

Chronological List of Handouts and Overhead Transparencies

Handouts

1. Meeting 5 Agenda
2. Impact of Placement on Children's Self-Concept
3. Definitions – Discipline and Punishment
4. Side Effects of Physical Punishment
5. Discipline Techniques to Help Children and Youth Manage Their Behaviors
6. Helping Children Understand Feelings
7. Choosing Discipline Techniques to Keep Children Safe and Meet Needs
8. Discipline Methods Worksheet
9. Reporting Abuse of Children in Our Community*
10. Allegations of Abuse – Preventative Practices
11. Strengths/Needs Worksheet – Meeting 5
12. Agency Discipline Policy for Foster and Adoptive Parents*
13. Shared Parenting and Alliance Building: Benefits to the Children, Foster Parents and Parents of Children in Foster Care
14. The Importance of Birth Parents to Children in Foster Care

* Handout needs to be developed by agency.

Meeting 5: Helping Children and Youth Learn To Manage Their Behaviors

Agenda

<u>Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>
(15 minutes)	A. Introduction to Meeting 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Welcome back◆ Mutual selection issues◆ Bridge from Meeting 4◆ Meeting 5 Agenda
(35 minutes)	B. A Framework for Understanding Discipline <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ The difference between discipline and punishment
(30 minutes)	C. Fifteen Ways to Help Children and Youth Manage Challenging Behaviors <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Discipline techniques that assure safety and meet needs
(10 minutes)	BREAK
(30 minutes)	D. The Power of Positive Reinforcement and Helping Children Understand Feelings <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Demonstration and practice
(30 minutes)	E. Helping Children and Youth Manage Challenging Behaviors <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Examples of situations requiring special discipline skills

<u>Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>
(20 minutes)	F. False Allegations of Abuse in Foster or Adoptive Homes <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Teamwork management of allegations of abuse in foster or adoptive homes
(10 minutes)	G. Summary of Meeting 5 and Preview of Meeting 6 <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Summary of Meeting 5◆ Preview of Meeting 6◆ Next step in the mutual assessment process◆ A Partnership in Parenting Experience

ROADWORK

- ◆ Read Handouts 10, 12, 13, and 14.
- ◆ Complete Handout 11, Strengths/Needs Worksheet – Meeting 5.

Impact of Placement on Children's Self-Concept *

Self-Concept: The set of beliefs which a person has about himself or herself, which evolves out of relationships with others over a period of time. These beliefs shape the way one feels, thinks and behaves in relation to oneself and others. Self-concept has four primary characteristics:

lovable

capable

worthwhile

responsible

Lovable: What makes you feel lovable? What makes children feel lovable? When children feel lovable, how do they show it? How do children let you know they feel unlovable? How might foster care placement make a child feel unlovable? What can foster parents and social workers do to help children feel more lovable?

Capable: When do you feel capable? What makes children feel capable? How do children demonstrate that they feel capable? How do they behave when they do not feel capable? How might placement make a child feel not capable? What can we do to help children feel more capable?

Worthwhile: What makes you feel worthwhile? What makes children feel worthwhile? How do children demonstrate that they feel worthwhile? How do they behave when they do not feel worthwhile? How might foster care placement make a child feel not worthwhile? What can foster parents, and social workers do to help youth in foster care feel more worthwhile?

Responsible: When do you feel responsible? What makes children feel responsible? Why would children in foster care not feel responsible or even want to be responsible? How does placement make a child feel not responsible? What can we do to help youth in foster care feel more responsible?

Which of the above four characteristics might be the easiest to instill? Which might be the most difficult? As a foster parent, where would you begin?

* Adapted from **Foster Parent Training – A Curriculum and Resource Manual**, by Michael E. Polowy, Daniel Wasson, and Mary Wolf. New York State Child Welfare Training Institute. State University College at Buffalo, 1985.

Definitions – Discipline and Punishment

- ◆ **Punishment** is giving negative consequences for a behavior after it has occurred.
- ◆ **Punishment** is a behavior designed to stop a behavior. Punishment is derived from the Latin, *punire*, which is associated with causing pain.
- ◆ **Discipline** is teaching healthy behaviors. The word discipline is derived from the Latin, *discere*, which means to learn. (Source: **The American Heritage Dictionary**)
- ◆ **Discipline** of children who have been physically abused, neglected, emotionally maltreated or sexually abused should teach the following:^{*}
 - ◆ To understand feelings and needs;
 - ◆ To understand the connection between feelings and behaviors;
 - ◆ To learn healthy ways to get needs met (problem solve);
 - ◆ To feel good about their relationships with adults and other children;
 - ◆ To feel good about themselves (lovable, capable, worthwhile and responsible).

