



Foster Care Forum

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
October 2009



Preventing Placement Disruptions in Foster Care: A Summary By Annette Semanchin Jones

Introduction

Disruptions in foster care placement can create a cycle of instability for children. It has been shown that the number of previous placements for a child is positively correlated to later placement disruptions. Even for children who do not exhibit behavior problems initially, an increased number of placements predicts an increase in both externalizing and internalizing behavior problems. Recently, a comprehensive report on the research on preventing placement disruptions in foster care was conducted through an agency-university collaboration of PATH Wisconsin and the University of Minnesota, with the support of the Bremer Foundation. The following two topic areas were explored: 1) risk factors and protective factors for placement stability and 2) practice and policy strategies in preventing disruptions in foster care. Some of the practice implications are highlighted in this article. (The full report, which describes strategies for breaking this cycle of instability in more detail, is available at: http://cehd.umn.edu/SSW/cascw/attributes/PDF/publications/Path_BremerReport.pdf).

The review of research on preventing placement disruptions in foster care indicates there are many factors affecting stability in foster care placements, including characteristics of the child, the foster parents, the caseworker and the agency. Behavior of the child is cited as the strongest predictor of placement disruptions, along with the foster parents' ability to deal with children's problem behavior.

Foster Parent Training

Research suggests foster parent training is one way to help prepare foster parents to handle high risk behavior of children and to avoid disruptions. However, research studies of even the most widely-used foster parent training program, such as MAPP and PRIDE, have not shown them to be effective in improving foster parents' ability to address difficult behaviors. For treatment foster care agencies, there is a pressing need to develop an effective, standardized foster parent training curriculum to improve foster parents' ability to address children's difficult behavior, to enhance involvement with birth families, and to involve foster parents in shared decision-making. Another suggestion is cross-training of caseworkers and foster parents so they have the same foundational knowledge about expected child developmental issues and the roles, responsibilities and competencies for foster parents.

Caseworker Support & Retention

Foster parent retention increases when foster parents feel supported by caseworkers as well as their own extended families and support networks. In supporting foster parents, agencies can also help them build peer support through connections with other foster parents. Research also indicates some successful strategies for retaining foster parents, such as including foster parents in decision-making, offering competitive rates for stipends, showing respect for their work, and ensuring the cultural competency of agency staff.

Since research also indicates that low caseworker turnover is correlated with a lower number of foster care disruptions, another strategy for preventing placement disruption is to increase caseworker retention. Studies have shown increased performance and retention for social workers with specialized education in social work and child welfare. In addition, agencies that provide supportive and job flexibility also retain more caseworkers on average.

Foster Placements

Studies indicate that the first six months of a placement is crucial since 70% of disruptions occur within this timeframe. This may be a particularly important window of opportunity for providing additional interventions. The importance of stability in a child's first placement highlights the importance of a good match between a child and foster home in a

child's first placement. To ensure that appropriate foster homes are available when needed, agencies must be vigilant in their efforts to recruit and retain foster families.

Program Models

In current research, several interventions and program models are shown to be effective or promising in preventing placement disruptions. Wraparound or coordinated intensive services have increased placement stability and improved child well-being in some instances. Cognitive-behavioral interventions, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, and attachment related services are promising practices that have been implemented and evaluated with foster parents and youth.

The Oregon based Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) has been shown to be an effective model for maintaining placement stability for older youth with severe emotional and behavioral issues. Early intervention Foster Care (EIFC), a program for younger children, is based on the MTFC model and research shows that it, too, improves placement stability for younger youth experiencing emotional and behavioral problems in foster care. Foster care agencies serving youth with severe emotional and behavioral issues may consider these evidence-based models for their practice.

Summary

Foster care agencies need to examine the unique characteristics of the youth they serve to determine the best course of action in preventing placement disruptions. The current literature demonstrates a strong correlation between a child's behavior and the foster parents' ability to deal with that behavior and placement stability. Youth needs must be assessed early and accurately so that the entire treatment team (i.e., foster parents, social workers and therapists and others) can meet the needs of the youth. Foster parents may be supported through pre-service training, on-going consultation, 24-hour on-call support, and effective communication and assistance from the social worker. Social workers need continuing support from foster care agencies to help foster parents meet the needs of the youth in care. Any plan developed by foster care agencies to prevent disruptions should adopt a comprehensive strategy to address the needs of youth, support foster parents, train qualified and committed social workers, and develop agency policies that support placement stability and permanency for youth in foster care.

**Pre-Placement Training
for Prospective Foster Parents**

October 1, 2009	6-9 PM
October 15, 2009	6-9 PM
November 5, 2009	6-9 PM
November 19, 2009	6-9 PM

All Classes are held in the Brookfield Room G137 in the Human Services Center located at 500 Riverview Avenue.

* Please enter the building at door 6. Call Shari Rather at (262)548-7267 to register.



