

Concurrent Planning: Creating An Environment for Permanency!

State of Idaho

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Permanency Planning

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*“Self-confidence is the result of a
successfully survived risk.”*

-Jack Gibb-

The Dream of Permanence For Children

Having a connection with an adult who is devoted to and loves a child unconditionally, is key to helping a child overcome the stress and trauma of abuse and neglect.

But the reality is that children in foster care, who have been victims of abuse and neglect move—a lot. When this day-to-day consistency is lost, the emotional consequences of multiple placements or disruptions is harmful and further impacts the child's ability to trust and love.

The Dream of Permanence For Children

- Repeated moves compound the adverse consequences that stress and inadequate parenting have on the child's development and ability to cope. Adults cope with impermanence by building on an accrued sense of self-reliance and by anticipating and planning for a time of greater constancy.
- Children, however, especially when young, have limited life experience on which to establish their sense of self. In addition, their sense of time focuses exclusively on the present and precludes meaningful understanding of "temporary" versus "permanent" or anticipation of the future.
- For young children, periods of weeks or months are not comprehensible. Disruption in either place or with a caregiver for even 1 day may be stressful. The younger the child and the more extended the period of uncertainty or separation, the more detrimental it will be to the child's well-being.

What Does This Mean?

**We Must Get Better At Achieving
Permanence for Children!**



About Concurrent Planning

What Actually Does Concurrent Planning Mean?

- Working towards reunification while at the same time establishing an alternative permanency plan
- Concurrent rather than sequential planning efforts to more quickly move children from the uncertainty of foster care to the security of a permanent family

Permanency Goals

- Reunification
- Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative
- Adoption
- Guardianship
- Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement

EXPECTED LONG TERM OUTCOMES OF CONCURRENT PERMANENCY PLANNING

- Children who are in resource family homes are less damaged because they have not suffered from continual moves.
- Less adoption disruptions. Less post-adoption high level/high cost placements.
- Adopted children have less identify issues in adolescence because they know “who they are,” and “where they came from,” and in most cases, have some type of ongoing relationship with their birth families.

EXPECTED LONG TERM OUTCOMES

- The elimination of the “waiting child” phenomena, as TPR and/or Relinquishment hearings don’t occur until the child has already been placed with their permanent family.
- Cases move through the quagmire quicker, resulting in overall cost savings to all involved systems.

EXPECTED LONG TERM OUTCOMES

- The fact that someone was "in the system" themselves, as a child, does not predispose them to being unable to have successful relationships and parent effectively.
- Workers are empowered.
- Children who are going home spend less time in placement.

EXPECTED LONG TERM OUTCOMES

- New extended families will be formed as fost/adopt families remain involved with children who go home and act as an ongoing resource to the birth family.
- The Protection of Children becomes a community issue and responsibility.
- Extended family members are involved, respected and proactive.



Best Practice in a Concurrent Planning Environment

Best Practice Framework That Supports Concurrent Planning

- Adhere to family-focused practice by recognizing that families are the optimal environment in which to nurture children and maximize their developmental potential;
- Maintain children's connection to kin, culture and community while in placement.
- Include children in care in information sharing and decision-making throughout the process;
- Value resource families as essential members of the planning and treatment team: sharing information with them, eliciting feedback from them, and providing them with support, in order to strengthen their caregiving and permanency planning abilities with children, their families, and staff; and

