

Shared Parenting

A simple guide for parents and caregivers

THE MAIN IDEA

Shared parenting keeps the child at the center. Parents, caregivers, and the worker share information and work as a team.

Your Questions, Answered

What is shared parenting?

It is a partnership between a child's parents and caregivers. They share information and work together to care for the child.

Does shared parenting replace the parent?

No. The goal is to facilitate communication between the parent and caregiver, support each person's role, and help the child stay connected to family and loved ones.

Why does it matter?

Children often feel less loss and worry when the adults share helpful information and support their family ties.

- It helps the child get consistent care.
- Parents can share important information with caregivers.
- It helps parents stay involved and can support return home.
- In some cases, children can continue the relationship with the foster family after they return home.
- If return home is not possible, it may help the child keep safe family ties.

When should parents and caregivers meet?

The worker should introduce them at the shelter care hearing when possible. An introductory meeting should be set within 7 days after protective custody. It may happen during the 14-day CFTM.

What can we talk about?

Keep the talk focused on the child: food, sleep, school, health, comfort, routines, culture, hair care, favorite activities, visits, and special events.

How can we share information?

Use the CFS 458-C, Let Me Tell You About My Child. Notes, drawings, and approved calls or messages can also help. The caseworker will inform the parent and caregiver what is approved.

What should parents do?

Share facts that help the caregiver care for the child. Follow the meeting rules, use first names, and keep the talk about the child. Ask the worker about case-plan issues.

What should caregivers do?

Ask the parent what the child needs. Share updates that may ease worry. Support the return-home goal when that is the goal. Do not make plans with the parent unless the worker approves them.

What should the worker do?

The worker should guide the partnership, explain roles, help set safe ways to communicate, include caregivers in team meetings, and follow up on concerns.

Should we share addresses or phone numbers?

At the first meeting, use first names only and do not ask for or share home addresses or phone numbers. The worker can help set an approved way to stay in touch.

Can parents join appointments and events?

When safe and approved by the caseworker, parents may be included in birthdays, school events, haircuts, medical or dental visits, sports, and other milestones.

IMPORTANT: Keep communication child-focused and use only the contact methods approved by the worker or set by the court.

Words You May Hear

Caregiver: The foster parent or relative caring for the child.

Introductory meeting: The first planned meeting between the parent, caregiver, and worker.

Permanency worker: The worker who helps guide the child's case and long-term plan.

Lifebook: A record of the child's story, people, photos, and important events.

Where can I learn more?

More details are in Illinois DCFS Procedure 315.30.

This guide gives general information. It is not legal advice. Rules and case details can change what happens. Ask your worker, supervisor, or lawyer about your own case.