



Resource Family Approval Pre-Service Training

Module One: Working as a Member of the CWS Team to Support Safety and Permanence

Santa Barbara County Department of Social Services

Your Notes

Some points for you to remember

RFA process, certification has three parts:

- The administrative process managed by Licensing Workers.
- The completion of 12 hour of RFA pre-service training (which includes the RFA Orientation).
- Permanency Assessment, that looks at a prospective Resource Parent's capacity to commit to the child's Court ordered case plan, and support Permanency for the child.

This workbook has a lot of material and it's not likely we will touch on all of the points and content in the allotted time.

Therefore you are encouraged to read/review all of the sections not covered during this module, and bring questions to the next module.

RFA Training Goals

- ▶ Realistically prepare caregivers to be Resource Parents who can meet the special needs of children and youth in care
- ▶ Prepare Resource Parents to provide familiar, safe, and nurturing environments for children in foster care
- ▶ Prepare Resource Parents to be members of the Child Welfare Team
- ▶ Achieve Safety and Permanency for children who are part of the Child Welfare Services system

Some points for you to remember

Review each goal, think about which goal stands out to you, and why.

Please share with the group.



Your Notes

Resource Parent Training Values

- The trainee values the importance of a solution focused and nonjudgmental approach when working with the CWS system.
- The trainee values Permanency as a primary goal for children.
- The trainee values his/her role as a member of the CWS professional team working to provide children with permanency, stability and safety.
- The trainee values the balance between the Constitutional rights of the biological parents and meeting the safety and care needs of children.
- The trainee values the importance of the children's long term kinship relationships.



Your Notes

Some points for you to remember

Take a moment and review each value.

The CWS system is a system that is guided by specific Child Welfare Values which guide the safety and protection of children.

Please share which of the values stands out to you, and what makes it stand out to you and way.

Agenda

- ▶ Making an informed decision about Placement
- ▶ Case Plans
 - What is the case plan
 - Visits with parents
 - Concurrent Planning
 - Being a member of the CWS Team
- ▶ Working collaboratively with the child's case manager and other members of the CWS team
 - Advocating for your child and yourself
 - Creating Safety and Personal Rights
 - Team Work Resources

Some points for you to remember

A critical component of being a Resource Family is the capacity for the parent/s to be members of the CWS Team.

This demands that parents have a dual role, as a person who cares for and nurtures a child, and as “professional member” of the team.

Can you think about how these two roles may be hard to balance or are in conflict with one another?



Your Notes

Group Agreements

- ▶ Everyone always has the right to pass - silence is a contribution.
- ▶ We agree to allow others to finish speaking before we speak and avoid interrupting and side conversations.
- ▶ We agree to put past hurts behind us, and focus on the needs of foster children and how we can prepare meet children's needs.
- ▶ We're here to "try it out".
- ▶ We agree to respect one another's confidentiality.
- ▶ We will work together to hold to these agreements and authorize the trainer to hold us to them.



Your Notes

Some points for you to remember

A few more agreements:

- We agree to disagree and avoid making assumptions or generalities.
- We agree to speak personally, for ourselves as individuals.

Some Housekeeping:

- Sign-in sheets
- Break times
- Location of the bathrooms.
- The importance of self-care - take a break if needed.
- Silence phones – if they need to take a call/text, please find quite space away from the group.

How will your life change?

Have you thought about how your home, family schedule or routines change when a new child comes to live with you?



Your Notes

Some points for you to remember

Maintaining a placement starts with Resource Parents assessing whether they can meet the child's need before the child arrives to their home. It is important that you feel comfortable inquiring about the following areas so that you can make sure your home meets the child's needs.

Think about different situations that will require you to adjusting your schedule/routine so that a child can adjust and feel safe in your home, e.g.:

- Attending church services.
- Attending preferred social events/activities.
- Use of social media.
- Scheduling appointments and welcoming service providers into your home.
- Working with sibling rivalry.

Make an Informed Decision – Topics to discuss with the placement worker prior to placement:

- Physical health
- Emotional and behavioral health
- Developmental issues or needs
- Educational needs
- History of abuse/neglect
- Placement history
- Legal situation
- Daily life and cultural issues
- What is the parental or/sibling situation?
- What about other relatives?

Not accepting a child/placement, will not preclude you from having the opportunity for a placement in the future.