Best Practice Framework

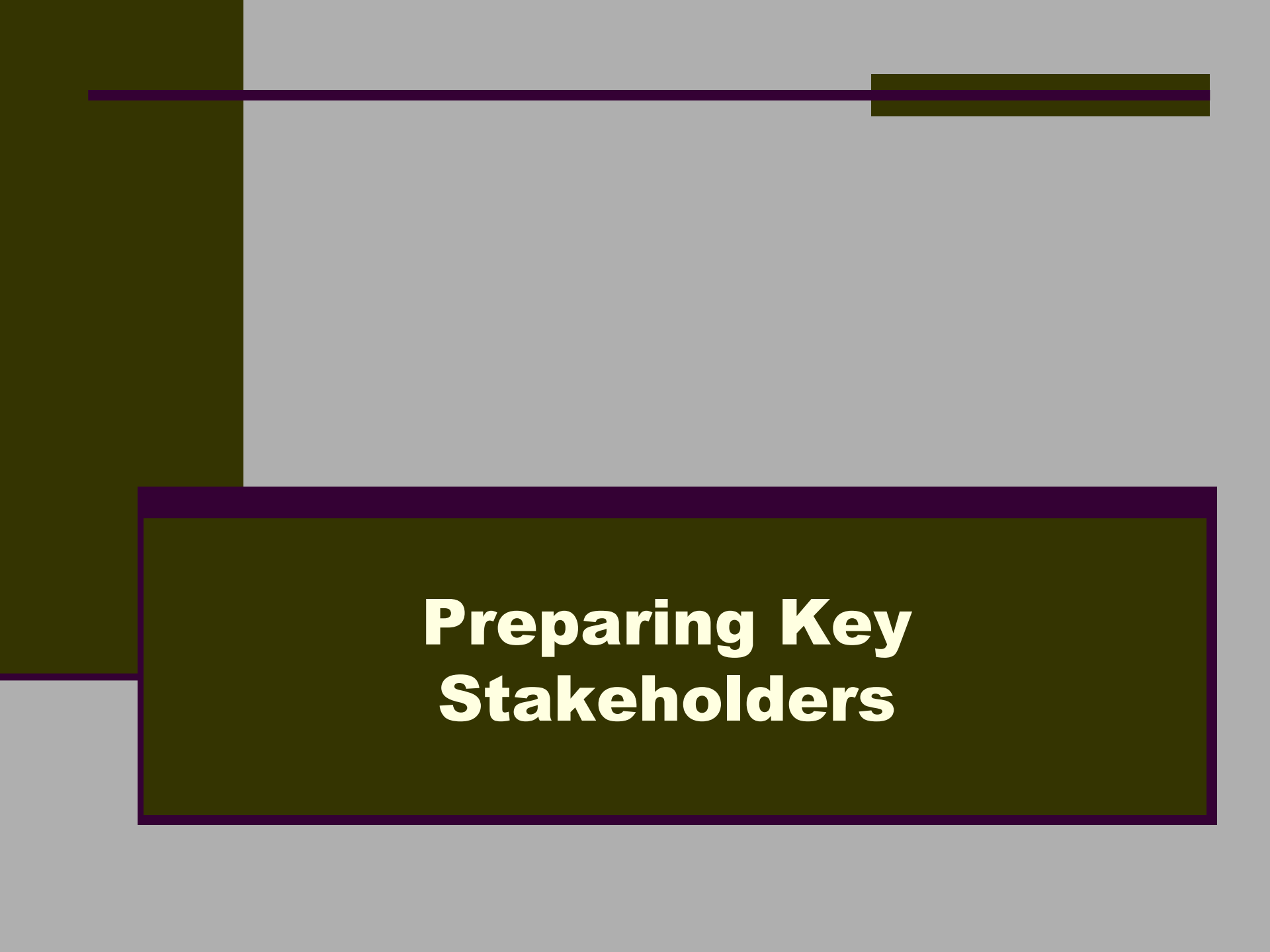
- Assert and practice a preference for placing children with kin whenever out-of-home placement is necessary, and search for other resources from children's neighborhoods and communities when placing with kin is not possible.
- Minimize trauma and unnecessary disruption for the child; Seek to have no more than one placement for the child.
- Reflect cultural, racial, and ethnic sensitivity and responsiveness.

Select Comments of Workers Around the Country On Concurrent Planning

- “...CP is in the best interest of the child and therefore it should not be attached to the age of the child; children without families experience trauma regardless of the age...”
- “...The need for diligent relative searches under CP was not something we understood in the beginning. We now understand that relatives must be pursued immediately and tenaciously...”
- “...Single most important activity that a parent can undertake is regular visitation with their child. CP supports and even requires this...”
- “...We see CP serving as a motivator for families. Staff and families feel so much better when we lay out options and choices from day one. Full disclosure makes the process honest and CP possible...”
- “...CP requires the understanding that nothing is set until it is set...staff need to be supported in learning to work in the gray...”

