

CLASS NOTES*SESSION 2 – Teamwork Toward Permanence*

DYFS has two essential mandates:

- Protect children from risk and harm
- Connect children to permanent relationships intended to last a lifetime

These are accomplished in one of two ways:

- Enabling the family to care for the child, or whenever this is not possible,
- Connecting the child to another family

Factors that might contribute who cannot care for their children:

- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Loss of job
- Physical or mental illness
- Substance abuse
- Domestic Violence
- Insufficient family/community supports
- Legal problems

Ways in which foster families can be a support for families experiencing problems:

- Temporary respite during a stressful time
- Opportunity for parents to enter treatment
- Ensures safety for children while parents develop necessary skills
- Opportunity for birth parents to work with foster parents on parenting issues and skills on behalf of the child
- “Families Helping Families”

Permanency is ...

- Having a sense of one’s past; including one’s cultural heritage and identity
- Having a legal and social status that comes from being a family member
- Having safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime

Permanency must include ...

- Connections
 - Ongoing relationships
 - Create a sense of belonging and stability
 - Helps promote cultural and personal identity
- Continuity
 - Child understands connections between past, present and future
 - Know where you’ve been and where you’re going
 - Also helps promote cultural and personal identity

Permanency planning is a set of activities and tasks directed toward achieving the child’s permanent goal.

Concurrent planning is the practice of directing activities and tasks toward more than one permanent goal at a time.

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How children are placed:

- When an instance of abuse or neglect is reported in a family, DYFS initiates an investigation
- As a result of the investigation, DYFS will do one of three things:
 - Find the report to be unfounded and close the referral upon intake
 - Open the case for services in an attempt to preserve the family (children remain in the home)
 - Remove the children immediately on an emergent basis (Dodd removal)
- When preservation services are put in place, DYFS continues to work with the family until the issues have been resolved or until such time that it is determined that children are at risk of harm
- When a child is removed under non-emergent circumstances, it must be under the authority of a court order
- When Dodd removals occur, DYFS must obtain a court order to continue the out-of-home placement within three business days

Court Timelines:

- Every child placed into care under court order is assigned a "law guardian" – an attorney that represents the child in court
- After a child is in placement for about 45 days, the case is reviewed by the Child Placement Review Board (CPRB) – a panel of volunteers appointed by the presiding family court judge to review cases and make recommendations to the court on the child's behalf
- A case is reviewed by the family court judge approximately every three months
- Around the 11th month of placement, the CPRB will hold a permanency review, which will be followed by a permanency hearing in court
- At the permanency hearing, DYFS must present a permanent plan to the court, which must include an intent to terminate parental rights (TPR) if reunification with family is not imminent
- If termination of parental rights is pursued, DYFS files a "guardianship complaint" which ultimately results in a TPR trial before the judge

Guidelines for effective teamwork:

- *Team members* need to share child welfare values and a respect for child welfare laws.
- *Team members* need to respect one another's complementary roles and value one another's perspectives.
- *Team members* need to have a clear understanding of the goals and objectives, and ensure that these are shared among all team members.

New Jersey Family Team Meetings:

- A component of the 2004 child welfare reform plan
- Team members can include birth family, DYFS staff (caseworker, supervisor), foster parents (if invited by the birth family), Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), child's law guardian, parents' attorneys, service providers (teachers, medical professionals, therapists, etc.)
- Bring together supportive resources to assess the family's needs
- Help keep the family and team members focused on plan of action
- Use conflict resolution methods that encourage collaboration and build consensus regarding placement and services
- Train other staff to become effective facilitators
- Identify needed interventions in finding solutions for the family
- Empower families to achieve their desired outcomes

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Impact of abuse and neglect on behavior:

- Some children are very needy and it may be very frustrating trying to meet their needs
- They may be slow to respond to your love and nurturing
- When children don't trust, they can be very rejecting
- It is difficult for resource parents to feel the same type of gratification that they may feel, or have felt, with their birth children
- The difficult behaviors displayed by children who are abused and neglected can stir up negative feelings in caregivers
- Over time, nurturing and perseverance on the part of the caregivers by consistently meeting the child's needs will instill trust in these children and enable them to form healthy attachments
- While not all children develop at the same rate, there are general predictions about when children should be reaching key milestones (pp 78-81 in the PRIDEBook). The influences of abuse and neglect can negatively impact the achievement of these milestones. NOTE: The chart does not include any indication of cultural development, and that as resource parents, we must learn as much as possible about a child's family culture before expressing a concern to the team about a possible developmental delay