Case Plan Goals

The primary goal of the case plan is permanency, possible goals:

- ▶ Remain home
- ▶ Return home
- ▶ Adoption with siblings
- ▶ Adoption
- ▶ Maintain in legal guardianship
- ▶ Legal guardianship
- ▶ Long term foster care
- ▶ Stable foster care with emancipation
- ▶ Long term foster care with relative caregiver

NOTE:

These final three do not actually represent permanency



Your Notes

Some points for you to remember

The component of the case plan include:

- Participants
- Permanency Goal
- Assessment Summary
- Contributing Factors
- Strengths
- Client Responsibilities
- Case Management Services
- Concurrent Planning
- Visitation
- Independent Living Plan Services
- Contact Schedules

Case Planning Key Concepts:

- Safety
- Actions of protection taken by the caregiver that directly mitigate the danger to the child/ren, and that are demonstrated over time.
 - Each time the Child Welfare Worker has contact with a child, the CWW is assessing the child's safety.
- Safety Planning
 - Safety planning is not just a practice for enhancing immediate safety, but actually is a vehicle to promote long-lasting change.
 - There is difference between "safety" and "services," - the culture of Child Welfare is one of case management and service planning, with the goal always being the enhanced safety of children.

Participatory Case Planning

In participatory case planning, social workers work together with the family and others (such as relatives, service providers and community members).

A Team Decision Making (TDM) model is followed to develop strength-based case plans that are tailored to meet the particular needs of the child and family.



Your Notes

Some points for you to remember

The benefits of participatory case planning include:

- Greater support for the family and better relationships between the family and service providers, CWs and other partners.
- Clear guidelines and expectations for care providers, this provides a voice/venue for care providers.
- There is better follow through by the team members.
- Describes an end state:
 - Represents the elimination of the identified problem.
 - Are statements that describe a specific desired behavioral outcome in positive words and feelings.

Team Decision Meetings:

- The child's family and team come together to address shared concerns, and plan for the safety and permanency of the child.
- Focused on three questions: What are we worried about? What is working well? And what needs to happen now?!
- You are an important part of this process.
- Supports the likelihood that written objectives/client responsibilities are tailored to the individual family, written in language that is easy to understand.

What is Permanency?

- ▶ The final, legal, forever home via reunification, adoption or guardianship.
- ▶ Reunification is the **first choice** for permanency.
- ▶ It requires concurrent planning – working on reunification AND adoption or guardianship, this includes assessment of potential adoptive families wherever they reside.
- ▶ A long term foster placement is **NOT** permanency.



Some points for you to remember

The Permanency Goal:

- The Permanency Goal includes the overall goal for the least restrictive environment needed to ensure safety for the child.
- Includes the primary and secondary permanency goals, objectives, family strengths, and
- Tasks/activities/services to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being in a timely manner.



Your Notes

Concurrent Planning

What is concurrent planning?

- ▶ Helping a family solve problems that made the child unsafe so they can go home.

AND AT THE SAME TIME....

- ▶ Creating and implementing a "Plan B" for the child in case they cannot go home. Types of "Plan Bs"
 - ▶ Going to live with a non-custodial parent.
 - ▶ Being adopted by a relative or non-relative.
 - ▶ Being adopted according to tribal custom by a relative or tribal member.
 - ▶ Granting legal guardianship until adulthood.



Your Notes

Some points for you to remember

Concurrent plans include assessing relatives for permanent placement, assessing the current caregiver for permanent placement, and if needed finding a different potential permanent placement.

Concurrent planning requires ongoing conversation with family members and substitute caregivers, about their willingness and ability to provide permanency. This includes ongoing efforts to locate additional family members who may be willing to provide permanency.

These permanency efforts must take place while the family is also receiving services intended to allow them to reunify.

The Concurrent Plan is the expression of the Permanency Alternative / Permanency Planning Goal and associated services. Details must be provided in the court report.

These permanency efforts must take place while the family is also receiving services intended to allow them to reunify.

Types of Visits

- ▶ Telephone and/or in person
- ▶ Supervised - Supervised visitation is an opportunity for the social worker to assess progress and an opportunity to shape parent's skill development.
- ▶ Unsupervised – step up process – from a few hours, to an overnight, to several nights.
- ▶ Extended visit – a pre reunification visit.
- ▶ Good-bye visits when parental rights are terminated can be considered.