Key Components of Successful Concurrent Planning

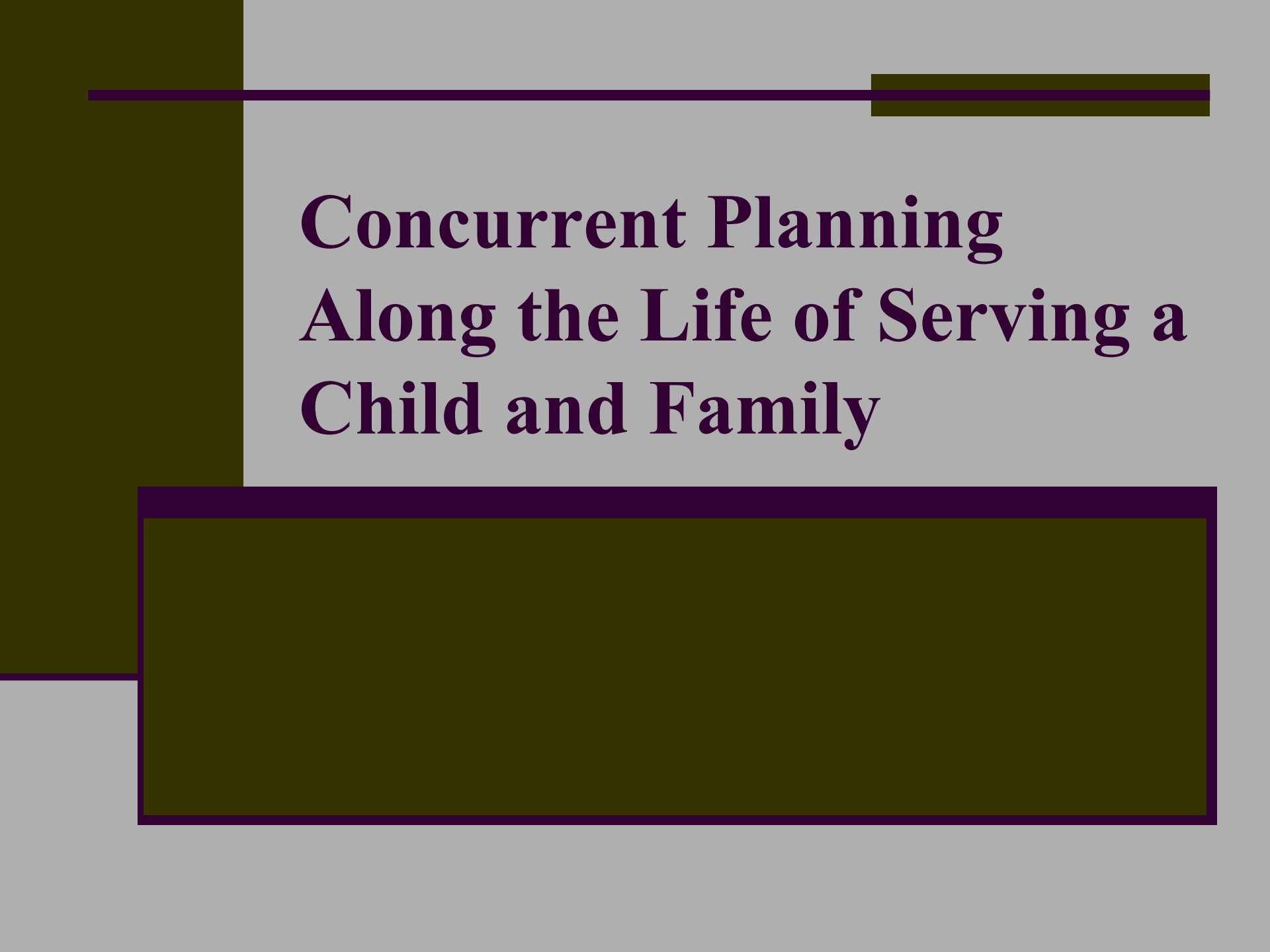
- 📄 Preparation of Key Stakeholders
- 📄 Intake
 - 📄 Rigorous Relative Search/Kinship Care
- 📄 Safety Assessment
- 📄 Role of the Resource Family
- 📄 Full Disclosure
- 📄 Assessment and Service Planning
- 📄 Frequent Visitation
- 📄 Case Plan Review



Preparing Key Stakeholders

PREPARING STAKEHOLDERS

- ☞ States, counties and community based agencies that have successfully implemented CP have **enshrined the importance of childhood attachment** in the minds of key stakeholders:
 - Comprehensive training for all judges, attorneys and social work staff--cross section dialogue.
 - Values clarification with the social workers-- you have to believe it!
 - Ensure that all members of the team fully understand the concurrent plan.
 - **Preparation of stakeholders in this case?**



Concurrent Planning Along the Life of Serving a Child and Family



Intake, Safety and Risk Assessment



A Thorough Assessment Provides:

- A foundation for informed decision-making and case planning
- An opportunity to build rapport and engage families
- An understanding of the issues that need to be addressed
- Identifies family members' needs and strengths/ capacities on which to build

