SESSION II

THE CHILD PROTECTION TEAM

Skill Set and Competencies

Skill Set: Basic understanding of the caregivers’ role in the child protection team

1. Aware of both temporary substitute care and permanent options for children.

2. Aware of caregiver’s role in permanency planning.

3. Aware of his or her role as a member of the team serving the child and his or her family. This includes collaborating with the caseworker, agency staff, and other professionals.

4. Aware of the caregiver’s role in case planning and case coordination with other team members.

5. Aware of the legal issues that affect child welfare and foster care practice. This includes confidentiality, liability, reasonable efforts, reunification, and state and agency rules and regulations.

6. Aware of the roles and responsibilities of court personnel. This includes Guardians ad Litem, court appointed special advocates, prosecuting attorneys, defense attorneys, judges, referees, and court investigators.

7. Aware of juvenile court processes for abused and neglected children.

Agenda

I. Welcome and Introductions
II. Child Welfare System Overview
III. Terms and Definitions
IV. Agency Goals
V. History of Foster Care and Adoption
VI. The Importance of the Team Approach
VII. Advantages and Disadvantages of the Team Approach
VIII. Practice Activity
Handouts

#1 Glossary
#2 Responsibilities of Children Services
#3 The Child Welfare Historical Time Line
#4 Types of Cases: Origination in Juvenile Court
#5 Scenario I and Scenario II
#6 Case Study
#7 Homework Assignment: Fill in the Blanks!! Child Welfare Terms

Section I. 20 minutes

Welcome and Introductions

Trainer Instructions: The trainer should distribute name tents and an agenda for the session to each participant prior to the welcome and introductions.

The trainer should welcome participants to the session and affirm their interest in foster or kinship caregiving or adoptive parenting. Session trainers should be introduced.

The trainer should conduct an ice-breaking activity. If the group has 15 or fewer participants, the trainer should encourage participants to find someone in the group they do not know, or know least well. The trainer should list a few questions on the flip chart, instruct participants to interview their partners, using the suggested questions, and be prepared to introduce their partners to the larger group. Sample questions from which to choose:

Name
What brings you to this session?
What is something interesting about yourself?
What would have been your alternate career?
What have you done lately that would have made your family proud?
Where would you be if you could be anywhere you wanted today?

The participants should be given about 10 minutes to conduct this activity. The trainer should ask the partners to introduce one another to the group. There will likely be humorous exchanges, and the trainer should encourage these interactions.

Alternate Ice-Breaker Exercise:

If the group is larger than 15, the trainer may choose to use the following ice-breaker. On colored index cards, the trainer should write characteristics of children who need care. The trainer may cut out and use the “eggs and boxes” included as a trainer aid in the appendix of this section. Some examples are:
• I am a drug-exposed newborn infant.
• I have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and am a nine-year-old boy.
• I am part of a sibling group of three children and want to be placed with my brother and sister.
• I am a teenage girl who has been sexually abused.
• I am a three-year-old boy who is developmentally delayed and am not potty trained.

On white index cards, the trainer should write characteristics of parents who are applying to foster or adopt. Some examples are:

• I have a large house and would like to care for a sibling group of two to three children.
• I can care for medically fragile babies.
• I get along well with teens and can handle a child who has been sexually abused.
• I work well with children who are developmentally delayed.

The trainer should give half of the participants (the “children”) colored cards and half of them (the “parents”) white cards. Participants are given five minutes to find a “match” somewhere in the room and get to know their match. After five minutes, the trainer should ask the people still looking for a match how it felt to wait and not find anyone. The trainer should ask the matched trainees how it felt to find a match. The trainer should explain to trainees that this exercise provides insight into the feelings of children who are waiting. Sometimes, participants decide to be more flexible than their index card would indicate. The trainer can point out the importance of that kind of flexibility for caregivers, as matches are rarely, if ever, perfect fits.

Everyone should be asked to return to their seats and briefly introduce themselves to the large group, one at a time.
Section II. 5 minutes

Child Welfare System Overview

Trainer Instructions: The trainer should prepare flip chart pages, outlining key points, for the following information. Information should be presented in a lecturette or large group discussion, guided by questions asked by the trainer.

The primary purpose of child protective services is to identify children who are at risk of harm or injury due to acts of commission or omission by their parents or caregivers; and, when necessary, to initiate immediate action to protect the children. The child protective worker identifies factors that increase risk, and factors that promote safety in the family environment. By understanding their individual and interrelating dynamics, a valid assessment of potential risk of abuse or neglect can be made. An intervention plan can then be developed that promotes the safety of the child with the least degree of intrusion into the family or trauma to the child.

The “continuum of child welfare services” represents the broad range of community-based, family-centered services needed to assure that each child served by the child welfare system has a safe, permanent family. The continuum might include in-home family support services, temporary out-of-home care (respite care, kinship care, foster care, treatment foster care, group home care, or residential treatment), and permanent care alternatives (reunification, guardianship with relatives, adoption, or independent living).

To be effective, foster care must be seen as one component of the continuum, a system of last resort that is involved only when other child welfare interventions are unable to reduce immediate risk to the child. By conducting a proper risk assessment, and by arranging immediate and intensive supportive family services to mitigate risk factors (a safety plan), workers can set the stage for maintaining many children safely in their own homes. Removal and placement of a child in substitute care, even if intended for only short periods of time, is not considered unless the child cannot be protected from maltreatment while in his own home.

There is a checks-and-balances system within child welfare. Child protective services workers operate within county child welfare agencies mandated and sanctioned by the Ohio Revised Code. The work of CPS county staff is governed by federal and state law (interpreted by county juvenile courts) as well as by the administrative rules of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. That is, the juvenile court in each county reviews all cases involving the removal of children from their homes, and the juvenile court approves the decision when and if a child returns to the birth parents. Further, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services develops rules to ensure that laws protecting children and families are applied appropriately, and the state department monitors county and private agencies to
determine that rules are followed. This checks-and-balances system works to protect the rights of the child, the family, and the community.

**Section III.** 10 minutes

**Terms and Definitions**

Use: Handout #1

**Trainer Instructions:** The trainer should inform the group that they will be learning and using many new terms, or will be using familiar terms in unfamiliar ways, in their introduction to child protective services. The trainer should distribute Handout #1, *Glossary*, to all participants and ask them to review the terms prior to the next session of Preservice training.

**Section IV.** 10 minutes

**Agency Goals**

Use: Handout #2

**Trainer Instructions:** This information should be delivered in lecture format. If available, the trainer should use the agency's mission statement and table of organization in conjunction with this lecture. The trainer should distribute Handout #2, *Responsibilities of Children Services*.

In general, the local children's services agency or department of job and family services has the following goals and purposes:

- To investigate and make a determination regarding allegations of abuse and neglect, and to determine the degree of risk to the child of remaining in the sole care of the parents
- To identify the factors in the family that create risk, and the family strengths and resources that can be used to help reduce and remove risk
- To provide protective services to children in their own homes, whenever possible, to prevent the trauma inherent in separation and placement
- When not possible to protect the child in the home, to place the child temporarily in a supportive family placement that meets the child’s individual needs, as close to the child’s own home as possible
To work toward permanence for the child. From the moment of placement in a foster home, the first choice is most often to strengthen the child’s family and reunify that child.