* Polowy, M., Wasson, D., and Wolf, M., (1985). Information on what discipline needs to teach is adapted from **Foster Parent Training — A Curriculum and Resource Manual**. Buffalo: The New York State Child Welfare Training Institute, State University College at Buffalo

Side Effects of Physical Punishment

Many parents, at some time, have felt that physical punishment (smacking, swatting, hitting, spanking, or depriving a child of food) is the only effective way to make a child stop a bad behavior.

Many parents have seen that physical punishment can be effective because:

- ◆ It immediately stops the behavior, at least for a while, by getting the child's attention.
- ◆ It makes the parents feel better because they are angry and, therefore, have a way to express their anger. The child knows they are angry.
- ◆ The spanking is just one small part of discipline and is received by the child in a context of a close, loving relationship with parents.*
- ◆ Many parents were raised with physical punishment and turned out to be healthy, happy and productive people.

Therefore, what is the problem with physical punishment? For children who have been sexually abused, physically abused or neglected, here are the side effects of physical punishment:

- ◆ Children who have been physically abused usually respond to physical punishment in one of the following ways:**
 - They are so used to being physically and emotionally hurt that they don't "feel" the pain. Therefore, they have to be hit or spanked harder and harder to feel any effects.
 - They may find pleasure, or relief in getting the spanking, because it's the only way they have learned to get attention.
- ◆ Physical punishment takes away the golden opportunity parents have to help a child feel remorse for an unkind or objectionable action, thus robbing the child of an opportunity for moral development.

* Gilman, Brian G., **"The Case Against Spanking,"** Foster Care Journal, April 1987.

** Adapted from McFadden, E.J. (n.d.). **Fostering the Battered and Abused Child.** Ypsilanti: Eastern Michigan University Social Work Program, p. 7. Battered and Abused Child.

Therefore, they will work hard to get their new parents to show attention the same way that their birth families showed attention.

- ◆ Physical punishment models aggressive behavior. It teaches children that the method a bigger person can use to stop the behavior of a smaller person is to use physical force. We don't often see an adult use physical discipline with a child bigger than the adult. Likewise, we don't often see a smaller child hitting a bigger child. The following example demonstrates how a parent can teach a child to use physical force:
 - A tired mother is in a grocery store or doctor's office with her two children who are fighting. They start hitting each other. The mother finally turns around and hits her children, telling them to stop hitting each other. Certainly, she got them to stop hitting — at least for a while. But what did she also teach them? That you get people to do what you want by hitting them.
- ◆ Physical punishment teaches children what not to do instead of what to do.
- ◆ Physical punishment hurts children, and children who need foster care already have been hurt enough.

For children who have been abused, spanking or smacking can be terribly damaging. And sometimes, of course, a child's foster parents will not know for certain that a child has been physically or sexually abused until the child's behavior in the foster home so indicates.

Therefore, using alternatives to physical punishment has two important benefits. First, it minimizes the risk of additional hurt to a child. Second, it helps break the intergenerational cycle of physical abuse.

Discipline Techniques to Help Children and Youth Manage Their Behaviors

Please use this handout to take notes as the methods are discussed. As you think about the method, write down behaviors that could be managed using the ideas presented.

I. Be a Role Model

One of the most effective methods of learning is imitation. Role modeling is an effective method of teaching social behaviors.

Think of some things you have learned to do by watching others. Can you think of some social situations, such as your first formal dining experience, where you may have taken cues on how to behave based on what others were doing?

2. Provide the Child with Time Out

Time out is an effective behavioral way to let children know that they cannot continue to do what they are doing. Time out is removing a child from the action and placing the child in a quiet place where he or she can gain control. Some people will ask, "How can you help young children learn to do things when their language is limited and it is difficult to reason with them?" Time out can be effectively used to stop a young child's behavior. It lets the child know what is right and what not to do. Time out also provides the child with an opportunity to get back in control.

Think of ways you as an adult have learned to take time out when you are angry or are having an emotional reaction.

3. Provide Positive Reinforcers and Privileges

One of the best ways to get a behavior to continue is to reward it. Immediate positive feedback usually causes the person to continue or repeat the behavior that is being reinforced. Both the Cycle of Need: Attachment and the Positive Interaction Cycle depend on positive interventions and positive response. The process is simple. We all tend to continue behavior when it is reinforced.

When someone compliments you on a job they think you've done well, how do you feel?

4. Take Away Privileges

Children need to be able to make the connections between actions, responsibilities and rights. Often privileges are earned based on responsible behavior. Privileges are lost as a result of irresponsible behaviors. If the rule is that no telephone call be longer than 20 minutes, and the child continues to extend calls beyond that time limit, taking away the privilege of using the phone for 24 hours may be an effective way to change the behavior. Children learn the connections between behavior and consequences when their lost privileges are tied to the behavior they need to change.