Assessment is A Form of Intervention

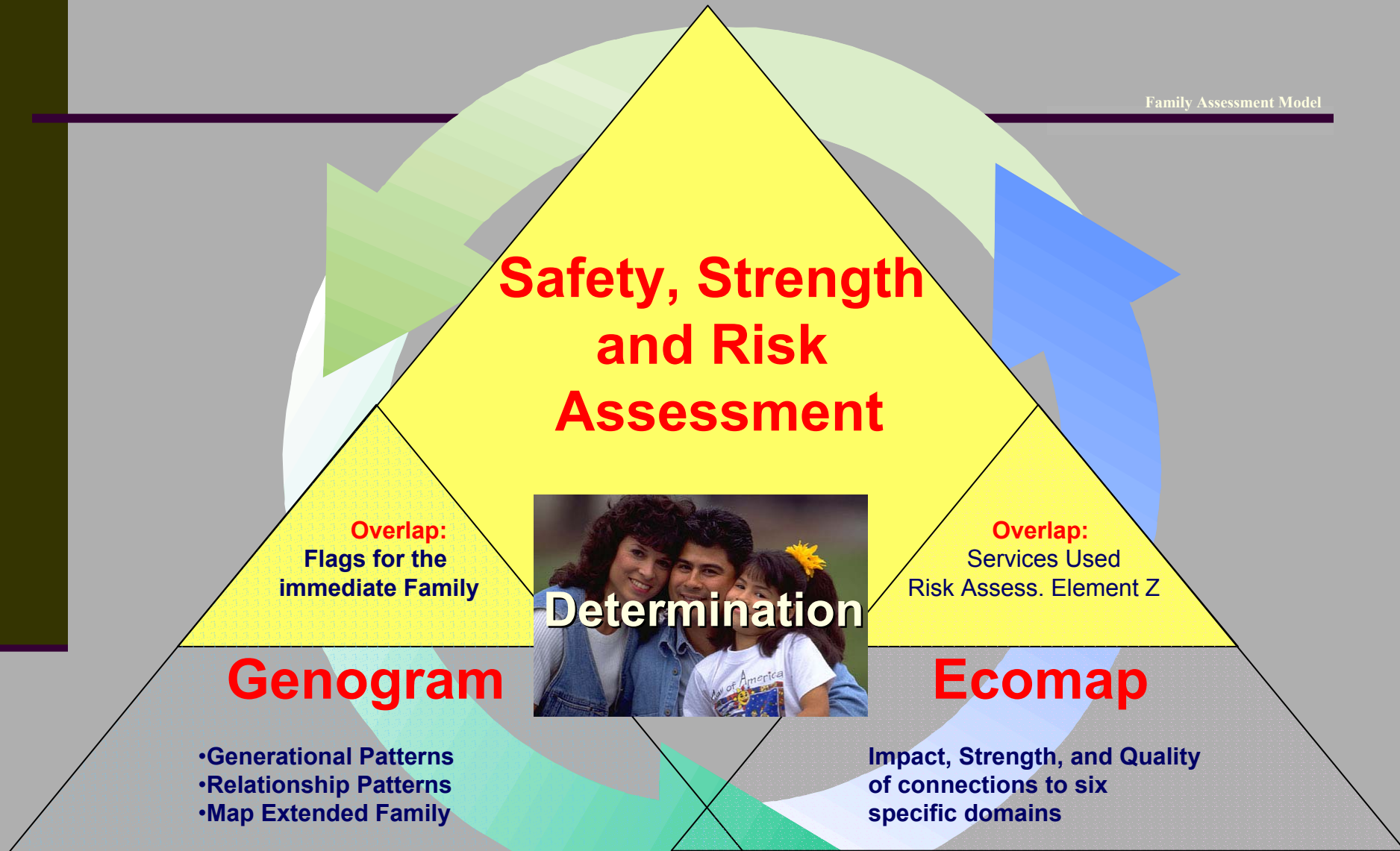
- Consider The Story of Billy.
- Remember: *The questions we ask in an assessment not only collect information but also **generate experience.***

How We Assess Sets The Stage For Relationship

- The questions we ask and the ways in which we organize the information we receive have a profound effect on our subsequent work with the family system.

