


You will have completed this

when


You have.....

Attended both sessions of class
(and missed no more than 15 min on either day!)

Turned in your completed Transfer of Learnings
for Day 1 and Day 2

Passed the Post-test with 80% completion

Completed the post-class Survey




Your Trainers

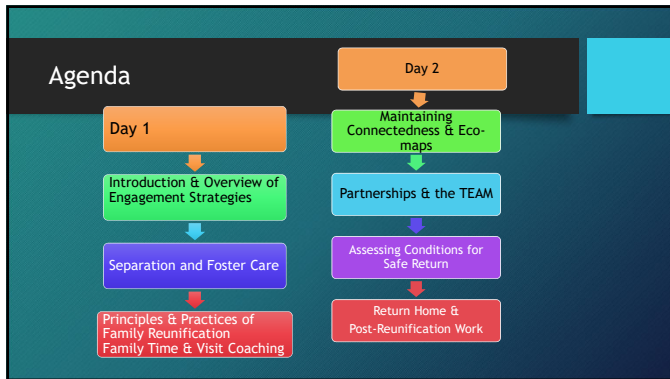
Your Name

Agency

What helps promote reunification?

Introduce yourself





Course Competencies

The learner will be able to:

- Identify effective Family Engagement strategies
- Define the meaning of Family Time and understand the Engagement Strategy of "visit coaching".
- Identify what parts of the visit coaching practice can be utilized in their work to assist the parent in addressing their children's needs during visits.

Handout A1

Course Competencies

The learner will be able to:


- Gain a deeper understanding of well-being, and how to help parents increase the level of attachment to their child during Family Time
- Explain the importance of maintaining connectedness and how the creation of eco-maps can help families exam their supports
- Use the family's support team to determine when it is safe to return home and to plan for stabilization and post-reunification

Virginia Children's Practice Model

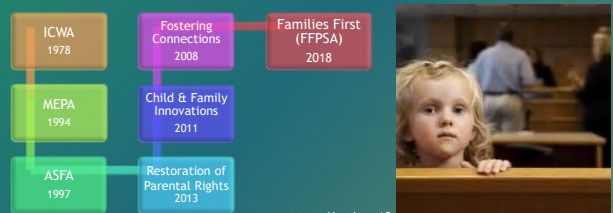
- All children and communities deserve to be safe.
- Practice is family, child, and youth-driven.
- Children do best when raised by families.
- All children and youth need and deserve a permanent family.
- Partnering with others is important to support child and family success in a system that is family-focused, child-centered, and community-based.
- How we do our work is as important as the work we do.

How do these principles relate to family reunification?

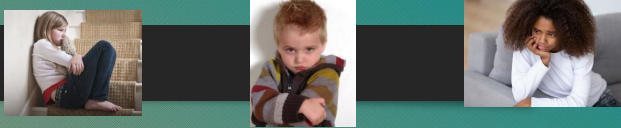
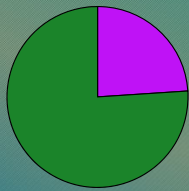
Handout A2



Laws Supporting & Affecting Family Reunification



Handout A3

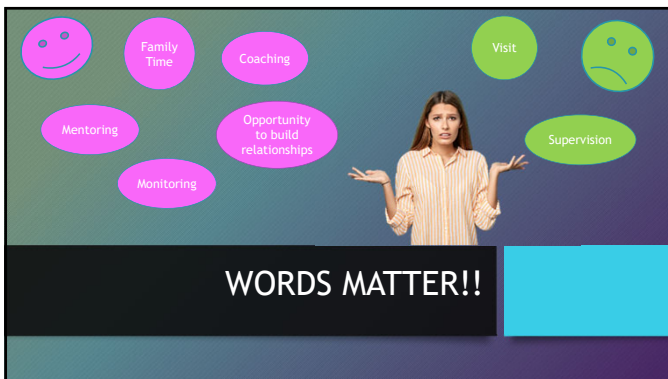



2019
2434 children were in foster care in Virginia
764 were successfully reunited with their families
That's 1/3!

<https://fusion.dss.virginia.gov/orp/ORP-Home/RECURRING-REPORTS/Foster-Care-Reports>







Family Time - Practices to Consider

Baby & Me

Visit Host


Parent Advocates/Mentors



Visit Coaching




Foster Care is a support to families.



REALITY:

- Foster care is a support to BOTH parents and children in the family.