Specific Areas of Abuse and Neglect and Their Expected Impact:

- Neglect
 - Children who are not supervised may harm themselves, and as a result may learn not to take risks, which can delay development.
 - A child left alone cannot model or mimic the skills of their caregiver.
 - Children may not have objects to play with or things to watch and observe and they do not receive adequate stimulation.
 - Basic needs must be met before children can concern themselves with other developmental tasks. If a child is hungry, sick or craving emotional attention, he or she cannot attend to other skills or learning.
- Physical Abuse
 - A child who is physically abused may be afraid to take risks for fear of doing something wrong.
 - Some children sustain serious injuries that affect their development on an ongoing basis, such as hearing loss, blindness or brain injuries.
- Sexual Abuse
 - The effects of sexual abuse may include factors that could impede normal sexual development, such as exposure to sexual activity before a child is physically mature, sexually transmitted diseases and infections, and emotional trauma
 - The emotional trauma of sexual abuse may take tremendous energy and focus that would otherwise be devoted to age-appropriate developmental tasks. For example, how does an 11 year old who has been sexually abused by her uncle sit around and giggle with her girlfriends about "cute boys" in class?
- Emotional Maltreatment
 - A child's self-esteem may be seriously eroded to the point where the child feels incompetent to tackle even basic life skills.
 - When a child is prevented from developing outside relationships may result in poor social development, lack of social skills, or difficulty with peers

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Areas where a child's developmental "age" can be different from those children who have not experienced abuse or neglect:

- Physical appearance – children can sometimes experience physical growth delays (neglect can sometimes lead to a medical condition known as "failure to thrive")
- Intellectual Age – prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol can have an effect on intellect
- School Age – preoccupation with their problems can prevent children from focusing
- Emotional Age – children who have not been taught to control their emotions can act out as toddlers would when they are significantly beyond that stage
- Social Age – children who have been isolated without exposure to peers have not learned how to interact with other children, such as on the school playground
- Cultural, Ethnic and Religious Experiences – these are sometimes completely absent
- Life Experiences – children may have experienced more than some of their peers will see in a lifetime (exposure to violence, substance abuse, sexual activity, etc.)

SESSION 4 – Meeting Developmental Needs: Loss

In terms of families whose children have been removed from the home due to abuse or neglect, **separation** is the change that occurs when there is a break up in a relationship; **loss** is the effect on people when something important is withdrawn; and **grief** is the process that helps people work together through the pain of separation and loss.

Challenges of dealing with loss:

- Separation, loss and grief are painful experiences to think and talk about
- It makes us uncomfortable to be with children and adults who are sad and angry
- The grief of others can remind us of our own losses and trigger painful memories
- Our own painful experiences can either help or hinder the way we respond to other's losses
- We often feel unsure how to help others people deal with their pain
- Dealing with painful losses can take a long time, sometimes forever

During our classroom discussions we separated loss into three categories; loss of *physical or mental health*, loss of *significant people* and loss of *self-esteem*. We also talked about losses as being *expected* or *unexpected*.

Expected losses are shared by most people, so they're considered to be "normal" and as a result there's lots of support when these types of losses occur. With expected losses, there's generally no great sense of blame and we're usually somewhat prepared for them, even though they may be very painful. Some examples of expected losses include:

- Death of a parent or older family member
- Moving to a new home, leaving friends and community behind
- Moving to a new job or retiring
- Children growing up and leaving home
- Loss of senses or abilities as a result of aging
- Loss of certain privileges and freedoms as we mature from children to adults

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Unexpected losses can be much more complicated to deal with because they're not generally shared equally among people, so there may be little understanding or support from the community about the how to grieve. We're usually unprepared to cope with unexpected losses and there's often a sense of personal shame or blame. Some examples of unexpected losses include:

- Loss of a child
- Sudden loss of a job
- Financial losses
- Serious Illness or injury
- Car accidents, fire, natural disasters
- Infertility
- Theft of property
- Divorce

It's important to understand these classifications of loss because the majority of significant experiences in life can involve a loss of some kind. Some losses are not as apparent as others, particularly with the types of losses experienced by those affected by the child welfare system. The most frequent type of loss, which is often a side effect of other losses, is the loss of self-esteem.

