

Working with Primary Families:  
Understanding Challenges, Issues and Strategies for Success

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### The Hurdle



What is your greatest concern or hurdle facing you when working with birth parents?

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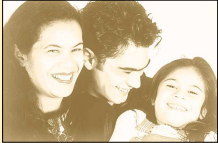
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### Why are We Here?

To examine how foster parents develop in their role with birth parents

To develop a plan for success as a mentoring foster parent		To step in the shoes a birth family and experience what they experience
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To learn strategies to help birth parents      To examine issues that create conflict and resolve conflict

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**From the Eyes  
of a Child**

**What does  
disengagement  
mean to a  
child?**



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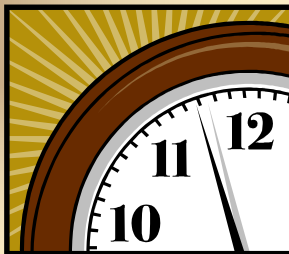
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**TIME OUT FOR TRANSFER OF  
LEARNING – (TOL 1)**

My thoughts, feelings  
or insights following  
this exercise regarding  
separation for children  
are...



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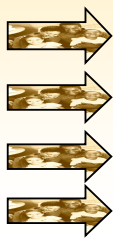
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**Understanding Foster Parents and  
How They Grow in Working with  
Birth Parents**



- Room for One More**
- Team Member**
- Team Leader**
- Child Advocate**

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Working with Birth Parents –  
Where it fits in your development

Room for one more	Team Member
Team Leader	Child Advocate

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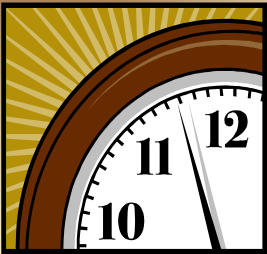
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**TIME OUT FOR TRANSFER OF  
LEARNING (TOL 2)**



Which stage would you place yourself? What understanding did you gain from this activity?

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**Handy Dandy Build a Family**



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### Let's Talk about Your Experience

- How did you feel trying to come up with realistic plans to get your child(ren) back?
- What hindered you?
- What was it like being separated?
- What might have made it better?

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### TIME OUT FOR TRANSFER OF LEARNING (TOL 3)

How would you personally describe your understanding of the impact of separation on families now that you have experienced it?



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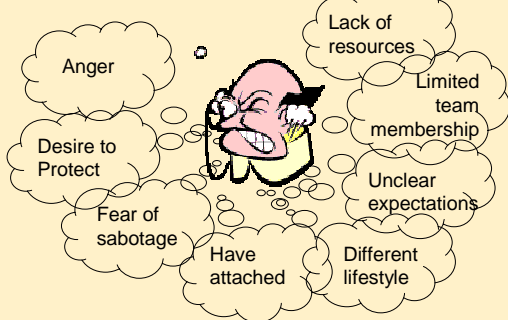
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### Dealing with Conflicts Sources of foster family conflict



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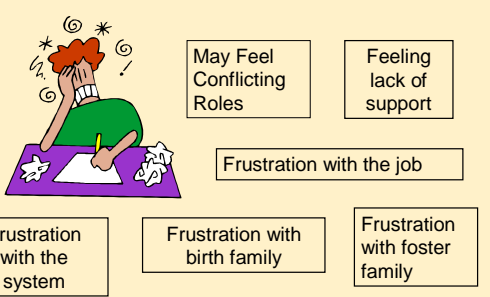
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### Dealing with Conflicts

#### Sources of caseworker conflict



May Feel Conflicting Roles

Feeling lack of support

Frustration with the job

Frustration with the system

Frustration with birth family

Frustration with foster family

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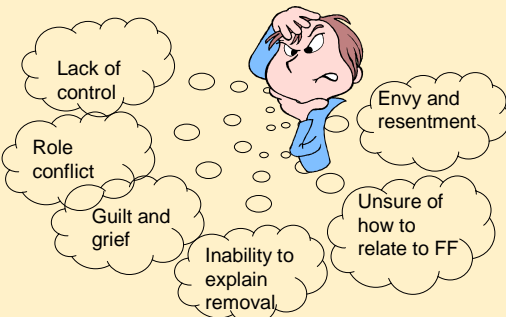
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### Dealing with Conflicts

#### Sources of birthparent conflict



Lack of control

Role conflict

Guilt and grief

Inability to explain removal

Envy and resentment

Unsure of how to relate to FF

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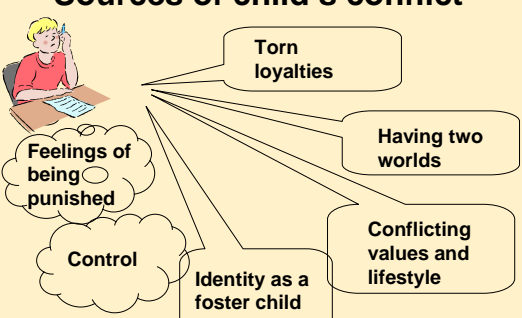
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### Dealing with Conflicts

#### Sources of child's conflict



Torn loyalties

Having two worlds

Conflicting values and lifestyle

Identity as a foster child

Control

Feelings of being punished

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### TIME OUT FOR TRANSFER OF LEARNING (TOL 4)

What conflicts have impacted your ability to work with the birth parent or agency? What insight did you gain from talking with other foster parents during this exercise?



