Module VIII

Separation, Placement, and Reunification in Family-Centered Child Protective Services

Agenda and Objectives

I. Introduction

Agenda, Competencies and What’s In It For Me (WIIFM)

Objectives:

- Trainees will get to know one another and the trainer.
- Trainees will identify their learning needs specific to this module.
- Trainees will understand the experiential nature of the workshop and be encouraged to safely explore emotions often triggered by separation and placement of children.

II. Concepts of Separation

A. Understanding separation
B. The impact of separation on attachment
C. Promoting attachment through family contacts

Objectives:

- Trainees will understand the dynamics of separation and children’s typical emotional responses to the separation experience.
- Trainees will understand the potential emotional impact on children when separating them from their parents and placing them into substitute care.
- Trainees will understand how a child’s attachment may be impacted by separation and placement away from his/her significant attachment figures.
- Trainees will understand the importance of regular and frequent visitation to maintain attachment between children in care and their families.
III. Contributing Factors to Children's Emotional Responses to Separation and Placement

A. Concepts of crisis intervention theory and applications to child placement
B. The effects of children's developmental level on their experience during separation and placement

Objectives:

• Trainees will understand that separation and placement can potentially precipitate a crisis for children.
• Trainees will understand the dynamics of crisis and how developmental variables affect a child's responses to the separation and placement experience.

IV. Children's Reactions to Loss: Common Behavior Patterns of the Grieving Process

A. The normal grieving process in children
B. Long-term consequences of excessive emotional distress for children in placement

Objective:

• Trainees will recognize the wide range of behavioral expressions of stress and loss in children who have been separated from their families and placed into substitute care.

V. The Philosophy of Permanence & Permanency Planning

A. Definition of permanency planning
B. Assumptions underlying permanency planning
C. Implications for program development

Objectives:

• Trainees will understand the philosophy of permanence and its importance in maintaining the psychological health of children.
• Trainees will recognize permanency planning as an aspect of comprehensive case planning.
• Trainees will be able to apply the concepts of concurrent planning, family group decision-making and other agency activities to ensure child permanency and to recognize permanency tasks as the responsibility of all workers, regardless of job title.

VI. Placement of the Child

A. The decision to move a child
B. Principles and strategies of placement
C. Pre-placement activities
D. The placement process  
E. Enhancing the visitation process  
F. Post-placement services

Objectives:

• Trainees will understand the importance of thorough assessment in determining the need to move a child.
• Trainees will recognize the importance of identifying the most appropriate placement setting to meet each child's individual needs.
• Trainees will know how to prepare the child, the primary family and the foster caregivers for the placement.
• Trainees will know how to properly plan and execute placements that will minimize the trauma and long-term negative consequences for the child and the family.
• Trainees will learn the guidelines to effective visitation practice and the role of the worker in preparation, assessment and support of family contacts.
• Trainees will understand the importance of supportive and therapeutic follow-up services in order to maintain the child in placement and to prevent disruption.

VII. Enabling and Empowering Parents of Children in Placement

A. Parents' responses to the loss of their children during placement  
B. Empowering parents to participate while the child is in placement and with visitation strategies to maintain parent involvement

Objectives:

• Trainees will understand the traumatic effects of separation and placement for parents and how parents’ distress may be expressed in behavior.
• Trainees will be able to work with parents during all phases of the child's placement to strengthen the parents’ skills and parenting abilities, to enhance the visitation process and to ensure opportunities for prompt reunification.

VIII. Supporting the Caregiver and Child in Placement

A. Dynamics of foster parenting  
B. Helping caregivers meet the child’s needs  
C. The team approach to foster care

Objectives:

• Trainees will understand the role of foster, kinship and other caregivers as members of a team to serve children in care and their families.
• Trainees will understand the importance of supportive services to caregivers to enable them to meet the needs of children in their care.
Trainees will understand how trained foster caregivers can work directly with members of the child's birth family to teach and model proper parenting and facilitate reunification.

IX. Promoting Reunification

A. Factors that support reunification
B. The developmental model
C. Preparing children to leave the foster home
D. Post-reunification services
E. When a child cannot go home

Objectives:

- Trainees will know the factors that lead to successful reunification and how to plan for successful reunification within a developmental model.
- Trainees will understand the importance of post-reunification services to maintain the child’s placement.
- Trainees will know the continuum of family connections possible for children who cannot return to their primary family.

X. Caseworker’s Feelings about Child Welfare

Objective:

- Trainees will become aware of their own feelings regarding child welfare casework and have the opportunity to discuss them in a supportive atmosphere.