Some losses that birth families may encounter include:

- Loss of their child/children
- Loss of home (housing assistance may be discontinued when there are no children)
- Loss of health (realization of a drug addiction, HIV, depression)
- Loss of spouse/significant other
- Loss of self-esteem (society looks down on offenders of child abuse and neglect)
- Loss of control/self-direction (must negotiate the return of their children with DYFS/Courts)

Some losses that resource families may encounter include:

- Loss of health (exposure to children being placed, mental stress)
- Loss of family stability
- Loss to own children in assuming role of resource family (sharing time with other children)
- Loss of self-esteem (children who do not respond or are difficult to manage)
- Possible loss of status in the community (perception of DYFS can be negative)
- Loss of important people (other team members when a child returns home)
- Loss to own children and extended family when a child returns home
- Loss of autonomy in parenting (need "permission" from DYFS)
- Loss of privacy

Some losses that adoptive families may encounter include:

- Loss of the family experience as they "expected" it to be if they were unable to have their own (birth) children
- Loss of exclusive parenting role in children's lives (children are likely to be curious about their birth family)
- Loss of control in their family development (need to work with other team members to identify a child that is "right" for them)

Some losses that may be specific to adopted children:

- Finality of the separation from their birth family
- Loss of their foster family
- Loss of friends, neighbors, teachers, coaches and others they knew
- Loss of the hope that they might return to their birth family

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Why it's important for resource families to understand their own experiences with loss:

- If you are overwhelmed with your own losses, it will be difficult to help children manage their losses
- Thinking about how we have been helped to grieve may help us help others with their grieving
- Cultural influences and "rules" about grieving may lead us to expect others to grieve in the same way we grieve
- Seeing how we have been able to manage losses in our past may give us confidence in helping someone else
- Children experiencing losses may "trigger" sad memories and feelings related to losses in our own past

SESSION 5 – Supporting Family Relationships

Children in foster care are at risk of developing positive self-esteem and a healthy sense of personal and cultural identity:

- They may feel they are responsible for bad things happening to them because they are not loveable or valuable
- Cultural identity can be negatively affected if placed out of their own culture and heritage
- Foster parents cannot provide children with a legal status, social status, continuity of parenting and commitment that comes from being with one's own family

Some of the challenges resource families may face regarding cultural or racial identity:

- School projects that involve family history (the "dreaded family tree")
- Other children may make cruel or inappropriate comments
- Children may feel embarrassed that they look different than your family
- Lack of historical photos/videos of the child's life or of their family

Some things you can do as a family to help deal with some of these challenges:

- Immerse yourself in school projects with your child – it will be an educational experience for you as well
- Reassure your child that the hurtful comments of their peers are probably because they don't understand
- Participate in foster/adoptive family association functions – children see other similar families
- Take as many pictures/videos of the child as you can – include their photos with your family's

How to work with the team to support family relationships:

- Support family visits
- Talk positively to children about birth families
- Encourage birth parents' participation in decision making for the child*
- Obtain pictures of the birth family*
- Take the child back to visit community/church/school (if appropriate)*
- Plan for telephone calls or letters*
- Have the child draw pictures/artwork for birth family
- Include birth family in child's prayers at bedtime
- Ensure that items given to the child by their birth family are respected
- Reassure the child that the birth family cares for him/her despite the difficulties the family has had in meeting child's needs

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- Be courteous and respectful to the birth family in front of the child
- Help birth family cope with their losses*
- Do not talk negatively about birth family in front of or to the child
- Ask for birth parents’ input or assistance on a parenting issue*

*These items will require the intervention of the child’s caseworker.