When the loss of privilege does not relate to the behavior, the child is more likely to feel punished and resentful. What are some privileges that adults can have taken away as a result of their actions?

5. Provide Natural and Logical Consequences

Consequences that are natural, ones likely to occur if no intervention is taken, become life's lessons. Natural consequences are really learning through the school of hard knocks, such as when toys left outside are stolen. Logical consequences are given to the child by the parent, such as when toys left outside are placed "off limits" for a period of time.

When we want to prevent life's blows to children or need to protect their health and safety, we often provide logical consequences rather than natural consequences. What are some natural consequences from which you have learned?

6. Ignore the Behavior

Some behaviors need attention or reinforcement to continue. Sometimes children will act up or out just to get a parent's attention. If a child is using a behavior to gain control or get your attention, an effective response can be to withhold attention.

Have you observed any instances where someone has stopped a troubling or offensive behavior because it was being ignored?

7. Ensure that Restitution Occurs

If children are held accountable for their behavior, they are more likely to be responsible. Restitution is giving back or “making amends” for behavior that causes harm to someone.

What are some adult situations where restitution is an effective technique?

8. Hold Family Meetings

Family meetings are scheduled family gatherings to share important information. Often the best way to resolve an issue is to get all the parties together and discuss what is happening and what are logical solutions. By holding family meetings, parents show their children that they are an important part of the family and that their feelings count. Also, family meetings help children learn to talk about their concerns.

Can you think of a time during your childhood or youth when a family meeting might have been a good way to help you learn answers to some of your questions or concerns?

9. Develop Behavioral Charts

Behavioral charts can help assist parents to determine when behaviors occur and what causes them. By tracking behaviors, parents can determine when to use positive reinforcement to increase the learning or performance of the desired behaviors.

Did you ever have a behavior that you might have managed differently if it had a been tracked on a chart?

10. Grandma’s Rule or This for That

Rules are clearly stated expectation for behaviors. Grandma’s Rule or This for That teaches both the expected order of behaviors and a logical way to earn privileges. For example, children must finish their homework before they can watch television.

Can you think of a example of “This for That” in your family growing up?

11. Help the Child Understand Feelings

Many children will not relate the way they are feeling to the way they are acting. When parents can help the child connect emotions and behaviors, an important first step toward changing behaviors has been made.

Can you think of an example when you did something as a way to express a feeling that you weren't able to/allowed to talk about?

12. Replace Negative Time with Positive Time

It is very difficult to stop behavior. Substituting something positive and healthy for something negative and destructive is a key to being able to change a behavior.

Can you think of a positive behavior you wish you had been encouraged to give more time to (instead of doing something negative)?

13. Provide Alternatives for Destructive Acting-Out Behaviors

Providing alternatives is giving the child acceptable behaviors to express strong feelings. Emotions carry a great deal of energy. Children will need some place to put that energy. Parents can help them to find positive ways to express their feelings.

What are some alternatives you think would be useful when you see the results of destructive acting-out behaviors?

14. Make a Plan for Change with a Child

Learning how to make a plan for change only comes with practice. Plans usually start with a goal. If you can help a child understand the need for change and then develop a goal, you will be moving in the right direction.

Think of a time you had a goal and what helped you to achieve it. Did you have small, reasonable steps? Were there lots of options to get you where you were going? What kind of reinforcers or rewards did you get along the way?

15. Make a Plan for Change with the Child and a Professional

Foster and adoptive parents have many resources available to them. You can call on the child welfare worker, a clinical social worker, psychologist, counselor and many other professionals. Be ready to reach out for the help that you and the child need.

Can you think of a time when a professional has helped a family make positive changes?

16. Other effective discipline techniques:

Helping Children Understand Feelings

Reflection is:

1. Focusing fully on the person.
2. Paying attention to the person's nonverbal behaviors and what he or she is saying at the moment.
3. Using this information to name the feeling.
4. Expressing understanding of the feelings by using various phrases such as:
 - ◆ You feel...
 - ◆ You are...
 - ◆ You seem...
 - ◆ Sounds like...
 - ◆ I get the feeling you...
 - ◆ I hear you saying...

Reflection is not:

1. Agreeing or disagreeing.
2. Reassuring ("Everything will be okay").
3. Telling the other person what to do and how to feel.
4. Giving advice or solving problems.