To secure a permanent alternative home for the child when a child cannot return home.

Section V. 30 minutes

History of Foster Care and Adoption

Use: Handout #3
Handout #4


Trainer Note: The trainer should deliver this information in a mini-lecture format. Much of this information has been provided for trainer information. The trainer should cover highlights of this historical perspective, using Handout #3, The Child Welfare Time Line, in conjunction with this presentation.

Historical Roots of American Child Welfare (edited with references)

c.1750 BC The Hammurabi Code is the first known compilation of civil law. In the sections regarding parent-child relationships, children owed a duty of respect to their parents, and if children fulfilled this duty, they were entitled to receive minimum care and treatment from their parents. If the child’s duty was violated, the parent owed the child nothing. Information about the Hannurabic Code can be found at: http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/MESO/CODE.HTM

800 BC The Hebrew Code fully supported the concepts of the Hammurabi Code, including the parent’s proprietary interest in the child, and the child’s absolute duty of respect to his parents. The tenets of the parent-child relationship did not end when the child reached adulthood; they remained until the father died.

c.450 BC Early Roman law, incorporating the doctrine of patria potestas, established the unilateral and almost unlimited right of the father. The power of the paterfamilias, or male head of the family, was not controllable by law. This is an early expression of a pervasive cultural value of parents’ rights superseding those of their children. Information about Early Roman Law (The Twelve Tables) can be found at: www.historyguide.org/ancient/12tables.html
**c.650 AD**
Formed with Roman, Germanic, and newly emerging Christian influences, the Visigothic Kingdom in Europe was unusual in its humane treatment of children. The primary difference from earlier statutes was that the Visigothic Code stressed the **duties rather than the power of the parent**. Parents were given authority to use **reasonable** physical discipline, but were not permitted to exceed what was considered reasonable. Information about the Visigothic Code can be found at: [http://libro.uca.edu/vcode/visigoths.htm](http://libro.uca.edu/vcode/visigoths.htm)

**Medieval England**
Early English law was strongly influenced by Roman law in that it permitted infanticide, the sale of children in times of poverty, and upheld the parent’s right to fully control his children. However, children were emancipated at majority, and had the right to own property. Children had some legal rights. The “guardian ad litem,” or court-appointed advocate of the rights of the child, was established during this period.

**Later English Law**
The doctrine of *parens patriae* (literally “father of his country”) evolved from case law and defined the relationship between the parent and child as a trust. The right of the parent was endowed by the Crown (state) because it was assumed that the parent would faithfully discharge his duties on behalf of the child. If the trust were not faithfully discharged, it would be incumbent upon the Crown to intervene and protect the child’s interest. The state acted as a guarantor of the trust.

### Child Welfare in the U.S.

**1628**
The Stubborn Child Act, enacted in Massachusetts, provided that a stubborn or rebellious child could be put to death.

**1874**
A volunteer caseworker in New York City learned about an eight-year-old girl, named Maryellen, who was frequently beaten. Because there were no laws to prevent maltreatment of children, the case was taken to court under laws protecting animals, with the help of Henry Birgh of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

**1875**
Henry Birgh helped found the New York Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

**Late 1800s**
The first child care institutions were founded to provide safe shelter for children rescued from poor houses and mental institutions.

**1912**
The U.S. Children’s Bureau was established to create a federal agency that could represent the interests of children. As a result of this legislation, many public and private child welfare agencies were established.
1950s  Professionals began to recognize that the needs of children could be better met in family settings than in institutions, and foster family homes began to replace orphanages as the primary child placement resource.

1970s  The “permanency planning” movement was initiated to correct the problem of foster care drift.

1978  The Indian Child Welfare Act assigned sole responsibility to tribal governments for child welfare and adoption decisions regarding children of Native American descent.

1980  Public Law 96-272, the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, required child welfare professionals to make “reasonable efforts” to prevent placement of children in substitute care through provision of supportive and therapeutic services to strengthen families, enabling them to retain care of their children.

1989  Ohio Senate Bill 89 limited the time children can spend in the foster care system to two years, set time lines for various parts of the legal process, and required permanency planning for each child. This helped reduce the time children spent in foster care.

1989  The federal Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA prohibited the use of race, color, or national origin as the sole factors used in making placement decisions for children.

1994  The Indian Child Welfare Act assigned sole responsibility to tribal governments for child welfare and adoption decisions regarding children of Native American descent.

1996  The Interethnic Placement Act amended MEPA and stated that placement decisions for children could not be denied or delayed at all due to considerations of race, color, or national origin.

1996  Ohio House Bill 419 created significant adoption reform, including the creation of legal options for both open records for adult adopted persons and openness in adoption, mandated training for all adoption practitioners, and the creation of a Putative Father Registry to protect the rights of birth fathers.

1997  The Adoption and Safe Families Act further strengthened the child welfare system’s responsibility to provide a timely, permanent family for children in care.

1999  Ohio House Bill 484 shortened time frames that children could remain in foster care and implemented the provisions of the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act.

1999  Federal Foster Care Independence Act increased funding and services to children up to the age of 21 leaving foster care.
Trainer Instructions: The trainer should mention any recent or pending legislation impacting foster care, adoption, or kinship care within the state. The trainer should distribute Handout #4, *Types of Cases: Origination in Juvenile Court*, and familiarize participants with terminology related to abuse, neglect, dependency, unruly, and delinquency cases.

**Exercise:** “Why Are You Here?”

Trainer Instructions: The trainer should conduct the following exercise through large group brainstorming. The trainer should ask participants what conditions create stress on the foster care and adoptive system. At the conclusion of this section, the trainer should ask participants why they decided to proceed with foster care, adoption, or kinship care despite all the evidence that it is a very hard job. The trainer should ensure that the following points are covered:

**What Strains the Foster Care and Adoption System?**

- The children coming into placement have increasingly complex needs and problems.
- Despite public perceptions, there is currently limited reimbursement for foster caregivers.
- Many foster families are two-parent-working families, with limited time and energy to devote to foster care.
- There may be a lack of understanding and support from the agency and community for the job foster caregivers do.
- Foster and adoptive parents may not always receive complete or accurate information regarding the children they foster or adopt.
- The system has not always taken advantage of the positive benefits of kinship care.
- Foster, adoptive, and kinship parents may not be given an opportunity to participate in planning for the care of their children.
- Caseworkers, overwhelmed by large caseloads, may find it difficult to provide adequate support to foster, adoptive, and kinship parents.
- Demands on the skills and time of caregivers are increasing.

The answers will vary to the question, "Why do you want to provide foster care, adoption, or kinship care if you know it is such a difficult job?" Likely responses will include:

**Why Are You Motivated to Pursue Foster Care, Adoption, or Kinship Care?**

- We want to help a child.
- We wanted to do what we could to help a child grow and develop.
- Our ______ (friend, relative, or coworker) is a foster parent.
- We like children.
• We wanted a large family.
• We couldn't have our own children.
• I knew this kid who needed a home.
• My brother did not take care of his kids.
• Our family has a lot to offer a child.

