

FAMILY INTERACTION: **THE EXPRESSWAY TO PERMANENCY - FACILITATING SUCCESSFUL VISITATION**

- *Prepared by:*

- *Norma M. Ginther, M.S.W., L.I.S.W.*

- *Jeffrey D. Ginther, J.D.*

- *From*

- *The Institute for Human Services*

- *Prepared for:*

- *Western Wisconsin Training Partnership*

- *At The University of Wisconsin*

- *River Falls, Wisconsin*



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WELCOME



- Why do you see your family?
 - What do you need?

Family Interaction Resources

Hess, P. & Proch, K. (1988). *Family visiting in out-of-home care: A guide to practice.*

Pine, B., Warsh, R., & Maluccio, A. (eds.) (1933). *Together again: Family reunification in foster care.*

National Resource Center for Foster Care & Permanency Planning (2003), in the article *Visiting Between Children in Care and Their Families: A look at Current policy.*

C.H. Neuman (1997).

BENEFITS OF FAMILY INTERACTION

- Without family interaction parent/child relationship deteriorates
- Loss greatest emotional trauma
- Reduces negative affects
- Reduces fantasies/fears
- Reduces self-blame
- Immediate, regular, and increased
- Length? – age/need for protection
- Least restrictive
- Minimum – multiple times per week



Crisis Theory

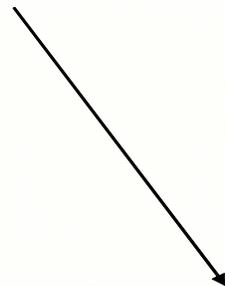
Stressors

Perception of Event

Coping Skills

CRISIS

Homeostasis

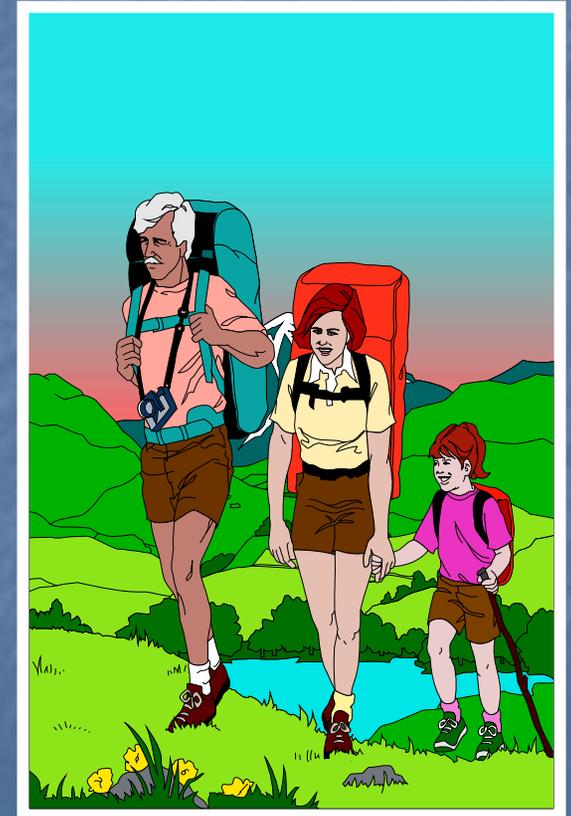


Purpose of Family Interaction for the Caseworker

1. **Reassurance** – reduce fear of separation
2. **Assessment** – observe attachment, develop plan, teach family, and assess family's progress.
3. **Treatment** – engage family in active treatment, test and build attachment.
4. **Documentation** – Justify return to home or termination of parental rights.

FAMILY INTERACTION FOR CHILDREN

- Keep relationships
- Reduce trauma
- Reduce fantasy
- Reduce fear
- Reduce self-blame
- Need to be normalized



Optimizing Family Interaction

- Surest way to assess strengths/needs.
- Teaching tool for caseworkers to model.
- Minimize risk.
- Never do anything for a child, a parent can do.
- Evaluate why children or parents withdraw.
- Keep and encourage family traditions.
- Make lifebooks.
- Caseworkers must assess their commitment level and why it's there.
- Specifically recruit foster parents to work with birth parents.

SIBLINGS ARE IMPORTANT



- Place together or in close proximity
- Use sibling placement contracts.
- Assist foster parent with parentified sibling.
- Don't strip the role of the parentified sibling.

FAMILY INTERACTION: **THE EXPRESSWAY TO PERMANENCY - FACILITATING SUCCESSFUL VISITATION**

- *Day one*

- *Afternoon*



AGENCY RESOURCES COMMITTED

Agency makes sure family interaction takes place and following guidelines are met:

- A required well developed, written Family Interaction plan
- Family Interaction held to same level as case plan
- Policy concerning expectations of agency
- Correlate high caseloads' and lack of family interaction
- Provide assistance to caseworkers
- Provide varied hours of operation
- A comfortable and relaxed environment
- Offer financial assistance to parents with limited resources.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. Agency assures well-planned family interaction.
2. Family interaction is not a reward or punishment.
3. All planning should involve all members of the Primary Care Team.

Basic Elements of Family Interaction Plan

- Frequency
- Length of time
- Location
- Supervision
- Participants
- Support Services
- Activities
- Case identification information
- Reasons for child being in care, risk to the child, ways to protect child if child needs to be protected.



