

Two, common sense and common experiences tell us that children survive disruptions. Often parents are hospitalized for serious illness or are forced to leave home for work, schooling or military service. We would never recommend that their children not be returned because of affection for substitute caretakers.

Three, when a child is not returned to the natural parent, he loses not only the parent but other family as well; siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles. Knowing blood relatives in addition to his parents offers support and a context to this child's life that an adoptive situation does not.

Four, my own experience in a number of cases reinforces the notion that a child's pull back to his natural family is very strong in spite of a more stable foster environment.

And finally it is not what happens to a child but how things happen that influence a successful outcome.

The consequence^{of}/being removed from one home and placed into another is tempered by how the move takes place. Important questions to ask are "Will the child be prepared for the move; will he understand why he will be living somewhere else?" "Will he have a chance to gradually integrate into the new family and take leave of the old?" "Will he be able to maintain contact with his foster parents and have the opportunity to make them part of an extended family?" A child can never have too many loving and supportive adults.

Under Massachusetts law the Commonwealth cannot force the breakup of the natural family without an affirmative showing of parental unfitness.

But in the case of incarcerated persons the Commonwealth may