



Ventura County Children & Family Services
fosterVCkids.org



Day Seven At-a-Glance

Section	Time	Materials	Activities
Review and Introduction to Day 7	5 Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPT 7. 1-7.2 Participant Guide 	
Educational Needs of Children in Foster Care	1 hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPT 7.3-7.6 Participant Guide FYS Handouts 	
Transitions	1 hour, 45 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPT 7.7-7.31 Participant Guide <p>Handout: Create Your Foster Child's Own Personal Lifebook</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case Studies A New Child in Your Home: Eco-mapping A New Child in Your Home: Welcoming
Homework	5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant Guide 	
Wrap-up	5 Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPT 7.32 Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluations

About Day Seven

Overview

Day Seven of the *21st Century Caregiving: Foster VC Kids Resource Family Training* focuses on transitions. Today's class will focus on educational considerations for children in foster care and transitions. During today's session you will have a guest speaker to talk about foster children's educational rights, the importance of school stability, and working with schools to ensure your child is receiving adequate support and services. You will also be revisiting loss and attachment and how transitions impact a child's trauma. You will explore the types of transitions a child might face on his/her personal path to permanency as well as the transitions participants and their families will face as a child comes into and out of their home. You will also prepare participants for helping children make good transitions. You will revisit the importance of life books and introduce the concept of the eco-map in relationship to transitions.

Case Studies: You will be utilizing case studies throughout the training so that participants may have the opportunity to apply their learning.

Real Cases: You will want to make it clear to the participants that all of the case studies used in this curriculum are de-identified families with any identifying information altered or removed.

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Foster Children's educational rights
- ✓ Resource Family responsibilities related to education
- ✓ The importance of school stability
- ✓ Educational resources
- ✓ Identify the feelings a child may experience during these transitions and determine how to help the child manage these feelings in order to achieve successful transition.
- ✓ Identify the feelings you and your family may experience during transitions of a foster child into and out of your home and determine how you may manage these feelings in order to achieve successful transition.
- ✓ Identify the types of transitions a child in the foster care system may experience on his/her personal journey towards permanency.
- ✓ Utilize an eco-map to identify connections and analyze support systems which can help through the transition process.
- ✓ Apply what you have learned about the foster care process as you welcome a new child into your home.

Trainer Preparation

In addition to the Trainer's Guide, Participants' Guides, and PowerPoint Slides, Day Seven will require the trainer to locate and prepare the following supplemental materials:

Evaluation Form:

- See appendix for the evaluation form to be completed by the participant.

Attendance Form:

Handouts:

- Create Your Foster Child's Own Personal Lifebook

Resources

Every Time Foster Kids Move, They Lose Months of Academic Progress (2/18/2014)

<http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/02/every-time-foster-kids-move-they-lose-months-of-academic-progress/284134/>

This article in The Atlantic discusses the impact of educational instability on foster youth academic achievement.

Assorted Handouts from the Ventura County Office of Education Foster Youth Services Program

<http://www.vcoe.org/spes/FosterYouthServices.aspx>

Handouts including: School Liaisons 2014-15, Uninterrupted Scholars Act FAQ's, AB 490 Fact Sheet, AB 216 Fact Sheet, AB 12 Fact Sheet , Info about Foster Ed Connect & Children's Law Center of California, Free Tutoring Referral , The Invisible Achievement Gap Report and brochures that review foster children's education rights and service available.

Attachment 101, A Primer for Parents (and Suggested Readings) (2010)

http://web.multco.us/sites/default/files/dcj/documents/attachment_101_a_primer_for_parents.pdf

This primer by Heidi Holman, an adoptive parent, discusses how attachment relationships impact brain development, the effects of early loss and trauma on development and provides some pointers on how to help a child who has suffered attachment disorders heal.

Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: A Curriculum Resource for Parents (2010)

This training from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (www.nctsn.org) is designed to help Resource Families understand the link between trauma and their children's often baffling behavior, feelings, and attitudes. It gives Resource Families practical tools to help their children move forward from their traumatic pasts, to recognize and reduce the impact of their children's traumas on themselves, and to seek useful support from others.

The Challenges of Foster Care: Grief and Loss

<http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org/library/870/grief&loss.pdf>

This tip sheet, by Adoption Resources of Wisconsin, provides tips, strategies and resources for coping with the grief and loss experienced by Resource Families and foster families.

Review and Introduction to Day Seven

Materials

PPT 7.1-7.2

Participant Guide

Flipchart Paper/Markers



5 Minutes

Presentation – Review

- **Review Day Six of training.** Briefly cover the following:
 - ▶ Last week focused on normal sexual development, sexual abuse and safety planning.
 - ▶ We explored how to build a healing home that promotes a sense of safety and well-being and establishes rules for safety and behavior in relationship to sexual behaviors.
 - ▶ A primary objective of last week's training was how you can play an important role in a child's recovery from childhood sexual abuse through emotional regulatory healing.
 - ▶ We closed the day discussing common and specialized health care needs of children in foster care, resources to support you in meeting your child's medical needs, and requirements related to meeting medical needs. .

ASK

Based on what you learned this last week:

- ? **What excites you most?**
- ? **What worries you most?**
- ? **Have you identified any new deal-breakers?**
- **Review Day Six Homework.**



PowerPoint Presentation – Day Three Learning Objectives (SLIDES 7.1-7.2)



21st Century Resource Familying :
Foster VC Kids Professional Resource Family
Training Day 7

SLIDE 7.1

PowerPoint Title Slide: *21st Century Caregiving: Foster VC Kids Resource Family Training (Day 7)*

SLIDE 7.2

PowerPoint Slide: Day Seven Learning Objectives

- ▶ The learning objectives for Day Seven of the *21st Century Caregiving: Foster VC Kids Resource Family Training* include the following:



- ▶ Foster Children’s **educational rights** and why these are important.
- ▶ Resource Family **responsibilities** related to meeting a child’s educational needs.
- ▶ The **importance of school stability** for children in the foster care system.
- ▶ Educational **resources available to children** and their families.
- ▶ Identify **the feelings a child may experience during transitions** and determine how to help the child manage these feelings in order to achieve successful transition
- ▶ Identify **the feelings you and your family may experience during transitions** of a foster child into and out of your home and determine how you may manage these feelings in order to achieve successful transition.
- ▶ Identify **the types of transitions** a child in the foster care system may experience on his/her personal journey towards permanency.

