

belonging and emotional security tool (BEST)

BEST

This introductory page is for social workers to orient themselves to using this tool. This introductory page should not be read to the youth or parents responding to the questions.

Research suggests that emotional security is a critical component of successful family permanence for youth in foster care. Casey Family Services is committed to permanence for each youth, including discovering or developing permanent family relationships that provide safety, emotional security and legal family membership. For youth unable to reunify with their families of origin, their closest family or family-like relationships may be with the foster parents with whom they have lived for an extended time. These relationships hold potential for legal permanence through adoption or guardianship.

Casey Family Services developed the Belonging and Emotional Security Tool (BEST) to assist social workers in exploring youth's sense of emotional security with their foster parents and foster parents' sense of claiming and attachment with youth in their care. There are two versions of the BEST — a parent version and a youth version. A youth's and permanent parent's responses to these statements can be used to guide meaningful permanency conversations toward a deepened, more secure and long-lasting parent-child relationship.

Simple yes/no responses to the questions could be used. (In the case of a two-parent family, the youth answers each set of questions twice, first related to one parent and then related to the other parent.)

Or, a rating scale could be used.

The following instructions apply if using a rating scale:

This questionnaire asks you about feelings you have toward this youth/this parent.

For each question, please choose a number (1 through 5) that best describes this youth/this parent.

1	2	3	4	5
completely agree	mostly agree	neither agree nor disagree	mostly disagree	completely disagree

If you “completely agree” with a statement, you would choose 1; if you “mostly agree,” you would choose 2; if you “neither agree nor disagree,” you would choose 3; if you “mostly disagree,” you would choose 4; if you “completely disagree,” you would choose 5. There are no right or wrong answers. Just choose the number that describes how much you agree with the statement about _____ .

BEST
FOR
YOUTH

1. My foster parent(s) would not kick me out of the family, no matter what I do.

2. My foster parent(s) makes me feel like I belong to the family. _____
3. My foster parent(s) expects to give and receive holiday cards or gifts with me just like everyone else in this family. _____
4. My foster parent(s) would loan or give me money if I really needed it. _____
5. My foster parent(s) wants to talk when something really important or exciting happens to me.

6. My foster parent(s) cares deeply about what happens to me. _____
7. It makes me feel happy when we spend time together. _____
8. My foster parent(s) makes me feel I am wanted. _____
9. My foster parent(s) wants me to be home for the holidays. _____
10. My foster parent(s) is someone I feel close to. _____
11. My foster parent(s) loves me. _____
12. My foster parent(s) is someone I trust. _____
13. My foster parent(s) includes me in family photos and portraits. _____
14. My foster parent(s) pays attention to me when I ask for help. _____
15. I care deeply about what happens to my foster parent(s). _____

**BEST
FOR
YOUTH**

16. My foster parent(s) includes me in family vacations. _____

17. I love this/these parent(s). _____

18. My foster parent(s) makes me feel like this is my family for life. _____

19. My foster parent(s) will always be someone I can count on for help if I need it.

20. My foster parent(s) will do everything to keep the relationship going even when I am no longer living at home. _____

21. My foster parent(s) finds a way to support, stand behind me and believe in me even when I'm wrong. _____

22. My foster parent(s) has done everything I need to make me feel like I belong.

Consider the following items only if there are other youth in the family:

23. My foster parent(s) treats me as well as the other youth in the family. _____

24. My foster parent(s) likes me as much as other youth in the family. _____

25. My foster parent(s) gives me gifts that are just as good as the other youth in the family get.

**BEST
FOR
PARENTS**

1. I would not kick this youth out of the family, no matter what. _____
2. This youth belongs to this family. _____
3. I expect to give and receive holiday cards or gifts with this youth just like everyone else in this family. _____
4. I would loan or give this youth money if he/she really needed it. _____
5. When something really important or exciting happens to this youth, I want to talk with him/her about it. _____
6. I care deeply about what happens to this youth. _____
7. It makes me feel happy when we spend time together. _____
8. I let this youth know he/she is wanted. _____
9. I want this youth to be home for the holidays. _____
10. I feel close to this youth. _____
11. I love this youth. _____
12. I trust this youth. _____
13. I include this youth in family photos and portraits. _____
14. I pay attention to this youth when she/he asks for help. _____
15. This youth cares deeply about what happens to me. _____
16. I include this youth in family vacations. _____

**BEST
FOR
PARENTS**

17. This youth loves me. _____

18. I let this youth know he/she will be in this family for life. _____

19. I let this youth know he/she will always be able to count on my help. _____

20. I will do everything to keep this relationship going even when the youth is not living at home.

21. I find a way to support, stand behind or believe in this youth even when he/she is wrong.

22. I have done everything I can to make this youth feel he/she belongs to this family.

Consider the following items only if there are other youth in the family:

23. I treat this youth the same as I treat other youth in the family. _____

24. I like this youth the same as other youth in the family. _____

25. I give this youth gifts that are just as good as the gifts that the other youth in the family get.