Your Notes

Some points for you to remember

Being part of a child's visitation plan can create anxiety for some Resource Parents. Experience has shown that Resource Parents feel better about being part of visitation with parents, if they can keep the following in mind:

- The birth family does not need to come to your home.
- Remember, there is a hierarchy in how visits occur, from the "most restrictive" setting, to the "least restrictive" setting, which for example means the range in the type of visits can range from meeting at CWS office in a room supervised by a CWS staff person, to having unsupervised visits.
- If you are asked to be part of a visit, i.e. to supervise the visit, transport the child/ren to the visit, etc., this will only occur CWS has assessed the parent and found the parent to not present risk to you or the child.
- Although it is most likely not needed, you should establish a safety plan with the child's worker to know how to handle a visit situation that present risk the child/ren or you.

Supporting visitation with the Birth Family

- ▶ Visitation is a child's right, not a parent's privilege.
- ▶ Visitation allows children to maintain relationships with their parents, siblings, and others who were close to them prior to placement and, reassuring the child and supporting development.
- ▶ Visits are an opportunity for a parent to practice safe parenting and demonstrate her/his protective capacity and readiness to keep the child/ren safe over time.



Your Notes

Some points for you to remember

Supporting the Child in the Visitation Process:

- Visiting should occur in settings that encourage natural interaction while minimizing risk.
- Remember, ultimately, if at all possible, it's in the child's best interest to have the person/s they are most safe and comfortable with, be part of the visitation.
- The range of visitation options is follows the most restrictive to less restrictive process.
- Reduction in restrictiveness is based on parent demonstrating behaviors that will keep the child safe over time.
- Visitation may re-stimulate loss and separation so it's important for the child's team to communicate about the child's emotional safety and stability.

What ways might you help a child work through feelings and behaviors and settle back in your care after a visit?

Taking a look at the Nuts and Bolts workbook where visits are discussed, what ways do you think you might help a child in your care to prepare for a visit with their family?

What is the Resource Caregiver's Role with Birth Families?

- ▶ It is in the best interest of a child to be reunified with their birth family whenever it is safe to do so. Resource families play a vital role in this process and are considered "co-parents."
- ▶ Resource Families, both relative and non-relative, understand the importance of fostering relationships with the children's biological parents, and help children to visit and reunify with their parents whenever possible.
- ▶ When birth family reunification is not possible, resource families are integral to helping us ensure children have long-term forever homes and families.



Your Notes

Some points for you to remember

Families sometimes have a difficult time managing their feelings toward the children's families, after all, you are caring for, loving and protecting the foster children, so it's normal for a Resource Parent to have mixed feelings toward the child/ren's biological parents.

How do you think you can manage these feelings, please share with the group.

Creating safety in your home

- ▶ Characteristics of a healing home...
 - Private Space
 - Boundaries
 - Respectful nurturing
- ▶ What rules, tasks, roles and activities would you create in your home?



Your Notes

Some points for you to remember

It's helpful to provide a child moving into your home with a general tour and the household rules, e.g.: help the child settle in by explaining:

- His/her personal sleep/bedroom space.
- Which is his/her bathroom.
- A safe, quiet space to take time away.
- The general household rules, e.g. knock on your bedroom door before entering, bed times, meal times, chores, etc.

And also by giving the child permission to:

- Use the bathroom.
- Access snacks.
- Keep a special item that from his/her parents or family.

Think about Connections and Continuity in your life:

- What is your preferred future?
- What are you doing now to move you in the direction of your preferred future?
- Who are the people, places, things and activities in your life that bring you a sense of meaning and safety.
- Who were you as a child? How do you know your childhood self?
- When a problem hits, how much time do you spend thinking about your preferred future?

Why Discuss Boundaries

Boundaries can easily become blurred due to:

- ▶ The nature of Child Welfare Services
 - There is an inherent paradox in the role of the Resource Parent, and the need to provide safety to a vulnerable child, while at the same time maintaining “professional” relationships with the different members of the CWS team.
- ▶ Resource Families are
 - Are primary witnesses to the child’s trauma.
 - Caring people who want to do what is best.

Some points for you to remember

Healthy boundaries provide the safest care possible in the relationship established between a resource parent, the child’s parents and the different members of the CWS team.

What does it mean to you that you are a “primary witness” to the child’s trauma?

What are some examples of what “bad/unhealthy boundaries” might look like?



Your Notes

Blurring of Boundaries

Can occur one small step at a time and almost without warning, yet if we are aware, the warning signs are there.

What may appear to be small may end up having significant ramifications on the well being of a child, biological parents, and Resource Families.

- ▶ Can lead to disruption in a child's placement.
- ▶ Can lead to disruption in a child's Court process.



