



Course 4.1: Comfort Calls

(Revised 2026)

Adapted from Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) Minnesota's Comfort Call Guide

What is it?

Comfort calls are a short, 10–15-minute phone call either the day of placement or the next day between the resource family and birth parents. The purpose of this call is to do an initial introduction, share information about the child, and share information about the resource family home.

Goals of the comfort call:

- Set the stage for partnership and co-parenting between the birth family and foster family.
- Open the door for birth and foster families to ask questions to one another that support the child/youth during the difficult time of initial separation.
- Reduce trauma and confusion that occurs for both children/youth and parents when they experience separation.

Options to initiate the Comfort Call:

- If the resource parent is comfortable, they can facilitate the Comfort Call, with sufficient prep from the caseworker and certifier, including how to end the call if it becomes unhelpful.
- DHS staff can facilitate a call during the initial placement of the child into the foster home.
- The case worker can facilitate a three-way call with the resource family and the birth family.

Examples of information resource families might share:

- Consider sharing compliments about their children.
- We're not here to replace you, we are here to support you and your child until they can go home.
- Share the makeup of your home – Who lives there? Other kids? Pets?
- Where will the child/children sleep? Do they share a room?
- If the call happens the day after placement, how did the first night go?

Examples of information resource families might share:

- What is your child's typical routine?
- What are the child's likes/dislikes/favorite foods?
- Allergies or medical needs
- Who are the important people in your child's life that they may bring up or talk about?
- Are there specific things you want us to know to help make your child/children more comfortable?
- Offer for the parents to bring family photos and photos of pets to the Icebreaker or provide them to the caseworker so they can be hung in the child's bedroom at the resource home.
- Ask if the parent has any pictures of their family and pets that they would like to gather and give to the caseworker, or bring to the Icebreaker, so you can offer to hang them up in the children's bedroom or get them a small photo album.
- Is there anything else you want us to know about your child/children?

If available, child/children and parents can talk briefly as well. This can be very helpful in reducing trauma for both children and parents.

What to do if the call becomes unhelpful:

These phone calls are meant to be helpful and demonstrate care and concern for the child/youth. If the phone call is not going well and the parent is not ready and able to have the conversation, end the call in a calm manner by simply restating why you made the phone call and indicate that you hope to communicate in the future. If you do have to end the conversation, contact the case worker and let them know what happened.

Next Steps:

We know that children and youth do their best when there is strengthened communication and relationship between their caregivers. The Comfort Call is meant to be a building block to a relationship between birth and resource families with hope that an Icebreaker Meeting can occur next.

You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer free of charge. Contact Resource Family Training at resource.familytraining@odhsoha.oregon.gov or 503-930-8903. We accept all relay calls.

Building the Relationship

Birth Parent	Foster Parent/Kinship Caregiver
<p>Suggested ways to build a strong relationship with resource parent foster/kinship caregiver through comfort calls and other introductory meetings to share your knowledge about your child, maintain a close bond and keep in regular contact with your child.</p>	<p>Suggested ways to build a strong relationship and support the birth parent in comfort calls and other introductory meetings to help you understand the experiences, culture, traditions, and routines of the child so that you can better respond to the needs of the family.</p>
<p>Here are some ideas you may want to share or discuss during a comfort call or an in-person family introductory meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I really love and care about my child. ❖ I am hoping that my child will be able to come back home to me. ❖ I want to know how my child is doing. ❖ I want you to know about my child’s medical information. ❖ I want you to know what my child really likes. ❖ I want you to know what my child doesn’t like. ❖ I want you to know that my child needs this routine for bedtime. ❖ I would like to know what school my child will attend. ❖ I would like to know how many children you have cared for in your home. <p>You may wish to ask questions about where your child is placed and information about resource families/kinship caregivers such as:</p> <p>What does your home look like? Are there any other children in your home? What does an average day in your house look like? How will my child fit into your family? How do you handle discipline in your family?</p> <p>It would be valuable for you to share your child’s sleeping habits, food preferences, likes and dislikes, medical issues, school progress and other relevant information to help the foster parent/kinship caregiver provide a smooth adjustment for your child.</p>	<p>Here are some ways that you can introduce yourself during the comfort call or in-person family introductory meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ “Hi – I am Betty, the foster parent taking care of your son for now. I can tell that he really misses you and his dad. I wanted to make sure that you knew who was taking care of Tommy. I really hope you and I can develop a positive relationship so we can best support Tommy together in this time.” ❖ The foster parent/kinship caregiver may ask the birth parent questions such as: ❖ Do you have any ideas how I can help your child tonight? ❖ What is your child’s favorite toy? Likes? Dislikes? ❖ What is your child’s favorite song that he/she likes? ❖ Does your child have a bedtime routine or any sleep habits? ❖ How are you doing? ❖ Do you have anyone who can support you right now? ❖ Can I tell your son or daughter that you are doing okay to help him or her feel more comfortable? <p>If you are comfortable doing so, you might share information about your family size and the ages and gender of the other children in your home. You may also want to describe a little about what your home looks like and the general neighborhood where you live.</p> <p>If the birth parent does not want to talk during the first comfort call, you may say you understand why they may be upset and ask if it would be okay to call back. Explain that you would like to share how their son or daughter is doing and obtain ideas from the parent about how best to support their child at this challenging time.</p>