

## Saying Hello

**It's important to understand how to "build a safe place" for each child that enters your home. Physical safety is not the same as psychological safety and your child will have his/her own definition of what feels safe.**

**To create a welcoming and safe environment, here are some things you may consider doing.**

### ***Prior to a child coming:***

- Create a "welcome book" with information about your family, home and neighborhood. A welcome book is a binder with photos of your home, notes about your family and a list of general house rules.
- Make rules simple to understand and bendable. Understand that any rule that is set may not work for every child. Limit the rules to a reasonable number depending upon the age of the child. A general guideline is to have no more than 5 major rules at the beginning of a placement. You can add and adjust as time passes.
- Consider making the bedroom a place for sleeping and dressing only by keeping toys and activities out of the bedroom. This may simplify your life and his by decreasing clutter and avoiding needing to supervise kids in bedrooms.

### ***On the first day:***

- Smile and get down on eye level if possible.
- Bake cookies or have other comfort snack foods available. Offer food but don't pressure eating. Many kids are hungry but afraid to ask for food.



- Be sensitive to touch and recognize that you are a stranger to him. Ask for permission before touching unless it's a small child.
- If there are other kids in the family, let the other kids show the "new kid" around. Show him his room and where he can put his belongings. Have a night light available for use in the bedroom and bathroom nearby.
- Sit down and talk about what is

happening and the expectations for living in your home. Use your welcome book as a guide to explain house rules and where to find things. Encourage him to talk about any rule that may be hard to follow (like shutting the bathroom door). Don't be overly forceful with the rules. Don't hand him the rules and let him read it on his own. Let him have the welcome book to keep until he doesn't need it anymore.

- Let him know that he can ask you any question that comes to mind and answer questions as honestly and accurately as possible. He will likely think you have information about birth family visitation, court and other important aspects of his case. *(continued on page 3)*

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## Medicaid for Youth after Foster Care

**Did you know that youth who turn 18 while still in foster care can continue to have Medicaid after they leave?**

Once a youth ages out or leaves foster care, she can go to her local DSS agency and apply for Medicaid under the “Former Foster Care” aid category. The application

is fairly simple. She needs to indicate on the application that she was a former foster care child. Income limits do not apply and she can receive the services until the age of 26 years.

If she is disabled, receives Social Security or has a child, she may qualify under a different aid category.

## Tax Tips

As you get ready to file taxes for 2015 please remember that you can claim foster care payments **ONLY** if the foster child is **not claimed** as a dependent and that **no expenses regarding the care of the child** are claimed.



Please be aware that when foster parents claim foster youth on their tax returns it can have a negative impact on that youth's ability to qualify for college financial aid. In order for a foster youth to get

the maximum amount of financial aid, he must qualify as an independent person.

If you claim a foster youth on your taxes, some colleges will consider that student dependent and will use your income to determine if the youth qualifies for various financial aid packages. If you have questions or concerns, please talk with your caseworker or financial aid representative from the institution the youth is planning to attend.

**You can learn more about claiming foster youth on your taxes at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) as well as the CCC Foster Parent Pre-Service Training Manual (2014 update, page 41).**

## Spring Break Plans

Spring Break will be here sooner than you realize and you may want start planning activities for the children in your home while they're out of school.

Teaching independent living skills is a great use of time and will help children for years to come.

If your child is old enough, consider a baking project.



Baking cookies, breads, cakes and other treats helps children learn to measure, how to follow a recipe and the safe use of kitchen equipment. Having delicious treats to share also benefits the family!

**[Here's a recipe to get you started.](#)**

# Calories Count!

The USDA recommends that children consume the following calories per day according to age and gender. However, it is important to note that calorie requirements may be greater for active children:



2 – 3 years old:	1,000 calories	9 – 13 male:	1,800 cal.
4 – 8 years old:	1,200-1,400 cal.	14 – 18 female:	1,800 cal.
9 – 13 female:	1,600 cal.	14 – 18 male:	2,200 cal.

