

- 1) Visits should occur in **comfortable surroundings**, e.g., the foster home or caregiver home. Visits of one hour a week in child welfare offices – a common practice – are too minimal and the surroundings have aversive connotations that inhibit comfortable communication between parent and infant.
- 2) Visits should be scheduled to allow for regular involvement of the parent in the daily feeding, sleeping, bathing, and play routine of the infant, and as little disruption as possible in the infant's eating and sleeping routines.

## Parental Capacities

The following parental capacities are minimally necessary for the healthy growth and development of the infant:

1. Capacity to **carry out parenting responsibilities**. Social skills and adaptive capabilities, not IQ, are relevant
2. Capacity to be aware of and to respond to the infant's **physical needs** and the ability to protect and provide a **safe environment**
3. Capacity to be aware of and to respond appropriately to the infant's **developmental needs**, including the sensory, motor, cognitive domains
4. Capacity to **invest emotionally** in the infant and emotional energy to invest in caregiving
5. Ability to perceive and **accurately read the infant's cues and communications** about needs and to respond appropriately and consistently
6. Ability to **delay gratification, tolerate frustration, and cope with the resulting stress**, avoiding intense anger and resentment toward the infant
7. Ability to **experience the infant as a separate person** with his or her own needs, not as an extension of the parent
8. **Capacity to meet own needs** for self-gratification and self-esteem independent of the infant
9. Ability to **recognize when assistance is needed** and to accept it when offered
10. Ability to respond appropriately to emergency situations

## Parental Needs After Termination of Parental Rights

Any caregiver that loses an infant without her or his consent will grieve. If possible, counseling should be available to the parent in adjusting to this painful experience. Parents cope with loss in many ways: becoming pregnant again, becoming self-destructive, isolating, moving away are all common reactions. Counseling can assist the parent to accept the decision as in the best interests of both parent and infant, complete the grieving process and move toward a healthier outcome.