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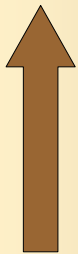
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### Benefits of working together



- Reunification may occur more quickly
- Primary family is likely to make permanent changes
- If reunification not possible, primary families may relinquish custody to foster family
- Foster family experience personal growth

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### Liabilities of working together

- Foster families and primary families may not agree
- Foster and primary families may not like each other
- Foster family may be fearful of the primary family
- Primary family may interfere with the foster family
- Foster family may want to adopt
- Primary family may be jealous



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**Guidelines to Produce Beneficial Services to Children and their Families**

- Respect for one another.
- Seek conflict resolution.
- Permission for honesty.
- Focus on the best interest of the child.
- Communication..
- Continuity of the teams mission.

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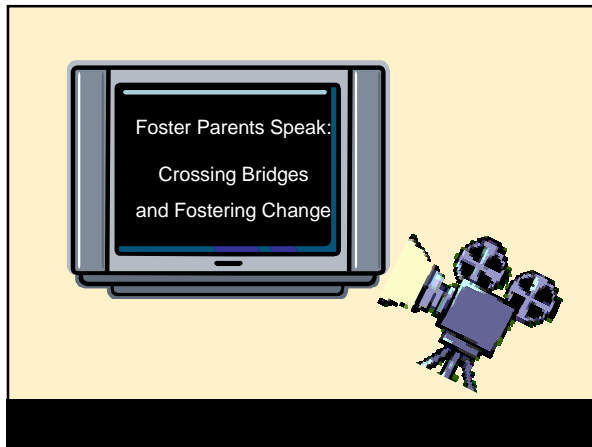
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- What new things did you learn from the video? How do you think this new insight might change you?
- Did anything in the video surprise you? If so, what? Why was it surprising?
- Which things in the video were most like your own experience?
- Which things in the video were most different from your own experience?
- If you could ask the foster parents in the video a question, what would you ask them?

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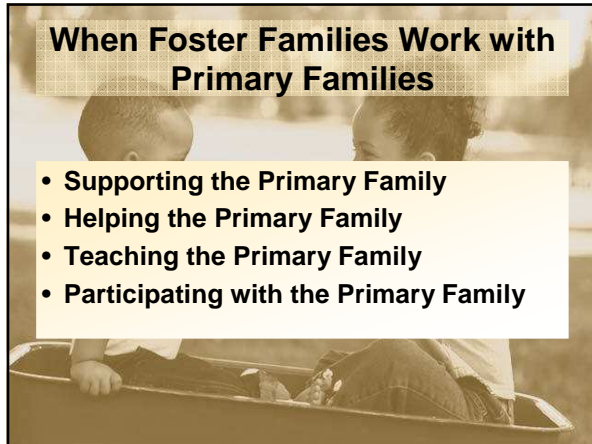
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**When Foster Families Work with Primary Families**

- Supporting the Primary Family
- Helping the Primary Family
- Teaching the Primary Family
- Participating with the Primary Family

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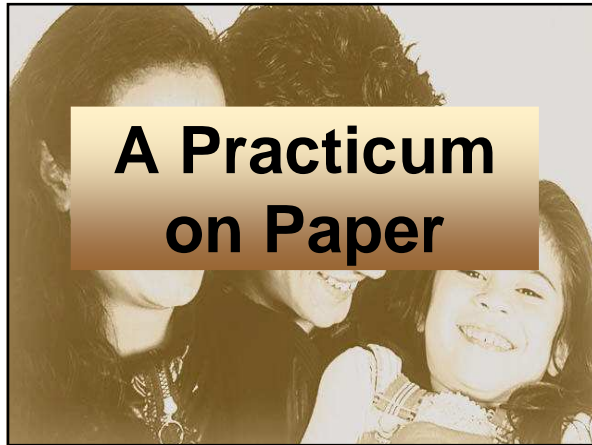
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**A Practicum on Paper**