- ▶ Utilize an **eco-map to identify connections and analyze support systems** which can help through the transition process.
- ▶ Apply what you have learned about the foster care process as you **welcome a new child into your home.**



TRANSITION

- ▶ Today we are going to talk first about a child's education needs and rights, as well as your responsibility as a Resource Family to meet those needs. We will finish this class by talking about transitions in the foster care system and your role in transitions is critical. We will have a guest speaker from the County's Foster Youth Services Program at the Ventura County Office of Education speak to use about Education (***Pending Availability***). While we will spend most of the day talking about transitions that are part of the process, a school transition should rarely, if ever, take place for a child in foster care, and today we will learn why.

Education

Materials

PPT 7.3-7.7.6

Participant Guide

Flipchart Paper/Markers

Handouts:

Foster Youth Services to Provide Handouts and folders to participants



1 hour


Presentation – Introduction to Topic

- ▶ I would like to introduce _____ (name of FYS staff and youth joining the group).
- ▶ ***Note to Instructor: FYS may lead this hour of the class. Your role will be to reiterate important points of the FYS presentation. They may request assistance with the PowerPoint, showing a video, or other aspects to their presentation.***

Educational Rights of Children in Foster Care

There is legislation that protects foster child's education rights to ensure that education services are being provided and that the child's needs are being met.

- AB 490 allows for foster children to be immediately enrolled in school, to be maintained in their school placements, given access to the same resources, to be placed in the least restrictive educational setting and that all education decisions are in the best interest of the child. This also mandates schools to assign a foster youth liaison to support compliance with the law.
- AB 216 allows school districts to make exceptions to graduation requirements to ease the path to graduation for youth who have moved schools and lost credits.
- Always contact the Ventura County Office of Education Foster Youth Services program if you have any questions or concerns.




SLIDE 7.3

PowerPoint Slide: Educational Rights of Children in Foster Care

- ▶ AB 490 is the legislation that allows for foster children to be immediately enrolled in school without records, to be maintained in school placements, to be placed in the least restrictive educational setting possible, given access to the same academic resources, services, and extracurricular activities. All educational and school placement decisions are to be dictated by the best interest of the child. This legislation allows requires school to provide a liaison to ensure proper placement, transfer and enrollment in school. The law also liberalized the sharing of records to streamline school enrollment and academic achievement.
- ▶ If a child is not able to be enrolled in school immediately, the Foster Youth Services team should be contacted right away.
- ▶ AB 216 allows for school districts to exempt a pupil in foster care from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the governing board of the local school district that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements. This eases the path to graduation for children who have moved schools and have lost opportunities to receive credits.
- ▶ Some children's birth parents will remain the education rights holder, and the foster family will be partnering with them to make educational decisions.

Educational Responsibilities for Resource Families

- Maintain the School of Origin, whenever possible. Extra funding is available in some situations.
- Consult with social workers before making any school changes.
- Work with the child's educational team to access assessments and services. This includes the educational rights holder, which may be the birth parents or an appointed surrogate.
- Participate in school related meetings, events, and activities.
- Encourage the child's participation in school, clubs, sports and other school related extracurricular activities.
- Assist with homework and school projects.



SLIDE 7.4

PowerPoint Slide: Educational Responsibilities for Resource Families

- ▶ To maintain the school of origin whenever possible.
- ▶ Consult with the social worker before making any school changes
- ▶ Work with the team to identify needed services, assessments and interventions in the school setting.
- ▶ Partner with educational rights holders to make education decisions.

- ▶ Provide transportation to and from school or work with the child's team to transport if needed to retain school of origin.
- ▶ Participate in teacher meetings, IEPs, Back to School Night, teacher conferences, and other school related meetings.
- ▶ Encourage participation in school clubs, sports and other extracurricular activities.
- ▶ Assist with homework and school projects.


SLIDE 7.5

PowerPoint Slide: The Importance of School Stability

The Importance of School Stability

- 1. Students in foster care move schools at least once or twice a year.
- 2. By the time they age out of the system, over 1/3 will have experienced 5 or more school moves.
- 3. Children are estimated to lose 4-6 months of academic progress per move.
- 4. School transfers decrease the chances of high school graduation. Only 54% of aged-out foster youth received their diploma.
- 5. 50% of adolescents aging out of foster care and juvenile justice systems will be homeless within 6 months.
- 6. Over 50% of aged out foster youth are unemployed.

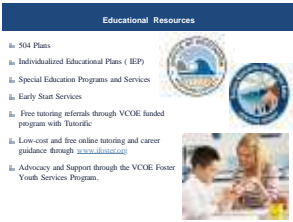
16. This one only speaks to the importance of school stability but also the critical importance of life long connections to support youth through their transitions into adulthood.



- ▶ Students in foster care move schools at least once or twice a year.
- ▶ By the time they age out of the system, over one third will have experienced five or more school moves.
- ▶ Children are estimated to lose four to six months of academic progress per move, which puts most foster care children years behind their peers.
- ▶ School transfers also decrease the chances a foster care student will ever graduate from high school.
- ▶ A national study of 1,087 foster care alumni found that “youth who had even one fewer change in living arrangement per year were almost twice as likely to graduate from high school before leaving foster care.
- ▶ Some other startling stats include: 50% of adolescents aging out of foster care and juvenile justice systems will be homeless within 6 months because they are unprepared to live independently, have limited education, and no social support.
- ▶ Only 54% of aged-out foster kids receive their diploma.
- ▶ Over 50% of aged out foster youth are unemployed. Compare this to the 14.2% of general youth age 14-24.

SLIDE 7.6

PowerPoint Slide: Educational Resources



- ▶ 504 Plans
- ▶ Individualized Educational Plans & Special Education Programs
- ▶ Early Start Services
- ▶ Low-cost and free online tutoring and career guidance through www.iFoster.org
- ▶ Advocacy and support through the Foster Youth Services Program at VCOE. If ever in doubt, consult FYS for support



TRANSITION to Attachment, Loss, & Transition

- ▶ School transitions are transitions that we can hopefully prevent. Now we are going to talk about transitions that are part of the foster care process.



