

# Fostering Relationships: An Enhanced Visitation Program



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# Why have enhanced visitation?

- Visitation often goes poorly because
  1. Child uncomfortable around birth mother and she may push for quick intimacy
  2. Birth mother feels rejected by her child
  3. Birth mother may not have developed skills for interacting with young children

# Why have enhanced visitation?

- Enhance likelihood that:
  - Birth parent will have pleasant interactions with child (will not feel rejected)
  - Birth parent will feel supported by foster parent
  - Foster and birth parent will learn to follow child's lead

# *What we want to achieve*

1. Birth parents become more comfortable relying on foster parent for support
  
1. Visitation goes better for everyone
  - a. Birth mother gives child time to warm up
  - b. Birth mother does not feel rejected by child
  - c. Birth mother learns to follow her child's lead

# Mentor training

- Meet with birth parent 15-20 minutes alone prior to each of 5 visitation sessions
- **Session 1: Child Wariness**
  - Help parent anticipate child reticence
  - Help practice holding back
- **Sessions 2-5: Following the Lead**
  - Review reticence and holding back
  - Teach following the lead

# Foster parent training

- Join first five visitation sessions with birth parent and child
- Your role is to support the birth mother during visitation by commenting on times when she follows her child lead
- *Imitating (do what I do)*
- *Narrating*
- *Responding to child's game, not yours*



# Foster parent training

- Ideally you will be in the room with the child and the birth mother will enter after she finishes meeting with the Mentor (like videos)
- Room should have several age appropriate toys
  - Puzzles with big pieces
  - Toy animals
  - Blocks

# Foster parent training

- Commenting is hard! Here are some examples:

1. Point out *specifically* the parent's behavior:

“That’s a perfect example of following her lead — she rolled the car and you said ‘Wow you’re driving the car!’”





## Examples of in the moment feedback:

2. Linking how what mom just did affects child:

“Great job following her lead! Did you see how she smiled at you there? That makes her feel so important!”

“Wow you stacked a block just like she did! It’s hard to believe, but following her lead like that will help her develop good skills for school!”