

## **Foster Care: How do I engage birth/legal parents?**

Birth/Legal Parents retain the rights and responsibility for consenting to non-emergency, non-routine care; e.g. elective surgical procedures, psychotropic medications, inpatient psychiatric admission, requesting a vaccine waiver and consenting for release of health/mental health records.

Reunification is the primary permanency plan for the majority of children in foster care, so it is important to make sure that birth/legal parents remain engaged in their child's health/mental health care to the fullest extent possible.

Following are the steps you can take to engage birth/legal parents in health/mental health appointments:

1. Communicate clearly with birth/legal parents about any limits on contact between the child and birth/legal parent; e.g. must visits be supervised, is there an order of no contact.
2. If there are no restrictions/concerns about birth/legal parents attending appointments:
  - a. Talk with health/mental health providers about how to include birth/legal parents in appointments call/text reminders along with foster parents and foster care worker.
  - b. Include birth/legal parents and foster parents when scheduling appointments.
  - c. Make copies of the after appointment summaries for birth/legal and foster parents.
3. If birth/legal parents are limited to supervised visitation:
  - a. Work with health/mental health providers to determine how to ensure any supervision needs during times when the child is in the waiting area.
  - b. Continue to include birth/legal parents in appointment call/text reminders along with foster parents and foster care worker.
  - c. Include birth/legal parents and foster parents when scheduling appointments.
  - d. Make copies of the after appointment summaries for birth/legal and foster parents.
4. If birth/legal parents are restricted from direct contact with child:
  - a. Consider how to build time during appointments to obtain information from birth/legal parent; e.g. phone contact or completing clinical questionnaires.
  - b. Talk with health care providers about assisting with arranging for consents for treatment needing birth/legal parent approval.
5. Build birth/legal parent involvement in health/mental health appointments into the Parent Agency Treatment Plan.

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6. Report on birth/legal parent engagement in ISP/USP documents.
7. Provide parents with a medical passport quarterly with any recent updates to the child's medical/dental/mental health needs.