LOCATION

- Least restrictive/most normal
- Provide safety
- Best for child
 - - own home
 - - foster home
 - - neutral place
 - - office



Roles and Responsibilities Regarding Family Interaction

Caseworkers' Role/Responsibility

- Develop, implement and revise plan.
- Prioritize facilitation of plan.
- Support the parent, foster family and child.
- Inform parent of their responsibilities.
- Assess family attachment and extended family connection.
- Evaluate success of plan.
- Supervise Family Interaction, if needed.
- Work with child and parent over setbacks in plan.
- Provide conflict resolution to the plan.
- Stress to all that safety is sole responsibility of parent.

Parents' Role/Responsibility

- Insure emotional and physical safety and well-being of child.
- Provide or support transportation, whenever possible.
- Attend Family Interactions  as scheduled.
- Call in advance to cancel and discuss cancellation with child.
- Take on parental role to meet child's needs.
- Respond to direction during visits.
- Follow agreed-to rules and conditions.



Foster Families' Role/Responsibility



- Assist or provide transportation of child.
- Have regular on-going contact with parent.
- Permit Family Interaction in foster homes.
- Active in arranging Family Interaction.
- Document behavior before, during, and after.
- Encourage contact and support child.
- Have child ready to participate.
- Pack clothing and other essentials for overnight.
- Help child accept separation from parent – life book opportunities.
- Notify caseworker of any unplanned activity that occurs.

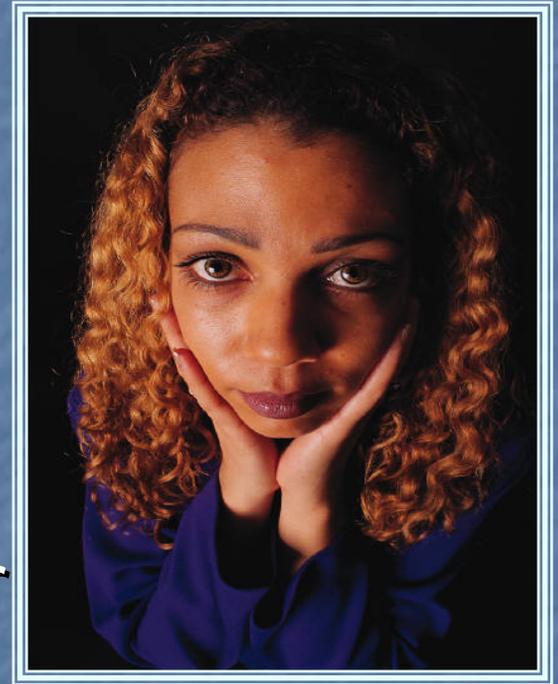
CONTACT MUST BE CHILD SPECIFIC



- Child's ability to self-care
- Family's willingness/ability to get help
- Child's request for and reaction to visits
- Divided loyalty/chaos at home
- Developmentally appropriate activities
- Therapeutic needs of child
- Consider child's schedule

Parent/Child Relationship Neglect

- Lack of knowledge
- Immature
- Ambivalent
- Living conditions – poor
- Rejection/unwilling





Parent/Child Relationship Physical Abuse

- Inability to manage anger
- Limited child management skills
- Philosophical commitment to corporal punishment.

PARENT/CHILD RELATIONSHIP SEXUAL ABUSE

- Different from physical abuse/neglect – it is the disabling condition
- Not curable, can be managed
- Child contact with the perpetrator with should be based on the child's therapy
- Support non-offending parent to build attachment for child and receive counseling
- Supervise until non-offending parent takes responsibility for safety of child
- Watch for failure to protect.

Special Conditions Affecting the Parent

- Drug or alcohol addiction
- Incarceration
- Parental non-compliance with Family Interaction
- Issues of foster parents
 - * Extra supports to assist parent
 - * Putting aside biases



Phases of Family Interaction

■ I. Initial

■ II. Middle

■ III. Transitional



Initial Phase

Characteristics:

- Builds relations
- Assessment/Goal setting
- Two-Four weeks
- People uncomfortable
- Pressure on child
- Close supervision
- Supervisor plays important roles
- Levels of supervision – fade in/out



Initial Phase Reasons

- Assessment
- Mediate
- Problem Solve
- Assess ability to provide safety
- Demonstrate strength resources
- Identify impediments to reunification
- Modeling/Facilitate goals

Middle Phase

Characteristics:

- Responsibility shifts agency to parent
- Work toward goals
- Activities chosen to provide learning/practice
- Collaboration of agencies
- Timing and reconnection assessed
- Consider change in arrangements
- More often/longer
- Time – months to years



MIDDLE PHASE REASONS

- ❖ Forum for parents to show growth
- ❖ Facilitate progress
- ❖ Demonstrate reduction of risk
- ❖ Show timing
- ❖ Reactions to family interactions
- ❖ Messages sent
- ❖ Shift responsibility
- ❖ Use community supports

Transition Phase

Characteristics:

Case goal in sight

Secure services after return

Plan ahead

Maximize contact

Evaluate remaining stressors



Transition Phase Alternative Permanent Placement

- **Three Critical Messages:**

I love you

I can't take care of you

I give you permission to love
someone else

- **Video and/or letter**

- **Parents role changes**