Jesse's Corner

Jesus Mireles
Manager of the Children and
Family Division

Parents Place Programs
262-549-5575
www.ppacinc.org

Waukesha County Department of Health and Human Services recently completed a weeklong review of our child welfare practice. From August 24th through August 28, 2009, staff from the State of Wisconsin and other trained reviewers, conducted an on-site review of our child welfare practice called the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Child Welfare Review. Twelve (12) opened cases were randomly selected for review. Since this was voluntary the parents agreed to participate. Each case was evaluated and scored on a scale from Improvement Zone to Refinement Zone to the Maintenance Zone (highest). All of our cases were in the Refinement or Maintenance stage. Good work by everyone!

In addition to the individual cases, the QSR/CQI reviewers scheduled 20 focus groups including a focus group for foster youth, parents, foster parents, court ordered relative placements, legal representatives, law enforcement, school representatives, social workers, community providers, etc. 110 people attended and participated in the various focus groups. The QSR/CQI reviewers kept track of the comments and recommendations made during the focus group discussions. The foster parent focus group was well attended. Seventeen (17) foster parents attended and were able to share their thoughts about our child welfare practice. To my delight, a majority of the foster parent indicated the importance and value of foster parent training. In addition, some foster parents shared their strong belief and commitment to providing Shared Parenting with the parents of children in foster care. I think the reviewers were impressed with the level and commitment of our foster parents and their willingness to not only care for the children but also providing support to the parents through shared parenting.

There were some common themes of our child welfare practice. These include:

- More families with complex challenges; abuse of prescription drugs, mental health issues, trauma, domestic violence and treatment needs,
- Lack of local providers who accept Medical Assistance (MA),
- Growing population of underinsured and working poor.
- Multi-generational families involvement in the child welfare system,
- Shrinking resources, and
- Agency and community genuinely care for the children and families.

We will get a final report in the next month or so and I will share the results with anyone who is interested. In the meantime, we have created a committee that will review and follow up with the recommendations. This committee will consist of our child welfare staff, supervisors and managers. We will also receive technical assistance and support from the State and our Southern Child Welfare Training Partnership. I look forward to our create and implement our next step action items with the goal to continue to improve our child welfare practice in Waukesha. I would like to thank everyone who participated in the review and look forward to working with you in the future. Your voice did make a difference! Thank you!

Thanks,
Jesse

Training

Adoption Resources of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
6682 W. Greenfield Avenue, Suite 310, Milwaukee
800-947-8074

Reaching Your Boiling Point

Wednesday, October 21, 2009
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Fee: \$10

We all have a boiling point, but what happens to us physically, emotionally and spiritually when we reach it? This session will teach you about emotional flooding, ways to avoid your boiling point and the impact of conflict on you and your child. Strategies for taking a break and self-soothing techniques will also be explored and discussed.

Prices for some classes may apply. Call 262-549-5575 to register. Free pre-registered childcare is available while attending most classes. Space is limited.

New and Effective Strategies for the Challenging Child

Mondays, October 5 - 26
6 - 7:30 p.m.

Many parents find that the methods their parents used don't work well with their own children. This course presents new strategies and provides a way of measuring your child's behavioral improvement.

Calming the Explosive Volcano

Tuesdays, October 6 - 27
6 - 7:30 p.m.

This course will teach you how to deal more effectively with angry, explosive and defiant children. You will learn what the "magic wand" of parenting is, and three specific skills for using it to calm the explosions and tantrums.

Parenting: The Early Years

Tuesdays, October 6 - 27
5:30 - 7 p.m.

Together with other parents, we will discuss key factors that prepare us to be successful parents and raise happy well-adjusted children.

Kids Managing Anger (Parent and child class)

Mondays, October 5 - 26
5:30 - 7 p.m.

Parents learn to deal with their children's anger and frustrations while children learn the tools to curb their anger as well. Parents will meet with a facilitator while the children are in their sessions.

New Ideas For Parenting Children & Adolescence with ADHD/ADD

Mondays, November 2 - 23
6 - 7:30 p.m.

Regardless of whether your child is on medication or not, as a parent you still need to deal with your child as a person. These classes will explore the five gifts of the ADHD child, and teach parental coaching skills that cultivate the child's emotional intelligence.

Love and Logic®

Tuesdays, November 3 - December 8
5:30 - 7 p.m.

Love and Logic is a philosophy founded by Jim Fay and Foster W. Cline, M.D., and provides simple and practical techniques to help participants have less stress and more fun while raising responsible kids. This curriculum provides immediate results with techniques like: setting limits with enforceable statements, sharing control through lots of small choices and many more.

Adults Managing Anger

Mondays, November 2 - 23
5:30 - 7 p.m.

Explore common causes of anger, learn how to manage your emotions and find techniques that will help you control your actions before they hurt someone or yourself.

