

AWKWARD FIRST PHONE CALL

Scripts for When the Person Answers the Phone



“Hello, my name is *(your name)*, I am currently working with a young person named *(child’s first name)*, who is in foster care. My role is to identify, locate and reach out to people who are relatives or kin to build a support network around *(child’s first name)*. Through my work, your name came up as someone who might be a relative or somehow connected to *(child’s first name)*. *(Child’s first name)* is *(XX)* years old and his/her/their parents’ first names are *(first name)* and *(first name)*”.

**Always consult with the agency with custody on amount of information you can share on child and biological parents.*

Do you know this young person or family?



NO

Thank you for your time.

If they sound quite certain.

End the call.

If it sounds like they might actually know the child, you might offer your phone number and say something to the effect of ‘in case you realize later that you do know this child or family’.

End the call.



YES

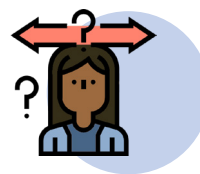
I am so glad I found the right person. Would you be willing to talk with me a bit? Is now a good time or could we schedule some time soon to talk?

NO, I will not talk.

I realize that I don’t know you or any of the reasons you might not be open to talking with me, but I do know that you could make a real difference for *(Child’s first name)*. Would you be willing to take my phone number just in case you decide you might be able to talk with me at a later time?

Give number, say thanks and end call.

YES, I will talk



NOT SURE

I understand. Out of respect for privacy, I have not shared much information. Would you be willing to share a little bit about the child and/or family you are thinking about so we can try to figure out if it’s the right person?

Do you know where they’ve lived or maybe other family members’ names?

If it is determined that they DO know the child or family, proceed to next step.

If it is determined that they do NOT know the child/family. “Thank you for your time.”

End the call

Did you know the child was in foster care?

NO, I did not know the child is in foster care

At this point, I can only share a few things, but (*child's first name) has been in foster care for (Time).

PERSONALIZE...



The parent/s are working with (jurisdiction/agency) and the hope is that (*child's first name) will return home in the next few months. We are working hard to find family members who can help with three things:

- provide a network of support
- share information about (*child's first name) family and history
- identify someone who would consider learning more about providing temporary placement.

OR



It has been a terribly sad situation and his/her/their parents' rights have been terminated. We are all working very hard to find family members who can help with three things:

- provide a network of support
- share information about (*child's first name) family and history
- know someone who would consider learning more about adoption.



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YES, does know child is in foster care, but not willing/able to get involved due to conflict with parent/other family members/or not willing to interact with child protection

Would you be willing to tell me more about your thoughts on this? It sounds like you might be reluctant to get involved, is that right? I hear that and I understand your reluctance. However, I believe you can be an incredibly valuable resource and help me expand (*child's first name) family tree and supportive resources.

If termination of parental rights have occurred, let them know; sometimes family/connections are more likely to help the child if the parents are no longer involved with the case.

Talk with them about the reasons you reached out (bottom of pg. 3) as much as they are willing. Offer contact information in case they change their mind.

YES, does know child is in foster care



Have you been contacted before by the county/agency about ways you might help? Or have you been involved in other ways already?



Has not had contact with county/agency

That makes our connection so much more important. I really appreciate you taking the time to talk with me, I have a lot of questions and together we can figure out some ways you might be able to help support (*child's first name).



Has had contact with county/agency and started process at one point, but not still engaged

Would you be willing to tell me more about when that was, and what happened? I am certain that there are ways you could be helpful to (*child's first name), and am very interested to hear your thoughts.



Has tried to have contact and is frustrated or angry with experience

I am very sorry you've had a frustrating experience with this situation (*clarify again whether or not you are with the agency/department they are upset with*). If you are willing to share a bit about what happened, I would be interested to hear about it. I'd also like to focus our call on what might be done going forward.

Hear what they have to say.



Don't get overly focused on rehashing the past, but if they were not treated fairly consider providing Ombudsman office information or other appropriate routes for addressing complaints/concerns. (Follow your agency's protocols for providing grievance information.) Your respectful interaction with them might re-open options for a child that would otherwise be unavailable. Take notes and ask probing questions to elicit stories and the names of other family members/supporters.

As I've mentioned a few times, I have a few reasons for reaching out to you (and other relatives or connections):



1. We are trying to create a Lifebook for (*child's first name) and I wonder if you could help? Basically, a Lifebook is a cross between a photo album or scrapbook and a journal and foster care case file. Many children in foster care treasure them because they help them to keep track of their history and their own story. You could help us as we gather material for (*child's first name) lifebook by sharing:

Family photos or photos of (*child's first name) and his/her/their family – especially early childhood photos, if you have them (you can send copies, or originals....I will get originals back to you after I copy them). If you have photos of places this child has lived and/or photos of grandparents or others in the family or family friends – all of these things are gold for a Lifebook.



Would you be willing to send copies of a special family recipe, or write (*child's first name) a letter that includes stories about elders in your family or family traditions? Maybe you have a story about a family event or reunion that (*child's first name) attended that you can share information about?



2. I need to identify as many family members as possible so I can reach out to them to see if they would be willing to help in some way – basically I want to have this same conversation with each of them. Would you be willing to provide me with names of other relatives or people who are connected to the family? If you have contact information that would be great. Does your family have reunions or holiday gatherings? Who plans or hosts those events? They are often a great source for gathering names.

3. Would you have the ability and time to provide support to (*child's first name) – for instance, would you be open to having occasional phone calls or visits? Might you be interested in knowing about and attending special school events like concerts or games? Would you be open to talking with the foster parent/s to help them learn more about religious or cultural activities that are important to your family? A lot of children in foster care lose connections to their cultural or racial identity – having family members involved can help reduce the risk to (child).

4. Would you like to learn more about the process for possibly providing temporary placement or a permanent home to (*child's first name)? If they say 'yes' tell them what will happen next to get that information to them ASAP. If they say 'no', thank them and remind them again how much help they've provided already.

5. Could I provide you with my contact information in case you change your mind or think of something you'd like to tell me?



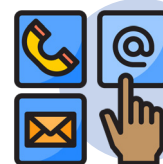
FOLLOW UP: Tell them what you are going to do next and give them a small task to do.

EXAMPLES



Thank you so much for all of your help today. I will email you with all of my contact information. I will also plan on calling you again next week to see how things are going with the photos you thought you might gather for (*child's first name) Lifebook.

I will provide your contact information to the home study worker who will further explain the process for getting a foster care home study completed. Thanks again for being open to learning more about that. Again, I can't promise the (*child's first name) will be placed with you, but it means so much that you are willing to learn more about the process.



I am going to call/email/write to each of the family members you told me about. Thank you so much. We know that children in foster care do better when they stay connected to relatives, connections and community. Thank you for helping us make that possible for (*child's first name). I will call you next week to see if you thought of anything else.

I will call you next week to find out how your conversations went with your other relatives who might be interested in helping out.