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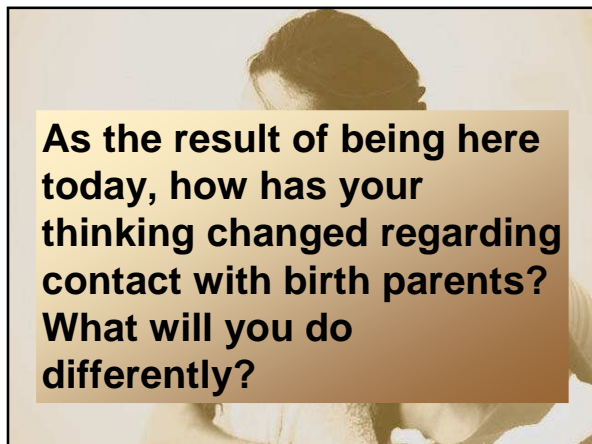
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**As the result of being here today, how has your thinking changed regarding contact with birth parents? What will you do differently?**

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## **AGENDA**

- I. Introduction
- II. Professional Development of Foster Families
- III. Gaining Understanding
- IV. Dealing with Conflicts and Identifying Behaviors
- V. Why Would a Foster Family Go to All this Trouble?
- VI. Closing and Evaluation

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- To identify challenges and obstacles in working with the primary family
- To develop an understanding of the importance of primary family inclusion and its impact on children in care
- To review the developmental stages of foster family development and to relate those stages to how foster families work with the primary family
- To provide an opportunity for the foster family to experience the removal of a child and the challenges of reunification
- To gain understanding on the types of conflicts that interfere in working with birth parents and to develop strategies on dealing with those conflicts  
To gain insight into the benefits and liabilities of working with the birth parents and other members of the team, and to develop specific methods of support

## COMPETENCIES

922-02-004	Knows types of family resources and strengths that decrease risk of abuse and neglect
927-02-003	Knows why it is important to include the child's cultural background in caregiver family practices and celebrations
927-02-004	Knows how to honor the child's cultural values, norms, and practices in the caregiving home
928-01-001	Knows how to help plan and arrange visits that can support the child and primary family members
928-01-002	Knows how visits with primary family members may affect children and their family members
928-01-003	Knows how to help children deal with emotional distress resulting from contacts with primary family members
928-01-004	Knows how to help children enhance their attachment to their primary parents; Knows how to do this in a way that is suitable for the child's level of development
928-01-006	Can help foster and kinship children maintain attachments with their primary family members
928-02-001	Understands the rights of parents whose children are in placement, and knows how to respect those rights
928-02-002	Understands how primary parents may react to children being removed from their homes and placed in caregiving homes
928-02-003	Understands how positive relationships with primary families may help children reunify with those primary families; Understands how this may also help primary parents make another permanency plan for their children
928-02-004	Knows ways to support children's positive feelings toward their birth parents, siblings, and extended family members
928-02-005	Knows benefits of working cooperatively with primary families
928-02-008	Can recognize primary families' strengths and can talk with children about their primary families in a fair, understanding, and realistic manner
928-02-009	Can work with primary parents to keep them involved with their children

