



"Empower, Support, Protect"

Human Services Department
COUNTY OF SONOMA

Transition Planning for Children in Care

Mission Statement

We are committed to transitioning all children in a thoughtful, planned and attachment focused manner that is child centered and takes into account the child's individual needs. This means that transitions may look different for different children even if those children are in the same family. We value the experience and wisdom of all involved and will strive to create a transition plan that takes into consideration everyone's input. We understand that the final transition plan will be developed by the team. We believe and expect that the individualized nature of transitioning will require flexibility to make changes as they become necessary and in the child's best interest. We value the process of transition and are committed to learning from all experiences to improve the transitioning experience for children.

Print Name

Date

Signature

Successful Transitions

The children with whom we work have experienced significant trauma, often including the trauma of an abrupt removal from a primary care provider when that child initially enters foster care. While this may be unavoidable, we recognize that children deserve better. Our goal is to provide transitions that are sensitive, thoughtful, and well planned to lessen the trauma experienced by the child. Additionally, we recognize that all children have important relationships that should be nurtured and maintained during and after a transition. The following recommendations offer general guidelines for successful, healthy transitions for children.

Recommendations for Successful Transitions

- The **adults set the tone** for how the child will respond to and understand the transition. All parties should treat each other with respect and cooperation. If disagreements arise these should be dealt with away from the child in a collegial manner that continues to put the best interest of the child first.
- **All families have valuable information.** It's beneficial for the **social worker to have a conversation** with the sending and receiving family separately about expectations and transition needs **before the initial transition meeting takes place.**
- All children shall have a **written transition plan** (see attached samples) that includes a designated transition coordinator and that individual's contact information.
- **Transitions should always be child-centered** and allow for flexibility based on the age, emotional needs, and developmental needs of the child. Adjustments to the transition plan should be based on the child's best interest.
- Whenever possible, transition visits should **begin in the home of the child's current placement**, where the child is most comfortable. This helps the new family to become familiar with the routines and patterns of the child before the child has visits in the receiving family's home.
- **The sending family should provide written information** to the receiving family on the child's schedule, routines, likes and dislikes, and other information that will help the child acclimate to their new home. **This helps the receiving family create familiar experiences in their home that will help the child adjust.**
- **Receiving family should strive to maintain a child's existing routine** in the new home during and immediately following the transition as the child adjusts to the new environment. This can include keeping a similar schedule, using the same brand of diapers/formula, having familiar foods available, maintaining expectations and discipline techniques, keeping the same naptime/bedtime, etc.
- It can be helpful to use a **transitional object** (e.g., blanket, toy, stuffed animal) to help the child bring something familiar and comforting into the receiving family's home. For infants, it can also be helpful for the receiving family to provide something that smells like their home to meet the infant's sensory needs and assist in making the new home seem familiar.
- When moving a child, the child's belongings should always be packed with respect in suitcases, duffle bags, totes, or boxes. **Garbage bags should never be used to transport their belongings.**
- Anticipate that children **may regress during the transition** (e.g., changes in sleep patterns, toilet training, eating habits, aggressive behavior, anger, sadness). This is a normal response to dealing with the stress and uncertainty of change.
- **Reverse transition visits** (the sending family visiting the child in the receiving family's home after the placement change, and/or the child returning to the prior placement for a brief visit) should be used when possible **to help the child and both families grieve, celebrate, and/or adjust to the placement change and achieve closure.**
- An ice breaker meeting should be considered with every placement change to allow the birth parents and receiving family to meet and discuss the child.

TRANSITION PLAN

(DATE)

CHILD: _____ **DOB:** _____

SENDING HOME: (This could be Valley of the Moon, an emergency foster home, agency foster home, relative home, etc. Identify names, address, phone #, and email of sending home unless information needs to be limited for confidentiality purposes.)

RECEIVING HOME: (This could be a foster home, concurrent home, relative home, etc. Identify names, address, phone #, and email of receiving home unless information needs to be limited for confidentiality purposes.)

TRANSITION PLAN COORDINATOR: (Whoever in the Department is taking the lead with the transition. This could be the primary social worker, secondary SW, placement specialist, or concurrent planning specialist. Identify name, title, phone #, and email.)

OTHER SOCIAL WORKERS: (Include name, title, agency, phone #, and email of all other SWs involved in the case – FFA worker, County SW, placement specialist, Adoption SW, etc.)

Transition Plan - [date] (continued)

VISITATION SCHEDULE: Typically this plan is developed in person at the first visit, through discussion/negotiation with both the sending and receiving families and with guidance from the transition coordinator.

Details: For each visit, list who will attend, who will provide transportation, any specific tasks to accomplish at the visit, any appointments that will be included as part of the visit, etc.

Use as many visits as necessary, based on age and needs of child, distance between placements, each family's availability, etc.

FIRST VISIT: (date and time)

PLACE: (Location of visit– foster home, concurrent home, CPS office, community, etc.)

SECOND VISIT:

PLACE:

THIRD VISIT:

PLACE:

FOURTH VISIT:

PLACE:

FIFTH VISIT:

PLACE:

SIXTH VISIT:

PLACE:

TENTATIVE PLACEMENT DATE: (Identify projected placement date and transportation arrangements, with the understanding that date may need to change based on how child is handling the transition and the receiving home's readiness for placement.)