



RESTORATION CARE

Restoration is the default permanency goal for children who enter care. This is because restoration recognises the child's basic human right to be with their parents (where it is safe to do so). Carers play a critical role in successful restoration but it can be a time of mixed emotions for them and many experience grief and loss.

The role of carers in restoration

Research has shown that positive relationships between carers and a child's parents leads to better outcomes for the child returning home. There are a number of ways that you can work with the biological parent of the child/ren in your care. These include:

- Attending appointments together
- Involving the biological family in decision making
- Including the biological family in celebrations
- Acknowledging the biological parents' views and providing positive feedback to help build trust and confidence
- Sharing a meal together
- Providing updates to each other about the child's growth and development (e.g. preferred evening routine)
- Working with the biological family to determine the logistics of family time (for example, who will do drop offs and pick ups)

The mixed emotions of restoration care

As a carer you might disagree with restoration. It is common for carers to have concerns that the biological parents have not changed enough or hold concerns that they will revert to their old ways. You may feel that the child is better off living with you. Whilst these are valid feelings and concerns, it is vital that you accept the restoration so that you can support the child through the restoration and contribute to planning.

GRIEF AND LOSS IN RESTORATION CARE

Factors influencing grief for foster parent

- **Characteristics of the foster child/parent relationship:** Age of the child when placed, length of time in placement, and the emotional 'fit' of the parent and child.
- **Circumstances of the child's transition to and from placement:** I.e. a well planned cooperative transition or an abrupt unexpected move.
- **Permanency planning**
- **Culture and belief system:** Expression of grief being seen as a weakness, demanding multiple roles of the foster carer, the agency's plan to place another child as soon as the vacancy in the home is expected.

Signs of grief

- Grief touches every aspect of a person and may involve psychological, behavioural and physical grief. These symptoms can include:
- Numbness
- Irritability
- Sleep disturbances
- Guilt
- Anger
- Weepiness
- Loneliness
- Loss of appetite
- Apathy
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Powerlessness
- Tension
- Overwhelming pain

These symptoms can be distressing to the foster parent, especially when neither the foster parent nor the people in the social environment expected a grieving response.

Practical strategies for managing grief and transitions

- Take time to sort out your feelings and think about where they are coming from
- Allow yourself time to grieve
- Talk to someone about your feelings
- Ask your child's social worker to involve you in the planning process and keep you informed of developments as they occur
- Establish with your social worker, what future contacts if any, you may have with the child after the move takes place
- Remember your good times and accomplishments
- Draw your family closer and 'regroup'
- Make a scrapbook of events and times spent together
- Have a going away party for the child
- Duplicate pictures of events in the foster family and give one set to the parents
- A gift to the child, however small, may serve as an important transitional object
- Have a special meal for the child where you cook their favourite food



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