Presentation- Introduction to Topic

- Materials
- PPT7.7-7.17
- Participant Guide
- Flipchart
- Paper/Markers
- Handouts:

- ▶ Transitions are losses as much as they are gains. Even in Happy transitions, there is loss. In light of this, we are going to return to the topic of trauma sensitive care to discuss what it has meant for the child in your care to become attached and what it means to experience losses. We are going to also discuss that they transition out of foster care means in terms of loss for a child and a reminder of the first losses they experienced.
- ▶ We are also going to discuss what makes a good transition such as keeping the environment safe to talk, being as

Create your Foster
Child's own
Personal Lifebook

Econ Maps for Case
Study



1 hour

45 minutes



planful as possible and supporting children through emotional highs and lows during transitions.

- ▶ We are going to talk about the types of transitions a child in foster care may experience on their journey towards permanency.
- ▶ Additionally, we are going to talk about the feelings you and your family will experience during transitions.

PowerPoint Presentation – (SLIDES 7.7-7.17) Attachment and Loss

SLIDE 7.7

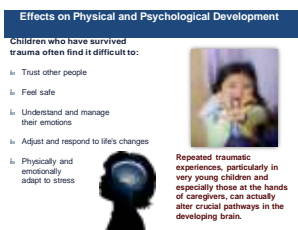
PowerPoint Slide: Attachment and Loss

- ▶ To become **attached** a child will:
 - ▶ Take risks,
 - ▶ Allow themselves to depend on someone else and
 - ▶ Build a safe zone.
- ▶ To have **losses means** a child will experience:
 - ▶ Loss of control,
 - ▶ Loss of the familiar,
 - ▶ Traumatic loss, even if there is also relief,
 - ▶ Loss of things and belongings, and
 - ▶ Loss of routines

SLIDE 7.8

PowerPoint Slide: Effects of Trauma on Physical and Psychological Development

- ▶ In review, **trauma can have profound effects on a child's healthy physical and psychological development.**



- ▶ Children who have survived trauma often find it difficult to:
 - ▶ Trust other people.
 - ▶ Feel safe.
 - ▶ Understand and manage their emotions.
 - ▶ Adjust and respond to life's changes, and
 - ▶ Physically and emotionally adapt to stress.
- ▶ **Repeated traumatic experiences**--particularly in very young children and especially those at the hands of caregivers--**can actually alter crucial pathways in the developing brain.** Over time, a child who has felt overwhelmed over and over again may not react normally to even minor everyday stresses.



SLIDE 7.9

PowerPoint Slide: Connections and Attachment

- ▶ Children learn who they are and what the world is like through the connections they make, including relationships with other people. Positive, stable relationships play a vital role in helping children heal from trauma.
- ▶ Additionally, as the primary caregiver, you will be required to be the primary attachment figure for the child for his/her healthy development and his/her future mental health and attachments.
- ▶ You also have the responsibility to support connections and relationships.
- ▶ It is important for you to know your child and his/her attachment strengths and needs and trauma triggers, so that you can best help him/her through the transition.

Ask:

? What are your experiences with helping children, traumatized or not, through transitions and losses?

Sample Responses:

- ❖ Examples of death of a loved one.

- ❖ Examples of leaving children in child care.
- ❖ Custody issues and transitions within divorce or separation.

- ▶ As we can see, we have, in this room, experiences that we can use to inform the way we manage and help children manage transitions and losses, and with our trauma-informed lens, we have the opportunity to make even sad transitions into meaningful growing moments for children.



SLIDE 7.10

PowerPoint Slide: Loss: What Will It Mean to Leave Now?

- ▶ When the child's experience in your home comes to an end, the child will experience loss.
- ▶ This loss will mean:
 - ▶ Loss of the foster family,
 - ▶ Change in routine,
 - ▶ Possible loss, or perceived loss, of safety depending on the transition,
 - ▶ Move into the unknown, and
 - ▶ Putting themselves out there again.
- ▶ This is frightening for anyone, but for a child who has experienced trauma, each loss is a reminder of the first losses. Additionally, often the transitions are times of great stress, dysregulation, regression, and acting out.
- ▶ As a trauma-sensitive parent, you will be aware of your child's triggers and will be able to help your child through his/her reaction to the stress of this loss.

Ask:

- ❓ **Based on some of the losses we just discussed, what do you envision as a way to anticipate and manage some of the emotional dysregulation and 'junk behavior' that may come up?**

Sample Responses:

- ❖ Maintain awareness that this is normal, predictable, and if managed well, can be a chance for children to take even more growth from their experience with you.
- ❖ Talk candidly with the child and other household members about what can be difficult during transitions.
- ❖ Remind children of how far they have come.
- ❖ Empower children to think of ways to make the transition more comfortable.
- ❖ Work as a team with your supports and the child's team to plan for and provide extra support during transitions.



SLIDE 7.11

PowerPoint Slide: Resource Family=The Transition-Maker

- ▶ **At its core, the job as a Resource Family is to prepare a child for transition.** It is an inevitable truth that there will be transition either through reunification, relative placement, independent living or adoption (perhaps by you).
- ▶ You should consider yourself the **transition-maker**. You are establishing the foundation for a child's successful transition by:
 - ▶ Providing a **loving and safe home** where the child feels connected and wanted,
 - ▶ Being a **sensitive and responsive caregiver** who develops a nurturing relationship with the child that helps the child heal and responds to child behaviors and responses through traumatic sensitive-care while maintaining your own platform.
 - ▶ Helping the child develop his/her own **strategies for resilience** as well as building **skills in self-regulation, self-control, social interaction, and cognition.**
 - ▶ Helping the child **prepare for the future** through support and encouragement of child's interests, education and cultural background, and

- ▶ Supporting **connections and relationships**.

Ask:

? How do you think you will use your own family strengths to accomplish this goal of being a transition maker?

Sample Responses:

- ❖ Remain a support to the family and child after transition.
- ❖ Involve my other children in rituals to celebrate the good times and successes we have had.
- ❖ Work together to help the child manage the losses.



SLIDE 7.12

PowerPoint Slide: Creating a Good Transition

- ▶ In addition, a good transition is characterized by the following:
 - ▶ Talking with children about the **changes that occur with transition**,
 - ▶ Helping children **understand their own history**, and
 - ▶ Helping children **adjust to losses**.
- ▶ A good transition requires planning as well as anticipation of how you will support children through the emotional highs and lows they experience.



SLIDE 7.13

PowerPoint Slide: Talking with Children About the Changes

- ▶ In preparing to talk to children about the changes that occur with transition, parents and other caring adults in children's lives should remember to engage the child in the process and listen carefully to the words the child uses and to the questions the child asks.