Goals for family visits:

- The **child** needs to know he or she is loved and lovable and that parents are all right
- The **birth family** needs to know that the child is being well cared for and that the child has not forgotten them
- The **resource family** may gain a better understanding of the family relationships/dynamics, which will help them support the child in his or her attempt to understand the birth family and their situation
- The **caseworker** needs to provide direct input into the parent-child relationship, observe parenting skills and obtain data to make decisions

Common concerns about family visits and how they’re addressed:

Myth	Reality
Birth parents may harm or kidnap the children during a visit.	Visits are generally supervised and birth parents usually understand that there are rules to be followed and that failure to follow those rules will have an adverse affect on their case.
Birth parents will find out where the resource family lives and create a disturbance.	DYFS does not share identifying information about the resource family without express consent. In the event that this information is somehow disclosed to the birth family, they are usually aware that creating a disturbance at the home of the resource family will likely have an adverse affect on their case.
Parents who have abused/neglected their children don’t deserve to see them.	Visits are mandated by DYFS policy and by the courts. Until their parental rights are terminated, birth parents still have a legal right to visit with their children.
Children report that they do not want to visit with their siblings, possibly because of sibling rivalry, so they should not be forced to go.	Experience shows that siblings ties are very strong, even with rivalry. Siblings may need to see each other more when they’ve been separated from their parents.
The children exhibit behaviors that indicate that they do not enjoy visiting with their relatives, so they should not be forced to go.	The resource family needs to report these behaviors to the caseworker so that the team can assess which kin contacts are important to maintain and possibly petition the Court to modify visitation arrangements.
Visitation with the birth family will slow down the process of attachment to the foster or adoptive family.	Attachment is a complex process. Children are able to attach to different people at the same time.

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General suggestions on how to prepare a child for a visit:

- Provide the child with a clear understanding of the visiting arrangements and as much information as you have about the visit ahead of time
- Prepared for the parent's reaction. Over time, you may learn more about this from the caseworker.
- Be prepared for the child's feelings and reactions as they anticipate the visit. Over time, you will learn to look for visual and verbal cues from the child.
- Understand that emotions are complicated and unpredictable, and that the visit may bring up a range of these feelings.

General suggestions on helping children after a visit:

- If you're able to assist with transportation to/from the visit (not required), work with the caseworker to remove the child quickly calmly the visiting location; avoid long good-byes.
- Let the child know that you are there to listen, but do not question them about the visit.
- Tell the child when the next visit will be.
- Make a statement that allows the child to know that he or she can express their feelings.
- After visits, be prepared to pick up the child's visual and verbal cues. Some children may want to be left alone, while others may need to be with someone. Many children may exhibit a need to sleep.
- Don't force the child to eat or push them to be affectionate.

Lifebooks:

- A Lifebook is a tool that can be used to build a sense of history and continuity for a child.
- It is a child's record of families and connections, both past and present.
- A Lifebook can be a photo album, a loose-leaf binder, folder or composition book, a scrapbook, or even a video. It can be as simple or as fancy as you and child would like.
- The collection should include information about why the child came into care, pictures of where he/she has been, names of significant people and important life events.
- Contributions to Lifebooks can be from you, the child, the birth family, the caseworker or any other person in the child's life.
- *Maintaining a Lifebook is a DYFS licensing requirement.*

SESSION 6 – Meeting Developmental Needs: Discipline

Why disciplining DYFS children can be challenging:

- You may feel that others have higher expectations than you can meet
- Children placed with resource families have experienced traumas and inconsistencies in their young lives, so understanding rules and expectations is difficult for them
- These children have also experienced a loss of control, anger, sadness and other emotions which can result in extreme behaviors
- Instilling discipline and facilitating responsible behavior in children is complicated by their diverse and special needs
- When children are 1st placed there is an urgency to establish a relationship with them. This can be difficult to accomplish when resource families use disciplinary techniques during this period in order to respond to children's unacceptable behavior
- Incorporating a new child into your family and household requires extra planning for change

CLASS NOTESDefinition of **discipline**:

- The word "discipline" comes from the Latin root *discere* which means to learn, and the Latin word *discipulus* which means pupil
- With this in mind, we must think of a disciplinarian as someone who teaches, and a disciplined person as someone who has learned
- As parents, our children should regard us as teachers who guide them and help them learn!
- Discipline is intended to help a child develop self-control, self-respect, responsibility and orderliness.