## **Time Out for Transfer of Learning**

### **TOL 1: Essential Connections Activity**

**What are your thoughts, feelings, or insights regarding separation for children following this exercise?**

### **TOL 2: Stages and Roles Activity**

**At which stage would you place yourself? What understanding did you gain from this exercise?**

### **TOL 3: Handy Dandy Build a Family**

**What personal insight did you gain from this activity?**

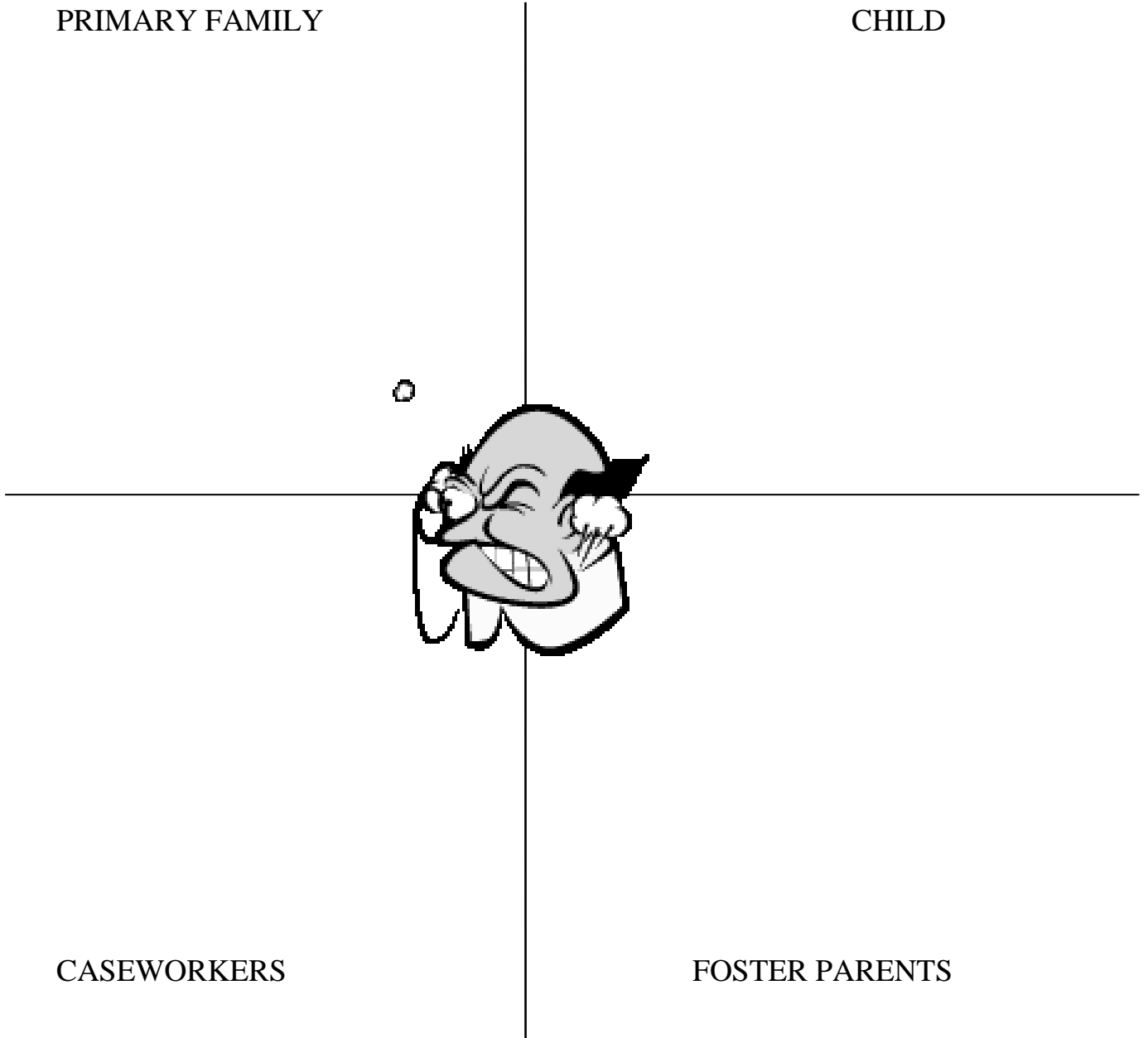
### **TOL 4: Sources of Conflict**

**What conflicts have impacted your ability to work with the birth parent or the agency? What insight did you gain from talking with other foster parents during this exercise?**

## Things You Will See and Hear

PRIMARY FAMILY

CHILD



## Sources of Conflict that Divide the Primary Team

### Sources of Conflict for Foster Families

- Anger with the primary family for what has happened to the child
- A desire to protect the child from further harm
- Fear that the primary family may sabotage the child's placement
- Fear that the primary family will hurt the child or the foster family in an emotional or physical manner
- Fear that the foster family may want the child to be a part of their family
- Different lifestyle between the foster family and the primary family
- Unclear expectations
- Limited team membership (The foster family may feel frustrated if they feel they are not being given full consideration as team members.)
- Lack of effective resources



### Sources of Conflict for Caseworkers:

- Frustration with the system (The caseworker may feel overwhelmed with the number and complexity of cases.)
- Frustration with primary families (The caseworker may be frustrated at the lack of effort they perceive the primary family is making.)
- Frustration with the foster family (Caseworkers may be frustrated when they do not feel the foster family is supporting the case plan.)
- Frustration with the job (The caseworker may feel that all she is doing is putting out other people's fires.)
- Feeling of lack of support and appreciation (The community may not be in a supportive position of the job of children's services.)
- May feel conflicting roles (Many caseworkers come into the field because they have a sincere interest in children.)

### Sources of Conflict for Primary Families:

- Lack of control (The primary family may have overwhelming feelings of lack of control due to the legal nature of the proceedings.)
- Role conflict (Some primary families are well conditioned to play the victim role and may resist becoming an active and productive member.)
- Guilt and grief (The primary family may be overwhelmed with guilt at not preventing the removal.)
- Inability to explain removal (The primary family may be at a loss to explain to family and friends the removal of their children.)
- Unsure of how to relate to the foster family (Primary families often do not know how to face foster families.)



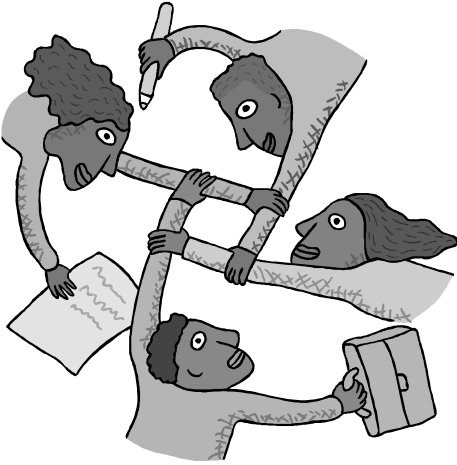
- Envy and resentment (Primary families may be envious of the life of the foster parent.)