- ▶ **Questions about the birth family** and their status may need to be addressed.
- ▶ **It is important to always tell the truth**—even if it is painful—and to validate the child's experience and feelings. While these talks may bring up painful feelings for children, and for parents who love them, helping children to grieve can also help them to move on to a feeling of permanency with their new family.
- ▶ Talks between parents and children about the changes that will occur with transition will probably need to be **repeated several times and in a variety of ways**, so children can fully understand at their own level.
- ▶ It is best if these conversations take place when the parent and child are **engaged in activities together**.
- ▶ To make the conversation beneficial for the child:
 - ▶ **Plan the discussion.** In collaboration with the Social worker, the parents should decide if they want to talk with the child first and have the Social worker reinforce what was said in a later conversation, or if they would like to talk to the child together about the transition. Parents should be prepared to answer the child's questions that may be raised by the discussion.
 - ▶ **Help the child talk about the perceived difference in his or her own words.** The child should feel safe to talk and you should ask open-ended questions of the child such as,
 - “What do you think the biggest difference will be, when you're living with your mom and dad again?” or
 - “How do you think being adopted will be different from being in foster care?”
 - ▶ Help the child **draw analogies to something in the child's own life.** For instance, a parent might say,
 - “This is like the time when”
- ▶ **Manage your own losses.** Some parents and families struggle to manage their own losses at transition time, which puts pressure on children to either make things okay for the adults, or to have a different reaction to the transition. Be sure that you are on top of your own emotions and reaction before you engage with the child.
- ▶ **Acknowledge that this is a time of happiness and sadness for all of you** (if the transition is a positive step

towards permanency).

- ▶ **Remain strong and able to hear** the child's full set of emotions, including ambivalence.
- ▶ **Involve the Team.** Talk to your team about how to best handle the transition. Ask your social worker or RDS worker about what happens during the transition process. While you want to discuss the transition under ideal circumstances, you must also be prepared for and discuss what happens if a child is pulled out of your home without warning. A judge may decide to physically pull a child from your home, but that does not mean that the case is closed or that you cannot work to create a transition for the child once removed. **It is very important to advocate for a transition plan and to attend court throughout the process!**

Ask:

- ? **What supports do you have that can help you in managing your own response?**

Sample Responses:

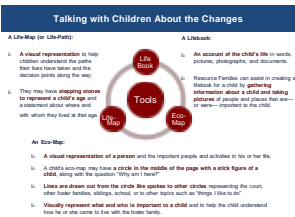
- ❖ Family
- ❖ Friends
- ❖ Team



SLIDE 7.14

PowerPoint Slide: Helping Children Understand Their Own History: Questions to Ask

- ▶ Parents can help children review and understand their previous life experiences to clarify what happened to them in the past and help them integrate those experiences so they will have greater self-understanding.
- ▶ Resource Families can help children in answering important questions about their lives to assess their readiness for and to prepare them for transition.
- ▶ These questions include:
 - ▶ **Who am I?** (question related to identity)
 - ▶ **What happened to me?** (question related to loss)
 - ▶ **Where am I going?** (question related to attachment)
 - ▶ **How will I get there?** (question related to relationships)
 - ▶ **When will I know I belong?** (question related to claiming and safety)
- ▶ Children’s answers to these questions will change, depending on their developmental stage. Their responses can guide parents and therapists in helping the children achieve feelings of permanency.



SLIDE 7.15

PowerPoint Slide: Helping Children Understand Their Own History: Tools to Use

- ▶ There are many ways families can help children in answering these important questions and in understanding their unique history.
- ▶ **Lifebooks, eco-maps, life-maps, and life-paths** are all tools Resource Families can use to help children of various ages understand and find ways to visually represent the answers to questions of how they came to be separated from their biological family and where they will ultimately belong.

- ▶ A **lifebook**, is essentially an account of the child's life in words, pictures, photographs, and documents. While lifebooks can take many forms, each child's lifebook will be unique to that child. Resource Families can assist in creating a lifebook for a child by gathering information about a child and taking pictures of people and places that are—or were—important to the child.
- ▶ An **eco-map** is a visual representation of a person and the important people and activities in his/her life. A child's eco-map may have a circle in the middle of the page with a stick figure of a child, along with the question "Why am I here?" Lines are drawn out from the circle like spokes to other circles representing the court, other foster families, siblings, school, or to other topics such as "things I like to do" to visually represent what and who is important to a child and to help the child understand how he/she came to live with the foster family. We will be doing an eco-map in an upcoming activity.
- ▶ **Lifemaps or lifepaths** are visual representations to help children understand the paths their lives have taken and the decision points along the way. They may have stepping stones to represent a child's age and a statement about where and with whom they lived at that age. They may have lines that go to a drawing of a house representing any foster homes a child lived in, the years the child lived there, and a mention of who lived with the child at that house, if known.
- ▶ **The most important information to include** in any of these tools to help children understand their past history **is information about the child's birth and an explanation of why and how the child entered foster care and how decisions about moves and new placements were made.** A baby picture and pictures of birth parents should be included, if possible. If no information is available, children can draw a picture of what they might have looked like. Statements such as, "there is no information about Johnny's birth father in his file," at least acknowledge the father's existence. The importance of honesty, developmental appropriateness, and compassion in any explanation of difficult and painful circumstances that bring children into care is important for children.
- ▶ Working with these tools provides an opportunity for the child to experience and work through the feelings of loss; therefore, they are beneficial therapeutic methods to help children with the grieving process.

- ▶ It is important to keep in mind, however, that revisiting their history may bring up a memory that acts as a trauma trigger. You should be aware of your child's triggers and prepare to act as an emotional container for the child's experience. Remember to Stop, Drop, and Roll



- **Using the flipchart**, ask the group to think of some of the possible items to collect in a lifebook.

Sample Responses:

- ❖ Developmental milestones (when a child first smiled, crawled, walked, talked, etc.).
- ❖ Common childhood diseases and immunizations, injuries, illnesses, or hospitalizations.
- ❖ Pictures of a child's birth parents and/or birth relatives and information about visits.
- ❖ Members of the foster family's extended family who were/are important to the child.
- ❖ Pictures of previous foster families, their homes, and their pets.
- ❖ Names of teachers and schools attended, report cards, and school activities.
- ❖ Any special activities such as scouting, clubs, or camping experiences.
- ❖ Faith-based activities.
- ❖ What a child did when he/she was happy or excited and ways a child showed affection.
- ❖ Cute things the child did, nicknames, favorite friends, activities, and toys.
- ❖ Birthdays or religious celebrations or any trips taken with the foster family.



