

# Trauma Informed Practice Strategies (T.I.P.S.) for Foster Parents

## 1. Provide sensory comfort, familiarity, help with settling in.

- Ask children about their favorite foods, their bedtime routines, hobbies and favorite things to do.
- Have a welcome basket for new children when they arrive.
- Babies and very young children (e.g. preverbal) need physical soothing, maybe a snack when they first arrive.
- Cooking kids' favorite foods can provide soothing sensory stimulation which has an effect on the brain, relieving stress and anxiety.
- Show them around the house when they arrive.
- Show them their room and what is theirs.
- Ask them if they're hungry or thirsty.
- Show them where there are snacks that they can have whenever they want. For younger children, have a snack drawer that they can reach.
- Ask them what they would like to do.
- Ask if they take any medications.
- If they come in the middle of the night, offer to rub their back (probably best only for younger children - be sure to ask if it's OK before touching or hugging), stay with them for a while if they want, play soothing CD's, have stuffed animals, be available if they need anything.
- If they mention something they didn't bring with them or that they wished they had, ask the caseworker if he or she can get it.

## 2. Empathize, connect, try to understand the child's perspective, but don't probe.

- Be open to listening if they want to talk, but don't probe or grill them.
- Acknowledge their feelings and the difficulty of what they are going through.
- Assure them that they are safe and will be cared for.

### 3. Support child's relationships and family connections

- Honor the relationship between children and their parents. Acknowledge their love for their parents and their parents' love for them. Realize that, despite abuse or neglect, the child is experiencing grief and loss at being separated from their parents (and siblings if in a different placement).
- Support contact with siblings.
- Support visits with parents.
- Provide the parent with information on how the child is doing, what their routines are and what it's like in your house (e.g. at the beginning of visits if transporting the child, at icebreakers, family meetings, etc.). Parents may convey worry to the child if they don't know where they are or what it's like where they are.
- If there is an opportunity (e.g. to attend an icebreaker) ask the parents about the child's routines, what is soothing to the child, likes and dislikes, medical conditions, allergies, etc. (especially important for babies and very young children).
- Children benefit and feel reassured when they see all the adults (foster parents, parents, caseworkers, school staff, etc.) working together to resolve issues, to make a good plan and to make things better.

### 4. Provide structure, control, inclusion, predictability

- Create a positive environment in the home.
- Keep the menu kid friendly, include them in making dinner.
- Talk to them about their likes and dislikes and honor those during the first few weeks, or even days.
- Older children – talk to them. Let them know what to expect around your house. Gradually introduce them to rules.
- Ask them if there's anything they need or would like to happen for them to feel safe and comfortable.

### 5. Advocate for the child by advocating for personal support and training.

- Seek ongoing education and training. Additional training and feelings of competency in the foster parent can help relieve stress for you and the child.
- Ask the caseworker if you need assistance with a child.
- Seek clarity with regards to policy and case specifics around contact between siblings or other family members.