Working Together with Primary Families

Syllabus

Introduction

Expert – Wendy Wolff, MS, school counselor, researcher, consultant, and expert in positive visit practices.

This course explores the benefits and challenges of building relationships between foster and primary families.

Shared Parenting

Defines primary family as biological and other adults who have a strong attachment to the child. Shared parenting implies both the foster and primary families working together toward reunification. Shared parenting has positive benefits for all involved parties.

The Child Protection Team

Outlines the role of the team and discusses the role foster parents play on the team.

About Primary Parents

Discusses how primary families in the court system frequently have experienced challenges that shaped their parenting choices including:

- childhood trauma
- inadequate coping skills
- adult lifestyle choices
- isolation

Grief and Ambiguous Loss

Defines a special kind of grief, “ambiguous loss,” associated with a loss involving uncertainty. Two types of ambiguous loss are:

1. The parent is physically present but is unable to meet the child's needs.
2. The parent is psychologically present but physically absent.
Terrell’s Story

The case of a child who has experienced several placements and demonstrates ambiguous loss.

Understanding Empathy and Foster Care

Discusses the need for empathy and nonjudgmental attitudes as a prerequisite for establishing respectful interactions between foster and primary families.

Building a Shared Parenting Relationship

Building a relationship between foster and primary families takes time and patience. Different levels and types of contact are described.

Closing

Summary of key points and reminder to print out handouts.