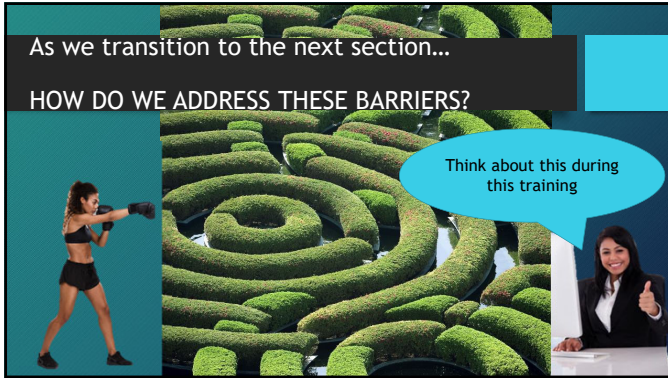
MYTH:

- Foster Care is NOT substitute care.

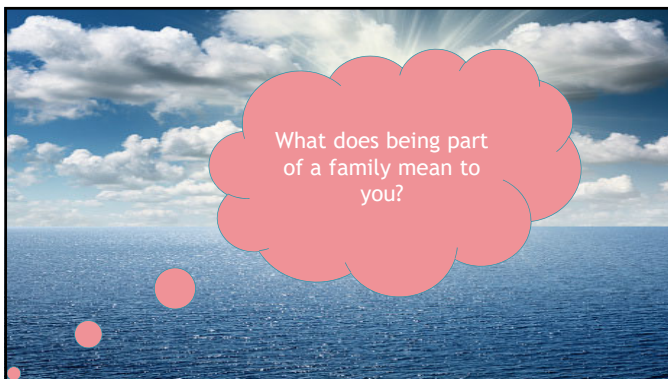
Why does family reunification not happen more often?

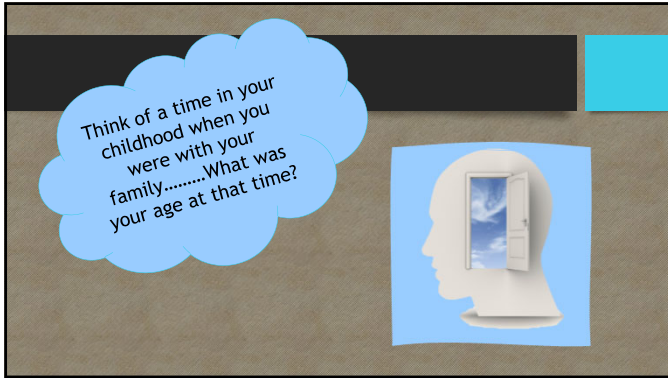
- The Impact of Trauma
- Our attitudes about families who have experienced abuse and neglect
- Cultural bias
- Ineffective assessments and service plans
- Parent's substance use disorder
- Mental health of family
- Resource family understanding of/or motivation towards working with family
- Not enough or poor-quality Parent-Child Visitation/Family Time