Strength Based Family Centered Family Assessment

Family Assessment Model



**Assessment Process Must
Include:**

Rigorous Search for Kin

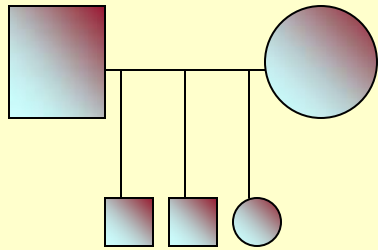
Rigorous Relative Search

- States that have successfully implemented CP interviewed are clear that one of the most valuable ‘lessons learned’ was the importance of conducting relative searches early.
- Many sites use the Family Group Conferencing model as their vehicle for relative searches and involvement.
 - While family conferencing may not work, nor be culturally relevant for every child/family, it is a fundamental part of effective Concurrent Planning for many families.

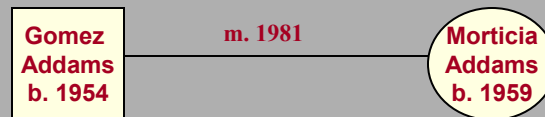
Rigorous Relative Search

- Relative searches should occur immediately..
“looking for the child’s kin as if you were searching for your own family members.”
- State of North Dakota: “The need for being diligent in relative searches was not something we understood in the beginning and so we were not as aggressive as we should have been...
 - Asking where the absent father was, or establishing paternity.
 - Identifying others to whom the child is close.
 - We now understand these activities must be pursued with diligence, immediately...”

