



Kids benefit

When there is contact between birth and foster parents, studies show children:

- Have more stable placements.
- Experience better emotional development.
- Are more successful in school.
- Return home sooner.

Birth parents benefit

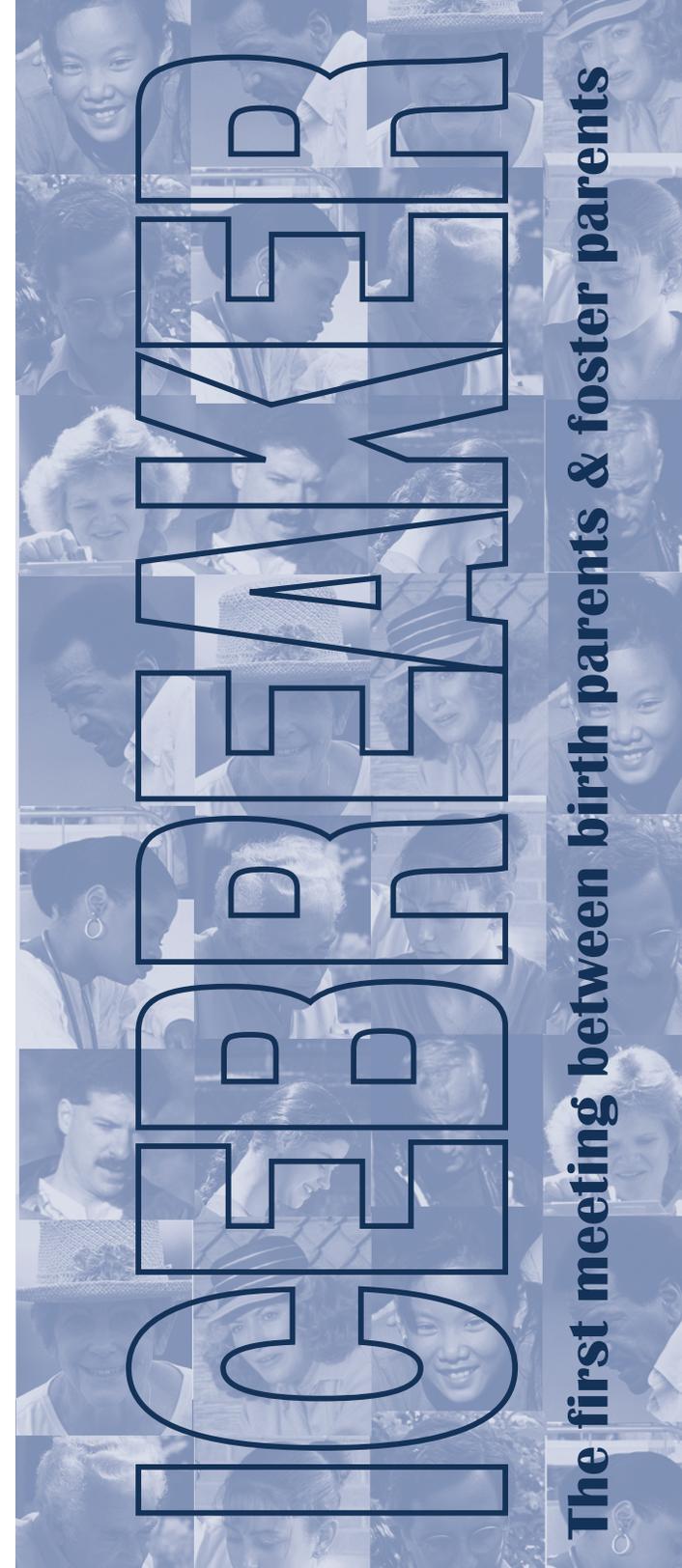


Contact with foster parents helps birth parents feel more at ease about their child's safety, well-being and placement.

How to have an effective Icebreaker meeting

- Arrive on time.
- Focus on the child's needs.
- Respect the feelings, opinions, cultural differences and ideas of others.
- Recognize the importance each person has in the life of the child.
- Keep what is said in the meeting confidential.

If you have questions or need this document in an alternate format, please contact your caseworker.



The first meeting between birth parents & foster parents

Why have an Icebreaker meeting?

An icebreaker meeting provides an opportunity for birth parents and foster parents to talk about the needs of the child.

The birth parents and foster parents are able to share information about themselves and their parenting practices.

Icebreaker meetings are most effective when they occur early in a child's placement. The caseworker coordinates the meeting. It lasts about 30 minutes or more and usually occurs at the child welfare office.

Roles and Responsibilities

Birth parents

- Share information about your child, including bed time or daily routines, favorite toys and foods, hobbies, likes and dislikes, etc.
- Bring important personal items for the child, such as pictures, favorite toys and clothes or other special things.

DHS caseworker

- Coordinate the meeting.
- Make sure participants understand why the meeting is being held and what will be discussed.
- Keep discussion focused on the child's needs.
- Ensure participants feel safe and comfortable.

Foster parents

- Ask for specific information about the child from the parents, such as routines and medical needs.
- Ask questions that will help you understand the child's needs, including cultural traditions.
- Talk about why you are a foster parent and some of the basic rules of your house. (You can also bring pictures which show your house and family activities.)