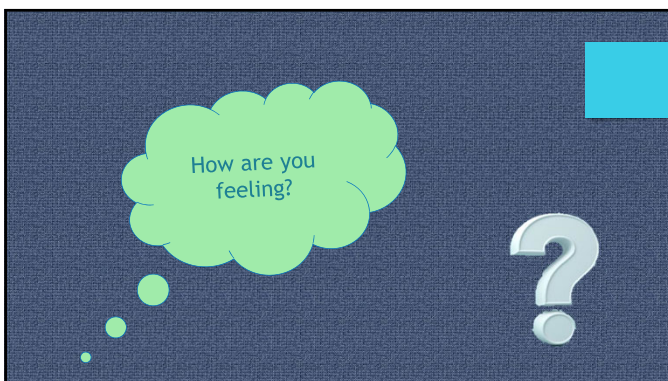


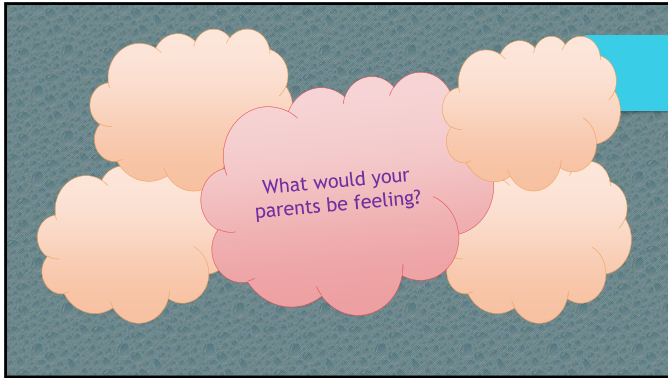


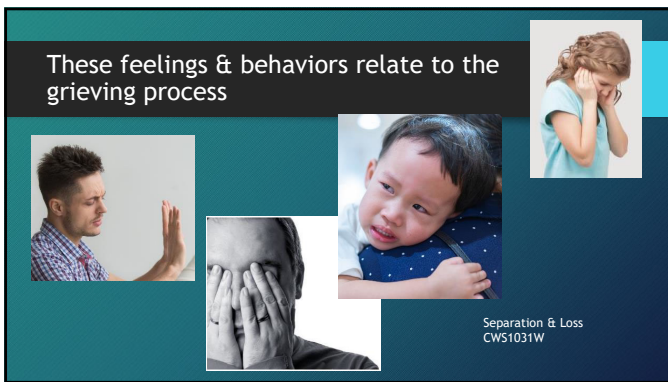


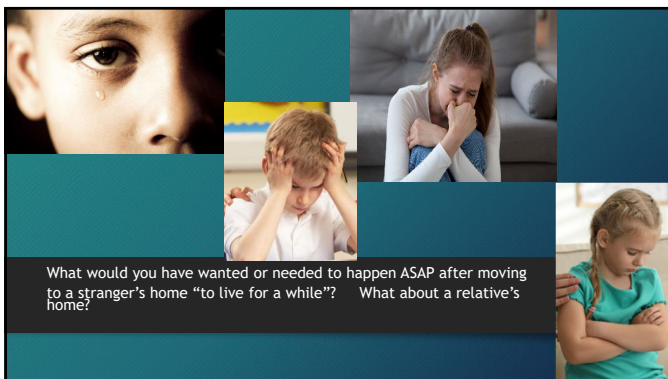




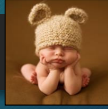








Ambiguity of Loss



- Not knowing or developmentally not being able to understand why you are not with your family
"Where are my parents? My brothers? My sisters?"



Strategic Response



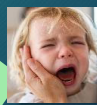
What would immediate contact have meant to you?



Within 24 hours....
Initiate contact unless there is a clear and present safety threat to the child

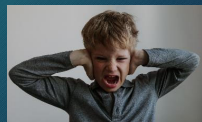



No contact with primary caretaker immediately following trauma when there is the greatest need for psychological safety



Did we just increase the trauma?

Children and youth are most traumatized immediately following the removal.





In Summary.....

How are we addressing the management of grief and loss in service plans with parents?

Family Time stirs up ambivalent feelings among team members which are often expressed behaviorally.


Not dealing with loss & assoc. feelings, impedes healing & often increases difficult behaviors in children & parents.



STRATEGY-

SUGGEST FEELING WORDS -I.E.
CONFUSED, SAD, MAD, LONELY,
WORRIED,

FOR BEHAVIORS DISPLAYED BY
CHILDREN & PARENTS



Principles and Practices

of Family Reunification
Section C

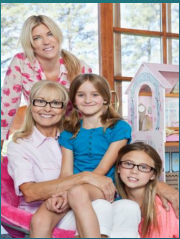

Family Reunification

Family Reunification is....

How would you define family reunification to a new co-worker?




FAMILY REUNIFICATION

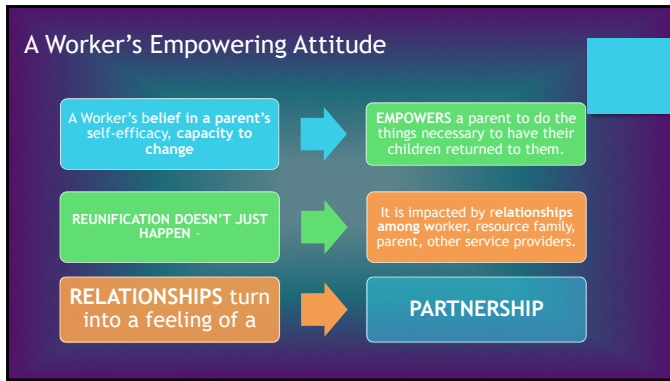



The outcome of the planned process of safely reconnecting children to their families and their communities.

Principles & Beliefs of Family Reunification

- Most families want to care for their children if given assistance.
- Early & consistent contact between child and family is critical to successful reunification.
- The relationship between parent and child is paramount.
- Support services post-reunification are necessary for re-integration & to assure safety and well-being.
- "Parents love their kids, they just don't know how to get better," says a parent.





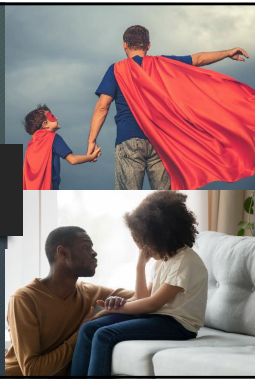




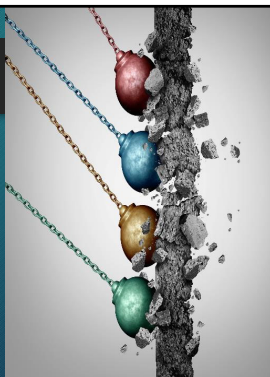
Relationships are critical

*When I had a supervisor or social worker where **partnership was the goal**, the case went really well. We were able to really connect and be together and the children were obviously much better. The chances of going home happened more often. Whoever is responsible for that **relationship from the very first minute** can make a difference with reunification.”, Roberta – foster parent*

Remember the Importance of Fathers!




