

Benefits of the Icebreaker Meeting

- ◆ Fosters open communication between birth parents and foster parents.
- ◆ Results in more stable placements by minimizing placement disruptions.
- ◆ Improves reunification or permanency outcomes.
- ◆ Helps birth parents preserve and strengthen their bonds with their children.
- ◆ Encourages birth parents in engaging in needed services more quickly.
- ◆ Fosters smoother transitions for children to new schools and placements.

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



NEVADA DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF CHILD
AND FAMILY SERVICES

Icebreaker Meetings



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What is an Icebreaker Meeting?

An icebreaker meeting is a facilitated, child-focused meeting, held shortly after a child is placed (or re-placed) in out-of-home care, to provide an opportunity for birth parents and foster parents (or other caregivers) to meet each other and to share information about the birth family, foster family and, most importantly, the needs of the child. This meeting is the beginning of establishing communication and building a relationship between the child's parents and caregivers.

When and where do the meetings occur?

Meetings are most effective when they occur early in the child's placement, ideally within seven days of placement. They last about 30 minutes and normally occur at the DCFS office or a neutral location.

Who will be there?

The meeting will be attended by the birth parent, foster parent(s), DCFS worker, and the child, if appropriate.

What is the role of DCFS?

- ◆ Schedule and host the meeting
- ◆ Educate participants on why the meeting is being held and what will be discussed
- ◆ Keep discussions focused on the child's needs
- ◆ Ensure participants feel safe and comfortable

What is the role of the birth parent?

- ◆ Share information about your child including bed time, daily routines, cultural traditions, favorite toys and foods, hobbies, important relationships, likes and dislikes, etc.
- ◆ Share information about any special needs including medical, dental, behavioral, and educational (does your child have an IEP, academic strengths or deficits?)
- ◆ Bring important personal items for your child such as pictures, favorite toys or clothes, or other special things

What is the role of the foster parent?

- ◆ Share background information such as how long you have been a foster parent, why you are a foster parent, basic rules in your home, family values and habits, disciplinary style, likes and dislikes, languages, food, religion, etc.
- ◆ Ask for specific information from the parents, such as routines, medical, educational needs, traditions, etc.
- ◆ Ask questions that will help you understand the child's needs and help make them more comfortable in your home.
- ◆ How is the child doing in your home?