The child says:	A word that names what the child might be feeling	Use the word in a statement that shows you understand the feeling
<i>"The bus driver yelled at me and everyone laughed."</i>		
<i>"Just because I forgot the permission slip, my teacher said I couldn't go on the field trip. She's a bitch."</i>		
<i>"All the other kids got invited to the party. Not me. Never me."</i>		
<i>"My mother isn't going to show up for the visit. She never does. I bet she's with her new boyfriend."</i>		
The parent says:		
<i>"I know my daughter's mad at me. She barely looks up when I come into the room."</i>		
<i>"I don't need you to tell me about my kid. Special class isn't what she needs."</i>		

Choosing Discipline Techniques to Keep Children Safe and Meet Needs

Jenny, age 6, was placed in foster care three months ago after she was physically abused by her mother's boyfriend. Jenny's mother says that she loves Jenny and wants her home. She continues to live with the boyfriend, who also beat her when she tried to protect Jenny. Jenny's birth father lives in Utah with his family and volunteered to give up his rights to Jenny. Jenny has no other family resources.

Jenny has been living with the Nelson family for three months. The Nelsons have a twelve-year-old daughter, Sandra, a ten-year-old son, Jeff, and a beloved and old family dog, Rusty. Jenny is doing well in first grade.

Jenny's challenging behaviors:

- ◆ Jenny expresses many fears: she doesn't want to be touched, is afraid of baths, strangers, and the stairs, and screams when she sees someone with a lit cigarette.
- ◆ She also disobeys or ignores many of the foster family's rules, e.g., won't wash her hands before meals or help clear the table after dinner.

Recent behaviors:

- ◆ Jenny has begun hitting the family dog, mostly when she thinks no one is watching.
- ◆ She has begun using profanity, especially in front of friends of Sandra and Jeff. She yelled "suck my dick" at Mrs. Nelson yesterday.

Joey, age one, was born to a twenty-two-year-old mom dependent on crack cocaine. He tested positive for crack cocaine and the hospital made a report to the State Central Registry (SCR). Mom's drug use and its overall effect on her physical, emotional, and mental health directly affected her ability to meet Joey's or her own basic needs.

Mom requested that Joey be placed with his great aunt. This aunt was a source of stability and support to mom in her own chaotic youth. His great aunt reports that Joey is not interested in anything or anyone, tends to look sad, is just learning to stand, cries often, and is not easily comforted. She loves him deeply and wants to adopt him but she doesn't know how to help him.

Joey's challenging behaviors:

- ◆ Joey is not interested in anything or anyone.
- ◆ Joey tends to look sad, cries often and is not easily comforted.
- ◆ Joey is just learning to stand

Recent behavior:

- ◆ Joey's uncontrolled crying has changed into full body rages with Joey hitting his head on hard surfaces.

Jeryce is an eleven-year-old girl who came into care two months ago as a result of neglect and lack of supervision. Jeryce's parents struggled from the beginning to feed, clothe, and give Jeryce those "little extras" they wanted their baby girl to have. Everything changed when a friend introduced the parents to crystal meth when Jeryce was nine. Jeryce's father and mother are separated and spend time together using drugs. For long periods of time Jeryce had to find her own food and shelter, because her parents were unable to provide for her most basic needs. Jeryce was sexually assaulted by neighbor adolescents while her parents were getting high and were unable to protect her. Her parents blame themselves, each other, and a neighborhood boy for Jeryce's placement.

Once an average student, Jeryce's grades have slipped dramatically during the past two years. She has begun skipping school since she came into foster care. Jeryce is African American and is living in a white foster home in a working class, white neighborhood. Although Jeryce has experienced some terrible racial slurs, she has begun talking with her foster family about ways she can handle the situation in the neighborhood.

Jeryce's challenging behaviors:

- ◆ Jeryce has begun to dress more provocatively and spends a lot of time at the foster family's church flirting with the older boys
- ◆ Jeryce has been caught lying on several occasions and for no apparent reason. It's almost like she doesn't recognize the truth.
- ◆ Jeryce cries herself to sleep almost every night. She explains that she is afraid of the dark.

Recent behavior:

- ◆ During the past two weeks, Jeryce has begun masturbating on the floor and rhythmically rocking on a pillow when the family watches television together.

Karen is 14 and has been in and out of foster care three times during her life due to neglect and medical neglect. The last time was three years ago. Her father is an alcoholic who has not been heard from in four years. Her mother has recurrent problems with drugs and alcohol. When she relapses, she is unable to care for Karen. Karen has Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). She is developmentally delayed, is three years behind grade level, and has dyslexia and a heart murmur. When she is in recovery, Karen's mom makes sure that Karen gets to her medical appointments and follows through on the school's recommendations.

Karen was placed into care again after her mother disappeared for a week. Broken promises, brushes with the law, and Karen's placement have estranged mom from all members of her extended family, who refuse to help. The plan is for Karen to be reunited with her mother if her mother completes treatment and can keep her safe and meet her needs.