Goals of effective discipline:

- **Protecting and Nurturing Children's Physical and Psychological Well-Being:** This ensures that children do not experience physical pain or discomfort, and that their self-concept, of which self-esteem is a part, is protected and enhanced.
- **Advancing Children's Development:** This includes enhancing the child's physical, emotional, intellectual, social and moral development, as well as considering the child's uniqueness and developmental status.
- **Meeting Children's Needs:** Needs are what drive people to behave. Discipline should be focused on helping children meet their needs in an acceptable way.
- **Teaching ways to prevent and solve problems:** Discipline is not something you do when a child does something unacceptable. It involves teaching a child to solve problems by modeling and learning from previous experiences. It also includes structuring an environment to prevent problems from occurring.
- **Maintaining and building the parent/child relationship:** Children grow through nurturing, accepting, trusting relationships with adults important to them. Methods used as part of the disciplinary process should not damage this crucial ingredient to healthy growth and development.
- **Helping children develop self-control and responsibility:** Discipline should provide children with the capacity to control impulses, to use their internal rules for governing conduct, to make decisions and to encourage them to take responsibility for their actions.
- **Producing the desired behavior:** The disciplinary action should result in the effect that is desired. It should not contribute to avoidance behavior, fear or the opposite of what is considered to be the goal of the disciplinary process.

Definition of **punishment**:

- The word "punishment" is derived from the Latin word *punire* which means penalty; to pay for and to give pain. This Latin word implies the threat or use of one's power over another.
- With this in mind, punishment can be defined as inflicting a penalty on someone who has done something wrong, to treat roughly, to injure or hurt, to cause a loss of freedom or money or to provide physical pain for a wrongdoing.
- Examples of punishment include inflicting pain through corporal punishment (slapping or spanking), ridicule or threats, imposing suffering such as isolation or withholding of food, grounding or removing privileges
- Non-physical punishment can be effective now and then as a reminder of the consequences for breaking rules which are necessary for order and everyone's safety.

CLASS NOTES

Why does DYFS need a policy on discipline?

- Children in placement have had serious losses, including the loss of significant others, health and/or self-esteem.
- Most often, these losses are from neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse and/or emotional abuse.
- Some children have lived for many years with inappropriate physical punishment and abuse, leaving them with emotional scars. The trauma from this cannot be overcome quickly. Physical punishment does not help a child with the effect of past abuse. For some children who have experienced severe physical punishment, a spanking would do little to change behavior.
- Other forms of physical and emotional punishment do not make sense for children who already have been hurt badly enough that they need to be separated temporarily or permanently from their families.
- Many children who have been subjected to cruel and/or extreme punishments will not respond to punishment unless it is abusive or severe. Others will overreact to any form of punishment.
- A goal of resource families is to provide children with a safe, nurturing environment where they can experience physical and emotional growth, and a feeling of security and positive self-esteem. Physical punishment is obviously a poor tool for providing these conditions.

How we respond to spanking:

- "I was spanked and I turned out okay." Many of us were spanked or otherwise physically punished, and we did turn out okay. That's because while our parents were using that form of punishment, they were probably also doing things that made us feel good about ourselves and helped us problem-solve. In other words, they were not physically punishing us all the time.
- "Some children just ask for it." Children who experience abuse or neglect may learn that the only way to get attention is to disobey and behave inappropriately. Some children may not know they are behaving inappropriately. A child who expects or wants to be physically hurt is a child with some emotional problems. Physical punishment won't help; it usually makes the problem worse.
- "You said to treat all children equally, and I spank my children." Treating all children equally means treating them fairly and with dignity and respect. A physical punishment given to a child who has had a loving, nurturing and caring background differs greatly from that same punishment given to a child who has been abused physically, sexually and/or emotionally. After increased awareness of the negative effects of spanking, many resource parents refrain from using this type of punishment completely.
- "I don't want my children to become spoiled. An occasional spanking is good for them." Children become "spoiled" through inconsistent parenting, a lack of structure and a lack of clear expectations for their conduct, rather than from not spanking. Understanding and meeting a child's need is the best way to prevent them from becoming self-centered or spoiled. Saying spanking is "good" for them makes it sound as if there is a benefit for children to realize through this action. Being hit doesn't feel good at the time, nor does it produce a long term benefit.
- "Spanking is OK if the parent remains calm and in control." If a parent is calm and not angry, the parent is in control and should be able to manage a child's behavior more effectively than by spanking. Using spanking to relieve parental frustration or to diffuse parental anger, serves the parent, and has no positive benefit for the child.