Your Notes

Some points for you to remember

It's important to remember that poor boundaries on the part of birth parents are often what led to placement in the first place:

- Therefore, don't assume that birth parents know where the lines are.
- Go with your judgment first and be sure to discuss any concerns with the birth parents' boundaries with the child/ren's case manager.
- If confronted with a possible boundary violation, be clear and polite with the birth parent, and then report the concern to the case manager.

It's in the best interest of children that all of the members of the CWS team maintain healthy boundaries.

Be aware of yourself and your role as a change agent in the child's life.

- Manage your feelings, reactions and perceptions of others.
- Be observant of the behavior of other team members.

Always Act in the best interest of the child.

What to expect during Monthly Caseworker Visits

- ▶ The caseworker must see the child in their living environment at least every other month.
- ▶ The caseworker must offer the child a chance to talk privately without you present.
- ▶ The caseworker will ask you many questions about how the child is adjusting and developing. Let's take a look at some resources...

Some points for you to remember

Collaboration is not just a noun - it is a series of practices:

- Developing understanding whereby everyone is clear about *why* we are here, *what* we are trying to accomplish, and *how* we are going to do it.
- Participation which allows everyone's voices to be heard; being present allows people to feel a sense of ownership in the process.
- Creating shared commitments for action and the outcomes.



Your Notes

Mandated reporter / Incident reports

- ▶ A child may disclose information to you about past or present incidents of abuse – you must report this information.
 - 1-800-367-0166
- ▶ Incident reports:
 - Running away
 - Medical emergencies
 - Injuries
 - Arrests -- assaults
 - Property damage



Your Notes

Some points for you to remember

The role of the Resource Parent is to:

- Reassure the child that he or she is okay/safe.
- Listen/observe the child's words/descriptive actions closely.
- Do not ask questions/probe the child as this may contaminate the facts of the referral.
- Provide objective, behaviorally focused information from the child, free of opinions, feelings – this will allow the clearest assessment/action by CWS.

Remember, the child is in your care, so the child is safe.

Some points for you to remember

Prudent Parent Standard

- ▶ It's a right and a responsibility
- ▶ Allows a caregiver to make routine decisions about activities of a child, such as babysitting, staying overnight at a friend's home or traveling with a designated adult.
- ▶ You must exercise your "prudent" and reasonable judgment.



Your Notes

PROMOTING SAFETY

MAINTAINING THE CHILD'S PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY IN THE COMMUNITY and on SOCIAL MEDIA



Your Notes

Some points for you to remember

The definition of safety: actions taken by adult to mitigate harm/danger to the child in a manner visible to others over time.

How will you manage the following situations?

- How do you introduce the child to your friends and family?
- The use of Social Media.
- Interacting with the child's biological family in the community.
- Participating in visits and supporting parents.

Some points for you to remember

Nuts and Bolts of Teamwork

- Questions you might ask the placing worker
- Getting the child settled
- Checklist of essential placement information and paperwork
- Record keeping
- Assessing your child's needs
- The rights of Children and Resource Parents
- Frequently asked questions



Your Notes

LET'S DRAW A PICTURE OF YOU ONCE UPON A TIME

Some points for you to remember

Take a few minutes, and remember back to when you were in first grade.

Draw a picture of your home, family members, and any other important things to you – pets, toys, school, friends, games, etc.

Share your home with the group

Your Notes

Quality Parenting Initiative

The Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) is Youth Law Center's approach to strengthening foster care, including kinship care, using branding and marketing principles.



Your Notes

Some points for you to remember

QPI came into being in an effort to address the following issues:

- Foster care “brand” has negative connotations.
- We can't create a new brand without reassessing the role of foster families.
- A new brand is useless without changes in practice.
- A quality foster parent brand is core to the success or failure of the Child Welfare System.

Core Premise of QPI

- The primary goal of the Child Welfare System is to ensure that children have effective, loving parenting.
- The best way to achieve this goal is to enable the child's own parents to care for him or her.
- If that isn't possible, the system must ensure that the foster or relative family caring for the child provides the loving, committed, skilled care that the child needs to reach the child's long term goals.

What is a Quality Caregiver?

- A member of the team that supports healthy development & permanency for children who cannot live with their parents.
- Provides high quality parenting, assumes many of parenting roles provides for the child's needs while the child is in their home.
- Provides the foster child: food, shelter, medical care, education, safety, encouragement, reassurance, self-esteem, self-worth, security, structure, and love; consistent with the needs of the child.
- When appropriate mentors the biological parent(s).
- When appropriate maintains a permanent relationship with the child.



Thank You!!

