

Child Welfare Staff & Foster Parents: A Team Approach

Training Group Presentation



Partnership

- Partnership is when two or more people work together for a common goal. Partnership begins during the selection process and continues while the children are in the foster home



Partnership



- **A successful partnership between child welfare staff and foster parents depends on:**
 - **Willingness to work in cooperation**
 - **Effective communication**
 - **Contributions of something of value**
 - **Clear expectations and roles**
 - **Trust**
 - **Honesty**

Communication

- The exchange of ideas, thoughts, and information
- “Two-way street” exchange
- Also involves listening



Communication

- Foster parents are able to build alliances with birth parents and others who have significant relationships with the child
- Child Welfare Staff and Foster parents would greatly benefit from increased communication for the good of the children

Shared Parenting

By the foster parents and birth parents sharing parenting, increased communication leads to better results for children

Communication

- Foster parents nurture children's cultural connections by supporting shared parenting with birth parents
- This helps build the child's self esteem, making for a better foster care experience for all



Goals for foster parenting



- **Child Welfare Staff should promote, encourage, and aid in a successful foster relationship**
 - Foster parents should have information about the child's early history and family background
 - Establish a bond over time and commit to the child's best interests
 - Share in the decision making
 - Have a temporary role as a parent, but commit to contributing something meaningful to the child's life

Goals for foster parenting

- Prepare children for the next steps in the foster/adoptive process
- Help children and their families towards reunification when safety can be assured
- Often decide to adopt



Goals for foster parenting

- Foster/adoptive parents help children heal from neglect
- Foster parents may also serve as models, teacher, or mentors to birth parents and children to prevent future neglect



Goals for foster parenting

- Help children heal from emotional maltreatment
- Prevent further emotional maltreatment
- Foster parents can help caseworkers assess risk and likelihood of future harm



Goals for foster parenting

- Foster parents are seen more as therapeutic team members, rather than solely nurturing caregivers
- They have become supplements to the families of children in care, forming alliances with birth parents



Common Denominator

- We have a responsibility to provide safe and nurturing homes for these children. We must help them grow and develop while also working in partnership to keep the best interests of the child a number one priority



Attachment

- Partnership provides the foundation for all the work we do together
- Partnership is a key element is helping children develop attachments



Attachment



- **Child Welfare Staff & Foster parents work together to achieve the following attachment tasks:**

- To support the attachment children have to their birth families
- To help children recover from a separation from their families and attach to a foster family
- To help the child in foster care rebuild and maintain relationships with their birth families
- To help them build and maintain a relationship with an adoptive family

Teamwork



- **A group of people, working together with different roles and responsibilities, to achieve a common goal**
- **Foster parents and child welfare staff ideally work together in a team relationship**

Teamwork

- It is important that the child welfare staff and foster parents all work together to tell the child the same story. Children need to hear the “story” over and over in order to understand better when there is going to be yet another change in their lives

FOCUS

Support Teamwork

Assure Child Safety

Focus on the goal of permanency and safety for children

Teamwork

- As team members, foster and adoptive parents and child welfare staff must have a trusting relationship
- Trusting relationships take time and effort to develop



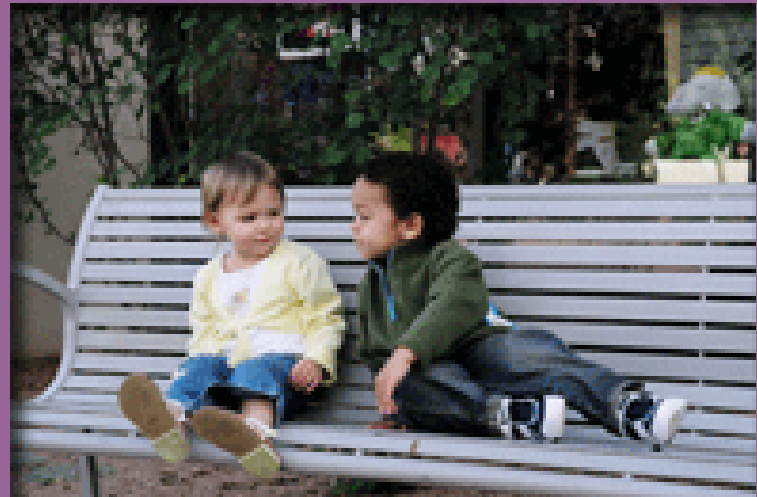
Teamwork



- Ultimately, it is important to pay attention to the process and to the communication breakdowns
- In order to achieve a successful outcome, team members must work together towards a common goal and be aware of what each member brings to the table

Teamwork

- Roles need to be clear so that critical work is neither neglected nor duplicated among team members



Appreciation

- We need to appreciate each other
 - “Thank You”
 - “I appreciate you”



On being a foster parent.....

I am often asked how I find the time.....

It is there.

I am often asked how I find the right words....

They come.

I am often asked if it breaks my heart...

It fills it.

I am often asked if I like what I do.....

I love it.

I am often asked if I think I make a difference....

I know that I do.

I am often asked if I have any regrets....

Only that I didn't begin sooner.

Some say that this child is lucky to have me in their life...

The truth is...

The blessing is mine.

