



Life Books

Presented by

Licensing Team

Permanency Planning: Social Work Division



A top-down view of a wooden surface covered with various craft supplies. There are several Polaroid-style photographs scattered around, some showing people in nature. A pair of red and green scissors is prominent on the right side. Other items include colorful markers (green, purple, orange), patterned papers with fox and leaf designs, and wooden letters. A white, torn-edge banner is overlaid in the center, containing the main title and a paragraph of text.

Training Mission and Goals:

Foster children need a sense of value and a way to maintain connections while in foster care. Life Books document a child's journey through foster care. This training helps to define what a Life Book is for foster children, discusses the importance, and reviews the parameters and expectations of a Lifebook.



What is a Life Book?

It is a tool and process to help children understand their life experiences so that they can function better, feel better about themselves in the present and be better prepared for the future. It is an important collection of the child's history and aids the child in their identity.



My How I went into foster care:

Story

When I went into foster care:

Why I went into foster care:

Look How I've Grown!

I lived with the _____ family from _____ to _____.

When I came to live with the _____ family on ___ / ___ / ___, I was _____ old, _____ inches tall, and weighed _____ pounds. When it was time for me to leave on ___ / ___ / ___, I was _____ old, _____ inches tall, and weighed _____ pounds.

The _____ family's contact information is:

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Their phone numbers: _____

Their e-mail addresses: _____

Names of people in their family: _____

Childhood Milestones

My first word was

My first haircut

My first tooth:

My first steps:

My first time crawling:

My first toy:

My first pet

My first friend



What are the benefits of Life Books?

Benefits for a child include; providing a history for them of where they came from, helps in identifying feelings associated with that history, builds self-esteem, opens doors for exploring questions, and helps to identify gaps and information that a child may desire.

Benefits for a Caregiver/Foster Parent may include; building trust and attachment, an opportunity to get to know the child's interests, identify triggers, identify important people in the child's life.

Benefits for Service Providers includes; clarity around reasons for past moves, information for therapy, strengths and needs of families, helps identify gaps in the child's knowledge of the past.

Benefits for Birth Families includes; helping them understand the child's behaviors, provides for shared parenting, relationship building with the foster family.



Policy

- Life Books shall be created and maintained for all children who are removed from their homes.
- Life Books shall reflect as much information as possible from the birth of the child to the present time.
- Life Books shall contain information that helps a child to know and remember his or her history with details of that history through placement.
- Completion and maintenance of the life book is a joint responsibility among social, resource parent and birth family.
- The Life Book belongs to the child.
- The development of Life Books shall begin within the first 30 days of placement and shall be continuously maintained.



Social Worker's Responsibilities

- The SW should engage monthly with the placement provider to discuss the maintenance of Life Books and document the discussion using the Monthly Contact Record.
- Provide flash drives and other materials for caregivers and children to create and maintain Life Books if needed.
- Ask to view the child's Life Book periodically. The Life Book can be either digital, traditional, or; a combination of the two.
- Ensure the Life Book follows the child and is provided to the child at the termination of CPS services.



Information for a Life Book may be collected from such sources as:

Case records

Case records from other agencies

Birth parents

Resource parents

Grandparents and other relatives

Previous social workers

Hospital where born

Well-baby clinic

Other medical personnel

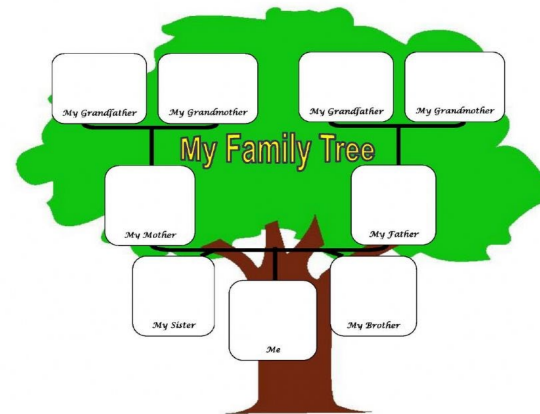
Previous neighbors

Teachers and school

Court records: Newspapers- birth announcements, marriage announcements, obituaries

School pictures

Church and Sunday school records



What *MUST* be included in every Life Book per NC Child Welfare Policy:

- A copy of a certified birth certificate (or date and time of birth, location of birth, and weight and length at birth)
- Schools/daycare centers the child has attended
- Medical information, including immunizations, diseases, and allergies
- Medical history of birth family
- Pictures of the child at various ages
- Names and pictures of siblings
- Pictures of birth parents



What *SHOULD* be in a Life Book?

- Dentist first visit
- Doctor visits
- Eye doctor
- School records – class schedules, report cards, artwork/projects, pictures of schools and teachers, awards
- Family Traditions and experiences
- Extracurricular activities, ticket stubs, cards, flyers from activities
- Birthdays and holidays
- People and Pets
- First Times
- Genogram
- Pictures of resource family or families
- Names of social workers
- Places of worship child attended
- Confirmation, baptism and other similar records
- Child's likes and dislikes
- Copies of letters written to and from parents (especially if a parent is not local or is incarcerated)
- Materials from Sunday school
- And many more...



Keeping it up to date

- Digital photo storage, digital pages
- Laminate hard copies
- Engage youth in the creation of the book
- Involve bio parents and community partners in the process
- Make time, it doesn't happen without some dedicated time to the mission.



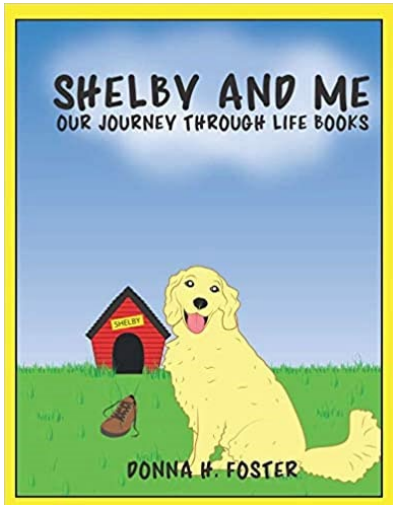
Remember the book belongs to the youth and should travel with them at the point of any move to a new foster placement or back home.



Resources



- <https://www.amazon.com/Shelby-Me-Journey-Through-Books/dp/0578513811>
 - To purchase "Shelby and Me," (\$23.95 plus shipping and handling) contact Donna Foster (DonnaFoster@shelbyandme.com).
 - <https://www.afamilyforeverychild.org/lifebooks/>
 - http://www.ifapa.org/publications/IFAPA_Lifebook_Pages.asp
 - <https://www.mare.org/Resources/Lifebook>
 - <https://www.lssi.org/lifebooks/what-is-a-lifebook/>
- <https://www.amazon.com/When-Im-Famous-fill-blank/dp/0970183291>



Formats:



- USB Drive (ask your social worker if you need one)
 - Photo album
 - Scrapbook
- Keepsake box (make sure to caption the photos on the back)
 - Premade Life Books (usually can be purchased online)
- Phone/ Online Apps (Shutterfly, Tiny Beans, Snapfish, Etsy- printable Life Book pages, Ella Life Book app)

