have a lot of time to overthink things.
11. I was placed in your home for a reason. Please try to provide me with the love and care that my parent(s) couldn't give me.
12. Talking things through helps me feel included. Sometimes I rebel because I feel like I am being spoken at and not having my voice heard. Allow me to have input in decisions that affect me.
13. Set concrete ground rules and boundaries. Be careful to not make me feel like I can't do anything, but rules should still be enforced to help me learn how to be held accountable.
14. Allow me to feel like a normal teenager.
15. I am human. I may not interpret things that happen the same way previous foster children may have interpreted things. I may feel and act differently.
16. Although my relationship with my birth family may not be perfect, it is important to me. If I have a sibling, I may want to see them. If it's safe and legal, allow and encourage me to build those connections with my family. It may be the one consistent thing that I have.
17. Sometimes things might not be "ok" for me, and that's completely normal. Try to encourage me to feel what I am feeling.
18. As long as I am safe and you feel okay with what I'm doing, it doesn't hurt to encourage normative experiences such as sports, social media, visits with friends, etc.
19. Culture is important to me. I might have different customs than you do, for example praying or engaging in certain rituals. Try to understand my culture and encourage the engagement if that's what I choose.
20. Find common ground between us and offer opportunities for me to participate in events. Finding something we both enjoy will open a door when it comes to engaging with you, building trust with you, and feeling comfortable in your home. Common ground can be found within TV shows you enjoy, music you like, animals, food, etc.
21. By nature, parents try to avoid letting children make mistakes. Mistakes are inevitable and can be used as a growth opportunity. It can be an opportunity for us to build trust with each other.
22. If you realize I am facing difficulties beyond your control, it is important to talk to the caseworker to get me the necessary attention. Sometimes you may feel overwhelmed because you don't use available resources for both of us.
23. Don't give up. Without a doubt, things will get tough, but try your hardest not to give up. I am very vulnerable. If you give up, I may feel like "what's the point?" Try to stay positive.
24. Taking me into your home is never easy!! Although it may feel like a burden sometimes, when you make a positive impact believe it or not, I will remember you and your home forever. The goal is to help me learn what healthy relationships and family looks like.
25. Always remember that I might just be a moment in your life, but for that moment you are my whole life.



**Office of Children
and Family Services**

**Youth Advisory
Board**

A voice to help create positive changes in Foster Care