What are some reasons fathers have not been as involved?



PREVIOUSLY UNINVOLVED FATHERS AND THEIR FAMILIES HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH FAMILY TIME




Family Time




- Includes normal parenting activities
- Provides the opportunity to build parental skills
- Considers the developmental needs of child
- Considers the capacity of parent & resource parent to share parenting roles

Developmentally Related Activities for Visits



Handout C1




! ?

Maintain connections

Gives worker opportunity to assess strengths & needs

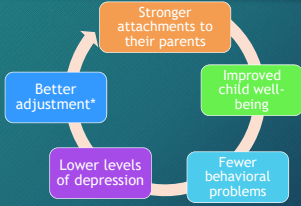
What is the purpose of Family Time?



Helps parent see how child is doing, and child can see how parent is doing

Helps with the grieving and healing process

Positive Outcome of Frequent & Regular Family Time/Visits



```

graph TD
    A[Stronger attachments to their parents] --> B[Improved child well-being]
    B --> C[Fewer behavioral problems]
    C --> D[Lower levels of depression]
    D --> E[Better adjustment*]
    E --> A
  
```

Research findings from ACF, US Dept. of Health and Human Services, Feb. 5, 2020

Visitation or Communication Plans shall address:


Who is responsible for ensuring Family Time? Who can attend?

Are there any limitations/rules for the Family Time?

How often?

Where ?

What to accomplish during Family Time - objective to meet child's needs



How the child/parent gets to/from Family Time








Baby & Me




Hands on parenting in a group using play and discussion to connect parents with their children led by trained facilitators

Visit Host



Can the family provide a "safe" person that both the agency and family trust to sponsor the visits?

Who can be a Host?



Relatives and fictive kin

- able to support the parent, child and resource parent
- able to follow agency's parameters for family time
- meets basic safety standards - passes CPS and criminal check
- home meets safety standards, if visits will take place in their home


Parent Mentors/Advocates




Parents Helping Parents



Parents reunited with their children, or resource parents who have navigated the court system through their own experiences with foster care, partner with parents recently separated from their children.

Visit Coaching - A Model of Practice



for Family Time:

- Qualified or trained “coach”
- Guide the parent(s)
- Build on strengths of families
- “Start where the parent is”

-Dr. Marty Beyer

Visit Coaching Principles










Empowerment

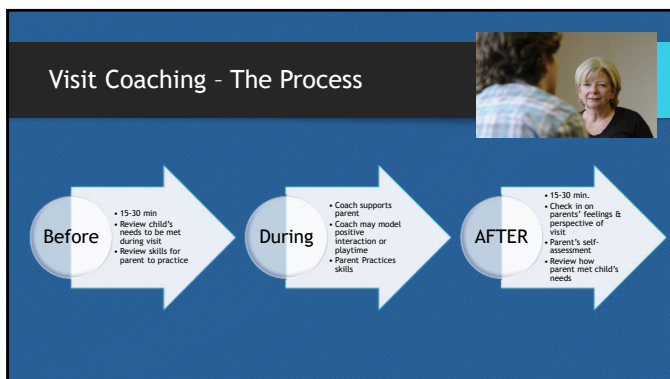
Empathy

Responsiveness

Active Parenting

Empowerment	Empathy
<p>Families are supported to take charge of family time!</p> 	<p>Parents are supported to stand in child's shoes Help each child to have "just you, just me" time with parent during visit. Connect child's need to reason child is in care</p> 

Responsiveness	Active Parenting
<p>Support parents to make family time anger free. Help parents understand & respond to children's needs according to their developmental age.</p> 	<p>Improve the fit between parent's limit setting and their child's temperament and behavior. Use of redirection and play to handle behavior.</p> 



What do you need to be a coach?





- Empathy
- Patience
- Belief that people can change
- Ability to empower parents
- Aware of cultural differences
- Knows child development stages

Pre-Family Time Planning


- Allow parent to vent anger, frustration before seeing their children
- Parent learns to identify their child's needs and how to meet them - Develop Empathy
- Review written notes from previous debriefing. Parent takes charge of plans for today's family time. Empowerment

NOTE: It can take 12-15 sessions to see a difference in parenting.



During Family Time, look for....

Opportunities to build on strengths & Interactions that demonstrate parent's abilities in each of the PROTECTIVE FACTORS



- Social Emotional Competence of Children
- Concrete Supports for Parents
- Social Connections
- Parental Resilience
- Knowledge of Child Development
- Nurturing & attachment

Handout C -3

After the visit, coach debriefs with parent

Help parents with their feelings so they come back for next visit

Ask parent - what do you think went well?