CLASS NOTES

Knowledge, skills and qualities of an effective disciplinarian:

- **Patience:** No one becomes a disciplined person spontaneously. An effective disciplinarian knows that change happens slowly.
- **Determination:** An effective disciplinarian never gives up on a child, and always searches for other ways to bring about change or solve problems.
- **Confidence:** Teaching discipline involves challenges and risk taking, and the realization that no one has all the answers. The effective disciplinarian acts upon his/ her own feelings of self worth and self assurance.
- **Genuineness and Concern:** Effective discipline is based on the quality of the parent-child relationship. Thus, relationship building is an important ingredient of successful discipline.
- **Openness:** An effective disciplinarian sees more than one side to any situation, is eager to consider different options, and is willing to try to understand a child's feelings and needs, even when challenged by a child's unacceptable behavior. Being willing to explore the birth parent's approaches and what has worked or not worked in the past.
- **Friendly Firmness:** One needs to set limits, and provide consistency and predictability in a friendly, trusting manner.
- **Separateness:** There needs to be a distance between parent and child; this attitude helps the parent to avoid making excuses for the child, to allow the child to experience the consequences of behavior, to avoid power struggles with the child, and to resist feeling like a failure when child does something wrong.
- **Understanding child and adolescent development, and the factors that affect development:** *Remember the exercise from Session 3 looking at age differences between a child in out-of-home care and a child who is not.* One should know the characteristics, tasks, and needs of a child's stages of development, and be able to apply this understanding to the disciplinary process.
- **Effective Communication:** The disciplinary process is based on the parent's ability to communicate understanding.
- **Understanding the Goals of Effective Discipline:** Discipline serves more than meeting the goal of stopping or changing unacceptable behavior (remember goals discussed earlier)
- **Understanding the Meaning of Behavior:** Remember our exercises on Survival Behaviors (Session 3) and Needs that Motivate Behavior (below). A critical element of effective discipline is behavior management, and the key to behavior management involves understanding what motivates a person's behavior.

Most of our behaviors are motivated by a desire to fulfill our needs, which generally fall into the following categories:

- All human beings strive first to meet their **basic needs** including food, clothing, shelter and safety.
- Human beings also have a **need to connect** to one another and **belong**.
- Sometimes we behave in certain ways in order to get **attention** or **recognition**.
- We also have a **need for power or to control** our environment.
- We pursue activities that we will **enjoy**, and we value our **freedom** to do so.

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Disciplinary methods and techniques:

- Promoting Positive Behavior (pro-active discipline): One of the most powerful ways to encourage self-esteem and self-control is through promoting positive behavior. Examples include listening to children, asking questions, providing encouragement, modeling, praising desired behavior, rewarding appropriate behavior, "catching the child doing something good"
- Promoting Self-Control: Actions that seek to use planning and preparation as a means to help organize family life and avoid situations where children act out of control. The disciplinarian is taking some responsibility for children's behavior by providing rules or a structure to help children assume control of their own behavior. Examples include modifying the environment, setting rules, stating expectations, developing schedules and routines.
- Responding to Lack of Self-Control: This includes disciplinary techniques that address situations in which the child is not able to use self control. In these situations, the disciplinarian is assuming primary responsibility for the child's behavior. Examples include consequences for behavior, exploring alternatives, making commands or requests to modify behavior, removing the child from the situation, and time out.

