Family Dynamics in Foster Care
Syllabus

Introduction

Expert – Richard Delaney, PhD, psychologist.

This course explores the effects fostering a child has on family dynamics and on individual family members. It looks at the motives parents may have for fostering children and how that can affect their fostering experience. The goal for this class is to give social workers the knowledge they need to improve matches and increase the likelihood of a stable, positive placement.

Family Styles

A family can be thought of as a small society with its own patterns, customs, and shared history. There are four classic family styles: the disengaged family; the enmeshed family; the shaped by guilt family; and the secure and strong family. Foster family style can either interfere with or facilitate helping children.

An interactive exercise helps viewers identify predominant family styles and how asking questions can reveal clues about family style.

Myths and Motives

Foster parents’ motives for bringing a child into their home can be complex and can range from positive to problematic. Motives can change, and parents may not even be aware of them.

Parents often enter caregiving with misconceptions or myths about helping children. “Love is enough” is the most common myth.

Foster children have their own expectations about families, many of them negative.

An exercise explores which questions might help an interviewer uncover the myths and motives of resource parents and children.
The Impact of Placement

A family’s style, motives and myths all play a part in what impact a placement might have, especially when the placement is not going smoothly. There are seven common pressures on foster families. Further, each member of the family will be impacted differently by the placement and the parents’ marriage will likely suffer some wear and tear.

An exercise helps professionals choose interview questions that might help them understand the impact of a placement on a family.

A case study is examined through the various stages of the placement.

Conclusion

Closing comments.

Viewers are encouraged to print and read the handouts.