What would you like to see happen next time with your child?

Share what coach noticed





The quality of the relationship between coach and parent makes the difference.


Agree Or Disagree?



1. The family's understanding of their children's needs may remain different from those of the worker and resource parent.
2. A parent's own needs may obscure their child's needs.
3. Parents may view the safety needs for which their child was removed from home as luxuries rather than true non-optional needs. As a result, family time may be spoiled when they act out their anger about the child's removal.

"Paraphrasing" Statements by Dr. Beyer


Visit Coaching:	A Win/Win	for Parent	and Child
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While watching each segment of the movie, write down:


One thing that is different from what you do now in Family Time.... and

One thing you could transfer into your practice with families.




What are some challenges we run into with Family Time?



What do you do when....



Mary and William came to every scheduled Family Time for the first 5 weeks. Week 6, they call to say they can't make it due to a flat tire. After that, they do not call or show up.

What do you do when....


Parents show up for their visit slurring their words and they are finding it difficult to look you straight in the eye.



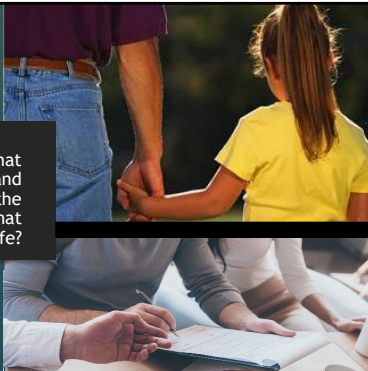
Family Time is not based on reward or punishment systems.

REMINDER!

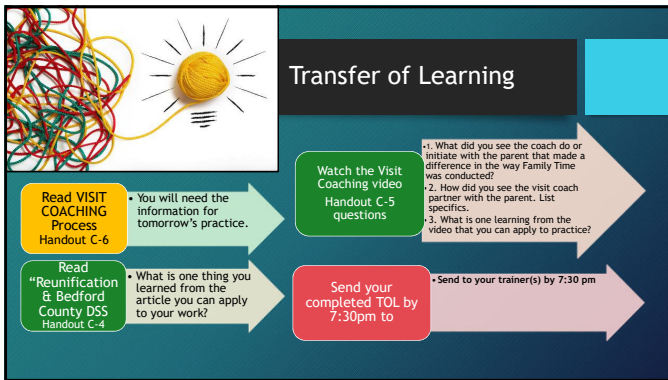
Parents and children have the right to visit and maintain communication.



Does the parent understand what he/she needs to accomplish, and can he/she demonstrate the changes through behavior that keeps their children safe?







Promoting Family Reunification

Welcome to Day 2

Transfer of Learning

Responses to the article "Reunification & the Bedford County DSS" will be reviewed and discussed later, in the section on Partnerships and The Team.

Handout C 6 & 7 will be used in Visit Coaching practice

Responses to Coaching video

- What did you see the coach do or initiate with the parent that made a difference in the way Family Time was conducted?

Responses to Coaching Video


In what specific way did you see the coach partner with the parent?

Responses to Coaching video

3. Overall, what is one significant learning from the video that you could transfer into your work?

Visit Coaching

- Helps parent “stand in the shoes of their child”- develop empathy.
- Listen, encourage, empower the parent
- Assist parent in the identification & meeting of their children's needs.
 - Before Family Time- pre-visit planning
 - During Family Time - parent practice, coach supports parent & models behavior
 - After Family Time - debrief




Coaching - Points to Remember

Coach wants parent to take charge of Family Time

It takes time to see progress!

Help parents not get discouraged when progress is slow.

Stay positive & hopeful to encourage parents to return for more visits




Remember....


Many parents have experienced trauma and loss in their own lives, which affects their behavior.

Now they have "lost" their children to foster care

Coping with emotion & responsibilities of foster care, leaves parents short on energy, time & money to think about the meaning of Family Time beyond seeing their children.



The Smith Family - Natalie, John, Shea



John was 6, and his sister, Shea, 3, when they came in to emergency foster care. They had been living with their mother Natalie, age 24, and Natalie's boyfriend, Matt. Natalie and her boyfriend would leave John and Shea alone, so they could "go shopping" for brief periods.

One day a neighbor found the kids alone in the house. She decided to stay with John & Shea outside till Natalie came home. She waited over two hrs. & Natalie still had not come home; nor could Natalie be reached on her cell. It was getting dark. The neighbor called the police, who called CPS. When the worker arrived, the children were crying and wanted to know where their mommy was. The worker tried to call the number John had for his mother, but no one answered. She noticed marks on the children's arms. She waited at the house, trying to learn more information from the children.

