

The logo for Boston Medical Center features the word "CENTER" in a sans-serif font, arched over a thin black circle. The words "BOSTON" and "MEDICAL" are stacked below the circle in a large, bold, black serif font.

BOSTON MEDICAL

Supporting Our Families Through Addiction and Recovery (SOFAR)

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Supporting Our Families Through Addiction and Recovery- Lifebook template

A lifebook is a developmentally appropriate tool used to assist families in discussing challenging topics such as adoption, foster care, parental separation, and other family stressors.

A lifebook can be made in conjunction with visits with a social worker/therapist. We recommend that families meet at least twice with a social worker during the creation of a lifebook. The first visit is typically used to discuss different approaches and language that may best fit the family. The second visit is typically used to review the lifebook before sharing with the child. If the family wants more support during the process, the social worker/therapist is able to assist further.

In preparation of sharing a lifebook with a child, it is important to remember that all children respond differently to their stories. Some children may have big feelings and not want to look at it, or may be very excited by it, while other children may appear not to care at all. Once the lifebook has been shared with the child, it is important to leave it in a place where the child can access it as they wish.

The lifebook can be designed to look however the family thinks would be best. Sometimes families like to make a scrapbook with photos and pictures where the story is always changing. Sometimes families like to make the lifebook as a printed photobook (e.g., shutterfly or other online website)

This template is meant as a guide. Parts can be moved around, adapted, or taken out completely. There is no perfect way to create a lifebook. Giving caregivers, therapist, or other support people space to have feelings about the story is also important.

Trigger warning: This template includes information about separation from birth families, reunification, and adoption. It includes narratives for children who are reunified with their parents and for children who are adopted. The template uses the phrase “mommy,” “birth mommy,” “daddy” and “birth daddy” to discuss family members dependent on circumstances prompting lifebook to be written.

<p><u>Title Page</u></p> <p>My Life Book! A story all about me!</p> <p><i>Collage of photos and drawings.</i></p>	<p><u>Chapters</u></p> <p><i>Some kids might want to make their lifebook have “chapters” A good way to think about this would be by concrete again or developmental stage such as baby me, toddler me, kindergarten me, etc.</i></p> <p><i>It would not be recommended to have chapters include the headings in this template.</i></p>
<p><u>All about me</u></p> <p><i>This page might have some basic information introducing who the child is.</i></p> <p>My name is Sam and I am 5 years old!</p> <p>I was born in Boston, MA on January 1, 2019.</p> <p>My (mommy or birth mommy’s) name is Danielle and my (daddy or birth daddy’s) name is Jose.</p> <p>When I was born, I was in the hospital for 2 weeks so I could grow big and strong! When I left the hospital, I went to live with my (mommy or birth mommy) in a place where other kids and their mommies lived. My (daddy or birth daddy) couldn’t live there but he came to visit every Saturday!</p> <p><i>If you don’t have this information, this section could also say “I was born in Massachusetts on XXX. It was a sunny day when I was born- you can google weather or other fun facts about birthdays</i></p>	<p><u>All about me</u></p> <p><i>Basic information about child may continue onto an additional page.</i></p> <p>I started walking when I was one year old!</p> <p>My favorite foods were bananas and pasta.</p> <p><i>If the child has any fun facts or things they are proud of that could be included on this page.</i></p> <p><i>Picture suggestions for both all about me pages:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Photo of child from when they were a baby.</i> <i>Photo of child’s family/ birth family.</i> <i>Photo of child from when they were little.</i> <i>Drawing of child eating their favorite food.</i>

Information about removal or relapse

KINSHIP:

When I was two years old, my grandma came to (mommy or birth mommy's) and/or house and brought me to her house. Grandma told me that I was going to stay with her for a little while.

Photo with family member

FOSTER:

When I was two years old, I went to live with Ms. Maria. Ms. Maria took care of me when my (mommy/ birth mommy) and (daddy/ birth daddy) weren't able to.

Ms. Maria and I love to play at the playground and eat ice cream.

Photo of with foster family

Information about addiction

My (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) have an addiction.

An addiction is a disease that makes it hard to take care of yourself or other people.

My (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) love me so much and they could not take care of me because of their addiction.

When my (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) had an addiction, I went to live with (grandma, foster parent, family member, etc)

For moments where this feels like too much you can try the following:

My (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) have a disease. A disease can happen in different parts of your body. My (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) disease makes it so they can't take care of themselves or other people. My (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) love me so much even with their disease.

There are also great books called Mamas Waves and Daddys Waves. The books have great language around removal from caregiver and use the phrase "wavy days." You can read the book and use similar language in this section as well.

Feelings about addiction

Sometimes I feel sad and angry when I think about my (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddys) (addiction or disease).

