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## Stay Connected with Your Child/ren by Telephone

*Calling your child/ren can be costly so use your time wisely. Remember to express your appreciation to the person who has agreed to accept and pay for your call so that you can stay in touch with your child/ren.*

- **Plan** out your call in advance. You may even want to write a list of the things you think your child/ren would like to talk about so you don't forget.
- If the child/ren's caregiver answers, **ask for an update** about your child/ren. *The more you know about their feelings and activities the easier it will be to talk.*
- Keep in mind the age of your child/ren and think about when would be a **good time to call**. Try not to call when you know your child/ren will be busy (meals, homework, bedtime). If possible, work out the day and time you will call in advance and in what order you will talk with them so that everyone can be ready.
- Once your child gets on the phone, **share how much time** you will have to talk. *Watch the clock together if your child knows how to tell time.*
- If you **know** your child's interests, ask about them. Ask open ended questions "Tell me all about your day.....Mommy told me you got a new toy. Tell me about it.....What is the best thing that happened to you today?" *Questions that can be answered with yes or no don't get you too far.*
- Don't bring up sensitive topics. Save them for a visit or letter. However, if your child asks you a direct question **give an answer that is honest and appropriate for his or her age**. Some questions you may have to answer more than once such as "Why can't you come home?" Some questions may be easier for your child to ask over the phone rather than in person.
- Don't use the phone call to **pump** you child/ren for information about others..."What did mommy do last night? Where was she?" ....Children know when they are being used and they don't like it.
- **Reward positive behavior!** Tell them how proud you are for things like .....helping mom with the baby... good grades.... going to bed on time. Include comments that will make them feel good about themselves....."It's great to hear you laugh.....You really know a lot about.....Mom says you are trying hard at school".
- Watch the clock so that you will have time to wind down the conversation. **End on a positive note**. If possible, tell your child when you may be able to talk again. If you're not sure, then say "I'll call again as soon as I can....or..... I'll write you a letter tomorrow". And finally, remember to tell your child that you **love** them.

*If you or any member of your family needs help call or write Families in Crisis, Inc.*