It can be difficult to determine how many servings of which foods are appropriate to feed children of different ages and genders. Consider the following serving recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics and use them to determine which foods and how many servings are appropriate for your child:

AGE	FRUITS (CUPS)	VEGETABLES (CUPS)	GRAINS (OUNCES)	MEATS / BEANS (CUPS)	MILK (CUPS)	OILS (TSP)
2-3 years	1	2	3	2	2	3
4 – 8	1 – 1 ½	1 ½	4-5	3-4	2	4
9 – 13 females	1 ½	2	5	5	3	5
9 – 13 males	1 ½	2	5	5	3	5
14 – 18 females	1 ½	2 ½	6	5	3	5
14 – 18 males	2	3	7	6	3	6

## Saying Hello (continued from page 1)

- Ask him what you can do to make him feel more comfortable and make sure you make efforts to meet this need. Asking about food preferences will go a long way to show you care and want him to be comfortable.
- Plan something fun and low key. Play a game, watch a movie, go to the park and have fun! Relax, laugh and enjoy being together.

### *During the get-to-know-you period:*

- Give him control over some aspects of his life. This could be contributing to rules or deciding what to wear.
- Help him to maintain a sense of connection to his past by creating a collage of pictures of the child’s favorite people. Get pictures from social media, case workers or his family if possible.
- Let the child know what will happen next whenever possible. Creating structure and predictability in routines will help most kids feel safe.
- Involve him in meal planning and set meals at consistent times.
- Help him to “own” the bedroom by making it his own. This could mean putting posters on the wall or putting his belongings where he likes.
- Set consistent sleep and wake times with predictable and calming routines. Work with him to come up with a routine that makes sense for everyone’s schedule and sleep needs.
- Don’t bring up any other “parents’ unless the child does first. Some kids will want to forget and some kids will always compare you to other parents. Be understanding and neutral in your responses when this comes up. Never disrespect other parents, even if they did terrible things to the child. Remember, that he loves his parents and needs to heal at his own pace.
- Don’t treat the child as being “different” by doing things like introducing him as a “foster child.” Kids just want to be treated like everyone else. Don’t make him stand out more by treating him differently than your other kids. The only time treating a child differently may make sense is when addressing a behavior problem.
- If he has a lot of anger issues, buy a lot of pillows and soft things. Remember that anger is natural. Don’t get mad because he is mad. Rather, teach him to direct his anger appropriately.



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Catholic Charities**

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## Reminders

CCC offices will be closed to celebrate the following holidays:

President's Day (February 15th)

Good Friday (March 25th)



## Things to know

- Please remember to let your case worker know if you are making plans for respite or travel during any upcoming school holidays. A minimum of two week's notice is needed.
- Our annual foster parent and youth survey will be distributed in March. Your case worker will bring them out to your home and will have them available at training classes during March. All feedback is appreciated as we use it to help us improve our services and support.

## There's an app for that!

Did you know there's a smart phone app for foster parents and foster kids? Last year UCLA's Nathanson Center launched a **FOCUS on Foster Families** app which has stories and helpful information for both parents and youth.

The app has a wealth of videos focusing on five main skill areas:

- (1) communicating
- (2) overcoming stressful or traumatic situations
- (3) solving problems
- (4) dealing with tough emotions
- (5) setting goals



For parents there are video interviews of real parents covering everything from dealing with tantrums to managing visits with birth parents. For youth the videos range from the practical (advice for dealing with attorneys, court and social workers) to the more abstract (you have to be your own voice).

This is a wonderful resource that is available to you for free.

**Commonwealth Catholic Charities (CCC) meets the basic needs of the community's most vulnerable residents, including families in crisis, pregnant women, the hungry and homeless, children, seniors, refugees and immigrants. Last year CCC provided hope and help to more than 40,000 people in need throughout Virginia.**