



### Welcome Home Books: Building Connections

Imagine for a moment what it must feel like to move into a new environment, with new surroundings, an unfamiliar mattress, new rules and new routines. Moving into a new home can be a scary and overwhelming experience for youth in foster care.

Foster and adoptive parents can help ease some of those fears and anxieties by creating a welcome book. The less anxiety a child feels, the safer he or she will feel.

Welcome books can be valuable resources for youth of all ages. Welcome books can help bridge the gap between what is unknown to what will soon become more familiar, comfortable, safe, and secure.

#### Getting Started

Encourage all family members to participate and contribute in creating a welcome book. Welcome books do not have to be an extensive project. Pictures with captions and descriptions are what make up the contents of a Welcome Book. A small photo album or a scrapbook with captions would work well too.

Your creativity will ultimately dictate how detailed and comprehensive your welcome book



ultimately becomes. Be creative and most importantly of all, have fun and be expressive!

If you have computer skills, you could create a welcome book through a free online website, such as [snapfish.com](http://snapfish.com). If computers are not your strong suit, then perhaps you could put together a hand crafted book, including pictures of:

- Family members greeting the child with messages, such as Welcome Annisha! or We are looking forward to meeting you, Antonio!
- The child's bedroom
- The family's dining room
- Holiday celebrations or family traditions
- Family members having fun
- Neighborhood and child's school
- Car(s)
- Family pet(s)
- Garden or yard
- House—both inside and outside
- Local park, public zoo, playground, public pool, or skate park

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### Everyone Appreciates Being Welcomed

A welcome book is a gift for children who are in foster care or are being adopted. This special gift can help ease the transition for the child by painting a picture of your family and household.

If you decide to create a welcome book, you could either personally deliver a copy to the child or provide a copy to the child's caseworker and ask him or her to share the book with the child. A welcome book does not need to be a big project but it can have a big impact.



### Resources Available from the FCARC Library

(You can find the following resources by going to this link:

<http://wifostercareandadoption.org/plugins/library/advancedsearch.asp> and then typing in the title or keyword in the search box.)

#### **Welcome Home**

by Christopher Alexander, Ph.D.

This resource provides parents of foster and adopted children with practical skills for raising children of all ages. This book provides step-by-step solutions for caring for a child who is adopted or in foster care.

#### **A Place to Call Home**

by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and the Children's Action Network.

This DVD, which is narrated by Henry Winkler, features four heartwarming stories of families formed through foster care and adoption.

**Foster Parents Speak: Crossing Bridges and Fostering Change** by New York State Citizen's Coalition for Children . An award winning DVD that explores foster parenting today through the experiences and insights of foster families.

#### **Online Resources**

The **Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parent Association** provides free downloadable *Welcome Book* pages at:

<http://ifapa.org/resources/publications.asp>