Karen has been in this foster home for three months. This is the second time she has lived here. If Karen can't be returned home safely, her current foster parents may adopt her but they have not made a final decision. They love Karen but don't know if they can meet her needs. Karen has two friends from her foster parents' church, who are two years younger than she is. Karen has a big smile when she is happy and she loves to dress up. She looks forward to Sundays when her mother eats dinner with the foster family.

Karen's Recent Challenging Behavior:

- ◆ Karen went out with new friends and came home with alcohol on her breath and speaking incoherently.

Discipline Methods Worksheet

Child's challenging behavior (what the child says or does)

1. The child's behavior might be expressing this feeling(s)

or need (i.e. physical survival, safety, love and belonging, self-esteem, making dreams come true.)

because:

2. As the parent, I am feeling:

because:

3. Child's behavior needs to be managed or changed because:

4. Child's behavior needs to change to:

5. Discipline techniques that would be harmful or not teach the child healthy ways to meet needs or manage feelings identified in Question 1 include:

6. Discipline techniques that I can use to help teach this child healthy ways to get his or her needs met:

Reporting Abuse of Children in Our Community

Do Not Copy!

(To be developed and added by local agency)

When Helpers Are Falsely Accused

A. Who Makes False Child Abuse Allegation Reports?

False abuse reports can come directly from the child or anyone who knows the child. Most people making a report, which ends up being false, sincerely believe abuse has occurred. Private individuals, social workers, therapists, teachers, parents, and neighbors are not child abuse specialists or assessors. Individuals making any abuse report tend to be genuinely concerned for the welfare of the child. The child protective service worker must assess each report in order to identify those cases where abuse has occurred.

Many false allegations are not purposeful lies. Often the child may believe abuse has occurred where it has not. These are called “naïve false allegations.” Some common examples of this are:

1. misunderstandings (especially of touch);
2. confusing reality and flashbacks; and
3. confusing reality and fantasy.

In all cases of false reports the foster and adoptive parents' best protection is in the way they manage their professional responsibilities and in the quality of the relationships they have developed.

Usually when we think of “false” abuse reports we mean those reports where the individual making the report is not telling the truth. This type of report is most often made by the child, the child's parents, or extended family. These are called “manipulative false allegations.”

There are many motives for a child to make a false abuse report. Some possible reasons are:

1. to gain attention;
2. to seek revenge or get even;
3. to avoid consequences;
4. to avoid a perceived threat;
5. to resolve feelings of betrayal of birth family;
6. to rescue birth family; or
7. to get back home.

* Adapted from **Preventative Practices Trainer's Guide**, developed by the Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association.

We usually understand that children in foster care have experienced severe trauma. It's harder to remember that their parents and other family members have also experienced trauma. Most parents love their children. The reasons their children are in care are due to stress, poor parenting skills, poor relationship skills, and/or other factors. Most parents try very hard. They just cannot fulfill their responsibilities as a parent. When their children are removed from their homes they are devastated. Their already low self-esteem plummets as low as it can go. They are desperate. Desperate individuals do desperate things. They may be jealous. It can become easy to justify a lie when you think it is your only way out. Some common motives for parents to make a false report are:

1. distrust of foster parents;
2. jealousy;
3. avoid perceived threat to their child;
4. misdirected anger;
5. in a position of weakness/sadness;
6. in grief and loss cycle; or
7. to get their child back home.

Your best protection against a false report from the parents of a child living in your home is in the way you manage your professional role and in the quality of the relationships you have developed with the child's family and the other members of the team.

B. High Risk Situations

Certain conditions or situations increase the risk of a false report. Extra caution during these times can reduce the risk. Some high risk situations are:

1. child is under a lot of stress;
2. child is experiencing a lot of anxiety;
3. upcoming court date with a possible decision for the child to return home;
4. poor team relationship between the social worker, foster parent and birth family;
5. infrequent home visits; and
6. sight, sound, touch, smell, etc. that reminds the child of past abuse (when the child is unable or feels unsafe to verbalize the memory).

Your family rules, policies, and practices will help to manage these conditions to reduce your risk. Abuse allegations are a necessary hazard of being involved in helping children. Foster and adoptive parents, social workers, and day care providers are all at risk of an allegation. We cannot prevent an allegation from being made. We can minimize the risk of false child abuse allegations being substantiated.

C. Responding to Allegations

When an allegation is made, it is important to remember that you are not presumed guilty. It will feel horrible to be accused of maltreating a child. But, the purpose of the assessment is to discover the truth about the reported incident. Child protective staff are specifically trained to assess whether abuse or neglect has occurred. A Child Protective Service assessment is not a criminal investigation. Assessments are handled somewhat differently depending on your region and county.

Keep Perspective

A report or allegation does not mean you are pronounced guilty.

Be Honest!