**Sources of Conflict for the Child**

- Torn Loyalties. (The child may feel the need to choose sides in conflicts between the adults.)
  - Having to live in two worlds
  - Identity as a "foster child" (The child may resent having to live in foster care and having to be identified as being a foster child.)
  - Control (The child may feel he has no control in his life. He may attempt to take control at whatever level seems available.)
  - Lack of real input (The child was the one removed, but is the most innocent of any wrongdoing.)
- Feelings of being punished (The child may receive mixed messages from the adults involved. For example, the child may be told, "I am so proud of you for telling the truth about the abuse," and in the next breath the adult tells the child, "You can no longer live at home because it is not safe for children there.")

## ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE TEAM



**CLEAR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**-An effective team must know the job of the team and each individual on the team must have a role and related responsibilities. The team members must know each other's jobs.

**COORDINATION**-The team must organize work toward a common goal that must always include permanency for the child or children.

**CASE PLAN/SET GOALS AND OBJECTIVES-**

The team must determine a clear and concise case plan and set objectives and goals to fulfill the case plan. The team must also decide upon specific tasks for each member and ensure each member understands her role.

**ASSESSMENT**-The team should have an ongoing process of assessment of the activities being utilized to reach goals. The team needs to be flexible in the event of ineffective methods and be prepared to alter plans.

**SUPPORT**- Each team must be able and willing to support the others as the team attempts to reach goals. The team must be willing to "pick each other up" and assist one another to move on in the team process.

**COOPERATION**-Team members need to view each other as equal in the team process and give permission for members to use their unique and diverse talents in achieving the goal of permanency for the child, whether that means reunification or other plan for permanency.

**COMMUNICATION**-The team must establish clear and expedient channels through which information flows. The team must establish an open atmosphere where members can address difficult subjects in a non-judgmental manner.

**TRUST**-Each team member must believe that all members have a common vision of the "best interests of the child" and that no member is deliberately attempting to further harm the child.

***Guidelines to Produce Beneficial Services to Children and Their Families***



- **Respect for one another-** The primary team members must recognize that each member brings individual viewpoints, values, and culture to team process. The primary care team should seek to utilize diversity to achieve benefits for the child.
- **Seek conflict resolution-** The primary care team must be committed to resolving differences of opinion in regard to the case plan or intervention strategies. Differences of opinion that do not impact the case plan are irrelevant to the case planning process.
- **Permission for honesty-** The primary care team needs to set an atmosphere of honesty with one another in regard to case goals and planning. Each member needs to be honest in regard to the actual agenda for the case process. There must be freedom for members to explore with one another the meaning of behaviors and words.
- **Focus on the best interest of the child-** The primary care team must agree to act in a manner that helps children. The children have already been casualties at the hands of adults on at least one occasion. The primary care team must keep revisiting what is "best for the children?"
- **Communication-** The primary care team must have established channels of communication that provide information in a timely and efficient manner.
  - Expectations should be communicated through a well written case plan.
  - The primary care team can communicate clearly and document progress through the use of monthly reports.
  - Journals can be passed between the foster parent and the primary family to prevent miscommunication.
- **Continuity of the team's mission-** Should the goal of the case plan change, the primary care team continues to plan for the best interest of the child. The actual caregiver may change, as in situations of adoption and kinship care, but the primary family can remain involved in the planning process.

## Managing Benefits and Liabilities



**Benefits that result when the primary family and the foster family work together in a cooperative manner are as follows:**

- Reunification occurs more quickly or an alternative plan for permanency is determined more rapidly.
- The primary family is more likely to make permanent changes with the support of the foster family. The incorporation of permanent change means there is a higher likelihood of a permanent home for the child.
- Foster families will experience personal growth by interaction with families who are different than them. As a result of this interaction, foster families will develop interpersonal relationship skills that will make them better able to work through their own problems, as well as a repertoire of skills to use with their families and the primary families they work with. This is a cumulative building process that gets "bigger and better" with every experience they encounter.
- Foster families can contribute more actively toward the success of the child and his family when working together in a cooperative manner.
- Foster families are able to develop positive relationships with the primary family which will assist in the parenting of the child. When the two families work together, the child is less able to "pit" one family against the other.
- Foster families are able to maintain contact with the child following reunification. This is only possible when positive relationships are established between the foster family and the primary family.

**The liabilities that can result when the foster family works closely with the primary family:**

- The foster family and the primary family may not agree with one another. This is not uncommon, as the families may differ in values, background, culture, parenting style and beliefs, knowledge, and skill.



