

Welcome

Separation, Placement, and Reunification




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Lifebooks

Include:

- The past
- The present
- The future



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Introductions

- Name
- Agency/Position
- How long
- Lifebook entry

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Agenda


- Concepts of Separation
- Contributing Factors to Children's Emotional Response to Separation and Placement
- Children's Reactions to Loss: Common Behavior Patterns of the Grieving Process
- The Philosophy of Permanence and Permanency Planning

Agenda

- Placement of the Child
- Enabling and Empowering Parents of Children in Placement
- Supporting the Caregiver and Child in Placement
- Promoting Reunification
- Caseworker's Feelings about Child Welfare

WIIFM?

From your review of competencies and objectives, what are your learning needs for this workshop?



Your Separation Experience

- What helped make it easier?
- What made it more difficult?
- How would your lifebook capture it?

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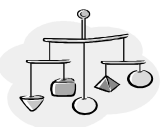
Factors that contribute to the degree of trauma associated with separation

- Degree of significance of the person lost
- Amount of change involved
- Whether temporary or permanent
- Who is thought to be the cause
- Availability of meaningful supports

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Crisis Intervention Theory

- A predictable emotional state which results when people are subjected to overwhelming and unmanageable stresses



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Factors that impact crisis

- Stressor
- Coping skills
- Perception of the event



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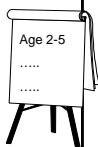
Age groups

- Infants, birth – 24 months
- Preschool, 2-5 years
- School age, 6-9 years
- Preadolescence, 10-12 years
- Early adolescence, 13-14 years
- Middle adolescence, 15-17 years




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1. Describe and discuss the “normal” child in your age group - cognitively, socially, emotionally and behaviorally.
2. Identify how these factors might affect the child’s response to separation and placement, including their susceptibility to crisis. Record on flip chart.
3. Consider:
 - Types of stressors
 - Availability of coping strategies
 - Child’s perception of the event



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Stages of Grief

- Shock/Denial
- Anger/Protest
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Resolution/ Integration

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Please return to your “age” group

List specific behaviors you may expect for each stage of grief.

How could this impact your work with the child?

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Permanency Planning

- Focusing child welfare services on the child’s need for a stable, permanent home during all phases of practice

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Assumptions underlying permanency planning


- All children have a right and need to live and develop within safe, secure, and permanent families.
- When child cannot be placed with relatives, placement should be within the child's neighborhood or community.



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Assumptions underlying permanency planning

- Children experience psychological and developmental disruption with extended separations from family.
- Child's perception of time is determined by developmental maturity.



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Remember ...

***All Workers
are
Permanency
Workers !***

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Disproportionality

- Nationally, placements are disproportionately high for children of minority racial and ethnic backgrounds
- Minority children more likely to be removed from families and placed than white children under comparable circumstances
- Minority children frequently experience disparate and inequitable service provision

(CWLA, 2003)

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Disproportionality

- In the U.S., African-American children represent almost 37% of children in foster care, yet only 15% of the child population in the U.S.

Casey-CSSP, October, 2006



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Principles of Placement

- Decisions must be based on sound, factual information
- Involves early planning when a placement is possible
- Must carefully assess degree of emergency
- Must allow staffing for thorough assessment
- Intensive, in-home support considered before removal
- Must guard against bias

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Placement Strategies

- Minimize the degree of stress
- Increase child's and family's ability to cope
- Help child and family achieve realistic perception of reasons for placement
- Provide opportunity for post-placement supportive services

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Placement Strategies

- Maintain and strengthen relationship between parent and child
- Enhance child's adjustment
- Strengthen caregiver's ability to meet the child's special needs



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Least-Restrictive Settings

- Relative or other person well known to child
- Agency-certified family foster home
- Agency-approved independent living
- Licensed/certified group home
- Licensed/certified maternity home

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Least-Restrictive Settings

- Licensed/certified emergency shelter care facility
- Licensed/certified children's residential center
- Licensed/certified medical or educational facility
- Licensed/certified detention or other secured facility

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Other Considerations

- As close to home as possible
- MEPA and ICWA
- Placement of siblings
- Kinship placements



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A Closer Look at Kinship

- Full-time care, nurturing, teaching, and protection of children by relatives, tribes or clan members, and godparents; stepparents, or any adult who has a significant bond as recognized by the child or family