Handout C7

The Smith Family - Natalie, John, Shea



Natalie and her boyfriend came home high. After not finding any kin, and learning more about the marks on the children, the kids came into emergency care. Natalie and her children were distraught. They were all hugging & crying. Natalie asserts she would never hurt her children; she takes care of her kids, "she and Matt were gone for just a little while."

Natalie loves her children, and says Matt provides a home for them. She wouldn't have any place to live without him. He gets angry because the children do not listen to him. Natalie has not worked since she met Matt and Shea was born. She has no idea where the children's father is or how to reach him. He left when he found out she was pregnant with Shea. Natalie's mom died shortly after Shea was born. She has no idea where her dad is. Natalie's older sister moved away when Natalie was 15. Natalie has no connection with other relatives.

With the children being removed and "this mess over an investigation", Matt has kicked Natalie out of his apartment. Natalie has found a place to stay temporarily with friends.

What are
Ms. Smith's
strengths?



What is it that John needs from his
mother when he walks through the
door for Family Time?



What is it that Shea needs from her mother when she walks through the door for Family Time?




Breakout Groups

Time to practice Visit Coaching



Breakout Groups

Handout C 6, 7, 7A



1. Choose who will be:

Group of 4 - Coach, Natalie, John, and Shea

Group of 3 - Coach, Natalie and John (John or Shea is timekeeper)


2. In your role, Practice Visit Coaching at their 2nd session

a. 5 minutes- Pre-planning (typically 30 min)

b. 5 minutes - Family Time (typically 1-2 hrs)

c. 5 minutes - Debrief (typically 30 min)

TRY TO IMAGINE & STAY IN YOUR ROLES



How would Ms. Natalie Smith act in planning time and in visit?

How would John and Shea act during Family Time?

How would the Coach act?



Practice Visit Coaching


- What do you want to say about your experience as a coach?
- What do you want to say about your experience as a parent?
- What do you want to say about your experience as a child?
- In your group, what was most helpful about this practice?

Summary/Transition

Family Time & Visit Coaching

Family Time is different than traditional supervised visitation.

What elements of Visit Coaching can be incorporated into practice?




Reminder....

Children often act out before or after family time -the grief cycle resurfaces.

Children often cling to resource parents and even call them mommy and daddy, or act like they do not want to be there.

Parents rightfully become scared and hurt.



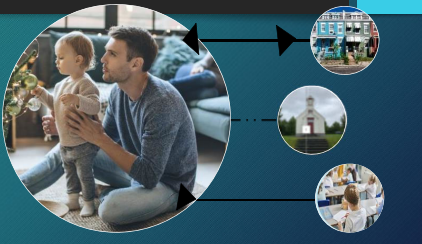


Maintaining Connectedness

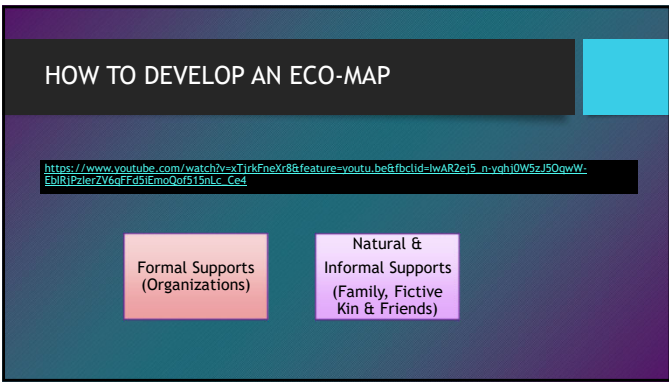
Section D

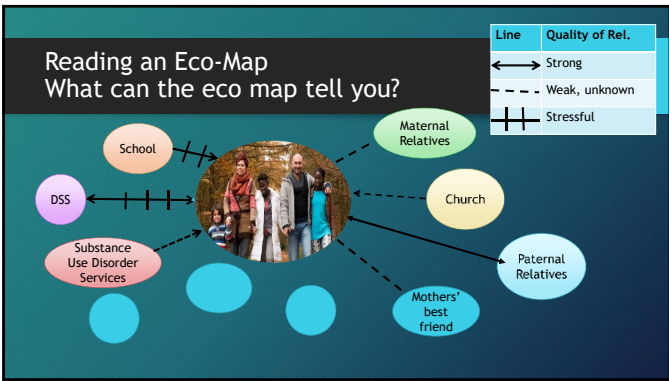
Eco-Maps

- Eco-Maps are visual representation of a family's connections to persons and/or systems
- Helps identify formal and informal supports – relatives and fictive kin
- Represents the quality of connections.
- Answers - How does the family interact within its environment?