I get confused when I see them at the office or when grandma tells me (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) can come to our house for a playdate but I can't go there.

Drawing of child feeling sad or angry

Information about reunification

My (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) went to a hospital to get better. Sometimes it takes a LONG time for grownups to get better when they have an (addiction or disease).

When they get better it is called recovery!

Recovery means that my (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) can take care of themselves and other people too, other people like me!

There are lots of kids like me who have mommies and daddies with addictions that have recovery! (Mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) go to AA/NA group with other people in recovery. People at group help (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) stay in recovery and they help other people too!

You may also choose to write something like this:

Sometimes I feel scared/sad that (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) may have addiction/disease again. I dont know where I would sleep and it makes me feel alone. When this happens, I ask my (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) for a big hug to help me feel better. I tell them I love them so much and they tell me they love me so much.

Drawing or photo of group/ support people

Information about adoption

KINSHIP:

Sometimes kids like me with a (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) who have an addiction/disease go home to their birth mommy and birth daddy because they get better. Sometimes kids like me get adopted. Adoption is when kids get a new forever home. Being adopted is special because it means I have lots of family. I still have my (mommy/birth mommy) and (daddy/birth daddy) and my grandma/grandpa/family member is also kind of like my other mommy/daddy now.

FOSTER:

Sometimes kids like me with a (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) who have an addiction/disease go home to their birth mommy and birth daddy because they get better. Sometimes kids like me get adopted. Adoption is when kids get a new forever home. Being adopted is special because it means I have lots of family. I still have my (mommy/birth mommy) and (daddy/birth daddy) and I also have my forever family: (list foster/adoptive family).

Information about open/closed adoption and visitation/contact.

Photos or drawings of family.

Information about siblings

It can be hard to explain if children are growing up away from other siblings. Below are some suggestions of how to talk about it.

Separation at removal:

When my (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) had an addiction my (brother or sister) went to live somewhere else. I got to see them at the park and the office but I missed seeing them everyday. When we lived together, we used to play with blocks and at the park. I love them so much and get really happy when I see them. Sometimes I feel sad too. Ms. Maria tells me its ok to feel happy and sad.

New sibling after removal:

When I was living with (foster/grandparent/etc) my (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) had another baby. The new baby got to go home with them from the hospital and they all live together now. I am sad and mad that the baby gets to live there and I don't. It's confusing and sometimes I ask questions about it and sometimes I stomp my feet and say "it's not fair!"

When I was living with (foster/grandparent/etc) my (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) had another baby. The new baby lives with a different family. I am really excited to meet my new baby one day- I wonder if they will look like me!

Resources

Mamas Waves by Chandra Ghosh Ippen:

Youtube read aloud:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Qk8jUPC1fQ>

Ellie's mommy in the book Mamas Waves has wavy days. Sometimes when my (mommy or birth mommy) has wavy days it makes me want to scream. Ms. K takes Ellie to the beach to yell at the ocean. I think this is silly. Grownups help me by telling me I can feel happy that my (mommy or birth mommy) loves me and sad that I don't get to live in the same house as my (mommy or birth mommy.)

Daddy's Waves by Chandra Ghosh Ippen:

Youtube read aloud:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFWP9_Un57M

Ellie's mommy in the book Daddy's Waves has wavy days. Sometimes when my (daddy or birth daddy) has wavy days it makes me want to scream. Ms. K takes Ellie to the beach to yell at the ocean. I think this is silly. Grownups help me by telling me I can feel happy that my (daddy or birth daddy) loves me and sad that I don't get to live in the same house as my (daddy or birth daddy.)

Sesame Street videos:

Addiction: <https://sesameworkshop.org/topics/parental-addiction/> <https://sesameworkshop.org/topics/foster-care/>

On Sesame Street, Elmo has a friend named Karli that has a (mommy or birth mommy) and (daddy or birth daddy) with an addiction too. Just like me Karli was in foster care

Grief/Death: <https://sesameworkshop.org/resources/explaining-what-happened/>

On Sesame Street Elmo's Uncle Jack died. Elmo's (daddy or birth daddy) told Elmo about how when someone dies it means you won't see or talk them again. This made Elmo and Elmo's birth daddy confused and sad.

Foster care: <https://sesameworkshop.org/resources/a-place-for-you-2/>

On Sesame Street, Elmo has a friend Karli who feels sad that she doesn't have a place to belong. Elmo helps her remember "I am safe, I am strong, there is a place for me here, I belong."

7 C's <https://sesameworkshop.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/7cs.pdf>

You didn't Cause the problem.

You can't Control it.

You can't Cure it.

But...

You can help take Care of yourself.

You can Communicate your feelings.

You can make healthy Choices.

You can Celebrate yourself!