DISTRIBUTE Handout

- *Distribute **Create Your Foster Child's Own Personal Lifebook** which can be found in the appendix.*

SLIDE 7.16

PowerPoint Slide: Helping Children Adjust to Losses



- ▶ It is important to help children integrate their previous attachments to important people in their lives in order to be able to transition that emotional attachment to a new family.
- ▶ Integration is a way of helping children cope with the painful realities of the separation from their biological families that often impact their future behaviors and can create extraordinary stress between them and their foster/adoptive parents. The five-step integration process is an effort to clarify the child's permission to be in foster care, to live with new parents, to be loved by them, and to love them back.
- ▶ **Steps in the Integration Process** include:
 - ▶ **Creating an accurate reconstruction of the child's entire placement history.** Creating a lifebook, lifemap, or eco-map with a child helps a child to see and understand his/her own history.
 - ▶ **Identifying the important attachment figures in the child's life.** Resource Families might be able to learn who these important people in a child's life are by listening to the child talk about people from previous placements. These attachment figures might be parents, but they could be siblings, former Resource Families, or other family members.
 - ▶ **Gaining the cooperation of the most significant of the attachment figures available.** If possible, parents should cooperate with the biological parent during a child's visits or gain the cooperation of a biological grandparent or relative to whom the child was attached. Even if the biological family is not happy about a child's permanency goal of adoption, there is likely to be one important person (e.g. a teacher or a former neighbor) who will be willing to work with foster/adoptive parents or the agency to make a child's transition to adoption easier.

- ▶ **Clarifying the permission message.** It is important for children to hear and feel from people who are important to them that it is all right to love another family. The important person in a child's life who is available to give the child that message should be sought out to do so.
- ▶ **Communicating it to the child.** Whether the "permission to love your family" comes in the form of a letter or phone call from grandma or from the biological parent during family visits, it is important that children hear from that person that it is not their fault they are in foster care and that it is all right to love another family. This "permission" will go a long way to helping a child relax and transfer his/her attachment to the new family.

Helping Children Adjust to Losses: Skills to Use in Integration



SLIDE 7.17

PowerPoint Slide: Helping Children Adjust to Losses: Skills to Use in Integration

- ▶ In working with children during this transition phase it will be important for parents and others working with the child to use the following skills:
 - ▶ Engaging the child,
 - ▶ Listening to the child,
 - ▶ Telling the truth,
 - ▶ Validating the child's life story,
 - ▶ Creating a safe space for the child,
 - ▶ Realizing that it is never too late to go back in time, and
 - ▶ Embracing pain as part of the process.



SUMMARIZE

- ▶ Allowing children to just "drift" into another family or adoption within your own family without acknowledging the very significant changes may lead to later difficulties.
- ▶ Resource Families need to help children consider and understand their own history.

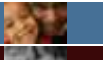
- ▶ Resource Families need to help the child understand the reasons for the changes, help them adjust to the losses, and help them transfer their attachments.
- ▶ In helping children, Resource Families will need to consider each child's needs as they are related to the child's age, health, personality, temperament, and cultural and racial experiences.



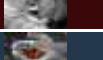
PowerPoint Presentation – (SLIDES 7.18-7.19) Types of Transition

Types of Transitions

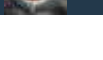
Reunification...



Relative Placement/
Guardianship...



Independent Living...



SLIDE 7.18

PowerPoint Slide: Types of Transitions

- ▶ If we think back to our case-flow and the goals for the child, we know that reunification is our ultimate goal. While we are trying to reach reunification, we also have concurrent goals so the child can achieve permanency.
- ▶ Each of these goals will result in a different type of transition:
 - ▶ Transition back to Biological Parent(s),
 - ▶ Transition to relative placement,
 - ▶ Transition to independent living,
- ▶ When talking about transitions, we will also discuss other disruptions in foster care including:
 - ▶ Discovery of deal breakers by the Resource Families.

Transition Back to Biological Parent(s) – Reunification

**SLIDE 7.19**

PowerPoint Slide: Transition Back to Biological Parent(s)

- ▶ This is an exciting time for the child, the Biological Parent, the Resource Family and the whole team. The plan has worked. The Biological Parent(s) have made the necessary or required changes and the child is returning home.
- ▶ But, this time may also create some tension or anxiety:
 - ▶ Children may wonder if the parent has really changed or if change will last,
 - ▶ Children may regress in placement due to anxiety,
 - ▶ Children may want to reject foster family first to show loyalty to family or to avoid their feelings, and
 - ▶ Emotions may run high when reunification is planned and is not immediate.
 - Timing for telling children should be discussed with the team.

Ask:

- ? What are some things you have learned during this that may help limit the child's rejection and acting out towards the foster family?**

Sample Response:

- ❖ Co-parenting encourages a child to maintain attachments to more than one person thus reducing his/her sense of guilt and disloyalty. When the time for transition back to the birth family is at hand, the open communication, mutual respect and teamwork that is created through effective co-parenting should help put the child's mind at ease.
- ❖ The input of the biological family may be helpful.
- ❖ Remembering that a child will feel a loss of the foster family, keeping a positive relationship with the biological parents will help the child feel as if he/she can maintain a connection with you after returning home thus reducing the impact of this loss.

Ask:**? What can the Resource Family(s) do when emotions are running high?**

Sample Responses:

- ❖ It is important for the Resource Family to hold steady and hold standards for their own behavior during this potentially rocky time.
- ❖ Remember, that transition may trigger trauma responses in the child and that you must remain sensitive to these responses and the child's needs throughout the process.
- ❖ Be open with the child and be truthful with the child; making sure the child understands what is happening.
- ❖ Listen to the child and engage the child in conversation about the transition.
- ❖ Help the child understand that you are still a connection and support for them.

