

## Top 10 Things Foster Parents Can Do To Transition a Foster Child into Your Home More Smoothly...

- **Do a tour of important places.** Include the inside and outside of their new school and how they will get there, places older youth can get jobs and where you work.
- **Lay out rules---but in moderation.** It can be overwhelming to go from a family with no rules to a very structured environment and vice versa. Find out where they are coming from.
- **Refrain from treating youth like juvenile delinquents.** Anyone who is assumed to be a liar, thief or worse, is unlikely to feel like part of a family.
- **Ask the child how they would like to present your relationship to the public.** Though it is common sense that kids should not be forced to call you "Mom" or "Dad," what may not occur to some foster parents is the stigma of being in care. Some children may prefer to call their foster parents their aunt and uncle, rather than try to explain things to strangers.
- **Give the child a tour of your home as soon as they arrive.** If there is anything that is absolutely off-limits, this is a good time to say so. Be sure to point out such essentials as towels, spare blankets and where they can put their dirty laundry.
- **Ask about likes and dislikes.** Not only is this a good icebreaker, but also it is an opportunity to get to know the kid and show that you care about their opinions. Additionally, it gives the child a chance to ask questions about rules and routines.
- **Ask who they would like to stay in touch with from their past.** To the best of your ability, encourage phone calls, e-mails and letters to all safe, willing people they name.
- **Refrain from making promises you are unsure you will be able to keep.** More important than making the child happy, is making them feel like they can trust you. Telling the child "no" is better than saying yes and then not following through.
- **Encourage the child to get involved in school.** However, do not force a child to be involved in things just because you think they sound fun. Support the child in following their own interests. Then attend events, help them with practice or projects, or simply listen when they want to tell you what is going on.
- **Refrain from bashing people in the child's life.** Their biological family was their first family and many foster children return home eventually. Though they can't live together now, the child is most likely attached to their biological family. Negative statements you say, even if they are true, may put the child on the defensive and cause them to push you away.