Genogram and Ecomaps As a Means to Find Kin and Connections



THE ADDAMS FAMILY
001 Cementery Lane
Greenbriar USA

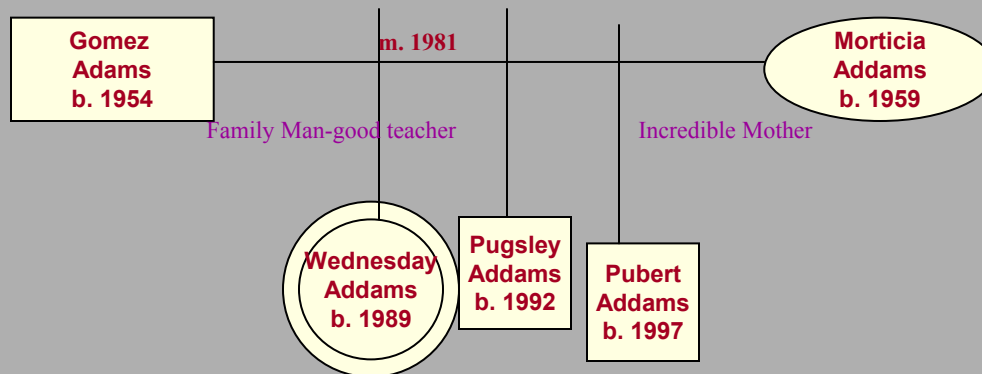


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THE ADDAMS FAMILY

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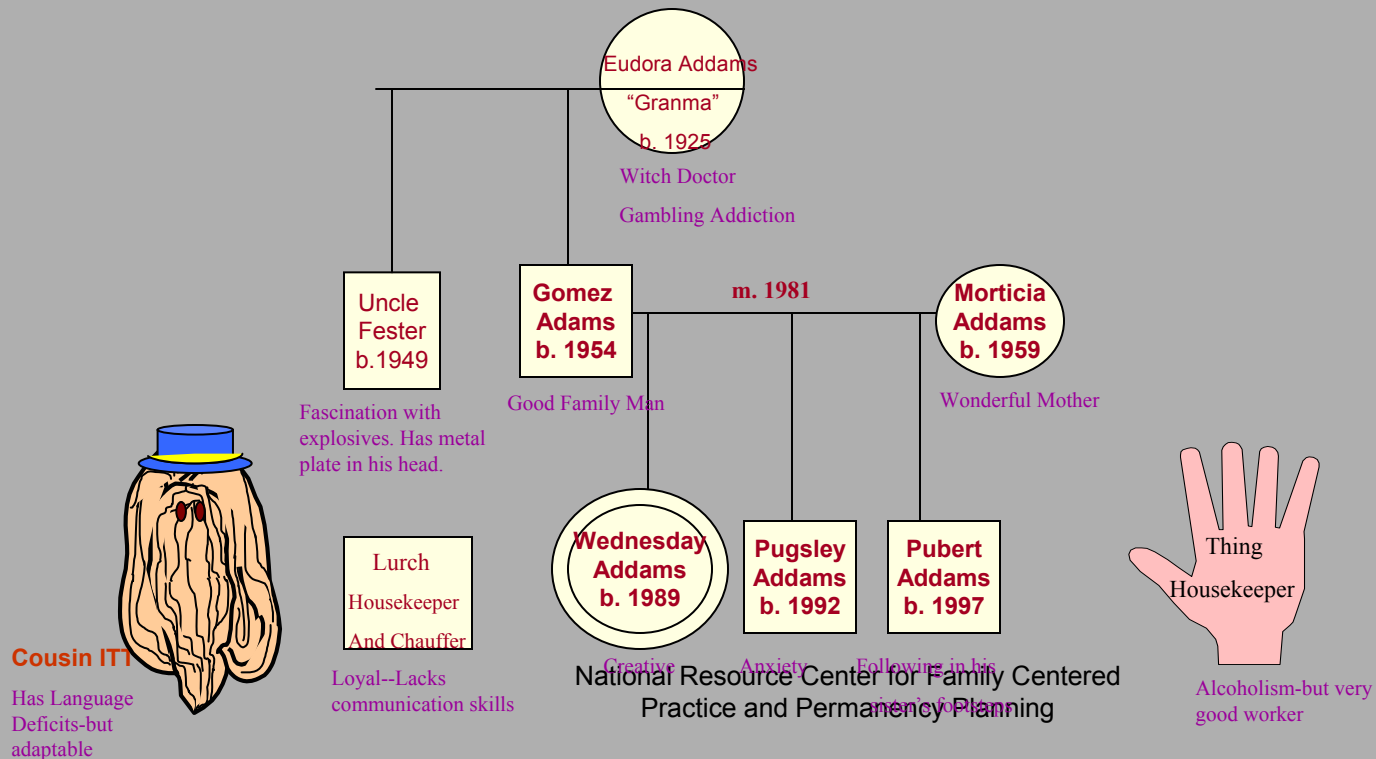
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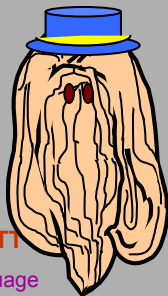
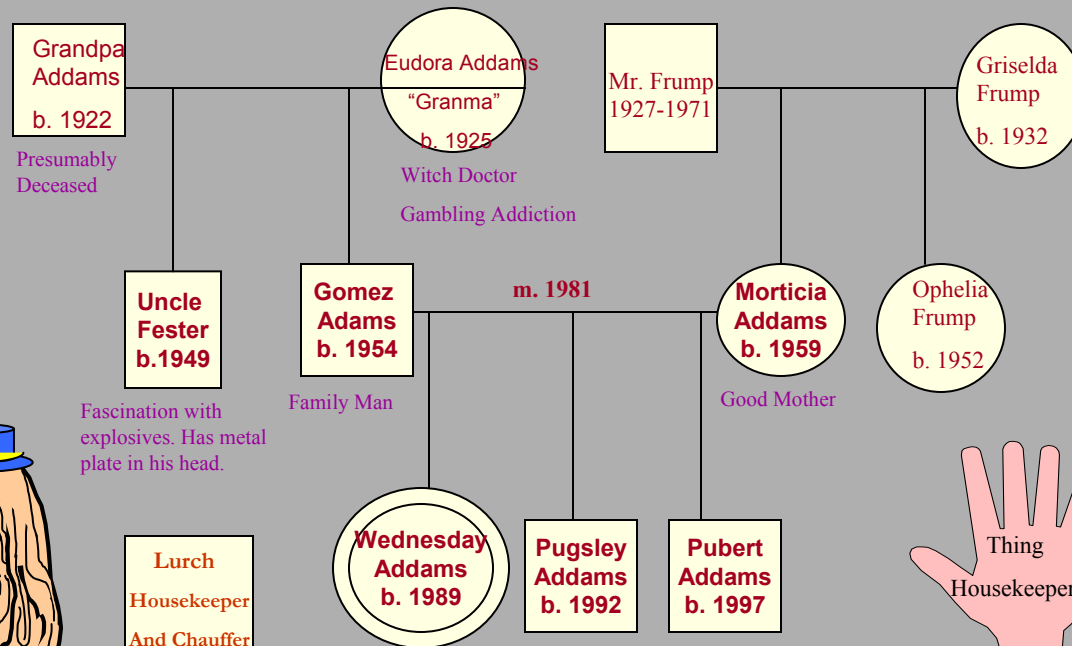
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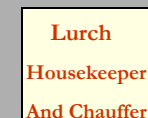
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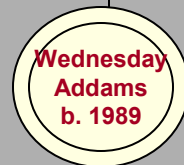