Refer participants to **Participant Guides Day Seven: Children's Stories Updates and Transition Plan Worksheets.**

CASE STUDY FOR TRANSITION BACK TO BIOLOGICAL PARENT: BIRDY



■ **Post Slide 7.20: Birdy.**

Scenario for Update: Birdy, her dad, and her team worked hard to help her move into recovery for the trauma of her sexual abuse and struggles with self-harm and depression/anxiety. Her journey to healing inspired her dad, and the two made phenomenal progress in their respective treatments. Six months later, Birdy's dad is living in an apartment, working, and actively participating in aftercare for his rehabilitation program. Birdy has opened up in the family and has also been able to have visits with her dad with increasing autonomy. At the permanency hearing, the judge determines that Birdy can slowly begin transitioning back to her home. This move will not be immediate, however. Birdy and her father will have more frequent visits, then will have overnights, and then will be reunified. In response to the news, Birdy returns

home and packs. She then shuts out the family emotionally and spends her days waiting to be reunified. She's frustrated that the transition will be slow.

Ask:

? What does Birdy need from you to ensure a smooth and effective transition back to her father?

Sample Responses:

- ❖ Permission to love her dad and to want to move home.
- ❖ Support in planning her transition.
- ❖ Continued support and reinforcement of her therapy.
- ❖ Be an advocate for Birdy and her dad and support them in the slow transition.
- ❖ Help dad set everything up and work with the system and resources.

Ask:

? How should you respond to Birdy's rejection of you and your family?

Sample Responses:

- ❖ Being Constant: giving loving and accepting messages
- ❖ Reminding Birdy how far she has come and how brave she was to a) disclose, and b) ask her dad for what she needed.
- ❖ Allow Birdy to be 'ready to go'.
- ❖ Continue to enforce rules and therapeutic agreements.
- ❖ Help her plan for her life with her dad.
- ❖ Offer an open door, if this is something your family can do, for both Birdy and her dad.

Ask:

? How will you manage your own feelings of sadness at her leaving, and anger at her attitude?

Sample Responses:

- ❖ Use the team and your supports for venting and comfort. (when Birdy is not at home)
- ❖ Identify ways to celebrate the family's successes in bringing Birdy in and supporting her wishes and her family.
- ❖ Acknowledge that it is tough to transition.



SLIDE 7.21

PowerPoint Slide: Transition to Relative Placement

- ▶ Sometimes relatives (or non-relatives family friends) may come forward during the initial placement experience or may be approved after a child has been placed in a non-related resource home.
 - ▶ Relatives, non-related extended family member/friends and parents who are non-offending may petition for and gain custody even while the previously custodial parent is still working a case plan.
 - ▶ Additionally, with the emphasis on family finding, we find that there may be relatives, often paternal relatives, who do not know the child but upon learning of her/him, seek custody.
- ▶ This can be stressful for several reasons:
 - ▶ The relative may have not know the child was in care or was unable to take the child at the time of detention.
 - ▶ The child may not know the relative very well.
 - ▶ Resource Families must work with a new partner on the team
 - ▶ **The transition may happen suddenly and with little warning.**

Ask:

- ? What can you do to help a child who does not know the relative very well?**

Sample Responses:

- ❖ To the extent possible, before transition, involve the relative in the child's life in the same way you would involve a biological parent through co-parenting.
- ❖ Ask the team to help you facilitate a transition plan, even if it is a hurried brief discussion, where you can share important information such as likes, schedule, routines, and connections with the emerging relative.
- ❖ Work with the team to see how you can be of help and with the relative to see if they will allow or want you to assist and remain connected in any way.

Ask:

- ? What kinds of things can you do to ensure the smoothest possible transition when it comes unexpectedly and immediately?**

Sample Responses:

- ❖ Plan for this outcome in advance.
- ❖ Keep updated journals or notes about what changes have occurred in habits, likes and dislikes, routines, and interests so that you can quickly describe ways that the new caregiver can maintain consistency.
- ❖ Make sure that children have some things that are precious to them that could be transitional objects: i.e. stuffed animals, prized books or photos, etc.
- ❖ Offer ongoing contact (to the degree you are comfortable) so that the child can feel that he/she is gaining more people who love him or her, rather than losing everything familiar.

CASE STUDY FOR TRANSITION TO RELATIVE PLACEMENT



■ *Post Slide 7.22: Jessamyn.*

Scenario for Update: *Jessamyn dad's aunt met her at the hospital, has been trying to convince the dad to seek custody, or enter a reunification plan. When Jessamyn's dad will not become involved, his aunt Margaret finally goes against her nephew's wishes and petitions for relative caregiver custody. Since she is a nurse and can provide medical care, she is approved. You are ordered to return the child immediately. You and your family are devastated: you were supportive of her mom but thought you would have her for longer. In addition to your deep attachment to Jessamyn, you have recently booked a 7-day cruise, and you purchased a ticket for Jessamyn, having asked for permission from the court for the cruise prior to Margaret's petition.*

Ask:

- ? What does Jessamyn need from you to ensure a smooth and effective transition to her aunt?**

Sample Responses:

- ❖ Jessamyn needs to extend her attachment to you towards her relationship with her aunt.
- ❖ Jessamyn needs calm reassurance that this transition will be okay, conveyed in verbal and non-verbal ways, as she is so young.
- ❖ Jessamyn needs you to collaborate with her aunt to try to maintain consistency in her care and routine.
- ❖ Jessamyn needs 'transitional objects', or objects that will give her comfort through touch and smell. For example, sheets, bedding, stuffed animals, and special toys.
- ❖ Jessamyn needs continued connection with her siblings.

Ask:**? What can you offer Margaret to help her with the transition?**

Sample Responses:

- ❖ Information about routine, likes, dislikes, etc.
- ❖ Support for the transition, possibly including offering respite, offering to be part of celebrations, etc.
- ❖ Respect for Margaret as the caregiver including respecting her boundaries and wishes.
- ❖ Information on all the supports and services you have in place for Jessamyn.

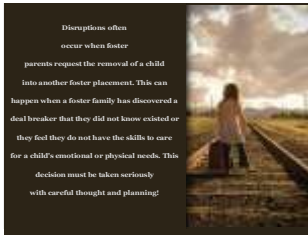
Ask:**? How can you work with the team to help in this transition?**

Sample Responses:

- ❖ Working in advance towards transition.
- ❖ Discuss what works best for Jessamyn. Would a longer transition period be in her best interest especially concerning attachment issues? Would it be allowable?
- ❖ Work with the team to identify whether the cruise is an important issue for Jessamyn or just for you. Consider asking the aunt if she can still go.



