

The placement call: 20 questions to ask before saying yes.

When the phone rings, you'll have a few minutes to make a decision that shapes months of your life — and a child's. Here's what to ask, and why each answer matters. Download the PDF and keep it by the phone.

✓ Last reviewed July 2, 2026 Evergreen guidance — reviewed annually

Before the phone rings

The call usually comes with little warning — sometimes at dinner, sometimes at 2 a.m. The person calling is working through a list of families, and they need an answer. That pressure is real, but it is theirs, not yours.

So hold on to two things. **You are allowed to say no.** And **a good match beats a fast yes** — for you, and especially for the child, because a placement that doesn't fit often means another move later.

The caseworker won't have every answer, particularly in an emergency. That's fine. Asking these questions isn't a test they have to pass — it's how you find out what's known, what isn't, and whether this is a yes your whole household can keep.

QUESTIONS 1–5

About the child

Start here. These answers tell you who is about to walk through your door — and what they'll need in the first 24 hours.

1 What's the child's name and age?

Use their name for the rest of the call — this is a person, not a case number. The age also tells you right away whether the placement fits your approval range and your home.

2 Can you share why they came into care?

The worker may not be able to say much, and that's normal. But even a general answer helps you prepare — and how much is known tells you how new this case is.

3 Do they have brothers or sisters, and where are they?

Siblings may join your home later, or you may be asked to drive to sibling visits. Better to see the whole picture before you answer.

4 Where do they go to school, and can they stay there?

Children in foster care can often stay in their current school for stability. Find out now whether that means a 10-minute drop-off or an hour each way.

5 Any immediate health needs or medications?

An inhaler, an allergy, a prescription that can't skip a dose. If something is needed tonight, you want it named — and in the bag — before the drive over.

QUESTIONS 6–10

About the placement

These answers set your expectations — for your calendar, and for your heart.

6 Is this an emergency placement or a planned one?

Emergency means less information and a child arriving within hours. Planned means you may get records, a meeting, even a transition visit. Both are normal — but they're different first nights.

7 Honestly, how long do you expect this to last?

Nobody can promise, and a good worker will say so. But "a few nights while we look for relatives" and "likely long-term" are different yeses. Ask for the honest guess, not the hopeful one.

8 What's the goal – reunification, relatives, or adoption?

Most children's plan is to go home, and your job is to support that. Knowing the goal from day one keeps your expectations — and your attachment — honest.

9 Are there court dates coming up?

A hearing next week can change everything, including how long the child stays. It may also be something you can attend — many foster parents do.

10 What will visitation with the family look like?

Visits with parents or siblings may happen weekly, and you may be the driver. Check the schedule against your work week before you say yes, not after.

QUESTIONS 11–15

About support

Saying yes is easier when you know what comes with it. None of these questions are greedy — they're how you keep the placement steady.

11 What's the per diem level, and is there a specialized rate?

Higher-needs care can carry a higher rate, and it's much easier to set up front than to chase later. The numbers live in our **per diem guide**.

12 What is the child arriving with?

Often one bag; sometimes less. Knowing sizes and gaps tonight means a foster closet run tomorrow instead of guessing at sizes at midnight.

13 What's the childcare plan?

If you work, ask about CAPS childcare on this call — children in foster care are a priority group, but the paperwork takes time to move. Start it now.

14 Who is the case manager, and how do I reach someone after hours?

You will have a real question at 9 p.m. on a Saturday. Get the case manager's name, direct number, and the after-hours line before you hang up.

15 What therapy or services are already in place?

Keeping an existing therapist or specialist usually beats starting over. The answer also tells you, gently, what this child is carrying.

QUESTIONS 16–20

About fit

The hardest group, and the most important. These are the questions people skip because they feel awkward. Ask them anyway.