Some motivations are more likely to result in the parent’s disappointment or, even worse, in a disruption of the placement. Motivations most likely to end in disappointment are:

• Replacing a child who has died
• Finding a playmate for a sibling
• Keeping a relationship together
• Earning money without leaving home for a traditional work setting
• Bending under family pressure to have children

Prospective caregivers will be talking further about motivation with the assessor who interviews them during completion of the family assessment. Caregivers need to think carefully about all of their motivations in pursuing foster care, adoption, or kinship care.

**Trainer Instructions:** The trainer should acknowledge and affirm the participants’ desire to proceed with the difficult task of becoming a foster, adoptive, or kinship caregiver.

The trainer should distribute the state foster care rules and regulations at this time. The trainer should encourage participants to examine the rules in greater depth at home, explaining that they are distributed early in the training so that the participants have an opportunity to become familiar with the material and bring questions to future training sessions.
Section VI.

The Importance of the Team Approach

A. Overview of Teambuilding

20 minutes

Trainer Instructions: The trainer should introduce this section by asking, "What is a team?" The trainer should list participant responses on a flip chart. Likely responses are given below for trainer review:

- A group of people that work together to achieve a goal
- People who work together to accomplish a task
- Each person has a job description, and they do their job together to produce a product
- People who can accomplish, together, what none can do alone

There are various individuals on the team who are essential to the child welfare team. When a child comes into foster care, it is usually because the parent’s behavior placed the child at risk of harm, the family couldn’t protect the child from harm, or the potential of harm was significant. The county Department of Job and Family Services or the county Children's Services Board determined, in conjunction with the court, that the child could not live safely at home. The court, not the child welfare agency, ultimately makes decisions to remove and place children, and the court also makes decisions about reunification of families. The child was placed in a temporary home, usually a foster home or a kinship care home, while the agency worked to strengthen the family and remove the problems that created the risk, or sought an alternative permanent home for the child.
The Child Welfare Team

Trainer Instructions: The trainer should use the PowerPoint slide, *Members of the Team Serving the Child*, to illustrate the concept of the “Primary Team.” The Primary Team includes the primary parents, the worker, and the caregiving parents. Other team members are in supporting roles. The trainer should note that the child is not a member of the primary care team but, when age-appropriate, should be included in decision making.

**Primary Care Team Members:**
- The birth parent
- The agency caseworker (and the supervisor)
- Foster, adoptive, or kinship caregivers

**Informal Support Team Members:**
- Kinship system members, including grandparents, aunts and uncles, adult siblings, other relatives, and very close family friends (who do not have legal custody of the child), neighbor, and church members

**Related Team Members:**
- Other agency staff, including foster and adoption department workers, transportation aides, parenting specialists, CDJFS or OWF worker, CSEA worker
- The court, including the:
  1. judge
  2. CASA or guardian ad litem (legal advocate for the best interest of the child)
  3. referee or magistrate (appointed by the judge to make decisions on cases)
  4. prosecutor (legal representative for the interests of the state or agency)
  5. defense attorney (legal representative for the rights of the parent or child)

**Supporting Team Members:**
- Physicians and other health providers
- Psychologists, psychiatrists, or other counselors
- Schools
- Volunteers (Big Brothers/Big Sisters, volunteer tutors, etc.)

This is quite a long list of team members; thus, it could become quite cumbersome to involve the whole team on a daily basis. Therefore, most day-to-day planning is conducted by members of the primary care team. This team is comprised of the parent, the caseworker, (along with the supervisor), and the foster, adoptive, or kinship parent. Various other team members are included according to the needs of the case.

The members of the primary care team regularly utilize the information that others on auxiliary teams have collected and compiled. A well-functioning team improves the quality...
and timeliness of services to children and their families. However, there are both advantages and disadvantages to a team approach.

B. Understanding the Caseworker’s Perspective 25 minutes

Use: Handout #5

Relationships between caseworkers and foster, adoptive, or kinship caregivers can become strained when communication is not open, and expectations for the other’s role are not realistic. The following activity will assist prospective parents in understanding the demands of the child welfare caseworker’s role.

**Scenario I**

You are an adoption social worker at a public agency. The following messages are waiting in your box when you return to the office following a lengthy court hearing. You only have 45 minutes in the office before you leave for your final appointment of the day, an appointment for a first interview with a family interested in applying for adoption of special needs children. You know you won’t have time to return all of these telephone messages today. Which ones can you call today? Which ones will have to wait?
Ms. Miller is interested in nine sibling groups in the new OAPL book – can you call the agencies for more information?

Mr. Smith is calling to set up second homestudy visit

Sue Social Worker is calling to get more information about a child your agency has waiting for whom she thinks she has a family

Ms. Kelly is a foster mom calling about problems her child is having in preplacement visits with a prospective adoptive family

Mr. Bryant is an adoptive parent calling - his recently placed adopted child was expelled from school

Johnson Elementary principal calling about the child placed with the Bryants

Ohio Dept. of Job & Family Services Field Office is calling to get information about a consumer complaint regarding how an application and police check were processed

Mr. Williams is a therapist calling about sexual contact between an adoptive parent’s birth child and the recently placed adoptive child

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Scenario II

It is Monday morning, and you are a child protective services and foster care social worker. Here are items on your “To Do” list this week. You have 40 hours. Prioritize tasks. Why did you choose this order? Who or what has to wait?

1. A relative has called to express an interest in providing care for a niece in foster care. You will need to expedite a homestudy process. You will need to visit her home and begin process as soon as possible because there is a court hearing next week.

2. Home visits are needed to re-certify the Smiths, Johnsons, and Williams (if you don’t do the visits this week, they will be unlicensed, and you will have to move the children in their homes). You must make one visit to each family. Each visit and travel time will require 3.5 hours.

3. Facilitate the Preservice training class. The preparation time, room set-up, and class time will require six hours.
4. Four prospective families want homestudy visits this week. Each visit, including travel time, will require 3.5 hours.

5. You have 20 requests for personal references to mail out. It takes about 10 minutes to process and log each request.

6. You have four Semi-Annual Administrative Reviews to attend. Each takes about an hour. MANDATORY

7. You have two court hearings to attend. Each will take four to five hours. MANDATORY

8. You must help supervise visits with three sibling groups and their birth parents. The visits, including child transportation, will each require two hours. MANDATORY

9. The Guardian ad Litem or Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for Johnny Jones wants to meet with you about the case plan. You will need one hour, at least.

10. The weekly department meeting and your supervisory conference will require at least 2 hours. MANDATORY

11. You have three homestudy assessment forms to complete. The visits are finished, but you need to complete the paperwork. You will need approximately six hours to write each assessment.

