



# Monroe Harding

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## Preparing the Family and Home for Placements

When a family decides to open their home to a placement there are many questions that arise. Here are some questions to get you thinking about the rewarding process of opening your home. Have all the family members answer the questions separately, and then discuss together once everyone has finished.

1. Does your family have a flexible schedule?
2. Many homes have very productive and full lives. What happens when something unexpected happens? How does it affect your family?
3. Who is the paperwork person in the family? How do they feel about taking on the documentation that is involved in caring for a child who is a ward of the state?
4. Does one parent take on more of the physical burdens (i.e. laundry, cleaning and other house maintenance?) How will they be affected?
5. How do you feel if you see another family member under stress? What tactics do you use to support one another?
6. How does your family handle stress? Typically, is stress ignored, talked about, or something that is dealt with individually to move past it?
7. Does your family have meetings? If not, how could family meetings be an asset once your family is approved for foster care?
8. What aspects of your family are you most proud of?
9. What does your family support look like? Who would you typically reach out to for help?
10. What do you think your family's strengths and challenges are when it will come to fostering a child?

## **Preparing the Family and Home for Placements- Answer Guide**

### **1. Does your family have a flexible schedule?**

Being flexible is key to an easier transition for all involved. When children enter the home, they are entering a whole new environment and will not be used to your family's schedule. It's important to note that children may come from various backgrounds where there may either be a lot of structure or they are used to very little to no structure. Being able to accommodate a new person coming into the home can be harder if a family has not prepared themselves for the changes. Where might your family need to be more flexible? Where might your family need more structure?

### **2. Many homes have very productive and full lives. What happens when something unexpected happens? How does it affect your family?**

Regardless of whether or not you foster, unexpected things happen in all of our lives. Think back to a time where someone in your family may have had a car problem, or someone in the family got sick. How well did the family handle those situations? What adjustments were needed and made to ensure life could go back to normal once the issues were resolved? Where can your family improve? How did everyone manage the expectations that were placed on them?

### **3. Who is the paperwork person in the family? How do they feel about taking on the documentation that is involved in caring for a child who is a ward of the state?**

Over time, many families find that they fall into a pattern of routine. One partner may find they prefer to take care of the paperwork more than the other. When becoming a foster parent, there will be increased paperwork that your family will be responsible for. It is important to discuss who will handle that responsibility and how your family plans to keep organized and up to date with all necessary paperwork that comes with foster care. If a family has a single person as head of the family, do they have the tools and support to help them manage the added documentation?

### **4. Does one parent take on more of the physical burdens (i.e. laundry, cleaning and other house maintenance?) How will they be affected?**

As mentioned previously, it is possible that the family structure may need to change in order to accommodate more members. This is a good time to talk about what tasks and daily chores each family member enjoys as well as which ones they dislike. It is also a good time to talk about who will step in when things do not go as planned. Example: If one person normally does the laundry, but they become the support for a foster youth and no longer has the time to do laundry, how will the family feel about increasing their chores to help?

### **5. How do you feel if you see another family member under stress? What tactics do you use to support one another?**

Changes in a home can cause stress to each family member. A common hidden stressor with foster care can be watching others in the family become more selfless than previously expected. When deciding to become a Foster Home, many families take into account how they will feel about sharing their time, space and energy with someone new. What is often not taken into account, however, is watching a loved one being pulled into a different role and how the rest of the family may feel about that. It's common for families to feel

protective and wanting to remove emotional burdens from the others around them, but feeling powerless to help. Have conversations about what you notice about your family members when they are stressed. In what ways does each person want to be supported? Learning how to communicate now will be helpful when new changes arise.

**6. How does your family handle stress? Typically, is stress ignored, talked about, or something that is dealt with individually to move past it?**

Talking about stress can be difficult. Explore examples of ways your family does a good job at expressing and handling stress. An important step in this process is to pinpoint the stresses that are currently affecting the family. Examples of stresses might be: work, school, family obligations and other community groups. Remember to include people and activities that also bring you joy, but still require energy.

**7. Does your family have meetings? If not, how could family meetings be an asset once your family is approved for foster care?**

Family meetings are very important. If your family does not yet hold regular family meetings, now is a great time to start before any new members join your family. Discuss how the house is running, upcoming events and expectations. Go over family rules and goals but keep the list short on what the family is trying to master. Once a goal is accomplished, celebrate and discuss how it was made possible. Each person in the family should contribute to the meeting and feel heard.

**8. What aspects of your family are you most proud of?**

Each family has unique strengths as a result of working as a team. Honor those by listing and celebrating what others that come into your house will find to be true. Do you value family time? Laughing together? Supporting one another? Do you celebrate your culture? What are your traditions?

**9. What does your family support look like? Who would you typically reach out to for help?**

It's important to discuss as a group who helps the household. Who can others turn to if they need help outside of the family? Most successful foster families have people that they can call on who live outside the home. Asking for help is a valuable strength. If you have not done so already, pinpoint who your family has a support and include them as your family prepares to foster.

**10. What do you think your family's strengths and challenges are when it will come to fostering a child?**

It is not uncommon for families to find that their friends and family question and doubt their desire to foster. It is important to make sure you listen to what others are saying and make sure you feel comfortable in your response. If you find several concerned family and friends asking about how your family will deal with loss, it may be good to explore as a family how well you have dealt with loss of a loved one in the past. The questions and doubts may seem endless from some, but remember you have expressed a want to help. Talk about your strengths and weaknesses in a way that will empower your family to create an amazing experience that will result in changing a young person's life. Make sure to keep your discussion balanced and how there will be both rewarding and tough times ahead.