



### **QPI Principle:**

*All partners and stakeholders in our child welfare system possess unique value and acknowledge their roles and responsibilities in reducing trauma and its' effect, and in achieving successful outcomes for Louisiana's children and families.*

Within the child welfare profession, it is readily acknowledged that removal of a child from his/her home is very traumatic for the child, his/her family, and the child welfare professional; and as such, is one of the most difficult aspects of child welfare work. CW professionals who recognize the trauma, possess the practice skills appropriate to safely reduce trauma, and utilize their knowledge, training and skills to effectively implement quality practice strategies will serve children more effectively and experience greater confidence in their role and the jobs they do. First and foremost, families need to be advised of and understand the reasons for their child's placement into foster care, the temporary nature and goal of foster care and their critical role in timely reunification of their child. To assist in reducing the trauma during these events and in demonstrating better quality of care and practice within our child welfare system, staff should utilize strategies within policy and practice guidelines that are designed to provide accurate and sufficient information and establish open and collaborative relationships.

### **Quality Practice Strategies Linked To Initial Removal of a Child:**

**Attempt to reduce stress and trauma for child and parents by providing as much information as possible regarding the foster family and initiate a trusting relationship by discussing what each can expect to occur within the upcoming days regarding contact and planned next steps**

- Establish expectation for open communication and information sharing to support a trusting, working relationship with birth parent. Be factual about information and plans. It is far better to advise that you do not know definitive answer rather than to be perceived as misleading or providing false information.
- Seek to build trust by conveying expectations and following through on promises and commitments. One example of establishing trust is through the CPS worker's initial commitment to contact birth parents from the foster home (*QPI Initial Call*) and providing them with an update on their child and the opportunity to speak with foster parent and child. Encourage them to think of information about their child that would be important for the foster parent to know to best care for their child, especially in the first few days. (If possible provide foster parents information about favorite meal, dessert, etc... in advance of arrival).
- Prior to leaving home inform parents and child of first names of foster family, # of children in home, city or parish of residence and other general information if known. (Do not try to glorify home or family by focusing on material items such as size of home, toys, pool, etc... rather focusing on caring family willing to provide temporary care only while needed and the foster family's commitment to working with the child and birth parents on goal of reunification)

- Acknowledge birthparent's unique ability to reduce trauma for child and support quality of care for child by providing critical information to assist foster parent in meeting child's needs and providing quality care. (Sleep preparation, favorite foods, games, allergies, fears, etc...) Reinforce that parent is the expert about their child.
- Provide child with information to reduce anxiety about movement to an unknown family or home through description of family members, home, pets, school, etc... Utilize photos, drive around home first and allow for questions, conduct call with foster caregivers and child from office or cell prior to arrival.
- As possible, plan and work collaboratively with others to minimize the time child waits at office prior to placement.
- Ideally, cps investigator and assigned foster care caseworkers should jointly place the child in their new placement. As the child's only connection is to the cps investigator, in the child's perspective, the cps investigator is the only person who knows where their parent is and how to contact them. By having both caseworkers participate in the placement,
  - this can reduce fear/anxiety of child,
  - facilitate the child's transition to a new caseworker,
  - expedite and clarify exchange of information and next steps/plans
  - allow the child to witness the sharing of important information about him/herself, birthparents and family, and
  - confirm all parties receive information on next steps and plans.
- Empower children and youth to participate in their care by specifically asking questions about their health, emotional and physical needs and preferences, etc.
- Allow child to gather belongings they choose to bring with them. Support parent in assisting child to pack items, as appropriate. Have duffel bag, suitcase, or tote bags available for packing if child does not have one. **Do not utilize garbage bags to pack child's belongings.**
- Encourage child, as appropriate to collect names, addresses, phone numbers, etc... of individuals with whom they would like to maintain contact. Discuss with parent any concerns about specific individuals.
- Ensure child gathers books or other school materials. Discuss openly with child if they will be attending same school. Provide child with opportunity to return to school to say goodbye to classmates, teachers, etc...if child so desires. Discuss with child prior to visit what information you will be able to share with specific individuals and how they may want to explain move.

### **Support a prepared, informed, and partnering foster care environment**

- Provide as much notice as possible to foster *parent* including information about child to allow informed placement decision and preparation by foster parent
- Provide foster parent with as much information as possible regarding child including health status, medical conditions, medical and food allergies, physicians, behavioral needs including interventions identified by parent to which the child responds, favorite foods, toys, bath routine, sleeping schedule, etc... LA R.S. 46:56 is clear that the "department may provide foster parents **all** information from the department's records and from other records to which the department has access concerning a child in the foster home, and concerning the child's family, where such information **is necessary** for the foster parents to properly care for the child."
- Discuss immediate and short term needs of child including medical, educational, initial visits, etc., how those will be accomplished including agreed upon scheduling and

transportation. Confirm to promptly share appointment times, scheduling changes, and completion of activities.

- Identify any possible resources for the foster parent related to the needs of the child – especially any that can assist within the first few days of placement
  - physician for initial medical or pharmacist for medications
  - community resources or specific assistance in securing initial clothing
- Convey importance of establishing positive and trusting relationship with birth family
  - Follow through with call to birth family to introduce foster parent, have foster parent ask for birth parents suggestions and information about child
  - Discuss opportunity to establish positive relationship, gather and share information at *Ice Breaker Meeting*
  - Allow foster parent autonomy to dialogue with birth parent based upon their level of comfort, progression of relationship, and information needed
- Provide foster caregivers with your and your supervisor's phone numbers, including after hours for emergencies. Discuss your work schedule, along with the foster caregivers', and discuss agreed upon communications including phone, email, text, etc. and time frame in which foster caregivers can expect response. Reaffirm commitment to ensuring confidentiality and protection of information in determining use of text, email, etc. Also explain that contact with supervisor is supported in the event emergency response is needed. Follow through on returning phone calls and messages timely.
- Acknowledge commitment made by caregiver to provide quality care and safety to this specific child, including support of birth family, maintaining family connections and contact, and ensuring that the child's foster care experience provides as much normalcy as possible. Thank, encourage, and support them in fully participating as a team member and partner in supporting the child and family's case plan.