Time-Outs – taking time and giving time:

- Take time to gain your own composure
- Give child the opportunity to change the behavior
- Tell child where to go and for how long (general rule, 1 minute per year of age)
- Time starts only when child is calm
- Ignore child's behavior while in time-out
- Afterwards, talk to child about what they have learned
- Focus on a positive activity
- Time out should be considered a means, not an end; it is used to help the child regain self control, not as a punishment
- Use it sparingly or it will cease to be effective
- Children should be told it is not a punishment but to help them calm down
- Never use a punitive tone of voice or attitude
- Adhere to the saying "timing is everything"

Recommended Resource on Time-Outs: "1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12, Third Edition" by Thomas W. Phelan, MD

CLASS NOTES

Factors influencing methods of discipline:

- The behavior itself: Some methods are more effective than others, depending on the particular behavior.
- Our feelings about the behavior: We will overreact according to our beliefs about the behavior.
- The child: We must always consider the uniqueness of the child. Special consideration is given to the age, developmental status and background of the child.
- The purpose we assign to the behavior: Our perceptions of the purpose of the child's behavior will influence our response to it.
- Where the behavior is occurring: We will react differently to a child's misbehavior at home vs. in public.
- Who is present in the setting: The number of people, their ages, and the relationships we have with them will influence our reaction
- Factors influencing our ability and willingness to respond effectively: Our level of confidence in dealing with the child's behavior, as well as the mood we're in and our own health.
- Our relationship with the child: The degree of familiarity, trust and past experiences with the child contribute to the reaction we will have to a particular child's behavior.

Situations in which children and youth are at greater risk:

- Significant changes and multiple losses
- Conflict around sexual identity
- Current or past instances of substance abuse
- Previous suicide attempts, suicidal ideation or a history of high risk behavior
- Serious mental health diagnosis, such as depression, PTSD, anorexia

Some children may exhibit behaviors that are seriously "out of control" and require additional knowledge and skills of the resource family. These are crisis situations that may require additional assistance for families to handle!

- Suicidal gestures or self-mutilation
- Persistent or repeated property damage that puts the child and others at risk of injury
- Physical assault of others
- Running away from home

Responding to these extreme behaviors:

- Enlist the assistance of the caseworker right away to request a special evaluation
- Some children have emotional disturbances that may require ongoing psychiatric monitoring and medication
- In rare circumstances, it may be necessary to summon outside help IMMEDIATELY in order to protect the child, yourself and your family

SESSION 7 – Continuing Family Relationships

The importance of permanent connections:

- Most people take for granted belonging to a family and being connected to people who will support them.
- Most people assume that their parents would take care of them.
- A feeling of belonging gives people a sense of history, roots and culture. It, also, provides us with a feeling of caring and being cared for, and a sense of identity and self-esteem.
- The need for people on whom we can rely is not something that ends in childhood. Most adults continue to need permanent connections.

CLASS NOTES

Possible permanency outcomes (some clarification specific to NJ policy and law):

- **Return Home** is appropriate when children can safely be returned to the care of their parents.
- **Adoption** is selected when a termination of parental rights is achieved, either voluntarily or by trial, and the child is appropriate for adoption.
- **Guardianship with Kin** is selected when children can live permanently with relatives or family friends and maintain a relationship with their birth family. In NJ, this is called Kinship Legal Guardianship, and *may only be considered when adoption has been ruled out.*
- **Alternative Permanent Living Arrangement** is utilized for children with extreme behavioral problems that prevent them from thriving in a family setting and require an institutional placement.

Parental rights and responsibilities:

	Foster Care	Adoption	KLG
Child remains in the custody of DYFS	Yes	No	No
Birth parents' rights are terminated	No	Yes	No
Caregiving parents can make major decisions for child	No	Yes	Yes
Caregiving parents are financially responsible for child*	No	Yes	Yes
Child can have last name of the family	No	Yes	No
Child has inheritance rights	No	Yes	No
Child is covered by family's insurance**	No	Yes	Yes
Legal Guardianship can be transferred (by will)	No	Yes	No
Permanency can be challenged by birth parents***	Yes	No	Yes

* Adoption subsidy may be available for certain children considered "hard to place" and continues the foster care board rate and clothing allowance until the child is 18 (or 21 if attending school). KLG may include a monthly kinship care subsidy until the child is 18.