PowerPoint Presentation – (SLIDES 7.23-7.26) Disruptions



SLIDE 7.23

PowerPoint Slide: Disruptions to Foster Care

- ▶ Before we move onto the two remaining transitions, I would like to talk a little about other disruptions to foster care.
- ▶ Disruptions often occur when Resource Families request the removal of a child into another foster placement. This can happen when a foster family has discovered a deal breaker that they did not know existed or they feel they do not have the skills to care for a child's emotional or physical needs including behavioral problems.
- ▶ It is ideal for a child to remain in the same placement until permanency is achieved. We all know that changing foster homes will create another loss in the child's life; another trauma. So this decision must be taken seriously with careful thought and planning.



SLIDE 7.24

PowerPoint Slide: Preventing Disruptions

- ▶ Even when it seems inevitable that a disruption will occur, you should make every reasonable effort to continue the placement.
- ▶ It is possible, and advisable, to come up with prevention strategies for dealing with the situation that is threatening the placement. These strategies include:
 - ▶ Involving the team to help resolve the problem as early as possible,
 - ▶ Request a Team Meeting to help prevent disruption, stabilize and identify additional supports if needed,
 - ▶ Seeking counseling for the child and/or family,

- ▶ Respite care to give everyone time to reflect and regroup,
- ▶ Educating yourself on the reasons for and possible strategies for coping with the deal breaking behaviors, and
- ▶ Joining a support or networking group.



SLIDE 7.25

PowerPoint Slide: When Disruption Does Occur

- ▶ Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, disruption does occur and there are times that it is best for the child to move to another placement.
- ▶ Change of placement is advisable when:
 - ▶ The safety of the family and other children is in jeopardy,
 - ▶ A reasonable solution cannot be found, or
 - ▶ Medical conditions exist that the family is not skilled to handle.
- ▶ Always request a Team Meeting so the move can be planned and not abrupt for the child and the new placement better suited to meet the child's needs.
- ▶ After making reasonable efforts to save the placement, if disruption does occur, please do not feel like a failure. Some children simply need a more specialized care than you may be able to provide and it will be best interest for that child and for your family to move on.
- ▶ Make sure that you keep the child's medical resource record up to date, so that children can maintain a continuity of care.

Ask:

- ? Going back to our discussion about deal breakers from early in this training, what, if anything, would you add or change on your list?**

Sample Responses:

- ❖ Stealing
- ❖ Physical threats or violence
- ❖ Severe mental health needs.
- ❖ Severe conflict with bio children.
- ❖ Criminal behavior in the community.

CASE STUDY FOR DISRUPTION DUE TO NEW PLACEMENT:



- **Post Slide 7.26: Miguel.**

Scenario for Update: Miguel has continued to struggle with his behavior in school. Most recently, he was accused of initiating sexual activity with another boy in the bathroom and was suspended from school. Upon being suspended, he was returned to the home and had a two hour tantrum, during which he defecated in his clothing and scratched himself and attacked you. You sent your own child to her room (Marisol and Ibiza were in school and day care), and called the Social worker. It was determined that Miguel needed an evaluation and was hospitalized for threats to self and others. The evaluator was concerned about sexually aggressive behavior as well as a strong traumatic response that could be made worse by a family pre-disposition to mental illness. Miguel is in the psychiatric hospital, and may be discharged to a more restrictive, specialized setting. Miguel has now been moved into a therapeutic foster home. The plan will be before Miguel to transition back to you upon completion of the program, but it may be a while. Marisol & Ibiza will continue to stay in your home. Marisol is eager for her brother to return home.

Ask:

- ? What would Miguel need from you during his hospitalization and during transition?**

Sample Responses:

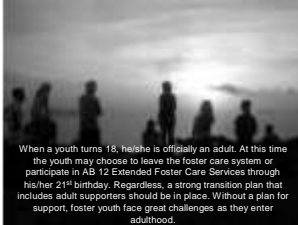
- ❖ Support, forgiveness, and understanding, even if you don't completely 'feel it' yet.
- ❖ **Connection with his sisters through you.** Be sure to plan with the new caregiver and Social worker to ensure this contact and connection is maintained
- ❖ Continued relationship with you and your family
- ❖ Being a resource to his new caregivers to assist with childcare or other support.
- ❖ Transitional objects that will give him reassurance and comfort: his own pajamas and clothes (as allowed by the program), books, other objects from his family and his room in your home.

Ask:**? What would Marisol & Ibiza need from you?****Sample Responses:**

- ❖ Reassurance that it is not her fault.
- ❖ Reassurance that Miguel is getting the care he needs.
- ❖ The ability to communicate with Miguel to be sure he is okay, if possible and advisable is very important.
- ❖ Ways to communicate her feelings to Miguel.
- ❖ Support for her loss and response.
- ❖ Information about what will happen next.
- ❖ Messages that are consistent and supportive from the team, including her mother.
- ❖ Consistency and predictability



PowerPoint Presentation – (SLIDES 7.27-7.28) Types of Transition, continued



SLIDE 7.27

PowerPoint Slide: Transition to Independent Living

- ▶ Many children age out of the system if reunification is not possible and they are not adopted. In this case, they will transition to Independent Living.
- ▶ This transition should be planned well in advance as part of the concurrent planning process. A transition plan will be in place and the youth will have been working, since his/her 16th birthday, on developing skills in self-sufficiency.
- ▶ When a youth turns 18, he/she is officially an adult. At this time the youth may chose to leave foster care or participate in AB 12 Extended Foster Care program through his/her 21st birthday.
- ▶ A youth who decided to leave the child welfare system often faces more challenges such as:
 - ▶ a higher risk for unemployment,
 - ▶ poor educational outcomes,
 - ▶ health issues,
 - ▶ early parenthood,
 - ▶ long-term dependency on public assistance,
 - ▶ increased rates of incarceration, and
 - ▶ homelessness.
- ▶ The Independent Living Program and its benefits are set up to help the youth in this transition.