The Argumentative Child

Tuesdays, November 3—24
6 - 7:30 p.m.

When parents get caught up in arguments with their children, they give away their power and expose that they don't know a better way to handle the situation. Put an end to parent-child arguments with these effective problem-solving techniques.

Controlling Conflict in the Family

Mondays, November 30 - December 21
6 - 7:30 p.m.

Conflict resolution and anger management aim at peaceful resolutions when the storms are raging. Learn positive ways to control conflict and keep the peace in your family.

Disciplining the Child

Tuesdays, December 1 - 22
6 - 7:30 p.m.

Many parenting experts recommend a variety of discipline techniques, focusing on punishments and rewards, but too often they just don't work. This class will give parents essential skills for effectively disciplining their child.

The Power of Choice By Elizabeth Pantley

Would you like to get your kids to willingly cooperate? Stop the daily battles? Teach your kids valuable life skills? If your answer is "Yes! Yes! Yes!" then read on...

There are so many things we must get our children to do and so many things we must stop them from doing! Get up. Get dressed. Don't dawdle. Do your homework. Eat. It goes on and on. We can get our kids to cooperate and at the same time allow them to learn self-discipline and develop good decision-making skills. *How?* By offering choices.

Giving a choice is a very powerful tool that can be used with toddlers through teenagers.

This is one skill that every parent should have tattooed on the back of his or her hand as a constant reminder. Parents should use this skill every day, many times a day. Giving children choices is a very effective way to enlist their cooperation because children love having the privilege of choice. Choice takes the pressure out of your request and allows a child to feel in control. This makes a child more willing to comply.

Using choice is an effective way to achieve results, and when you get in the habit of offering choices you are doing your children a big favor. As children learn to make simple choices — Mile or Juice? — they get the practice required to make bigger choices — Buy two T-shirts or one sweatshirt? — which gives them the ability as they grow to make more important decisions — Save or spend? Drink beer or soda? Study or fail? Giving children choices allows them to learn to listen to their inner voice. It is a valuable skill that they will carry with them to adulthood.

You should offer choices based on your child's age and your intent.

A toddler can handle two choices, a grade school child three or four. A teenager can be given general guidelines. Offer choices such that you would be happy with whatever option your child chooses. Otherwise, you are not being fair. For example, a parent might say, "Either eat your peas or go to your room," but when the child gets up off his chair, the parent yells, "Sit down and eat your dinner, young man!" (So that wasn't really a choice, was it?)

Here are some ways in which you can use choice:

Do you want to wear Big Bird pajamas or your Mickey Mouse pajamas?

Do you want to do your homework at the kitchen table or the desk?

Do you want to wear your coat, carry it, or put on a sweatshirt?

Would you prefer to let the dog out in the yard or take him for a walk?

Do you want to run up to bed or hop like a bunny?

What do you want to do first, take out the trash or dry the dishes?

Do you want to watch 5 more minutes of TV or 10?

A typical problem with choices is the child who makes up his own choice!

For example, "Taylor do you want to put on your pajamas first, or brush your teeth?" To which little Taylor answers, "I want to watch TV." What to do? Just smile sweetly and say, "That wasn't one of the choices. What do you want to do first, put on your pajamas or brush your teeth?"

If your child is still reluctant to choose from the options that you offer, then simply ask, "Would you like to choose or shall I choose for you?" If an appropriate answer is not forthcoming then you can say, "I see that you want me to choose for you." Then follow through. Make your choice and help your child by leading or carrying him—so that he can cooperate.

Boundaries and Ethics for Foster Parents

Saturday, October 24, 2009

9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

at

La Casa De Esparanza

410 Arcadian Avenue, Waukesha

Child Care Provided

Call Shari Rather to register
at 262-548-7267 by October 16th.

Parent's Choices When Kids Disagree By Elizabeth Pantley

When kids disagree, you have choices on how to handle the situation. You can ignore it, change the environment, redirect the kids, offer them choices, or help them work it out together.

Ignore the Unacceptable Behavior

This works best when you focus attention on acceptable or appropriate behaviors at the same time as you ignore the undesirable behavior. How *do you ignore a behavior?* Act as though it doesn't exist; you didn't see or hear it. You may find it easier to ignore offensive behavior if you think of something pleasant. *When should you ignore annoying behavior?* When children are fighting to get your attention, and the fighting isn't hurting either child, physically or emotionally.

Change Something in the Environment

Sometimes you can remove something and add something and the quarreling will stop. Rearranging things can work too. For example, if a four-year-old and a one-year-old are fighting because the younger gets into the older one's toys, store the toys out-of-reach of the one-year-old.