C. The Role of the Foster or Adoptive Parent in Preventing Abuse and Neglect

10 minutes

| Trainer Instructions: The trainer should present the following information as a mini-lecture, using the PowerPoint presentation or flip charts, as necessary, to illustrate the main points. |

As a member of the child welfare team, the foster caregiver should report any situation in which child abuse or neglect is suspected. Kinship care providers and adoptive parents, as private citizens, also have a responsibility to report suspected child abuse and neglect. When reports of suspected child abuse or neglect are made “in good faith” (not deliberately fabricated), the reporter is protected from any criminal or civil prosecution.

The foster, adoptive, or kinship caregivers or parents have other responsibilities as members of the child welfare team. They can be educators for others in the community, informing the public about the nature and value of protective services for children. Foster and kinship care providers can advocate for maltreated children, and can help with recruitment and training of new caregivers. Adoptive parents can assist the agency to recruit adoptive parents, especially for those children who are waiting for a family.
In most cases, the goal of child welfare is to protect children in their own homes by strengthening and supporting their families. As a member of the child welfare team, foster and kinship caregivers will often be asked to help child welfare workers with activities related to strengthening families and promoting reunification, in addition to providing direct care to the child. Caregivers can provide valuable services including helping to arrange and sometimes be involved with family visits; transporting children to and from visits; monitoring visits; modeling and coaching the parent in appropriate child care and behavior management skills; and perhaps most important, providing a positive role model and support system for a struggling parent.

Foster, adoptive, and kinship caregivers can also take an active role in associations that assist in education, advocacy, and lobbying efforts on behalf of families and children. If there are no existing organizations, they might join together to form one.

Section VII. 15 minutes

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Team Approach

Advantages of Working Together as a Team

- It increases efficiency and coordination, thus, increasing quantity and timeliness of services
- Responsibilities are shared, preventing the overburdening of individuals.
- Support from the group helps reduce stress on individual members.
- New and original ideas from team members increase available resources.
- The variety of skills and backgrounds of members creates a wider pool of ideas and strategies.
- It provides relief when one member is tired or unavailable.
- It develops comraderie to carry through the difficult times.
- There is a sense of accomplishment in doing together what none could do alone.
Limitations and Potential Barriers of Working Together as a Team

- Members may not like each other, increasing conflict and divisiveness in group.
- It is hard to get together for meetings, which may slow things down.
- Teams share responsibilities for one member’s failure.
- It is sometimes easier and quicker to do things yourself.
- Individual members may disagree with the goal or the route to get to the goal.
- Without clear roles and plans, members may get in each others’ way and duplicate efforts.

Trainer Instructions: The trainer should bring a conclusion to this section by asking participants to come up with rules of functioning as a team, or methods to manage the benefits and the liabilities of working together. The trainer could either ask participants to return to their groups or conduct this exercise as a large group brainstorm. In either case, the trainer should ensure that the following points are covered:

Suggestions for Effective Team Functioning

- Team members must agree on the goal they are working toward.
- Team members must plan, plan, plan!
- Team members must communicate about every aspect of the process and activities to reach the goal.
- Team members must agree to disagree on some points that can not be resolved to everyone’s satisfaction.
- Team members must be well trained and informed about the current issues in child welfare, and have complete and accurate case information.
- Team members must participate in activities that support the case plan, and be active team members.
- Team members must work toward building trust in an atmosphere of honesty and mutual respect.
- Team members must acknowledge personal issues or motivators for being on the team, and not allow these to get in the way of working toward the team’s goals for the child and family.
- Team members must advocate for one another, and be supportive of each other’s work.

Trainer Instructions: The trainer should distribute a roster of service providers prepared by referring agencies sending families to the Preservice sessions. Each roster should provide contact information about providers in the region or county meeting the following needs:

- Educational resources (SERCC centers, parent mentors, special education coordinators, etc.)
- Mental health providers who work with families, teens, or children
- Support groups or associations for foster and adoptive families, or for parents with children who have special needs
What’s Wrong With This Picture?  

25 minutes

Use: Handout #6

Trainer Instructions: The trainer should divide participants into small groups and distribute Handout #6, Case Study. The case study includes obvious breakdowns in the team process. The small groups should be directed to read the study and find “what’s wrong with this picture”? Trainees should underline problems with team functioning in the case study and, as a group, develop “corrective action plans” (see italicized example below in parentheses). After ten minutes of small group work, the trainer should ask each small group to share one or two problems with team work that they identified, and their plans to correct those problems.

Case Study

Alice Turner, a 26-year-old single mother, has six children, ages two to ten. The five youngest children are in two foster homes, and the oldest child is in a residential treatment facility for emotionally disturbed children.

The children entered foster care four months ago because the mother, who suffers from anxiety and depression (the caseworker should refer Alice for mental health evaluation and services), chronically neglected the children and left them with no adult supervision.

The 10-year-old, Billy, sees a psychiatrist bi-weekly; Billy is destructive and hyperactive. He has significant learning problems and is in a special education class at school. Billy is making poor progress academically, but the caseworker, mother, and psychiatrist have not met with the school personnel to adjust his Individualized Education Program. (The parent, residential institution’s social worker, caseworker, and therapist should meet with the school staff to share information and adjust the plan.) Furthermore, the psychiatrist provides monthly written reports to the caseworker about Billy’s progress in counseling, but Alice has never met with the psychiatrist. (If the plan is reunification, and Billy has ongoing visitation with his mother, Alice must be involved in the counseling.)

The court ordered supervised visitation because Alice has made threats to “kidnap” the children from placement. Since the children have been in placement, they have visited intermittently with their mother at the agency (a case aide from the agency transports the children and supervises the visits), but visits have never been coordinated so that the children can see each other. (The children will grieve for each other and need to visit each other and
The children have not telephoned each other, and they frequently ask the caseworker about their brothers and sisters. One foster parent has decided that Alice should be able to see her children more often and has dropped three of the children off at Alice’s home twice “for the afternoon.” The caseworker and the court do not know about these “extra” visits. (Visitation plans must be made by the agency in accordance with the court orders. The foster parent who violates a court order creates liability for herself and the agency.) The two sets of foster parents have not talked with each other (foster parents should have regular communication with one another), and one foster family has not met or talked to Alice. (Alice does not present a threat to the foster family, as she has never been violent. The foster family, even though uncomfortable with sharing their address and phone number, could call Alice to report progress and meet with the birth mother at the agency during supervised visitation.)

The two sets of foster parents have not talked with each other (foster parents should have regular communication with one another), and one foster family has not met or talked to Alice. (Alice does not present a threat to the foster family, as she has never been violent. The foster family, even though uncomfortable with sharing their address and phone number, could call Alice to report progress and meet with the birth mother at the agency during supervised visitation.)

The mother, in fact, does not know where her two youngest children are in placement. (Even if the mother does not have the address, she should, at the very least, have the opportunity to talk with the people who are caring for her children.) The foster mother for the two youngest children has identified some developmental delay in one of the children. Agency staff have not talked with her about her concerns, and no services to address these delays have been added to the case plan. (The foster mother should inform the caseworker of her concerns so that an assessment can be made and needed services delivered.)

