

**From:** Scott Corcoran [scott@afamilyforeverychild.org]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 18, 2013 4:41 PM  
**To:** scott@afamilyforeverychild.org  
**Subject:** Gathering information about your child



Dear ,

Children joining a new family often bring complicated histories and backgrounds that include abuse and neglect. These children may have multiple diagnoses that effect their health, social skills, academics, and emotional well-being. The more familiar you are with how trauma effects a child's daily life and relationships, the better prepared you will be to help your child work through their past and advocate for resources at school and in your community. It's important that you obtain accurate information as well, so reaching out to experience foster and adoptive parents or other community resources will be of great benefit to you and your child.

### **Information You Need About Your Child**

Gather as much information as you can about your child's social and medical history from the child's caseworker, foster parents, therapist, doctor, CASA, teacher, and also your agency. Rules on what must be shared vary by state, but overall you should ask for the following information:

- Why was the child initially placed in foster care? If applicable, why was the child subsequently placed in foster care?
- Details surrounding the child's other placements
- School records and details about the child's educational experiences, their abilities, etc.
- Details on how well the child interacts with others-peers, adults, pets, etc.
- Health records, including any immunization records and diagnoses related to emotional, behavioral, learning and developmental disabilities
- What are the child's behaviors? How do they play out when he/she is interacting with others? How have past foster parents dealt with the behaviors?
- General background information on the birth parents including education level, employment record, armed services history, social risk factors, medical risk factors, substance usage, mental health history, prenatal care history, and information about other children and extended family members.

### **Questions to ask former caregivers**

A child's foster parents may be willing to share their insight about the child and strategies they have employed to help the child heal from their trauma and work on their behaviors. The following are some questions you may want to ask a child's former caregivers:

- What information about the child's social and medical history do you believe to be significant? What information about the child's birth family's social and medical history do you believe to be significant?
- Is there anything missing from the paperwork? If so, what?
- How can I get more information about the child and his/her needs?
- How is the child's health? Has he/she been diagnosed with anything that is not listed in this file (allergies, mental health diagnoses, etc)?
- Does the child still maintain contact with his/her birth family? If so, who is he/she still in contact with? If not, when was the last time she/he had contact with their birth family?
- Does the child have any siblings that are not part of the adoption? If so, are they still in contact with their siblings, and what type of contact will be necessary post-adoption?
- What types of behaviors is the child showing related to abuse, separation, loss or any other trauma?
- How many foster care placements has the child been in? If the child has experienced multiple placements, what were the reasons behind the move? How did the child handle

moving from one home to another?

-How well does the child relate to his/her peers?

-What methods of discipline have you found the most effective?

-What comforts the child?

-What items or events trigger negative behaviors in the child? (Smells, foods, experiences, etc).

-In your opinion, what is the root cause of the child's behaviors?

-Are you willing to tell the child that he/she has your permission to join our family?

### **Should I be a foster parent before I adopt?**

It is not necessary to be a foster parent before you adopt from foster care. Being a foster parent, however, may increase your chances of adopting a younger child. Many of the younger children that come into care are placed with their foster parents if reunification is not possible to minimize the number of transitions that a child goes through in their young life. If a child becomes legally free, foster parents should be able to adopt that child in their care. As of September 2011, of the 400,540 children that were in foster care, 47% of them were adopted by a non-relative foster family.

### **Changing the welfare system**

If you want to help children in foster care and help change the system, join the many volunteers who donate their time every year helping children in foster care. Talk to your agency or a parent support group in your area to find out ways that you can get involved. In addition, take a look at [101 Ways to Get Involved in Foster Care](#) and AFFEC's [volunteer](#) page.

### **Additional Information**

After gathering all the information you can about the child from the people that work closely with him/her, you will need to make a commitment as a family to do whatever it takes to help the child heal and move forward with their life. For more information on what to ask when obtaining additional information on a child's background, visit Child Welfare Information Gateway's guide on [Obtaining Background Information on Your Prospective Adoptive Child](#). You can also check out NACAC's site to search for [parent support groups](#) in your area to gather more insight on adopting from foster care.

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