Redirect Children's Behavior

Tell the child specifically what you want her to do (an acceptable behavior), instead of just telling her to stop doing what she is doing (an unacceptable behavior). Tell her in a way that reminds her you like her, at the same time being clear that she needs to change what she's doing. For example, when a child is hitting another, say "It's not alright to hit. Touch your brother gently. If you want to hit him, tell me, and I'll help you decide what to do." When should you redirect a child's behavior? Definitely when the situation isn't safe, when a child hasn't yet learned the social skill needed, or when you are too tired to offer choices or work together to a solution. Redirecting behavior is also a positive way to teach children what is acceptable.

Offer Alternatives or Choices

Think of an acceptable thing the child could do instead of the undesirable behavior and give him a choice. For example, "You can play with Joe without hitting him or play by yourself in your room." Be sure you give the child only choices you and the child can accept. If you offer a choice that you or the child can't really accept one or both of you will be unhappy if the child chooses it! *When should you offer choice?* When the situation is safe and you have the time and patience to. The choices can be simple for children who don't speak, like "Give the book to Susan, or I will give it to her."

Encourage Children to Problem-Solve

Children can learn to work out solutions themselves if you help them identify the problem, help them come up with other choices, help them guess possible consequences of the alternatives and help them make a decision. When should you encourage them to negotiate? If they already know how to listen to each other, how to come up with ideas and how to evaluate different choices.



Just a reminder:

November 1st

**Daylight Savings Time
Ends**

October 2009 Foster Parent Spotlight

Randy Radish



Randy Radish is a single foster father who lives in the city of Waukesha.

Randy has a wonderful sense of humor when asked about fostering support he said "Tie a knot at the end of the rope and hang on...it's going to be a wild ride!" Friends, family, and another set of foster parents that have become like family are his support system.

Family activities vary. Family gatherings, church, cooking, school, social events, bike races, mixed martial arts, traveling, fishing,

this year deer hunting and working projects with his foster son so he can learn some additional skills.

"Hearing a 14 year old tell me how 'he' planned that he and his little brother should go into foster care - he wanted him to go to his old foster home and then the agency can figure out what to do with him. When the family could not take him, there was one very simple answer. You can come and live with me. It was crystal clear to me and I never hesitated. I could not. He is my first placement."

"My description of life as a foster parent is like being on an old wooden roller coaster. As you creep up the hill, you wonder what is next - and then BAM! While it does have its moments, I would not trade it. It is just awesome to watch someone come out of their shell and grow."

Randy has attended all of the mandatory training and he reports that it has been "interesting" and worthwhile.

The rewarding parts of fostering vary also. "Watching my foster son leave a courtroom and smiling because he does not have to go home again. The relief, finally, he can get on with his life. Watching his friends show up at our house after the hearing this because now he knows that he does not have to explain why he has a new parent and/or a new home. My foster son knows he is home."



We could not have done it without you!

Thank you to:
 Arrowhead H.S. Key Club
 Fox River Christian Church
 Green Bay Packers
 Target-Waukesha
 Walmart-Pewaukee
 Wisconsin Badgers
 Ione Backus
 Angie Briggs
 Rutth Fettig
 Deb Fosberg
 Karen Narlow
 Jo Nitkowski
 Michelle Jones
 Virginia L. Steilen
 Liz Carleton
 Amy Mangan

We wish to thank these individuals and organizations for the recent support to the foster parent clothing closet.

Come and see the newly organized closet.
 Fall and winter clothes are available.



Contact Numbers:

Waukesha H & HS
 262-548-7212

Children's Mental Health Outreach
 262-548-7666

Medical Emergency: 911
 Family Emergency: 211

Foster Parent Mentor
 Nikki Mertens
 262-246-6180

Lisa Roberts, Supervisor
 262-548-7271

Shari Rather, Foster Care
 Coordinator
 262-548-7267

August 2009 Placements

Regular Foster Care:
 42 Children
 0 Admitted
 2 Discharged

Treatment Foster Care:
 16 Children
 0 Admitted
 0 Discharged

Group Homes:
 4 Children
 0 Admitted
 1 Discharged

Residential Care Facilities:
 2 Children
 0 Admitted
 3 Discharged

Relative Placements:
 30 Children
 2 Admitted
 0 Discharged

Social Workers:

Bob Alioto
 262-548-7262

Suzanne Arnold
 262-548-7348

Peggy Beisser
 262-548-7261

Angie Briggs
 262-548-7275

Jennifer Eiler
 262-548-7260

Jeannine Eng
 262-548-7268

Margaret Johnson
 262-548-7265

Elizabeth Russo
 262-548-7349

Kim Sampson
 262-548-7273

Linda Senger
 262-548-7698

Ted Wuerslin
 262-548-7269

We Need You!

For more information about becoming a foster parent in Waukesha County, please contact Shari Rather at:

srather@waukeshacounty.gov

262-548-7267

Or visit our website at www.waukeshacounty.gov
 And follow the links to foster care.