The caseworker has developed the case plan without input from the mother or the foster families. (The caseworker must consult both the birth and foster parents in developing the case plan.) The semi-annual administrative review of the case plan will be held in a few weeks, but the caseworker has forgotten to invite the foster parents. (Foster parents are an important part of every semi-annual administrative review and should make every effort to attend, offer feedback, raise concerns, and build relationships with the agency and with the birth family.)

A great aunt Wanda cared for the children on and off for many years when the mother was unable to manage them. The children talk about her all the time. The caseworker does not seem to be aware of her importance to the children. (The caseworker should be talking with the mother and the children about kinship support systems, for potential placement options or for support to the children or parent. In the absence of the caseworker’s knowledge, the foster parents should inform the agency about the relationship the children have with Aunt Wanda.)

The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for the six Turner children believes that the agency should pursue adoption planning in this case. The caseworker and her supervisor are planning to reunify the Turner family. There is significant disagreement between the CASA and the caseworker about the minimum standard for reunification. (The CASA and caseworker should meet to discuss their thinking.) Finally, Alice’s case plan says that she must locate suitable housing; but she has been too depressed to follow through with a plan to find housing she can afford. (the caseworker should assist Alice with referral to a low-income housing program so that she has the tools to be successful in completion of her case plan) particularly since her TANF benefits were cut off 90 days after the removal of the
children. (Alice may need a referral for job counseling so that she can support herself while she works toward reunification.)

Questions:

1. Who are the team members?

   Response:
   - Alice Turner
   - Caseworker and supervisor
   - Two sets of foster parents
   - Residential institution staff, including social worker, in-patient counselors, and child care staff
   - Case aide
   - Billy’s psychiatrist
   - Great Aunt Wanda
   - CASA
   - School personnel for all school-age children

   Auxiliary team members:
   - Mental health board, to provide evaluation and treatment for Alice
   - Housing program staff
   - Department of Job and Family Services job counselors for Alice

2. What’s wrong with this picture? Underline problem areas of team functioning in the case study.

3. What would you do to correct ineffective team functioning for the benefit of the Turner children?
Section VIII.  

10 minutes

Practice Activity

Use: Handout #7

Trainer Instructions: The trainer should conclude the session by asking the large group to identify some of the differences that might occur, based on their roles as a foster, adoptive, foster-to-adopt, or kinship caregivers. When necessary, the trainer should generate discussion around the following issues:

- Role-related issues for parents or caregivers
- Who is responsible for various tasks
- The permanency of the parenting role
- The view of the community of the various roles
- Level of support from family members
- Level of support and service from service providers

Trainer Instructions: The trainer should distribute Handout #7, Homework Assignment, and direct participants to complete this assignment, using the Glossary (Handout #1) to find answers, and bring their answers for a brief review at the opening of the next session of Preservice.

Optional Homework Assignment:

The trainer may choose to have participants reflect on a time during their own childhood when they felt that they were being abused (emotionally or physically) or neglected. Participants should consider the following questions:

What was the situation?

How did you feel?

How do you imagine your parents or caregivers felt?

How did you wish your parents or caregivers would have handled the situation differently?

Now that you are an adult, do you have more empathy or understanding about the actions and feelings of your parents or caregivers?
Pre-Training Handout

Skill Sets and Competencies

Skill Set: Basic understanding of the caregivers’ role in the child protection team

- Aware of both temporary substitute care and permanent options for children.

- Aware of caregiver’s role in permanency planning.

- Aware of his or her role as a member of the team serving the child and his or her family. This includes collaborating with the caseworker, agency staff, and other professionals.

- Aware of the caregiver’s role in case planning and case coordination with other team members.

- Aware of the legal issues that affect child welfare and foster care practice. This includes confidentiality, liability, reasonable efforts, reunification, and state and agency rules and regulations.

- Aware of the roles and responsibilities of court personnel. This includes Guardians ad Litem, court appointed special advocates, prosecuting attorneys, defense attorneys, judges, referees, and court investigators.

- Aware of juvenile court processes for abused and neglected children.
Handout #1

Glossary

ABUSE
A legal term defined in the Ohio Revised Code Section 2151.031, which refers to a child who is endangered; who exhibits evidence of any non-accidental injury, trauma, or death which is at variance with the history of the event; or is the victim of sexual activity.

ADJUDICATION
The initial phase of the court proceeding, wherein the court must find, by clear and convincing evidence, that the child is an abused, neglected, or dependent child. Only if the court so finds does it have the power to change custody or to order the parents to participate in services.

ADOPTION
The creation of parental rights and responsibilities by a probate court after the termination of all rights and responsibilities of the birth parents or any other person holding legal rights to the child. Children become available for adoption in the United States through one of two routes: parental rights are terminated by the court due to abuse, neglect, or dependency adjudication, and permanent custody is given to an agency who is then responsible to find a permanent family for the child; or the individual holding parental rights of a child signs a permanent surrender to an agency without adversarial proceedings. In Ohio, the court must approve of the signing of a voluntary surrender for children over the age of six months.

ADOPTIVE SEARCH
A process by which adoptees, adoptive parents, or birth parents secure information about each other and the circumstances surrounding the adoptive process. While some adoptees search for information about birth parents, searches for siblings are even more common. Ohio legislation was passed in 1996 regulating what information can be released prior to the adoption, and what can be gained at various times in the future.

APPEAL
The legal process by which a party who has lost her or his case at trial level petitions a higher court for a review of the case, claiming that a lower court erred in its judgment. Following a decision by the court to terminate parental rights, the parent has thirty days to file an appeal with the District Court of Appeals, requesting a reversal of the lower court's decision. Children placed with an adoptive family during the appeal process are said to be in a legal-risk placement. This implies that the child could be returned to the birth family based on the court’s decision.
CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate)
A volunteer child advocate appointed by the court to act as Guardian ad Litem for a child who is the subject of a dependency, neglect, or abuse complaint. The CASA is responsible for conducting an independent investigation of the case, and for presenting the court with reports and recommendations concerning the course of action they believe to be in the best interest of the child.

CASE PLAN
A written document that is designed collaboratively by all parties, including the caseworker, the supervisor, the parent, the child, the CASA or Guardian ad Litem and the kinship or foster caregiver. The case plan is filed with the court as evidence of the agreement between all parties. Evidence that the following items are addressed must be in the plan: assessments, services, time frames, visitation arrangements, contact with the caseworker and the foster parent or kinship care provider, permanency goals, and level of financial support (as applicable).

CULTURE
A system of values, beliefs, attitudes, traditions, and standards of behavior that govern the organization of people into social groups and regulate both group and individual behavior. Culture is created by groups of individuals to assure the survival and well-being of group members. Culture is learned and is more complex than either ethnicity or race.

DEPENDENCY
A legal term, defined in Ohio Revised Code Section 2151.04, which refers to the status of a child who is homeless, destitute, or without proper care of support, through no fault of the parents, guardians, or custodians; who lacks proper care or support due to the mental or physical condition of the parents, guardians, or custodians; or whose condition or environment is such as to warrant the state assuming custody.