- The foster family may not like the primary family (or the primary family may not like the foster family). In some instances this is a natural occurrence, as some people are more likeable than others. In other instances, the foster family may have difficulty overcoming their anger towards the primary family for what happened to the child.
- The foster family may be fearful of the primary family. When the child is separated from her family, the family may become hostile and behave irrationally. The primary family may have contributing problems, such as mental illness or substance abuse, which can make their behavior difficult to predict. Some parents have been convicted of serious offenses, such as assault, rape, and committing a crime using a weapon.
- The primary family may interfere with the foster family. The foster parent may feel that the primary family causes difficulty in the day-to-day functioning of the foster family. The life of a foster parent can be very hectic.
- The primary family may be jealous of the foster family. The primary family may believe that the foster family has so much more to offer the child. The family may also feel embarrassed or ashamed at their lack of resources. They may worry that the children will be given so much that they will not want to return home.
- The foster family may want to adopt the child. In this instance, the foster family may be anxious to sever ties with the primary family. **IT IS IMPORTANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THIS IS NOT THE GOAL OF FOSTER CARE.**

## Four Specific Methods to Practice Partnership with the Primary Family

### I. Supporting the Primary Family

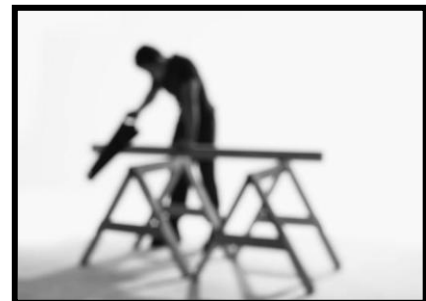
- Send letters and cards to the parent about the child's progress.
- Take pictures of the child and send them to the parent.
- Ask the parent for information about his child.
- Maintain visitation and phone contact between the parent and the child.
- Send copies of report cards, school work, and art work to the parent.
- Allow the report card and testing scores to be opened by the parent at visits, instead of being opened by the foster family.
- Compliment the parent's progress on the case plan.
- Dress the child up for the visit. Ask the parent what the child should wear to a certain event.
- Encourage the child to make cards or crafts to take as gifts to the visit.
- Call the parent when the child is sick or not feeling well; be flexible with visits during times of illness.
- Allow the parent to attend parent/child functions at school without your presence.
- Talk to the primary family about their history, beliefs, and traditions, and seek to understand their world view.
- In situations where the parent is receiving OWF and is required to work or to participate in work readiness activities, the foster caregiver can encourage completion of these activities.



- The foster parent should understand that many families experience the demands of the OWF self sufficiency contracts as pressure. In fact, sanctions for non-compliance and the 36-month limit on benefits may result in significant pressure for many OWF recipients. Additionally, benefits stop after the child has been in placement for more than six months. This puts additional financial pressure on the family.
- The foster caregiver is in a unique position to help parents perceive the work readiness activities as an opportunity to become financially independent.
- The foster caregiver can encourage the parent to utilize the OWF program to develop job skills, and to remediate the problems that resulted in unemployment and the placement of the child in foster care. The foster caregiver may also explain how he/she manages the dual responsibilities of raising children and maintaining employment.
- The foster caregiver can also support the parent in participating in the development and implementation of the case plan and supplemental contingency plans. The foster caregiver can provide advice, emotional support, and encouragement. If the foster caregiver is in disagreement with the parent, or feels that she cannot work with the parent, she should discuss this problem with the caseworker and negotiate an appropriate solution.

## II. Helping the Primary Family

- Transport the child to and from visits, especially in the initial stages.
- Assist the family to find and utilize resources.
- Transport the family to meetings and appointments, especially in the initial stages.
- Help the family locate furniture and other household items.
- Assist the family with food resources for extended visits (as needed).
- Offer to baby-sit for special events after the placement ends.
- Offer respite services after placement ends.



- Offer to host sibling visits if the child is placed separately or some children remain in the home.
- Acknowledge their anger, pain, resentment, and/or hostility as "normal." Let them see you model helpful coping mechanisms.

### III. Teaching the Primary Family



- Demonstrate child management techniques for the parent.
  - Let the primary family know how your family makes certain choices regarding life styles. Let them know the thought processes you go through to get to that choice. Ask them how they make decisions. Learn about the thoughts that go into their choices. Find out what you can learn from one another.
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- Instruct the parent on budgeting and nutrition. Model the way in which you make financial choices when on outings. For instance, not buying beverages when you take the family out for a meal, thus saving several dollars on a given outing; or refusing to fall into "commercialization traps" by not buying trinkets at an outing to the zoo.
  - Model warm, nurturing parent/child interactions for the family, especially when you are tired or have had a hard day. The parent needs to see that the role of parent continues even when you are sick or tired.
  - Mentor the primary family in positive parenting skills.
  - Model positive, productive, non-violent methods of solving problems. Show families that individuals can have high levels of emotions and make mature decisions about how to express them.
  - Teach parents how to play with their children. Model interaction with children during various parts of the day, such as allowing a four-year-old to recognize shapes or practice matching while folding laundry.
  - Assist families to plan low-cost, fun activities for their children.