Be honest throughout the process. If you lie or attempt to cover anything up you will lose credibility. If you slapped Sally – say you slapped Sally.

Cooperate

When child protective staff come to the door, cooperate completely. They may want to look through your house. They may want to talk to other members of the family. Be polite and as helpful as possible. You want the truth to come out.

Write Things Down

This is a very traumatic experience. You may tend to forget things or get confused. That's okay. Write everything down. Get the business card of the person investigating the complaint so that you will have a name and phone number. Keep a notebook and write down all of your conversations concerning the assessment. Keep all correspondence about the assessment in a folder with your notes. Keep a log of phone calls. Write down who called, what was said, what you said. Send correspondence by certified mail. You will get a green tag back recording that what you sent was received and by whom.

Ask Questions

Ask questions about the process. What are your rights? What will happen next? What are the time lines? Where do I get more information? Where do I get needed forms?

Get Support

Most of the time your licensing or placement worker can be a tremendous support. Sometimes a placement worker will be told to stay away until the assessment is completed. When this happens it is frustrating for them, and you may feel betrayed. If this happens, be sure to find support where you can, but always remember the policy and rules about confidentiality.

Strengths/Needs Worksheet – Meeting 5

Now that you have completed your fifth meeting, we would like you to think about your strengths and your needs, personal as well as family. For each bolded skill, please write an example of your strength and/or your need. You can provide as many examples as you'd like but please provide at least 3 strengths and 3 needs on the worksheet.

Skill	Activities	This is a strength for my family because....	This is a need for my family because...
1. Know your own family.			
2. Communicate effectively.	<u>Meeting 5</u> Help the Child Understand Feelings		
3. Know the children.	<u>Meeting 5</u> Discipline vs. Punishment		

Skill	Activities	This is a strength for my family because....	This is a need for my family because...
4. Build strengths; meet needs.	<u>Meeting 5</u> The Power of Positive Reinforcement		
5. Work in partnership.			
6. Be loss and attachment experts.			
7. Manage behaviors.	<u>Meeting 5</u> Fifteen Ways to Help Children Manage Their Behavior (sticky notes activity) Helping the Children Manage Challenging Behaviors (small group activity)		

Skill	Activities	This is a strength for my family because....	This is a need for my family because...
8. Build connections.			
9. Build self-esteem.			
10. Assure health and safety.	<p><u>Meeting 5</u> “Choosing Effective Discipline Techniques” and “Handling False Allegations in Foster and Adoptive Homes”</p>		
11. Assess impact.			
12. Make an informed decision.			

Abilities Developed During Meeting 5

Following are the abilities developed or enhanced during Meeting 5 of the GPSII/MAPP program:

GPSII/MAPP Meeting 5 Abilities

By participating in this meeting, prospective foster and adoptive parents should be able to:

- ◆ Describe personal or family strengths and needs related to the Twelve Skills for Successful Fostering and Adopting.
- ◆ Identify behaviors children and youth may need help managing.
- ◆ Describe behaviors that are dangerous or harmful to children, youth and family members.
- ◆ Describe the role of foster parent in helping children and youth manage their behaviors.
- ◆ Explain the difference between the parental interventions of punishment and discipline.
- ◆ Explain how behaviors are indicators of underlying needs.
- ◆ Explain behavior management as a way of getting needs met.
- ◆ Describe parental interventions that help children and youth manage their own behaviors.
- ◆ Select parental interventions that help children and youth manage their own behaviors.
- ◆ Describe personal emotional reactions that may create challenges for selecting effective parental interventions.
- ◆ Help children and youth manage their behaviors.
- ◆ In a case example, create parental interventions that help a child or youth manage own behavior and get needs met.
- ◆ Choose discipline strategies that provide for a child's safety.
- ◆ Explain how discipline can provide for a child's safety.
- ◆ In case examples, choose specific discipline techniques to help provide for a child's safety.
- ◆ Make an informed decision about attending Meeting 6.

Agency Discipline Policy for Foster and Adoptive Parents

Do Not Copy!

(To be developed and added by local agency)

Shared Parenting and Alliance Building: Benefits to the Children, Foster Parents and Parents of Children in Foster Care

Benefits to the Child in Foster Care

When foster parents and the agency work to build constructive partnerships with birth families, the child may receive the following benefits:

1. The child will have more of a feeling of connectedness.
2. The child will not feel or actually be cut off from both immediate needs as well as the less tangible needs that birth parents can offer.
3. The child will not feel torn between adults.
4. If the child has the security that adults are acting together in his or her best interests, the child is free to be a child (the child will not have to worry about taking care of himself or herself, self-parenting).
5. If the child has the security that adults are acting together in his or her best interests, the child is free to resume normal development, which has probably been interrupted by the confusion that led to the child's placement; this confusion may have included the child having to take on roles a child normally would not take on, which interferes with a child's development.
6. Children will be better able to manage and tolerate multiple-adult relationships if they perceive the adults in their life as working together, rather than being in conflict. When adults are in conflict, a child may become detached or have conflicting relationships.
7. When children have contact with birth parents, they are better able to work through some of the painful feelings they have from the separation that resulted from placement into care. Though the short-term effect of seeing birth parents may be that the child is upset, the long-term effects are generally beneficial.
8. When children are able to work through emotions by seeing birth parents, their behavior is likely to improve.
9. If children are able to see birth parents and express their feelings, they are less likely to misdirect their painful or angry feelings toward foster parents.
10. Regular birth parent visits strongly increase the chances of reunification.
11. Regular contact with birth parents helps the child see how much progress they are making toward bringing the child home.
12. Even when birth parents do not follow through by coming to visits or by coming to visits in a nurturing way, these experiences help children to come to recognize and understand their parents' limitations, which can emotionally ease the child's passage from foster care to adoption or independent living.

Benefits to the Child in Foster Care

When foster parents and the agency work to build constructive partnerships with birth families, the child may receive the following benefits:

1. By building partnerships with birth parents, foster parents become more an active part of the professional child welfare team.
2. If foster parents build a partnership with the birth parents, they are not limited to receiving all of their information about the child through the caseworker.
3. If foster parents build a partnership with the birth parents, they get their own firsthand experience of what they can directly ask the birth parents for and what the birth parents want from them.
4. Through partnership, foster parents can be a more direct contributor in the shared parenting role. For example, a foster mother might confide to a birth father that the birth father's daughter said she believed he hates her. This first hand testimony could have much more of a direct impact on the father than if the foster mother told it to the worker who in turn told it to the father. Also in such a case, the father is hearing things from both the caseworker and the foster parent. Hearing from several people can be more motivating and seem more real than hearing from only one. The foster parent's involvement might be the added ingredient that motivates the father to make a serious effort at helping his daughter know that he does not hate her.
5. A foster parent's first hand experience of working with birth parents may result in the foster parent feeling reassurance that the birth parents are working to try to care for their child.
6. Working in partnership with birth parents increases the foster parents' chances of developing genuine empathy for the birth parents, which will increase the foster parents' commitment in supporting teamwork. First hand experience may give the foster parent a clearer understanding and empathy for how difficult it is for the birth parents to change their lives or to achieve goals. When a foster parent recognizes this, foster parents may see a birth parent's efforts in a new light. By more clearly seeing a birth parent's obstacles, foster parents will better appreciate how the birth parent's efforts may be more significant and heart-felt than they first appeared.
7. When the child knows the foster parents are working with his or her birth parents, the foster parents are offering the child the security that adults are acting together in his or her best interests.
8. By working in partnership, foster parents will have the satisfaction of knowing they are supporting the child's sense of security. If the child has the security that adults are acting together in his or her best interests, the child is free to resume normal development, which has probably been interrupted by the confusion that led to the child's placement.

9. Greater contact with birth parents helps foster parents from becoming overly attached to the child because they are better able to see when a child and his or her parents belong together.
10. When foster parents work in partnership with birth parents, the foster parents can better support the agency in assessing what birth parents can or cannot do.
11. When foster parents are willing to work in partnership with birth parents, birth parents will sometimes tell valuable things to the foster parents that they would not tell the caseworker. Such information can add critical pieces to the puzzle's picture of how best to help the birth family and the child.
12. Foster parents and birth parents can share information in how best to care for the child. Obviously, the birth parents have critical parenting needs, or their child would not be in care. Nonetheless, we would be counterproductively stereotyping to assume the birth parents are simply "bad parents." The birth parents have lived with the child over enough time to know the child's daily routine and many useful details about the child. If the birth parents were to mention that the child loves to go to a local park to look at the ducks, the foster parents have learned about an activity that can give the child a sense of comfortable continuity by taking the child to a place he or she loved before so many changes began happening in his or her life. A foster mother may say to a birth mother that she is having trouble getting the child to do his homework after school. The birth parent may say she always gave the boy an hour after school to do fun things, like watch television or read comic books. The foster mother would say that the boy has never come straight home from school to begin doing homework, and she might adjust when she expects him to do his homework, allowing him to stay with his familiar pattern.
13. Foster parents can be extremely valuable by providing a model of parenting that the birth parents can see first hand and learn from.
14. When birth parents and foster parents communicate, they can normalize confusing things for one another. For example, a foster father may take a child to a mall when the child is in the process of having his level of Ritalin reduced. At the mall, the child begins screaming hysterically. Finally, the foster father simply picks the child up and tucks him under his arm and carries him out of the mall as matter-of-factly as a mailman carrying a parcel. Once outside the mall and away from people, the foster father felt less stressfully conspicuous in working to calm the child. If the foster parent told the birth parents about this episode, several good things could result. For one, the foster parent would be sharing a parenting technique that the birth parents might use with the child. But the birth parents might share that the child has behaved similarly many times at stores and malls. By sharing this information, both the birth parents and foster parents would see that the child's behavior has been part of a pattern over time. They would both see that the child has acted the same way with other people. Both sets of parents might feel somewhat relieved upon learning this, that they personally were not doing something "bad" or "stupid" that made the child behave in that way. Both sets of parents might be

