



# PLACEMENT RESOURCE GUIDE

## What are the different placement types?

The three most common placements that we work with are group homes, kinship placements and foster homes. We most commonly work with group homes, which are run by a house manager and their staff. We also work with kinship placements, which are typically family members or family friends. Finally, there are foster placements which means a foster parent or parents take in the child.

You may also work with a child in a shelter placement (temporary placement), a child who has been reunified (living with parents), or a child in independent living (similar to a small apartment complex overseen by a site manager).

The caregiver refers to whomever is “head of the placement”, whether it’s a house manager, aunt, uncle, grandparent, foster parent, etc.

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## How do I schedule visits?

You will coordinate visits with the caregiver. You should talk to them about your mentee’s schedule and availability and let them know yours, as well. You should be reaching out to your mentee’s caregiver *at least* 3 days ahead of time to schedule a visit with your mentee. More notice is better, though, and it’s advised to schedule your next visit when dropping your mentee off if possible.

You may be able to schedule with your mentee if they are older, but you should discuss this with the caregiver. If you are communicating directly with the child, you must keep in mind that the mentor is ultimately responsible for getting visits scheduled and you should not wait too long on the child to respond or pick a day/time.

Please see our “Visits Resource Guide” for more information.

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### **What can I do if I'm having trouble communicating and/or scheduling with the caregiver?**

First, you should ensure that you are reaching out to your mentee's caregiver *at least* 3 days ahead of time to schedule a visit with your mentee. Please see the previous section for additional details on scheduling visits.

Next, you should take some time to meet with the caregiver to go over your individual schedules and communication preferences. Does the caregiver prefer email, text, or phone calls? Do they know what you prefer? If working with a group home, find out what days they are off and whether other staff members reply when the house manager is off (some don't).

If you continue to run into problems after doing the previous steps, you should reach out to your coordinator for assistance. If we cannot help you fix the problem, DCS will be contacted to assist. You should share any scheduling problems you are having as soon as possible. We do not want you going weeks without being able to see or speak with your mentee.

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### **What should I do if my mentee is in a new placement and the home has become unresponsive? (reunification, foster, adoptive, kinship)**

You should be working closely with your coordinator during this time. It is important to reach out and introduce yourself to the parents or caregivers as soon as possible, but you may need to wait some time before scheduling a visit. See the section below on movements for more information.

As mentioned in the previous section, you should talk to the parents or caregivers to determine their schedule and communication preferences. You should still reach out *at least* 3 days prior to schedule visits. You should keep your coordinator updated if you continue to run into issues so that we can help. If we cannot help you fix the problem, DCS will be contacted to assist.

It is less likely that there will be issues if the child moves to another group home, but other caregivers may be less familiar with our program and may have a harder time adjusting. Please be patient and document any issues you are having to communicate with your coordinator.

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### **I just found out my mentee is moving soon or has moved, what should I do?**

Maintaining communications will help mitigate unexpected movements, however things can still happen quickly and with little notice. If you find out that your mentee has moved, you should immediately let your coordinator know so that we can help gather placement and caregiver

information. Your coordinator will help introduce you to the new caregiver so that you can begin scheduling visits again. It is important to reach out and introduce yourself to the parents or caregivers as soon as possible. If your mentee moves to a group home, it is easier to begin visits quickly, but you may need to wait some time before scheduling a visit at other placement types. The adjustment period can be hectic and the home might need some space to settle in. It is recommended that you maintain weekly communications as much as possible, though.

Regular communications are very important. You should be speaking with your mentee weekly when you are not doing visits. This will help you stay caught up on what is going on with them. Children may know if there are plans to move and will likely share that with you. This may not always be accurate but it is always good to follow up with the case manager for accuracy.

It is recommended that mentors reach out to case managers once a month. Keeping open communications will help increase the chances that they will keep you in the loop on potential movements. You can read more on this and other case manager details in our “Additional FAQ’s Resource Guide”.

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### **What should I do if I feel like a caregiver is being disrespectful towards me?**

There are a few things to keep in mind when working with caregivers. Children have many people on their team and the caregiver must be in contact with all of them, so it can be overwhelming for them at times.

Caregivers work with a lot of people on a child’s case, especially in group homes. It is possible that they are short due to trying to respond quickly. They may also forget that mentors are volunteers. A gentle reminder can often help and if you are not comfortable having this conversation yourself, you can contact your coordinator to assist.

As discussed in the previous section, some caregivers, especially foster parents or kinship, may not be as familiar with the program. Please be patient and document any issues you are having to communicate with your coordinator.

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### **How do I plan activities and manage our schedule?**

Many caregivers may not realize what the mentor role truly is. The child’s needs are often conveyed in their bio and mentors should be aware of what they need help with. Mentors are not expected to fix all problems but should feel comfortable addressing at least some of those needs.

Mentors can directly speak with the caregiver to discuss what they are comfortable with and able to address. Some things, like academics, may be helped directly with tutoring or indirectly by simply monitoring grades and regularly talking to their mentee about completed homework and finding resources to help.

Caregivers can forget mentors are volunteers. You should talk to the caregiver about what you feel your abilities are or you can ask your coordinator to help with this conversation if needed.

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### **What can I do if I feel like the caregiver's expectations of me are too high?**

Many caregivers may not realize what the mentor role truly is. The child's needs are often conveyed in their bio and mentors should be aware of what they need help with. Mentors are not expected to fix all problems but should feel comfortable addressing at least some of those needs.

Mentors can speak directly with the caregiver to discuss what they are comfortable with and able to address. Some things, like academics, may be helped directly with tutoring or indirectly by simply monitoring grades and regularly talking to their mentee about completed homework and finding resources to help.

Caregivers can forget mentors are volunteers. You should talk to the caregiver about what you feel your abilities are or you can ask your coordinator to help with this conversation if needed.

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***Please be sure to always contact your coordinator if you are struggling at all. This information helps with a lot of scenarios but your coordinator can always offer specific advice to your unique situation.***