- Teach and model appropriate housekeeping activities. Let them know how you set goals and priorities, such as doing the laundry while you watch television, or how you combine activities, such as light grocery shopping on your way to pick up children from an activity. Also acknowledge that sometimes you don't meet all your goals and that you get tired and exhausted also.
- Teach the parent stress reduction techniques, and how to take care of oneself as an adult.

#### **IV. Participating with the Primary Family**

- Meet with the primary family before placement, when possible.
- Invite the primary family to help the child move in and out of your home.
- Attend agency team meetings, review, and court hearings with the primary family. Offer to pick them up on your way to the meeting.
- Participate with the primary family in parenting or early intervention classes. This is an excellent opportunity for you to learn more about the child right alongside the primary parent.
- Have visits in your home.
- Supervise visits when this is necessary according to the case plan.
- Interact with the parent and the children on visits. Assist the family to plan what they will do on these supervised visits, especially if they are required to take place at an agency.
- Invite the primary family to school functions, sporting events, and community happenings.
- Invite the primary family to a fun outing.
- Advocate for the primary family in receiving counseling services, school placement, or other services as necessary.
- Take the primary family shopping.



**GROUP ONE - AT PLACEMENT**

Delores Smith is a single mother of three children-Tonya, age six, Barbara, age four, and Robert, age two. Ms. Smith receives benefits for the children and lives in a subsidized duplex. The whereabouts of the children's father is unknown.

Delores also has custody of her 14-year-old sister, Angela. About two years ago, Angela made an allegation of sexual abuse by her mother's boyfriend, which her mother refused to believe. Children's Aid Society placed Angela on a voluntary basis with her sister. Their mother refuses to have any contact with her two daughters and there is no other family in the state.

At the time of intake, Angela was left with the three children on a Friday night. On Saturday evening, when Delores did not return, Angela left the children alone while she went out to the mall with her 22 year-old boyfriend. The children were observed by a neighbor playing outside in the yard at midnight with no supervision. The neighbor reported the case to Children's Aid Society.

The police and the social worker were questioning the children when Angela arrived home. Spotting the police car, Angela fled the scene out of fear she would be held responsible for leaving the children alone. Angela was found about an hour later and returned to the home where the police and the social worker attempted to unravel the situation. Angela was crying, sobbing, and inconsolable. A few hours later, the police found Delores at the home of a friend.

When the police arrived with Delores, the children were afraid and crying. Delores was high on crack and became hysterical when the worker mentioned placing the children in a foster home. At first, Delores threatened to "kill Angela" for leaving the children alone. Angela said nothing, remaining curled up in a ball in the corner of the room. Then, in dramatic fashion, Delores threw herself on the couch yelling and crying in a high-pitched voice, saying that her "life was over" and that she had really "screwed things up big time." Delores was also screaming that she was "going to go to the agency" and "see

this person who was going to take care of her children." She also told the worker she was going to "tell that foster parent how to take care of her children" and that the agency "better do something with her whoring sister" because she (Delores) had "had it with her" and wanted nothing else to do with her.

You receive a call at three AM from the agency asking, that you foster the three Smith children. You say "Yes."

Another member of your foster parent support group says "yes" to fostering Angela.

1. How would you help the children and the mother cope with the separation at the time of the move into your home? What very specific things would you do?
2. How would you involve Delores in the actual placement of the children in your home that night?
3. What activities might you do in the next few days?
4. How would you assist the children to deal with the separation from Angela? (Delores has refused to allow the children to be placed together.) How would you assist them to deal with the cultural practices and expression of values that may be different in your home?
5. How would you assist Angela to deal with the separation from her sister, Delores, and her children for whom Angela cares deeply?
6. What values conflict might be at the root of the conflict between Angela and Delores?
7. What "old issues" for Angela would be expected to surface in the course of this case? In what ways might these issues be the same for Delores?

**GROUP TWO - IN PLACEMENT**

The three Smith children-Tonya, age six, Barbara, age four, and Robert, age two- were placed in your foster home when their mother left them in the care of her 14 year-old sister for an extended period of time. The sister, Angela, left the children alone to go out with her 22-year-old boyfriend. The night of the intake, Delores was high on crack and emotionally incoherent. Delores, who blamed Angela for the situation, refused to allow the children to be placed in the same foster home as Angela.

Delores is presently in a live-in drug rehabilitation program at a local hospital. She has visits with the children for one hour once a week in the visiting area of the rehabilitation center.