DISPOSITION
The second phase of the court proceeding, which follows the adjudication, and which focuses on the issue of custody and the best interest of the child.

EMERGENCY DETENTION HEARING
May be the first court hearing held in an abuse, neglect, or dependency case. The county agency files a complaint in juvenile court asking for emergency custody of a child who is alleged to be in imminent danger of physical or emotional harm if not removed from his or her home environment.
EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS
Literally means "one side only." This term refers to discussion held between a party (or interested individual) in a court proceeding and the judge or referee, when the other party is not present. Such communications are often considered unfair, and for this reason judges and referees avoid discussing a pending case with any of the interested parties except in a court proceeding where all interested parties are present. However, ex parte placement orders are considered appropriate in the most extreme circumstances, such as abandonment, severe medical conditions of a parent, or other incapacitation of the parent.

FAILURE TO THRIVE SYNDROME
A serious medical condition usually seen in children under one year of age. The child's height, weight, and motor development fall significantly short of the average growth rates of normally developing children. In the majority of cases, no medical cause can be found in children with this syndrome. The syndrome appears to be caused by a disturbed parent/child relationship which results in the parent being unable to meet his or her child's emotional and physical needs, including, most often, failure to feed the infant.

FINALIZATION OR LEGALIZATION
Court hearing at which the probate court terminates custody by the agency and awards full custody, including all parental rights and responsibilities, to the adoptive family. Under Ohio law, finalization can take place after the child has resided with the prospective adoptive family for six months.

GUARDIAN AD LITEM or GAL
A special guardian appointed by the court to represent the best interest of the child. In some counties a GAL may be either an attorney or a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). A GAL must be appointed to every case alleging abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse.

HOME STUDY
A) Process: Also called “family assessment.” A process through which potential foster or adoptive parents educate themselves about the rewards and challenges of foster or adoptive parenting, and through which they make a decision about the types of children they feel they can parent. The process through which individuals, with the help of an assessor or social worker, look at their skills, life experiences, strengths, and limitations to determine if foster care and adoption are right for them. It is also the assessor’s responsibility to determine basic child safety will be assured in the home—through collection of police checks, references, physical examination reports, and home safety audits.

B) Document: The written document on which all information gathered throughout the homestudy process is recorded. This document will also indicate the status of the application to foster or adopt (pending, approved, denied). The completed
A homestudy document is often used for matching approved or licensed families with children in need of placement. Court personnel sometimes see this document.

**INDEPENDENT LIVING**
An arrangement in which a child of 16 years or older resides independently and is partially or fully responsible for his individual living environment. An “independent living arrangement” is any living environment provided by an agency which includes service programs and activities to assist youth 16 years of age or older to make the transition from substitute care to independent living.

**LEGAL RISK PLACEMENT**
This is usually the placement of a child into a dually approved (foster or adoptive) home. The child enters the home officially as a foster child. However, certain clinical factors at the time of placement lead the agency to believe that reunification of the child and birth parent is unlikely and that the child will at some future point be in need of an alternative permanent placement (adoption). The placement into a “legal risk” family indicates the agency’s and family’s intent to have that foster family adopt the child in question should parental rights be terminated. (Sometimes parental rights have been terminated, but the case is under legal appeal.)

**LIFEBOOK**
A scrapbook, diary, or log kept for or by the child, which recreates the child's personal history, including birth, placements, important persons in his or her life, personal achievements, and information about the child’s experiences in foster care and adoption.

**MINIMUM COMMUNITY STANDARDS**
Developed by the juvenile court and the county agency with input from other community sources. These state the minimum level of acceptable child care practices in that particular community. The standards should take into account cultural norms and practices, as well as accurate information about child development. The standards are used to make decisions about what constitutes sufficient risk to warrant CPS (Child Protective Services) agency involvement. Standards may also affect placement decisions. This is not the same standard as "the best interest of the child."

**NEGLECT**
A legal term defined in Ohio Revised Code Section 2151.03, which refers to a child who is abandoned; or who lacks proper parental care and support because of parental faults or habits; or whose parents neglect or refuse to provide him or her with proper education, or medical care; or whose parents neglect or refuse to provide the child with the special care required because of a psychological condition.
NEXT FRIEND REPORT
A written report prepared by a social worker for the Probate Court which recommends the finalization of the adoptive placement.

OBJECTION (TO THE DECISION OF A REFEREE OR MAGISTRATE)
A legal action by a party who has lost a case in juvenile court which was heard by a referee or magistrate. This party may then file an Objection with the juvenile court judge, arguing that the judge should overrule the recommendation made by the magistrate or referee who decided the case.

OPEN ADOPTION
The practice of providing information to a child’s birth parents, adoptive parents, or the child as he or she child matures. Most adoptions in the United States have some degree of openness, from very little written information to full disclosure and face-to face-contact before, during, and after the adoption. Ohio law defines open adoption as a "voluntary agreement" that cannot be enforced under the Ohio Revised Codeed after the adoption is finalized.

PARTIES
Those persons who are deemed necessary by law to be participants in a court action. In a dependency, neglect, or abuse case, the parties include the child, legal parents or guardians, and any other individual who appears to the Court to be proper or necessary to the court proceedings. All parties are entitled to legal representation at all stages of the proceedings, and if indigent, are entitled to a court-appointed attorney.

PERMANENT CUSTODY
A legal status created by the court, granted to a county child protection agency following the termination of all parental rights, privileges, and obligations from the birth or custodial family or guardian. This gives the agency full authority and responsibility to provide a permanent, safe, and nurturing family for the child.

POST LEGAL SERVICES
Services offered to an adoptive family following legalization of the adoptive placement. Many adoptive families of children with special needs require continued support and services from the agency. Examples of these services are information and referral, education, group counseling, respite care, residential treatment, parent support groups, and advocacy.

PRE-PLACEMENT VISITS
In either foster care or adoption, a series of visits are made by the child to the prospective home, in order to prepare the child for the eventual move and lessen the trauma to the child. In foster care, one visit, at a minimum, must occur prior to the final move into the home. In all adoptive placements and, where possible in foster care, there should be a series of visits designed to familiarize the child with the home, family, and surrounding community. The younger the child, the more frequent the
visits and the quicker the move; the older the child, the slower and longer the pace of the visits. However the pace and frequency vary from case to case and must take into consideration the child's needs and developmental level.

**PRE-TRIAL**

An informal hearing which is scheduled as soon as possible after an emergency detention hearing. All the parties involved in the court action discuss the case in an effort to agree on issues of adjudication (whether the case is dependency, neglect, or abuse) and the disposition (custody, case plan contents, visitation, criminal prosecution, etc.). In some instances, the case is settled at this point and court involvement may end.

**PRIMARY FAMILY**

The persons with whom the child welfare system is working to reunify a child. This may include birth parents, extended family members, or others with whom the child has strong prior attachments. The child's family should help determine who is included in their "family," and the child welfare system should respect this determination.