Questions to help build Eco-maps

Handout D1

List Ms. Smith's natural, informal family connections:
Friends, relatives, fictive kin

List Ms. Smith's formal connections with organizations:
DSS, doctor, school, church

Quality of Relationships:
Which ones are
a) supportive b) weak, unknown
c) stressful or conflict-laden?
What are the missing/needed connections - both formal and informal?

What can Ms. Smith learn from creating her family eco-map with her children?

Think about how understanding these connections can help a family move forward towards reunification.

Summary - Eco-maps can help families reveal & discover connections & supports.

Eco-maps change as families add support & change relationships.
Revisit & add at each of the above points.











Time
to
Vote!

T.E.A.M. - Together Everyone Achieves More





- TEAMS work best when everyone is on the same page, promoting the same goal of reunification.
- Has anyone had the experience when someone on the TEAM, such as the GAL, therapist, or resource parent claims to support reunification, but their actions say otherwise.?
- Or ..What happens when someone on your team does NOT agree with the rest of the team that reunification should be the goal? What do you do?

Foster care experiences are better when....





..there's a working relationship between resource parents & parents of the children, and all feel they are part of the team.

Reunification & Bedford County D.S. S.

Share your own examples of successful reunification that involved the resource family

What qualities or factors made this reunification a success?

Experienced resource parents tell us these beliefs and actions demonstrate their reunification support

Let the family know your goal is to help them get their children back.

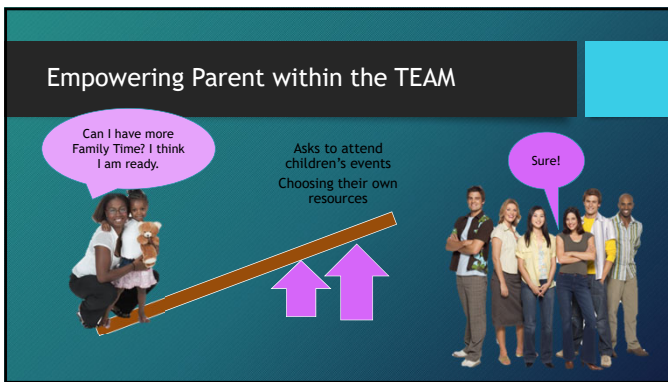
Understand how scared a parent is and try to help alleviate fears.

Believe people can change.

Support the family during foster care, so you can support them after!

from research by American Bar Association








In Summary,


A Resource Family's belief in reunification makes a Big Difference.

Foster Care is a support for families.

Worker, in collaboration with family & team decide...

Is it time? or....IT IS TIME!!





How will I know?

Section F
Handout F1

Foster Care Guidance (Section 8.4) says....

Did the parent make reasonable progress in correcting removal conditions?

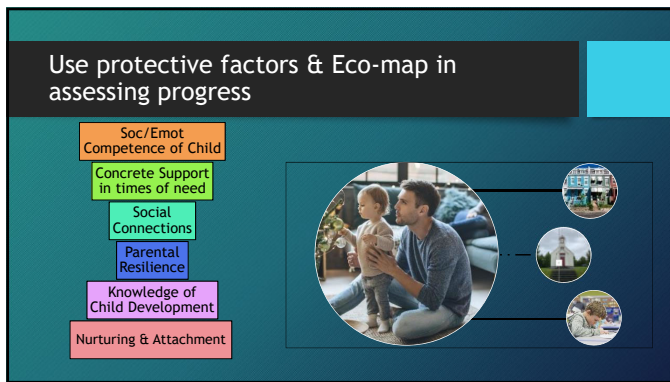
Have parents achieved outcomes so that child's safety & well-being can be met?

If yes, family can be reunited!



Safety/Reunification Assessment considers changes the family has made.

From entry to foster care	To Current status
Identified safety issues at time child placed in foster care	Changes made to decrease risk
Any new risks identified from assessment while in foster care	Changes made to decrease risk
Recognize parental capacity issues identified during Family Time	Improvements to parental capacity, guiding parents to meet child's developmental & emotional needs



What would this family need to look like for safe reunification?

What is the safety concern with this family?


What conditions must be met for safe return? What would it look like?

What are two services that may reduce the risk and help meet this family's challenges?

Handout F1

What conditions need to be met before Sam's children can return home? What would it look like?

Sam is so depressed since his wife left him, that he cannot provide basic care for his three children (7, 4, and 2); he is lethargic; sleeps most of the time; refuses to take medication; and withdraws to the bedroom.




What conditions would have to be met before Sarah can return home? What would it look like?