The case plan states that Delores must successfully complete the drug rehabilitation program, take parenting classes, find a reliable baby sitter, and improve the day-to-day care and nurturing of the children.

The three children miss their mother very much. The two girls cry and ask about their mother constantly. They have difficulty eating and sleeping. Tonya has night terrors. Robert clings to you and refuses to sleep by himself. The children are afraid that Angela is "dead." Delores is still demanding that the children not visit with Angela. Angela acts withdrawn in the foster home. She cries much of the time. Between crying spells she asks to see the children and her sister. Angela has tried to make contact with her mother, who tells her she is a "tramp" and a little "liar."

1. What could you do to assist the children to stay in contact with their mother while she completes drug rehabilitation?
2. What things could you do to assist Delores to complete her case plan? What strengths do you see in Delores' family system?
3. How could you assist the mother to maintain her relationship with her children?

4. How could the two foster parents assist Delores to deal with her feelings toward Angela?
5. How could you assist the four children to maintain some type of relationship with one another?
6. What can you do for Angela to assist her to deal with the recent events in her life?
7. How will you prepare your family (especially your children) to deal with the differences in values between your family and that of Delores?

**GROUP THREE - PRE-REUNIFICATION**

The three Smith children- Tonya, age seven, Barbara, age four, and Robert, age three (Tonya and Robert had birthdays while in care)- have been in your foster home for nine months. Please read SMITH CASE STUDY - PRE-PLACEMENT AND IN-PLACEMENT for additional information as necessary.

Robert no longer behaves in a clingy manner and the two girls are eating and sleeping better, but still have occasional nightmares. Tonya has expressed anxiety about staying with her mother overnight. Barbara has begun to soil her pants recently and has wet the bed on several occasions since the children have been having longer and overnight visits.

Delores has completed her in-patient drug rehabilitation program and is presently in after-care counseling. Delores has regularly visited with her children; however, the visits in the first six months were of short length and limited to once a week due to the regulations of the drug treatment facility. The agency has determined that Delores is ready to have the children placed with her again. This will require longer and more frequent visitation. Delores receives minimal benefits for herself and currently has no source of support for the children. Delores is currently living in the same house as when the children came into care.

Delores is concerned that she won't know what to do with the children on the long visits as she is "out of practice." She has also expressed concern that the children will not listen to her and that they no longer see her as their mother.

Delores and Angela are on speaking terms and have visited a few times since Delores finished her drug treatment program. Delores has allowed Angela to visit with the children on a regular basis. Angela has requested to remain in her current foster home at least until the end of the school year. With all the adjustments that Delores and the three children have to make, the agency agrees. The eventual plan for Angela, now 15, is to return to Delores' home. Angela is making good grades in school, is planning for her sixteenth birthday party, and is talking of getting her drivers license.

1. How can you help the children return to their mother smoothly?  
In what ways do you think the differences in value systems and culture will impact the children's return to their mother?
2. How do you prepare Delores for the regression in development that will likely take place when the children are returned to her?
3. How can you assist Delores to assume the mother role in the life of her children?
4. What could you do to further help the relationship between Angela and Delores?
5. In what other ways could you offer to help Delores?
6. Is there anything about Angela that is a "red flag" to you?

**GROUP FOUR - POST REUNIFICATION**

The three Smith children-Tonya, age seven, Barbara, age four, and Robert, age three- have been in your foster home for 11 months. Please refer to SMITH CASE STUDY - AT PLACEMENT and SMITH CASE STUDY - IN PLACEMENT for more complete background on the case. The case plan is completed and involved the mother, Delores Smith, completing in-patient drug rehabilitation, parenting classes, finding a reliable baby sitter, and improving her day-to-day care and nurturing of the children.

The children are being returned to the mother as we do this exercise. The mother, Delores, thanks you for taking good care of her children. You tell her that you wish her well in her mothering role. Delores tells you that she hopes so, too, because she really does love her children.

Angela, the 15-year-old sister of Delores remains in a neighborhood foster home. The plan remains for Angela to be reunified at the close of the school year (which is in two months).

You and Angela's foster mother are both concerned. You are both afraid that Delores will become too stressed and go back to using drugs and leaving the children alone.

1. How can you and Angela's foster mother assist Delores to stay drug free?
2. How can you support and assist Delores to be a parent to her three children? What strengths do you see in Delores at this point?
3. How can you prepare Delores to take a parenting role in Angela's life?
4. How can you prepare Angela for the changes that will occur when school is over? What concerns do you have for Angela at the present time?

## SMITH CASE STUDY

## Activity Handout #4

5. How can you, as the foster parents, assist Delores to prepare for Angela's coming home?
  
6. What do you do with the three children to assist them to make the move home?
  
7. What do you do to prepare yourself to say goodbye to the children you have cared for for almost one year?