SLIDE 7.28

PowerPoint Slide: Transition to Independent Living: The Resource Family's Role

- ▶ Just as you would send your own child off to college as prepared as possible, your job is to help the foster youth prepare for the transition to independence.
- ▶ Some of the things you can do include:
 - ▶ **Supporting the youth in developing skills in self-sufficiency when he/she is still living with you.**
 - You are a main source for helping the youth develop independent living skills, and
 - You must help the child access other supports and opportunities.
 - ▶ **Helping the youth gather his/her important documents and keeping these documents up-to-date** including:
 - Birth certificate,
 - Social security card,
 - Medical and school records,
 - Driver's license,
 - Identification card,
 - Foster care records,
 - Voter's registration card and
 - Health insurance card.
 - ▶ **Helping the youth gather important information and providing support/guidance** in:
 - How to get continued financial support and continued assistance through Aftercare funds and services, Transitional Support Services, Temporary Cash Assistance and other social support programs, Food Stamps, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Pregnancy/parenting assistance, etc.
 - Budgeting money and managing a bank account/credit cards,

- How to find a place to live,
 - How to run a household (responsibilities) and how to care for a child after foster care.
 - How to get a job,
 - How to stay healthy,
 - How to continue his/her education, and
 - What to do if he/she needs legal advice.
- ▶ **Continuing to be a support and a connection after the child has left your home.**
- Maintain communication,
 - Allow the youth to seek your advice and assistance when needed and appropriate, and
 - Be a lifelong resource for the youth.
 - Although upon turning 18, 21, or graduating, a youth may move out of your home or may not be subsidized anymore, ideally you will have forged a lifelong connection with youth who age out of care as a household member. This lifelong connection may be maintained through ongoing communication and availability and may also be playful on your part, such as opening your family traditions and events to youth who have lived in your home even after they have aged out.

Ask:

? What are some traditions and events that a youth could continue to be part of in your family?

Sample Responses:

- ❖ Holidays.
- ❖ Celebrations of achievements for the youth and/or the family: i.e. graduation, anniversaries, family rituals.
- ❖ Remembrances or anniversaries of placement, transitions, birthdays.
- ❖ Celebration and support during the youth's important life transitions, such as marriage, children, employment and educational landmarks.



PowerPoint Presentation – (SLIDES 7.29-7.38) Helping Your Family Through the Transitions



SLIDE 7.29

PowerPoint Slide: Helping Your Family Through Loss

- ▶ While it is comforting to know that you are doing an extraordinary thing by providing a child the care he/she needs to heal and to thrive in the future, it takes a lot of courage to be a Resource Family. Because as a rule, you are a temporary placement for this child and loss is in the cards for you.
- ▶ You have nurtured and cared for a child for months or even years. You have become deeply attached to the child and now the child is leaving your home because he/she is transitioning to a permanent placement, independence or back home.
- ▶ Or, you cannot meet this child's needs and he/she must be placed in a different foster home.
- ▶ Either way, it can be an emotionally draining time for everyone
- ▶ During this time, as we know, the child will experience grief and loss and you must help the child through this loss. But, you and your family will experience the grief of loss as well.
- ▶ Because you are grieving, you and your family members, including biological and other foster children, may experience the **stages of grief** including:
 - ▶ Denial,
 - ▶ Anger,
 - ▶ Bargaining,
 - ▶ Depression, and
 - ▶ Acceptance.
- ▶ It's true that people sometimes cannot continue to grieve in such a way, so they decide after the experience that this is their deal breaker. However, you can develop some strategies that will help you prepare to let go. These include:

- ▶ Keeping a record of the child from the first day including photos, memorabilia (this is good for you too),
- ▶ Acknowledge that a child's fear is greater than your own.
- ▶ Knowing you did your best for the child, will help you with your own grief.
- ▶ You can help prepare for the separation in advance by:
 - ▶ Working with the biological family as much as you can so you can ALL feel a sense of continuity and connection,
 - ▶ Reaching out, through visitation, conversations, letters, phone calls and emails, to the new family to help the transition and to build connections,
 - ▶ Reaching out to the team when you and your family members need extra support, and
 - ▶ Sharing your grief with your partner, the biological parent(s), children, and team.
 - ▶ Request support services to begin processing the loss and planning for the transition.



A New Child in Your Home: Welcoming INTRODUCE the Activity

- *Post Slide 7.30 as you introduce this activity.*
- ▶ Let's end this session, by going back to the beginning.
- ▶ During this activity, you will welcome a child into your home by applying what you have learned about the whole process.

PURPOSE of Activity

- *To allow participants to practice welcoming children into their home.*
- *To reinforce skills and knowledge participants have learned since starting the training.*

DIRECTIONS for Activity

- **Refer to Participant Guide Day Seven: A New Child in Your Home: Welcoming.**

Say

- ▶ We all know that we don't want to lay out all the rules in the first five minutes, but now that you have a picture of the whole process, let's take some time to explore what you now think is most essential to convey.
- ▶ As you complete this activity, I also want you to remember that trauma is at the cellular level and this is when you need to remember 'what the child brings' (literally – medication, special objects) to help ease the trauma.

- **Instruct** each participant to write a speech for welcoming the child that includes the following:
 - Welcoming,
 - Orienting,
 - Values your family holds about how to live together,
 - Rules and directions for the first few days,
 - Plans to check back in with Social worker, and
 - Visitation plan.
- **Divide** participants into pairs and instruct participants to practice their speech with their partners.

SUMMARIZE



Ask:

? **As you listened to your partner, what did you find most important and supportive to you, as you imagine this transition?**

- **Elicit** responses.

Homework Assignments

Materials



10 Minutes



Presentation – Introduction to Topic

- ▶ Let's take some time to discuss this week's homework.
 - **Use** this opportunity to explore how they are connected, what connections will sustain them as Resource Families, and what connections they need to build.
- Refer participants to Participant Guide Day Seven: **My Own Eco-Map: Connections for Fostering a New Child in My Home.**
- **Explain** this week's **Assignment.** We will create an eco-map for a new child who is entering your home in order to identify how we can integrate the child's "eco-system" into your family's map.

- *This activity will allow participants to explore*
- **Elicit** questions and comments about the homework.



TRANSITION

- ▶ Now let's wrap up for today.

Wrap-up

Materials

PPT 7.42
Evaluations



5 Minutes

Presentation – Wrap-up

- **Process** the work day with the participants.

Ask:

- ? **What did you learn from today's session?**
- ? **How will you integrate these new skills into your plan to become a Resource Family?**
- ? **What did you experience today that would not be useful to you as a Resource Family?**
- **Elicit** responses and briefly discuss.



SUMMARIZE

- **Post Slide 7.42: End of Session.**
- Today we discussed transitions-some are not so positive, like asking a youth to change schools when he comes into care. Some are more positive, such as the family meeting it's goal



and reunifying.

- Whatever kind of transition the child is going to be going through will require a thoughtful plan with all members of the team to ensure the transition is in the best interest of the child.

EVALUATIONS

If evaluations are being used they should be distributed and completed.