** Children in subsidized adoptions and KLG may be able to receive Medicaid benefits until age 21.

*** Excludes rights of appeal.

Questions that adoptive children may have:

- Who are my birth parents?
- Do I have brothers and sisters?
- What do I have in common with my birth family (appearance, genetic background, talents, behaviors, good/ bad traits)?
- Why didn't I grow up with my birth family like most other kids?
- Am I secure in this family or will my birth family come someday and take me back?
- Will I ever be able to meet my birth family?

CLASS NOTES*SESSION 8*

Safety and security for children who have been sexually abused:

- It is generally not your role to identify when a child has been abused or neglected. The child comes into your home after some form of abuse or neglect has been substantiated.
- However, instances of sexual abuse may not be known until the child has entered foster care and begins to develop a sense of safety and trust with the foster parents.
- *Realizing that sexual abuse is a possibility with any child that may be placed in your home means that you need to take steps and safeguards to ensure their safety and well-being.*

Allegations

- Resource parents are sometimes accused of abusing the children in their care. Unfortunately, sometimes this is true.
- In many circumstances, the child or another person makes an accusation that is not based on fact.
- *Knowledge, skills and teamwork are your best preventative tools and your best defense!*
- How to reduce the risk of allegations against your family:
 - Be observant. All of the patterns of a child's abuse may not be known.
 - Innocent and caring behaviors by the resource parent may be interpreted very differently by the child.
 - Behaviors that are appropriate with birth children may not be appropriate with children in foster care.
 - Efforts to protect children may lead teachers, social workers or others to ask questions that may seem intrusive and make you feel uncomfortable.

Uncertainty ... it comes with the territory!

- As resource parents, you need to be comfortable with a certain degree of uncertainty
- All of the information you want will rarely be available when you want it
- Children coming into care for emergency reasons usually come with little information
- It may be up to you to find out the missing information

Thinking ahead ...

- Resource families need to think about their strengths and needs, and their willingness to deal with different or unexpected situations
- If you feel that your family could not deal with a child who may have been sexually abused, you need to consider whether fostering or adopting is right for your family
- *DYFS cannot guarantee that a child placed with you has not been sexually abused*

Confidentiality:

- DYFS will share with you only what you need to know to care for the child
- You are NOT to discuss the details of a child's case with anyone who does not have a need to know
- DYFS will respect your anonymity from the birth family
- You cannot consent to public disclosure of a child's personal information

Things you may need to do as you prepare for placements:

- Inform the school
- Inform medical/dental providers
- Inform extended family, friends and neighbors (as appropriate)
- Have some basic supplies ready to meet the developmental needs of the child you are expecting to be placed with you

CLASS NOTES

Some changes that are likely to occur in your home immediately when a child is placed:

- Less privacy
- Routines disrupted
- Communication patterns
- Schedules
- Personal space
- Family rules
- Less free time

Some changes that are likely to occur in your home over time when a child is placed:

- Relationships among family members, communication, decision making, problem solving
- Need for additional community resources and developmental needs providers (remember your Ecomap)

Strategies for responding to changes within your family and in the areas of your Ecomap:

- Set up family meetings to discuss changes, rules and family roles and expectations
- Make time for marital relationship
- Nurture relationships with birth children
- Include entire family in decision making
- Establish clear household rules/expectations
- Model positive attitude in responding to change
- Take care of personal needs, including medical, fitness and emotional needs
- Speak with extended family and friends about your decision to become resource parents; take the opportunity to educate them
- Be more conscious of time management
- Seek to build on your existing relationships with community resources such as your church or local school
- Explore your need for family privacy and modify family routines to ensure everyone's privacy

For children in out-of-home care, remember that **TRANSITION=STRESS**. Transitions can be especially stressful for children who are entering care because there may not be much time to assist them with the transition. When a child is placed in your home, you can work with the team to help ensure that future transitions are adequately planned and the child is prepared.

- **Recognize that change takes time**
- Respect child's history
- Learn child's routine, traditions, patterns
- Don't place a lot of demands on child
- Help the child to be comfortable
- Help the child to understand expectations, rules and how things operate
- Acknowledge positive experiences the child may have had in prior placements (Lifebook)
- Make immediate changes only to the routines, traditions and patterns that threaten the safety of the child or others
- Make a plan that involves your entire family in the change process