**REFEREE OR MAGISTRATE**

The referee (also called a magistrate) is an attorney assigned by a judge to hear cases on the judge’s behalf. A decision by a referee is finalized when the judge signs the recommendation.

**REFEREE'S RECOMMENDATION**

The decision of a referee following a court hearing. The decision becomes final only when the judge signs the order, signifying his or her approval of the decision. A hearing is held by the judge only if one of the parties files an objection to the recommendation of the referee.

**SERVICE OF PROCESS**

Service of process is the delivery of legal documents to a person who is a party to a legal action. Service must furnish reasonable notice to the person of the pending legal action, and afford the person the opportunity to prepare a case and to appear and be heard before the court. Every party to a dependency, neglect, or abuse case must be served with a copy of the complaint, which is filed by the county agency with the court.

**SEXUAL ABUSE**

Sexual activity where the victim is a minor. The perpetrator may be an adult or a minor. Sexual abuse may include fondling, intercourse, oral sex, child pornography, forcing the child to watch others engage in sexual activity, watching the child masturbate, or inappropriate kissing.
SPECIAL NEEDS
In child welfare, a child with special needs has at least one of the following needs or circumstances that present barriers to his placement in a family: is part of a sibling group who should be placed together; is a member of a minority or ethnic group; is six years old or older; has waited for a permanent placement for more than one year; has a medical condition, physical impairment, mental retardation, or developmental disability; has an emotional disturbance or behavioral problem; has a social or medical history or background which places the child at risk of acquiring a medical condition, or a physical, mental, or developmental disability or disorder; or has experienced multiple placements.

SUPPLEMENTAL PLANNING (SOMETIMES CALLED CONCURRENT CASE PLANNING)
The process of developing a contingency, back-up plan for permanency for a child in case efforts for reunification with the birth family fail. Many agencies develop supplemental plans for cases in which the likelihood of the child’s return home is poor. Birth parents are notified, either through the case plan or through a supplemental plan notification form, of the agency’s intent to secure permanency for the child if reunification is not possible.

TEMPORARY CUSTODY
A legal status created by court order which grants a county child protection agency the right and responsibility to provide physical care and control of a child: to determine where and with whom the child shall live; to protect, train, and discipline the child; and to provide food, clothing, shelter, education, and medical care. This status may be terminated at any time by the court.

VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT FOR CARE (VAC)
A voluntary agreement between the county service agency and the parents, under which the county accepts temporary custody of a child without court involvement, for a relatively brief and specified period of time. Parents entering into a VAC agreement are generally cooperative and willing to work with the agency to complete the case plan. Some families may need to use a VAC during a period of serious illness of the only parent in the family, or by a young parent who is contemplating making an adoption plan for her child.

VOLUNTARY SURRENDER
A voluntary surrender is a legal document signed by parents to transfer custody of a child to an agency for purposes of adoption.
Responsibilities of Children Services

- To investigate and make a determination regarding allegations of abuse and neglect, and to determine the degree of risk to the child of remaining in the sole care of the parents

- To identify the factors in the family that create risk, and the family strengths and resources that can be used to help reduce and remove risk

- To provide protective services to children in their own homes, whenever possible, to prevent the trauma inherent in separation and placement

- When not possible to protect the child in the birth family’s home, to place the child temporarily in a culturally sensitive and supportive family placement that meets the child’s individual needs, as close to the child’s own home as possible

- To work toward permanence for the child, from the moment of placement in a foster home (the first choice is most often to strengthen the child’s family and reunify that child)

- To secure a permanent alternative home for the child when he or she cannot return home
OVERVIEW OF THE MULTI-ETHNIC PLACEMENT ACT OF 1994

Amended by the Interethnic Adoption Provisions, 1996

The Howard Metzenbaum Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 (MEPA) was signed into law by President Clinton on October 20, 1994 as part of the Improving America’s Schools Act. It was amended in 1996 by the Interethnic Adoption Provisions. The legislation, as amended, is designed to:

⇒ decrease the time children wait for adoption
⇒ prevent discrimination in the placement of children, and
⇒ facilitate the identification and recruitment of foster and adoptive families that can meet children’s needs

MEPA, as amended, has three basic requirements to achieve these goals:

1) It prohibits foster care and adoption agencies and other entities that are involved in the placement of children and that receive federal funds from delaying or denying or otherwise discriminating in making a placement decision on the basis of race, color or national origin.

2) It prohibits those federally assisted agencies and entities from denying the opportunity for any person to become an adoptive or foster parent on the basis of the race, color or national origin of the adoptive or foster parent or the child.

3) It requires states to develop plans for the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.
Handout #4

Types of Cases:

Origination in Juvenile Court

**Delinquency (Ohio Revised Code 2151.02)**
- Crimes that would be crimes for an adult
- Misdemeanors and felonies
- Filed through Juvenile Court Intake Department
- Filed by police agencies, private citizens, or stores

**Status offenses (Ohio Revised Code 2151.022)**
- Crimes that are crimes only because they are committed by a minor
- Filed through Unruly Department within the Juvenile Intake Department
- Filed by parents, schools, police agencies

**Traffic Offenses (2151.021)**
- Filed by police agencies or Highway Patrol
- Civil suit for damages in proper Civil Court (per dollar amount) by private counsel

**Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency**
- “Done to a child” (as opposed to “by a child”)
- Civil in nature
- Laws are for the protection of the child
- Filed through Protective Services Department of Juvenile Court
- Filed by Children Services, private citizens, relatives, anyone
- May or may not be accompanied by criminal charge against an adult in adult court
- If there is a criminal charge, it will be brought in appropriate court based on statutory level of crime

*Note:* When parent(s) “admit” to an abuse or neglect “finding,” it is not equal to “pleading guilty.” However, a parent(s) may be reluctant to make such an “admission” if they or their attorney think a criminal filing may be forthcoming. Such a “finding” could be used against them in adult criminal court.
**Neglect (Ohio Revised Code 2151.03)**
- Child is abandoned
- Child lacks proper parental care because of faults, or habits of caretakers
- Caretaker refuses to provide child with proper or necessary subsistence, medical care, education, etc., or refuses special care
- Caretaker’s omissions cause injury or suffering

**Dependency (Ohio Revised Code 2151.04)**
- Child is homeless, destitute, without proper care or support not because of faults or habits of caretakers
- Child lacks proper care or support because of parent’s medical condition
- Condition or environment is such as to warrant state involvement in child’s best interest
- Child resides in a home where parent, household member, or other sibling is abused or neglected or because of the abuse or neglect that child is in danger or potential danger

**Abuse (Ohio Revised Code 2151.031)**
- Child is victim of “sexual activity” (Ohio Revised Code 2907: Sex Offenses)—but no conviction is necessary
- Child is endangered (Ohio Revised Code 2919.22: Endangering Children)—but no conviction necessary
- Evidence of physical or mental injury or death by other than accidental means

**Potential Players in Abuse, Neglect, and Dependency**

**Prosecutor**
- Represents state
- Main presenter of evidence

**Attorney for Parents**
- Represents parent(s), stepparents, significant others, or alleged parents
- Client must be a party to the court action
- Court appointment list, public defender, or privately retained

**Guardian ad Litem or CASA**
- Represents “best interest” of child (as opposed to what child wants)
- Public defender, court appointment list, or volunteer
- Can also have a GAL for mentally impaired or retarded adult
- Can have two GALs on a case if mother of child is also a minor

**Attorney for Child(ren)**
- Not normally necessary
- Necessary if child’s desires are different from the GAL position
- Court appointment list or public defender
Scenario I

The following messages are waiting in your box when you return to the office following a lengthy court hearing. You only have 45 minutes in the office before you leave for your final appointment of the day, an appointment for a first interview with a family interested in applying for adoption of special needs children. You know you won’t have time to return all of these telephone messages today. Which ones can you call today? Which ones will have to wait?

