

ENGAGING FAMILIES IN THE PERMANENCY PROCESS

The Alliance of
Children & Family Services

Kane Jagers, LMSW
October 10, 2011

Get to Know Your Network

- What is your name?
- How long have you been in the field?
- Where do you work?
- What population do you work with?
- What kind of services do you offer?
- What is your role in engaging families?
- What is one thing you love about your job?

Words to Know

- Family-Driven Services:** Belief that families are *empowered* to make decisions involving them in policies guiding administrative processes (Affronti, M. and Levison-Johnson, J., 2010)
- Family-Centered Services:** Collaboration with parents that enables families to meet their own needs. (Affronti, M. and Levison-Johnson, J., 2010)
- Family Engagement:** Any level of *participation* of family members of children receiving services. (Affronti, M. and Levison-Johnson, J., 2010)
- Family Preservation:** Service that provide to family members of children receiving services without removing the child from the home. (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2010.)
- Intensive Family Reunification Services:** Short-term, family-based services to reunite families with their children. (National Family Preservation Network, 2003)
- Permanency Planning:** The *efforts* to prevent unnecessary child placements and return children from foster care to the previous family. (National Family Preservation Network, 2003)
- Family Reunification:** The process of returning children back into their previous family environment. (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2011.)

What do you know?

- ☐ The Permanency Process
 - Prevention
 - Intervention
- ☐ Family Reunification
- ☐ Post- Reunification

What is the Permanency Process?

- ☐ Where does it start?
 - CPS investigation
- ☐ Develop
 - Gather information
- ☐ Review
 - Court hearings
 - Staffing
- ☐ Re-Design
- ☐ Carry out
- ☐ Follow up

What is the history?

- ☐ Adoptions Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980
(National Family Preservation Network, 2003).
 - Out of home placement prevention
 - Permanency planning
 - Family preservation and reunification services
- ☐ Adoptions and Safe Families Act (1997) played a huge role in shifting the focus from reunification to adoption. (National Family Preservation Network, 2003.)
 - Required shorten timeframes for reunification to take place.
- ☐ Social Security Act (1997)
 - Family safety
 - Support families
 - Permanent homes for children

Permanency Outcomes

- ☐ In 2010, 31.4 % of the children removed from their home had a permanency goal of family reunification.
 - 61.9% achieved their permanency plan within 12 months.
- ☐ On average, families with this goal receive services for 14 months.
- ☐ 25% of all children reunified with their parent(s) return in care within 1 year. (cited by Wulczyn, 2004.)
- ☐ Other permanency outcomes are as follows (2010):
 - 48.7% Adoption
 - 7.1% Long Term
 - 5.2% Adult Living
 - 7.6% Placement with other caregivers

Common Theories and Perspectives

- ☐ Strength Perspective
- ☐ Cognitive-behavioral
- ☐ Family Systems Theory
- ☐ Solution Based
 - Miracle Questions
- ☐ Crisis Intervention
- ☐ Family Centered Models
- ☐ Social Learning
 - Attention
 - Retention
 - Motivation
 - Motor reproduction
- ☐ Three-Step Model (National Family Preservation Network)
 - Preparatory stage
 - Assess readiness
 - Intensive stage
 - 4 weeks of referral
 - "Step Down" stage

Values and Beliefs

- ☐ Safety is always our first concern
- ☐ Reunification is the priority whenever possible
 - Importance of human relationships
- ☐ Clients do the best they can
 - Dignity and worth
- ☐ Be open minded about the chances of success
 - Integrity
- ☐ Crisis is an opportunity for change
- ☐ Be accountable for our own work
 - Competence
- ☐ Limit the amount of barriers to services
 - Social Justice

Intensive Family Reunification Services Program

- ☐ Staff available 24/7
- ☐ Smaller caseloads (2-4 families)
- ☐ Immediate assessment
- ☐ Services conducted in home environment
- ☐ Individual services occur 5-20 hours a week
- ☐ Flexible meeting times
- ☐ Time limited to 60-90 days
- ☐ Three Step program

(National Family Preservation Network, 2003.)

Successful Tools for a Successful Reunification

- ☐ Caseworkers who have a social work education
- ☐ Flexible funding sources
- ☐ Individualized needs assessment
- ☐ Co-parenting (Family-driven practices)
- ☐ Support from all parties involved
- ☐ Advocate for families to help them understand the systems they are involved in.
- ☐ Post- Reunification services and plans
 - Request feedback
- ☐ Value and respect family involvement

Services Delivery is **KEY**

- ☐ Build trustful and open relationship
 - ☐ Family activities
 - ☐ Engaging families in the child's plan
 - ☐ Family Team Meetings
 - ☐ Increasing frequency of visits
 - Reunification is 10 times more likely with visits are consistent (cited by Davis, Landsverk, Newton, & Ganger, 1996.)
 - ☐ In home services
 - ☐ Concrete services
- ** Some studies show when reunification takes longer to achieve it helps reduce the rate of re-entry into the foster care system****

BEWARE

There are always limitations

- ☐ Early assessment can lead to premature termination
- ☐ Presiding Family Problems
 - Substance abuse
 - Mental health
 - Involvement in justice system
 - Lack of cooperation
- ☐ High cost of services
- ☐ Waiting lists
- ☐ Rural areas
 - Lack of transportation
 - Lack of specific services
 - Inconsistent services accessibility

Boysville Pilot Program

- ☐ Mission
 - To recreate a nurturing family environment that fosters parent engagement and prepares families for reunification
- ☐ Values
 - Family Involvement
 - Community
 - Individualization
 - Self-Determination
 - Education
 - Empowerment
 - Advocacy

Boysville Pilot Program Goals

- ☐ To help families feel supported through the process of family engagement and reunification

- ☐ Prevent relapse of out-of-home placement after reunification occurs.

- ☐ Help families build a positive, appropriate and engaging relationship with their children.

“Never be afraid to try something new”

-Anonymous

- ☐ What is the current procedure for engaging families?
- ☐ How do you see your agency engaging families?
- ☐ Is there RED TAPE?
- ☐ Creative action plan
- ☐ How can you implement the plan?
 - Who
 - When

Referances

(2008). Code of ethics of the national association of social workers. *National Association of Social Work*, 1-18. Retrieved from www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code.asp

Adoptions and Safe Family Act of 1997 § 9, 7 U.S.C., P.L. 96-272 (1997).

Affronti, M., & Levison-Johnson, L. (2010). The future of family engagement in residential care settings. *The Residential CARE consortium: Caring for America's Children and Families*, 1-30.

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2001). *Family reunification: What the evidence shows*. Washington, DC:US. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau.

Martens, P. (2003). Intensive family reunification services protocol. *National Family Preservation Network*, 1-9. Retrieved from www.nfpn.org

Social Security Act of 1997 § 102, 2 U.S.C., P.L. 109-288 (1997).

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. (2010). Annual Report and Data Book. Retrieved from www.dfps.state.tx.us

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. (2011). Specific Steps for Achieving the Permanency Goal. Retrieved from www.dfps.state.tx.us

Weis, A. (2009). *Family Engagement Strategic Planning*. Presentation at Boysville, Inc.

WARM FUZZIES

Questions or Comments?



Strategic Planning for Family Reunification

Current Procedure:

Vision:

Presiding Obstacles:

Creative Bridges:

Implementation Process:

Agency Vision

