



Promoting Permanency:

Successful Exits from Therapeutic Group Care
Through Family and Community Reintegration



casey family programs

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Casey Family Programs' 2020 Strategy and the Importance of Permanency

Nearly one million children are maltreated every year in this country, and almost 500,000 children live in foster care on any given day. Of those, approximately 80,000 reside in group care settings, with many of these youth remaining in group care for one year or more. In some situations, youth emancipate from, or “age out” of, group care at age 18 without having had the opportunity to develop caring relationships with adult family members or other adults. Such permanent relationships are crucial for positive emotional development and other areas of life success.

Casey Family Programs' 2020 Strategy reflects the belief that America can safely reduce the need for foster care by 50 percent while simultaneously strengthening families and communities. One mechanism for achieving this goal is permanency through family reunification, which includes preparing youth and their families for successful reintegration back into the community after experiencing the foster care system.

Learning Goals and Facilitator Tips

Learning Goals

This video raises awareness about the importance of permanency through family and community reintegration. It will stimulate important discussion for a variety of audiences, including child welfare staff and administrators, members of the legal community, mental health professionals, and residential treatment providers.

The video draws material from many sources, including the Child Protective Services (CPS) Reintegration Project, to illustrate issues and helpful practice strategies. CPS Reintegration Project staff provides the intensive support necessary to move children with complex mental and behavioral needs out of residential care and back into their families and communities using a wraparound service model.

Facilitator Tips

Introducing the Video

1. Provide any background information about the video that you'd like to share with your audience, including the video title, length, goals, and project partners.
2. Share the expectations or reasons why your organization or classroom has chosen to use the video.

Discussing the Video

1. Leave adequate time for discussion by avoiding showing it at the end of a training or class session. The video may bring out strong emotions or opinions in your audience that discussion may be important to address.
2. Create a safe environment where participants know they will be heard as they share their views and opinions by establishing ground rules for discussion.
3. Know who is present in your audience (in terms of role and background) and let their interests in the topic guide the discussion.
4. In order to address the unique needs of your organization or audience, feel free to customize the sample questions that are included in this guide.
5. Consider breaking up large audiences into smaller groups for discussion. Smaller groups can share key points from their conversation with the larger group.

Ending the Discussion

1. Prepare agency and/or community resource materials that audience participants can take away with them after the video.
2. Direct audience members to **www.casey.org** for additional information or to view the video online. Additional information includes the project's evaluation full report and executive summary. A project handbook is forthcoming.

Discussion About Definitions and Values

This video promotes specific values and principles in child welfare work and is meant to provoke discussion around these values in various settings and communities regardless of whether they have or can implement the CPS Reintegration Project model.

Definitions

1. *What is permanency?*

Permanency is a stable, healthy, culturally appropriate, and lasting living situation with at least one committed adult. It also involves reliable, continuous, and healthy connections with siblings, birth parents, extended family, and a network of other significant adults identified by the youth and the family.

2. *What are reintegration and reunification?*

Reintegration and reunification are the processes of returning children to a parent, guardian, or caregiver in their community after they have been involved in a period of foster care placement outside their family home.

3. *What is the wraparound service model?*

The wraparound model is a planning process that uses the individual strengths of the youth and the caregivers to identify services and supports the family will need in order to successfully maintain the child in the home. The goal of this model is to provide intensive, individualized services and supports to families that will allow youth experiencing ongoing emotional problems to live in a safe and stable family environment in their own community.

Values

What are the main values and principles underlying the CPS Reintegration Project practice model?

1. Permanence is a right for all adolescents and young adults in foster care, regardless of age, mental health, or behavior challenges.
2. Permanency planning must be inclusive:
 - Family engagement and family-centered practice are critical.
 - Planning must include meaningful participation by the youth.
 - Frequent visitation between youth and parents and engagement of siblings is essential in the planning process.
 - Collaborative service delivery is important.
3. Permanency planning should start early. But, at the same time, it is never too late to engage birth parents, relatives, or fictive kin to help youth in foster care achieve permanency.
4. Family circumstances change. Even if previous engagements have not met with success, family connections should continuously be revisited to determine whether new permanency options exist.
5. Families need emotional and financial support as they prepare for and experience reunification.
6. Permanency planning and reintegration is a continuous process and takes a significant amount of time before, during, and after returning the child to the home. Without this time, reintegration is not as likely to be successful.

7. Cultural sensitivity and competency are essential. Agencies must consistently develop services that are responsive to the cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, sexual orientation, gender identity, and religious/spiritual backgrounds of young people and their families.

Values Discussion Questions

1. To what extent do viewers agree with these values and principles?
2. Based on the response to that question, what are the possibilities for applying the values and principles of this practice model in your community? What are the barriers?

Discussion Questions

1. What family needs are evident from this video?
2. What are the main points or tips highlighted by the video that you would want to address in your daily practice or within your organization?
3. Does this video raise any concerns for you about working with youth, families, group homes, residential treatment centers, or other community partners around these issues? If so, please describe them.
4. What roles do you see for residential treatment service providers in successful reintegration of children back into their families and communities?
5. Given the disproportionate representation of children of color in the foster care system, what specific cultural competency training is needed by caseworkers to better meet the needs of children and families of color that are undergoing intensive reunification?
6. What kinds of community services are available in your area for children in the foster care system? What about for children with complex mental health needs?

7. For one young person in the video (Ana), it appears that many of her mental health difficulties lessened dramatically when she returned home. However, many children who leave foster care may need continuing or periodic mental health services. How would you describe the mental health and behavioral needs of the youth in this video? To what extent do you believe some mental health needs of youth in foster care are a product of “being in the system”? How do you provide “post-permanency” mental health services in your community for those youth who need them?
8. The CPS Reintegration Project offers several services to families including mental health services, educational support, support for basic needs, and services provided through flexible funding including parent coaches, mentoring, and respite. What resources and services are available in your community to facilitate reunification work? What additional resources and services are families likely to need?
9. Are there specific barriers that are unique to your community that may delay or prevent the reunification of youth in care who have complex mental health and behavior needs?
10. Can approaches like Family Finding be part of reintegration work? What other strategies have potential to promote reunification?
11. Do you think this approach to family and community reintegration has the potential to provide cost savings to agencies in the long run? If so, what thoughts do you have about possible ways to consider the reinvestment of these savings in support of families?



Project Partners and Additional Resources

The CPS Reintegration Project provides the intensive support necessary to move children with complex mental and behavioral needs out of residential care and back into their families and communities using a wraparound service model. It is a partnership among Casey Family Programs, Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Service, and Texas Child Protective Services. The School of Social Work at the University of Texas-Austin is a partner with Casey Family Programs in the CPS Reintegration Project evaluation and video production.

For information about the CPS Reintegration Project evaluation, please visit **www.casey.org**. For specific information about the CPS Reintegration Project and practice model, contact Laura Peveto at: Laura.Peveto@co.travis.tx.us or 512.854.7874. For additional information about foster care and how you can help children and families in your community, visit **www.casey.org**.