

Guidelines for assessing parents and children regarding placement preferences

Introduction

For most parents and their children, having children removed from the home is experienced as a crisis. The crisis may derive from the events necessitating placement, from removal from the home, per se, or from other aspects of involvement in the child welfare system. The negative and crisis nature of placement can be decreased in part by acknowledging its impact and attending to the parents' and child's wishes and needs regarding placement.

Placement selection should be based upon children's best interest. The parents and the child may be an excellent source of information about what placement will be the best for the child. However, best interest may differ from child and parental preferences. Most children would rather stay with their parents/caretakers, and most parents/caretakers want to keep their children. In addition, there are agency policies that must be adhered to and there are always constraints related to caseworkers' ability to effect best interest placements; chief among these is the lack of sufficient numbers of placements. Thus, caseworkers should take care not to raise unrealistic expectations in either parents or children when assessing children's needs and parents' wishes. Moreover, since not all needs can be satisfied, caseworkers should try to ascertain priorities.

Although there are child welfare policy requirements regarding placement processes, there are few examples of practice guidelines about how to gather information from parents and children about placement preferences.

Instructions to the caseworker

1. Give the list to the parent or child.
2. Explain that you will do your best to consider their wishes, but issues of child safety and availability of placements will limit how much you will be able to consider their wishes.
3. Read through the items on the list out loud with them.
4. Ask them to tell you which of the things (considerations) on the list is most important.
5. Instruct them not to choose more than three "most important."
6. Next ask them to tell you the things that are the least important, again limiting these to three items on the list.
7. Ask them to tell you more about their wishes and feelings related to placement.
8. Older children should have more say about where they are placed than younger children.
9. When interviewing children, be sure to tailor your inquiry to the child's developmental stage.

Questions for Parents whose children are going into placement:

1. Here is a list of things to consider in finding a temporary home for your child. Please read them.
 2. Tell me which three are the most important.
 3. Tell me which three are the least important.
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_____ **1. Stay in a previous placement** (if your child has lived with somewhere else before).

Name:
Address:
Phone:

_____ **2. Live with a relative.**

Names
Address
Phone

_____ **3. Stay with a family friend.**

Name:
Address:
Phone:

_____ **4. Stay with a neighbor.**

Name:
Address:
Phone:

_____ **5. Live in a home with other children.**

_____ **6. Not live with a family but in a group care facility.**

_____ **7. Have the children in my family stay together.**

_____ **8. My child be able to attend same school.**

_____ **9. My child be with family of our religion.**

What religion?

_____ **10. My child be with family with the same traditions.**

What traditions are important? (e.g. food, holidays)

_____ **11. My child live in a particular location.**

City Suburbs Rural/country

Placement questions for children: (for children 8 years and older)

1. Tell me which three are the most important.
 2. Tell me which three are the least important.
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_____ **1. Before this did you ever live with someone else?**

If yes, would you like to go back and live there?

Who are they?

_____ **2. Are there relatives whom you could live with for a while?**

Who are they?

_____ **3. Are there adults/grown-ups who are close to your family, who are not relatives, you would like to live with?**

Who are they?

_____ **4. Do you want to live in the same neighborhood or close to your family?**

_____ **5. Do you want to live with brothers and sisters?**

_____ **6. Do you want to be able to go to your same school?**

_____ **7. Do you want to live with someone with the same traditions as you?**

What traditions are important? (e.g. food, holidays)

_____ **8. Do you want to live with someone of the same religion as you?**

What religion is that?

_____ **9. Do you want to live with a family that has other children?**

_____ **10. Do you want to live in the city?**

the suburbs?

the country?

_____ **11. Would you prefer to live in a group home than with a family (can be asked of teenagers)?**