Ms. Miller is interested in nine sibling groups in the new OAPL book – can you call the agencies for more information?

Mr. Smith is calling to set up second homestudy visit

Sue Social Worker is calling to get more information about a child your agency has waiting for whom she thinks she has a family

Ms. Kelly is a foster mom calling about problems her child is having in preplacement visits with a prospective adoptive family

Mr. Bryant adoptive parent calling - his recently placed adopted child was expelled from school

Johnson Elementary principal calling about the child placed with the Bryants

State Dept. of Job & Family Services Field Office staff member calling to get information about a consumer complaint regarding how an applicant and police check were processed

Mr. Williams is a therapist calling about sexual contact between an adoptive parent’s birth child and the recently placed adoptive child
Scenario II

It is Monday morning, and you are a child protective services caseworker. Here are items on your “To Do” list this week. You have 40 hours. Prioritize tasks. Why did you choose this order? Who or what has to wait?

1. A relative has called to express an interest in providing care for a niece in foster care. You will need to expedite a homestudy process. You will need to visit her home and begin the process as soon as possible because there is a court hearing next week.

2. Home visits are needed to re-certify the Smiths, Johnsons, and Williams (if you don’t complete the recertifications this week, they will be unlicensed, and you will have to move the children in their homes). You must make one visit to each family. Each visit and travel time will require 3.5 hours.

3. Facilitate the Preservice training class. The preparation time, room set-up, and class time will require six hours.

4. Four prospective families want homestudy visits this week. Each visit, including travel time, will require 3.5 hours.

5. You have 20 requests for personal references to mail out. It takes about 10 minutes to process and log each request.

6. You have four Semi-Annual Case Reviews to attend. Each takes about an hour. MANDATORY

7. You have two court hearings to attend. Each will take four to five hours. MANDATORY

8. You must help supervise visits with three sibling groups and their birth parents. The visits, including child transportation, will each require two hours. MANDATORY

9. The Guardian ad Litem for Johnny Jones wants to meet with you about the case plan. You will need one hour, at least.

10. The weekly department meeting and your supervisory conference will require at least two hours. MANDATORY

11. You have three homestudy assessment forms to complete. The visits are finished, but you need to complete the paperwork. You will need approximately six hours to write each assessment.
Case Study

Alice Turner, a 26-year-old single mother, has six children, ages two to ten. The five youngest children are in two foster homes, and the oldest child is in a residential treatment facility for emotionally disturbed children.

The children entered foster care four months ago because the mother, who suffers from anxiety and depression, chronically neglected the children and left them with no adult supervision.

The 10-year-old, Billy, sees a psychiatrist bi-weekly; Billy is destructive and hyperactive. He has significant learning problems and is in a special education class at school. Billy is making poor progress academically, but the caseworker, mother, and psychiatrist have not met with the school personnel to adjust his Individualized Education Program. Furthermore, the psychiatrist provides monthly written reports to the caseworker about Billy’s progress in counseling, but Alice has never met with the psychiatrist.

The court ordered supervised visitation because Alice has made threats to “kidnap” the children from placement. Since the children have been in placement, they have visited intermittently with their mother at the agency (a case aide from the agency transports the children and supervises the visits), but visits have never been coordinated so that the children can see each other. The children have not telephoned each other, and they frequently ask the caseworker about their brothers and sisters. One foster parent has decided that Alice should be able to see her children more often and has dropped three of the children off at Alice’s home twice “for the afternoon.” The caseworker and the court do not know about these “extra” visits. The two sets of foster parents have not talked with each other, and one foster family has not met or talked to Alice. The mother, in fact, does not know where her two youngest children are in placement. The foster mother for the two youngest children has identified some developmental delay in one of the children. Agency staff have not talked with her about her concerns, and no services to address these delays have been added to the case plan.

The caseworker has developed the case plan without input from the mother or the foster families. The semi-annual review of the case plan will be held in a few weeks, but the caseworker has forgotten to invite the foster parents.

A great aunt, Wanda, cared for the children on and off for many years when the mother was unable to manage them. The children talk about her all the time. The caseworker does not seem to be aware of her importance to the children.
The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for the six Turner children believes that the agency should pursue adoption planning in this case. The caseworker and her supervisor are planning to reunify the Turner family. There is significant disagreement between the CASA and the caseworker about the minimum standard for reunification. Finally, Alice’s case plan says that she must locate suitable housing; but she has been too depressed to follow through with a plan to find housing she can afford, particularly since her TANF benefits were cut off 90 days after the removal of the children.

**Questions:**

1. Who are the team members?
2. What’s wrong with this picture? Underline problem areas of team functioning in the case study.
3. What would you do to correct ineffective team functioning for the benefit of the Turner children?
Handout #7

Homework Assignment: Fill In the Blanks!!

Child Welfare Terms

Using the provided Glossary of Terms, please fill in each of the blanks with the correct term.

1. In order to assure the best interest of the child is being represented, the court will appoint a ___________________ , which may be either an attorney or a Court Appointed Special Advocate.

2. The ______________________ may include birth parents, extended family members, or others with whom the child has strong prior attachments. These are persons with whom the child welfare system is working to reunify a child in foster or kinship care.

3. A _________________ is a good way of organizing a child’s personal history and can help initiate conversations about adoption and birth parents.

4. When a child not yet legally free for adoption is placed in your home as a foster child, but with the likelihood of adoption at some point in the future, this is referred to as a ________________.

5. ________________ are a series of visits made by a child to a prospective home to prepare the child for the eventual move.

6. A system of values, beliefs, attitudes, traditions, and standards of behavior that governs the organization of people into groups and assures the survival and well-being of members is known as ________________.

7. After the child has resided in your home for six months, you can ______________ the adoption, terminating agency custody and granting full parental rights and responsibilities to you.

8. The term ____________ refers to abandonment of a child or to the absence of adequate medical care, supervision, clothing, food, shelter, or education provided for children by persons responsible for their care.

9. A ________________ is a written document that outlines agreements about the tasks of agencies and families in efforts to reunify children with their primary families. The document includes visitation arrangements, level of financial support, and time frames for completion of tasks leading to reunification.

10. A ________________ is a legal document signed by parents to transfer custody of a child to an agency for purposes of adoption.