

Tips and Ways to Protect Yourself as a Caregiver

Caregivers need to be safe and feel safe

Home Safety:

1. Keep two separate diaper bags – one for visits and one for personal use.
2. Use your own car seat rather than a car seat provided by a parent as theirs may be easily identifiable.
3. Have a visible tag on the baby's car seat or stroller that states "please do not touch me unless you have washed your hands," especially for those little ones who are medically fragile.
4. Talk with your social worker about safety concerns regarding the parents prior to attempting to form a relationship with them.
5. After hours support line.

Mail:

1. Consider getting a post office box or a mail box exchange like at a Mailbox Center.

Phone:

1. Consider getting a caller ID block and a long distance block.
2. Consider using your cell phone over a land line.
3. Consider keeping your phone number unlisted.
4. Voicemail greeting should *not* contain any personal information.
5. Use a phone number that can be changed if compromised.

Medical:

1. Call ahead to your medical provider to request that they *not* read your personal information out loud when you bring a child in for an appointment.
2. Ask medical provider and other providers to delete all of your personal information for that child when he/she is no longer in your home,

- because biological parents can request medical records which could contain your information.
3. Ask pharmacist to keep your personal information off of the pill bottle labels.
 4. Request that the hospital or medical provider put your contact information on back page rather than the front page. The front page should just contain CPS office address and social worker contact information.
 5. Keep a log of all medical, therapy and dental appointments and inform social worker of all appointment dates and times.
 6. If child gets injured and has to go to the doctor make sure that intake (509-363-3333) and social worker are notified immediately. If no medical intervention is needed notify the social worker only.
 7. You can request that the child's personal information be listed as confidential for medical appointments and at their school.
 8. If there is a medical emergency call intake at 509-363-3333 or Central Intake at 1-800-562-5624.

Community Safety:

1. Facebook:
 - a. "By default, your privacy settings allow everyone to find you with search and friend finder using your contact information, such as your e-mail address and phone number. But when people click on your name in a search result, they won't be able to see all of the information in your profile (timeline). They'll always be able to view your name, gender, profile picture, username, user id (account number) and networks. Your privacy settings determine whether people can view additional information when they click on your name in a search result."
 - b. "If you'd like to modify who can look you up using your email address or phone number: Click the account menu at the top right of any Facebook page and choose Privacy Settings; Next to the How You Connect heading, click Edit Settings; Select your preference from the dropdown menu next to Who can look you up using the e-mail address or phone number you provided?"

- c. “This setting doesn’t control who can message you on Facebook. To do that: Click the account menu at the top right of any Facebook Page and choose Privacy Settings; Next to the How You Connect heading, click Edit Settings; Select your preference from the dropdown menu next to Who can send you Facebook messages?”
- d. For more information go to:
<http://www.facebook.com/settings/?tab=privacy>
2. Schools may keep caregiver contact information on file. You can request that the school flag your information to maintain privacy.
3. WIC will ask for your personal contact information and you must let them know to keep the information private.
4. Foster parent information has been compromised at Shared Planning Meetings (SPM), Family Team Decision Meetings (FTDM) and Child Health and Education Tracking staffings (CHET). Foster parents are to put down first name and role only – no other information.
5. Foster Parents have the option to participate in SPM, FTDM and CHET staffings by phone.
6. Sign in at the CPS reception desk with your first name only.
7. It is better for the child to be transported by their caregiver; however, if you are concerned over safety you are not required to transport. If safety is a concern notify social worker that transportation is needed.

Court:

1. You don’t have to sign in at Juvenile Court. You can just go to the desk and tell them you are there as a foster parent.
2. Photos are your best defense when working with parents. Consider bringing pictures to court to show the Commissioner or Judge and to give to parent(s).
3. Ask social worker to have your name left out of the ISSP and request *not* to be referenced by last name in court.
4. It is a good idea to let the social worker know you are planning to attend a specific child’s hearing. Dependency proceedings are open to the public.

5. Consider attending a court hearing on a day that is not related to a child in your care. This can give you an idea of how court works without the pressure of a hearing about one of your foster children.
6. Consider becoming familiar with how the Court in your county works. Each court has different processes. The Spokane Court has a unique structure called the Spokane Team Approach. Each Juvenile Court Commissioner is the leader of their specific team; a unit of CFWS workers; two or more parent's attorneys; a GAL; and an AAG. These teams operate very differently from each other but they are all very familiar with each other. The teams meet on at least a weekly basis outside of court hearings.
7. A quick recitation of court hearings are:
 - a. Pick up orders connected to dependency petitions.
 - b. Dependency petitions without pick up orders.
 - c. Shelter care hearings
 - d. Fact finding hearings
 - e. Review hearings
 - f. Motion hearings occurring as requested by a party.
 - g. Termination process occurs separately while the dependency process continues.
 - h. A termination process is:
 1. Request of termination petition
 2. Filing of termination petition
 3. Service of parents
 4. Assignment of Judge (in Superior Court not Juvenile Court)
 5. The parties meet with assigned Judge to set trial date.
 6. Motion hearings as requested by a party.
 7. Trial.
 - i. It should be noted that if the State requests a motion hearing the State almost always waits the required twenty days before going into court. If one of the parent's attorneys requests a motion it is almost always on shortened time or usually within a week.
8. Be aware of what you might say if you attend a court hearing for one of your foster children. Be prepared to make a statement about how the child is doing, how you believe visits are going, about whether you might

be a permanent placement. Discuss with SW ahead of time what might happen in court.

9. Be aware that if you are introduced to a parent's attorney (public defender) they may call you. Be aware of what your boundaries are, what you are willing to do and not willing to do. Be aware that a professional and non-emotional response is best.

10. In Spokane, and some of the outlying offices, there are social workers assigned to the Office of Public Defense. These social workers are *not* Children's Administration (CPS) social workers. They are advocates for the parents. It is a good idea to ask for identification of social workers who approach you or contact you.

Other Tips:

1. Have social worker call you back to decrease long distance telephone costs.
2. Use return envelopes for safety and savings.
3. Social workers to have side file or drop in folder for e-mail to maintain foster parent confidentiality but remember that this information is discoverable.
4. E-mail social worker weekly on updates on upcoming appointments and other things that are going on with each child.
5. Log issues in a journal as they arise.
6. Request that social workers *not* forward their e-mails to attorneys.