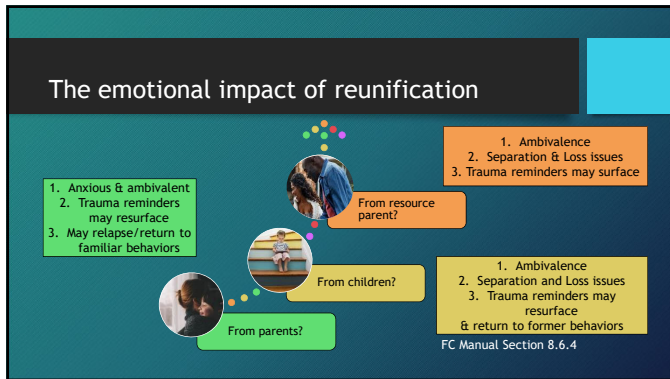
Sarah is 18 months old. She has an unexplained serious injury to her head. Doctors determine the injury is non-accidental. Missy, the mother, has offered three different explanations, none of which fit.

Relatives report she has been using different substances for her back pain ever since Sarah was born.

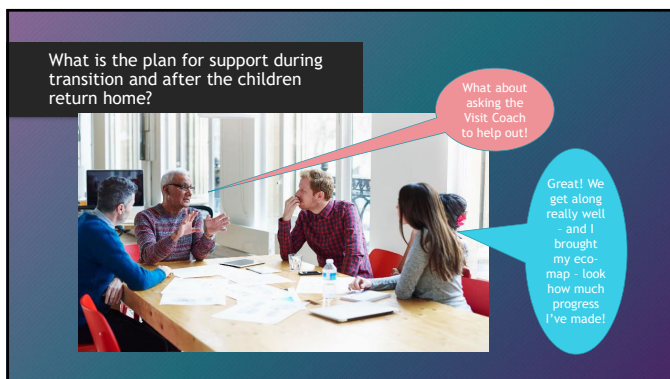
Handout F2











It's Time! For a trial home visit

Have you done a CPS & Criminal Background check on everyone in the home 18+?
Have you seen the home? Reduce trauma triggers.

Set up a transition schedule with gradually increasing time at home.
Be flexible with the schedule. It may need to speed up or slow down.

How is everyone doing with maintaining skills learned to maintain safety and well-being?
Check in privately with each parent, each child, each resource parent - Check in with others on the team - teachers, visit coach, relatives, GAL.

Don't expect perfection.

Be prepared!
Tell everyone involved in advance that it's normal for there to be challenges during the transition.

Set up a plan for communication and support to manage challenges.

Reunification!!

Placement home ≠ reunification - it is a placement change.

Reunification is achieved when legal custody is returned in court.

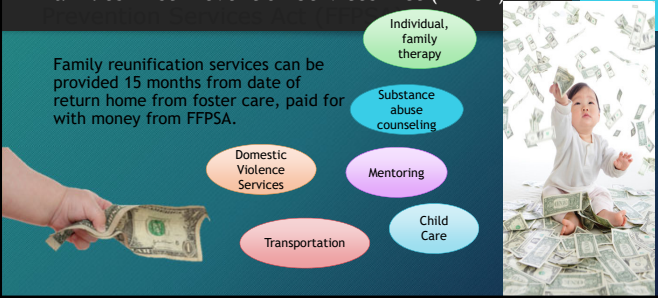
In between, child is still in agency custody.

1. Home visit 24-72 hours after placement.
2. Continue monthly visits, include some unannounced.
3. Continue to assess effectiveness of plan - modify as needed.

Family Reunification through Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)

Family reunification services can be provided 15 months from date of return home from foster care, paid for with money from FFPSA.

- Individual, family therapy
- Substance abuse counseling
- Domestic Violence Services
- Mentoring
- Transportation
- Child Care



Returning Custody w/Support vs Trial Home Visits

What is the benefit of returning custody with support instead of staying in foster care with trial home visits?

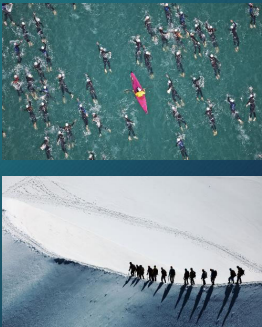



Summary

Challenges in Managing Family Reunification


Challenges in Managing Family Time

Think about what you have learned that gives you more strategies to promote family reunification






What is one take-away from this class that you will put into practice?



To complete this class.....

1. Attend both days without missing more than 15 minutes.
2. Turn in TOL from Day 1 to both trainers
3. Turn in TOL #2 Eco-map of Natalie Smith to trainers
4. Pass the post-test in the VLC with 80% accuracy.
5. Complete the survey in the VLC.

Note: You will get TOL #3 in an email to you & your supervisor. It does not have to be returned.



Thanks for your....

...thoughtfulness, participation and willingness to try new strategies!