able to accept that the experience of needing to manage the child's tantrums in public is simply going to be a normal part of parenting the child. Although the foster parent may not be managing the child's tantrums much more successfully than did the birth parents, there is comfort in two adults coming together with the same issue to deal with and collaborate in solving.

Benefits to the Child in Foster Care

When foster parents and the agency work to build constructive partnerships with birth families, the child may receive the following benefits:

1. With partnership, birth parents remain empowered to be a child's parent, rather than feeling and/or being pushed to the side.
2. When birth parents have more contact with the child and more participation through partnership, the parents will not forget how difficult parenting is. The more contact they have with their child, the better they are able to measure their own ability and interest in parenting and the reunification of their family.
3. Birth parents, through partnership, are treated as contributing adults in the child's life, which encourages the birth parents to expand and modify what they can contribute for the child.
4. Partnership gives birth parents a greater ability to know what is expected of them and to ask clearly what they expect of team members.
5. Through partnership, birth parents are included in decision-making.
6. Through partnership, birth parents are more directly supported in planning how to change in a way that will lead to the reunification of their family.
7. Partnership allows birth parents to be participatory in a process which has great bearing on their own circumstances.
8. Partnership includes parents in a way that makes it likely for them to be a part of significant events in their child's life, whether it is to be at the child's birthday or at the child's school for an independent educational program meeting.
9. When the agency and foster parents work in partnership with birth parents, they are not isolating the birth parents. Unification and isolation are opposites: how can a goal of reunification efficiently be achieved if the agency and foster parents isolate the birth parents?
10. Partnership provides birth parents with a process for achieving greater well-being for their child.
11. Partnership provides birth parents with a process for their achieving success in parenting.

The Importance of Birth Parents to Children in Foster Care*

It is critically important that children in foster care have contact with their birth parents, for the following reasons:

1. The separation process causes children to have many painful feelings (anger, guilt, sadness, frustration, etc.). Sometimes these feelings are “acted out.” Contact with the birth parents helps children get out some of their feelings, so it should be expected that children will seem more upset before, during or after a visit with their birth parents. “The short-term disadvantage of the child being upset by the visit is outweighed by the long-term benefit.”
2. If children are allowed to have contact and express all their upset feelings, then they will be less likely to take out or “displace” these feelings on the foster parents. They will be able to develop a positive relationship with the foster parents. A good attachment to their foster parents will help them with other relationships.
3. Regular contact with birth parents gives the child several important messages: (1) the child can see that the parents care enough to visit, and the child can see that all the adults — birth parents, foster parents and social worker — are working together; (2) children can see for themselves how much progress their parents are making toward getting them home. Research in the child welfare field consistently indicates that regular visits between children and birth parents is the strongest indicator of family reunification. In some ways, children can sense what this research has demonstrated. If their parents don't show up for visits, and don't follow through with plans, it helps the child to be able to see their limitations better.
4. Contact also is helpful for the parents. Just as the child may fantasize about “ideal” parents, the parents may forget how difficult parenting is. Regular contact with their child helps them measure their own ability and interest in parenting and family reunification.
5. Contact between children and birth parents helps foster parents, too. It keeps them from becoming overly attached to the child, because they can see that this child and the child's parents belong together. Foster parents, by getting to know the birth parents, can better understand the child's behavior.

* Adapted from “The Importance of the Natural Parents to the Child in Placement” by Ner Littner in *Parents of Children in Placement: Perspectives and Programs*, edited by P. A. Sinanogly and A. N. Maluccio. New York: Child Welfare League of America, 1981, p. 269-276.

6. Contact between the birth parents and child also helps the social worker. Because visits are the primary indicator of family reunification, visits are the main tool used by the social worker to assess: (1) how responsible and consistent the parent is; (2) the quality of the relationship between the parent and the child; (3) how much the birth parent is learning from the appropriate parenting skills modeled by the foster parent; and (4) how much progress is being made toward the case plan goal.
7. One of the most important benefits is that regular contact helps all the adults — birth parents, foster parents, and social worker — practice partnership in assuring permanence for children.