Children's Home Society of North Carolina

First Days in a New Placement: Foster Parent Checklist

PURPOSE:

The first days in a new placement are critical. This checklist gives foster parents practical steps to help a child feel safe, welcome, and supported while also meeting legal and procedural requirements.

Before Arrival

- **Prepare** a quiet, comforting space.
- **Stock up** on age-appropriate clothing, bedding, and hygiene items.
- **Confirm** medical coverage and schedule initial health check-ups.
  Click for FMLA RESOURCE
- **Learn** about the child's background, preferences, and any immediate needs.

Day 1-3: Immediate Needs

- Set up simple **routines** (meals, bedtime, school prep).
- Provide **comfort items** (stuffed animals, nightlight, familiar snacks).
- Create a small **welcome basket** with age-appropriate snacks, activities, and personal items (example: chips, blanket, nail polish, candy for a teen girl). This gives the child choice, control, and comfort.
- **Assure** the child they are safe and welcome.

First Week

- **Enroll** the child in school (if needed) and communicate with teachers.
- **Connect** with their social worker and therapist (if applicable).
- **Observe** behaviors and emotions, offering patience and support.
- **Keep a log** of medical, educational, and emotional needs. *Click for Medication Form*
- **Learn** the child's preferences — ask what helps them feel comfortable and what they enjoy doing.

First 7-14 Days

- **Schedule** the child's first doctor's appointment (required within 7 days).
  - **Resource**: *10 Ways to Advocate at the Doctor – CHSNC*
    - Ask each professional (social worker, therapist, GAL, etc.) their preferred method of contact (phone, text, or email).
  - **Tip**: Start with a quick text asking their preference. Respect their order of communication.
    - Begin learning about the child's interests, creativity, and background.
    - Be flexible with expectations — allow rest, quiet time, and space as the child adjusts.

Stability Tips for the First Weeks

- **Lower expectations**: Don't expect immediate adjustment to routines, moods, or behaviors. Give grace.
- **Prioritize connection**: Small moments of empathy and shared activities build trust.
- **Honor their past**: Ask about favorite foods, music, or traditions from their life before placement.
- **Support from CHSNC**: Check with your placement specialist to schedule check-ins for the first couple weeks.

Child's Perspective

Remember, this is new to you and the child entering your home. Here are some real things that are important for the child to feel welcomed and safe:

- "A home feels safe when I have my own space and things just for me."
- "Snacks or goodies I like show that someone thought about me."
- "It helps when people don't expect me to act like everything is fine right away."

Resources

- How Foster Care Disruptions Affect a Child's Emotions and Development
- Minimizing Foster Care Disruptions – What Foster Care Is and What It Isn't
- Preventing Foster Care Disruptions: Three Essential Strategies for Foster Parents
- What Causes Foster Care Disruptions? Common Types and Triggers

For foster parents licensed with Children's Home Society, log in to your Sky Prep account for additional training about this topic.

For more foster parent resources, visit:

chsnc.org