

You have welcomed a CHILD FROM UKRAINE

How to create good conditions for them in your family

You have become a family which helps by accepting a Ukrainian child without their parents. It is a very helpful act on your part, and no doubt a difficult task. We offer you some advice which might be helpful in the early days:

If there is a child with you who came alone, without their family, they are frightened, they are probably confused by the situation and they certainly miss their loved ones. Therefore you need to keep in mind the following:

Communicate with the child in a reassuring way. Allow them to express their worries, insecurities and fears - be empathetic and instead of saying "don't cry", say "I see you are sad, you are afraid, I am here with you, I'll help you..." There is no need to ask children what happened to them, it's better to wait until they start talking, and then just nod and don't ask for details.

Be sensitive to what the child needs.

Don't try to hug them, stroke them, or cuddle them - you are strangers to them. Touches are important for the child, give them to the child by shaking hands, stroking their hair, patting their back. Give them a cuddly toy, a soft pillow, a blanket to sleep on.

Familiarize them with the space where they will live.

Explain to them where they can find things, how things work and ask what else is needed. Ask them what they would like to have differently, check if they understand. Don't overwhelm them with information and plans, give them time and add new information gradually.

Be mindful about the language barrier.

It is ideal to have someone close to the child who can communicate with the child in a language he or she understands. Ideally, the child should not be in the host family alone but, for example, together with another child he or she knows. Also, it may be a good idea to arrange contact with a known person at least via mobile or internet. You can use the voice translator on your mobile phone to communicate.

Provide them with the "first aid package".

Peace, food, warmth, a place to sleep and wash. Find out what kind of food the child likes, if they prefer milk or cocoa. Ask them about their bedtime routine (complete silence/soft music, bedtime story, book, light/darkness.) - anything that you can do to enhance their sense of safety when falling asleep.

Gradually adjust the child's daily routine.

It should be appropriate for their age and habits - games, learning, contact with other children, interests, outings, appropriate tasks, involvement in the domestic chores. Also outdoor activities can be very useful for a child's emotional regulation.

Respect that the child has brought items which connect them to their home and relationships.

If they have brought clothes, toys or books, do not replace them, even if they are worn or old. These are the things which connect them to their memories and past events. You can wash them, you can gradually add to them, but respect them as they are very precious for the child. Ask the child about them, play with them, read from them together. If the child doesn't have any toy, ask them what kind of toy they liked at home and try to find a suitable new one or choose one of your own toys.

Children need to understand what is happening.

Therefore it is not reasonable to protect them from information, to isolate them. Uncertainty and the unknown can be much more frightening than facts, even if they are bad. That is why children need to be informed. The information should be given to them appropriately to their age, with regard to both the amount of information and the way it is conveyed. Young children do not need to be told details or to be overwhelmed with information. Just explain to them why they are without their parents (you can use a story or a fairy tale) and reassure them that everyone will do their best to make sure that their parents can come to them. If possible, help them to connect with their parents or other relatives at least by a call, a video or a message. For older children who can also obtain information on their own, check the sources of information and talk to them about what's going on, how it might evolve. And, of course, reassure them of your support.

Talk to the child about their home.

Talk about their life stories, where they lived, what they liked to do, let them introduce their country to you.. Try to prepare Ukrainian food together, learn a song, watch a Ukrainian fairy tale together, and be interested in their customs. Do anything that expresses your interest in them and their home, their country.

Keep in mind that **it is very probable that the child has**

close relationship persons. Support him/her in communicating with them and if it is not technically possible at present, the child can write to his/her loved ones and draw pictures for them with the prospect of a future reunion. Take an interest in his/her people and their life together. Understand that your role is temporary but still very important in the here and now.

If you have children with their parents or other close relatives:

If things look difficult, you should seek out a professional who deals with the impact of traumatic events

Support the adults to do all that have been described above. Don't do it for them, they are their relational persons, just support them in managing the situation and being supportive for their children. In order for them to be able to handle it, they need to take care of themselves - they also experienced fears, losses, separation from their loved ones, their homes. **If the children's companions are themselves in a bad emotional state, you can help them by spending some time with the child so that they can relax and seek professional help.**