

April 20, 2020

QPI-MN, a system change strategy to strengthen foster care, endorses the earliest, initial communication (Comfort Calls) possible between parent and foster parent as best practice for our child welfare system. Comfort Calls reduce trauma for children when out of home placement occurs by equipping the placing social worker and the foster / relative / kin parent to place a phone call to the child(ren)'s parent (birth parent, relative, legal guardian and/or previous foster parent).

Demonstrated outcomes related to Comfort Call practices across Quality Parenting Initiative sites include:

Comfort Call Improves	Comfort Call Reduces	Why is this important?
Improved child or youth's ability to tolerate physiological effects that occurs when major changes happen (removal from parent and family).	Significant stress and confusion occurs for children and youth when they experience separation from their primary caregiver(s). When inadequately addressed, this stress leads to trauma.	Separation intensifies the detrimental physiological effects of abrupt and overwhelming change in the child or youth. Higher stress hormones lead to compromised capacity and behavior regression.
Shared understanding around the unique needs and preferences of the child(ren) between the individuals who are parenting/caring for them.	The child or youth loses everything familiar to them when communication does not occur between birth and foster parents.	Quickens the learning curve of foster parents understanding of how to care for the child(ren). Child/youth experiences safety when the parent is okay with the unknown person providing care for them.
Birth and foster parents begin building a relationship in support of shared parenting.	Reduces feelings of loyalty binds for the child(ren)/youth. Child(ren) being less likely to use defiant behavior to demonstrate loyalty to their birth families.	Effective shared parenting and conflict resolution between birth parents and foster parents reduces the amount of children's internalizing and externalizing problems. A relationship with the foster parent provides support to the child and parent in ways that case managers cannot because of their role in child welfare.
Improving birth family engagement through the life of the case by immediately demonstrating to birth parents that caseworkers can be trusted to follow through on their promises and commitments.	Reduces case coordination for case workers and service providers.	A trusting relationship is developed by discussing what each can expect to occur within the upcoming days regarding contact and planned next steps.

QPI-MN extends gratitude to Representative Rena Moran and the House Health & Human Services Committee for their inclusion of the Comfort Call Bill. This serves children and youth's immediate sense of security and their long-term development into adulthood – which has a tremendous impact for Minnesota communities health and vitality.

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