(Casey, 2006)

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A Closer Look at Kinship

- **Informal – Decided by the family**
- **Formal – Determined by court or agency**
- **Nationally: 29% of children in foster care are placed with relatives; In Ohio: 23%**
- **The Pro's and Con's of kinship care**

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Placement Process

1. Pre-placement Visits
 - ❖ At least one, keep short
 - ❖ Tour home
 - ❖ Limit number of people
 - ❖ Provide continuity
 - ❖ Provide respite



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Placement Process

2. Determining Rate of Placement
 - ❖ Consider safety first
 - ❖ Consider child's coping ability

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Placement Process

3. Providing Child with Opportunities to Talk

- ❖ Allow child to express feelings
- ❖ Develop nurturing relationship with child
- ❖ Allow child to maintain ties

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When talking with children ...

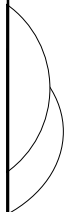
- Be truthful
- Use developmentally appropriate language; assure understanding
- Assure the child is and feels safe
- Take time; talk face-to-face
- Let him know who has been told what
- Explain what is next

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Billy: Age

Preparing	Placing


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Enhancing Visitation

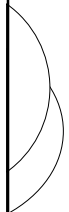
Questions for Discussion

1. What determines location, frequency, duration, and whether supervision is needed?
2. Why might a child be very upset before or after a visit?
3. How can you prepare the family, the caregiver and the child?
4. How can you limit your own time commitment?



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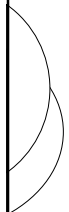




Post-Placement Services


- Assure that the caregiver receives adequate support and services.
- Help the child develop a cover story.
- Help the child maintain continuity and identity.

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Returning to Billy, consider:

- Visitation issues
- Cover story
- Lifebook



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As parents grieve

**Shock/
Denial**

**Anger/
Protest**

Bargaining

Depression

**Resolution/
Integration**

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How can you support and maintain the parent's involvement with the agency and the child immediately after placement?

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Dear
Caseworker,

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"I'm serious! They sit there and look at you like you are stupid! Or (they're) patronizing, 'You did really good!' what do you mean, 'Really good?' I have daycare in my home for eight years! I raised my children! I've got an 11- year-old. I raised him for 10 and a half years before you took him. I don't need you to tell me I did 'really good'."

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"The worst one (visit) was when he came home and had to be supervised. That was the worst visit because I felt like I was under a microscope, where I had to be on my best behavior, you know, I couldn't really be 'mama' ...I was just there with him, because he didn't get a chance to know that I was Mom because there was someone else there. He was just as used to her as he was to me. That was the worst visit."

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"Oh, God. It's like tearing my heart out. It's the most hurtful thing to be on a schedule to see your own child. It's just something that is inconceivable. The pain is just so deep. To tell your own child, 'good-bye.' As bad as you want to be with him. That's one of the hardest things I've ever had to experience next to giving him up... And it's terrible for him too. Because I know he loves me..."

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Vague Rules for Visiting

- Bring the right food
- Take care of your child
- Discipline your child appropriately
- Bring something to do
- Don't pump for information
- Don't make inappropriate comments about foster care
- Don't upset your child

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How can you
support the
caregiving family?

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*Factors that increase potential success
of reunification:*

- Safety threat was acute rather than chronic
- Parent actively and regularly involved with child
- Family has strong, positive relationship with child's caregiver
- Family has strong support network of extended family, friends and community



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Serious conditions that make reunification a very low probability:

- Parent's custody of another child has been previously permanently terminated, after intense services and no change
- Parent has killed or seriously harmed another child and no change has occurred


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Serious conditions that make reunification a very low probability:

- Parent has repeatedly and with premeditation, harmed or tortured this child
- Parent is diagnosed with severe mental illness and has refused or not responded to treatment
- When the only visible support is in illegal drugs, prostitution and street life.

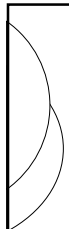
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Family Contact ...



The heart and soul of reunification

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Strategies to reunite:

- Prepare the family
- Explain and plan the steps with all parties
- Engage foster family to support the child during reunification
- Formalize the case plan, including agency supportive services
- Consider one child at a time, over several weeks
- Provide intensive, in-home support; link family to community support