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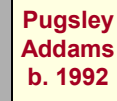
Has Language Deficits-Adaptable



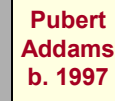
Loyal--Lacks communication skills



National Resource Center for Family Centered Practice and Permanency Planning



Loves Siblings



Following in his parents' footsteps

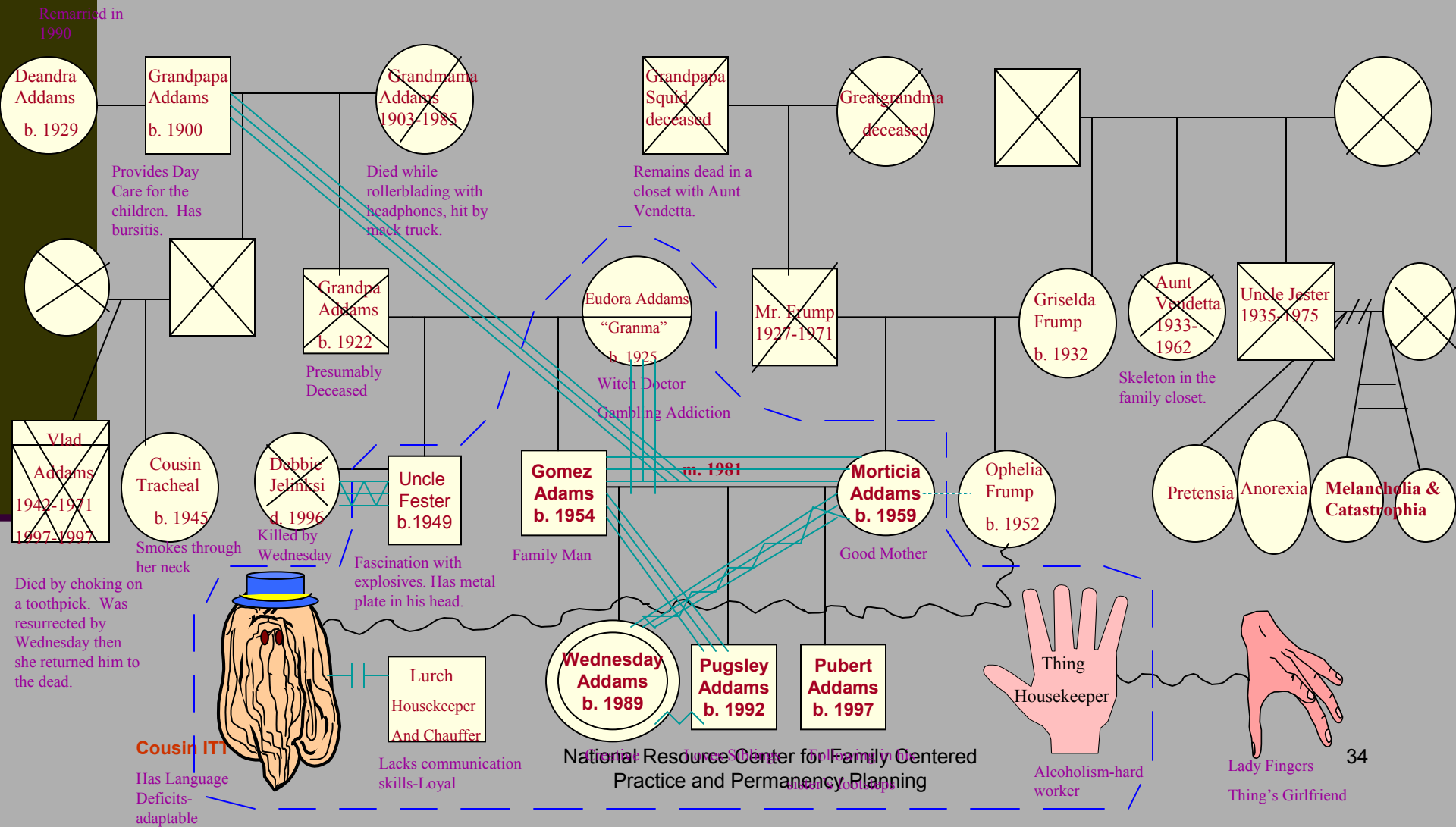


Alcoholism-Good Worker

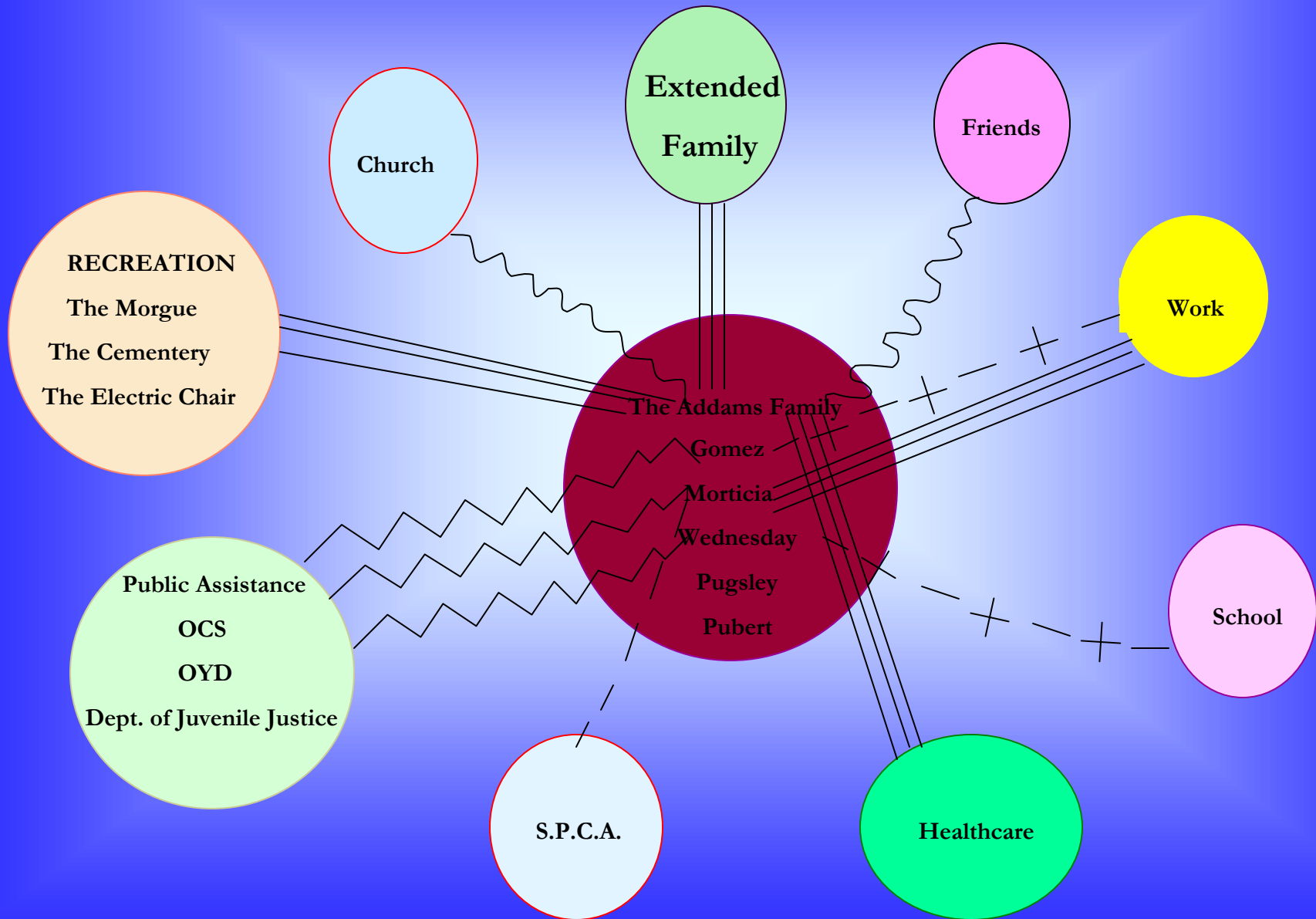
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ECOMAP





Assessment Content

Assessments and Service Planning

- **Differential Assessment is a practice tenet of CP.**
- **The worker considers the families strengths, resources, “red flags” and case history, to develop a reasoned, tentative hypothesis about the potential of the family to access/use resources and make required changes within one year.**

Strengths and Protective Capacities

- **FAMILY STRENGTHS/EARLY REUNIFICATION INDICATORS**
Strengths and resources which can be called upon to help the family plan for timely reunification and improve children's well-being
- **PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP**
- Parent shows empathy and concern for child
- Parent responds positively and supportively to the child's verbal and non-verbal signals
- Parent shows the ability to put the child's needs ahead of his/her own
- When they are together, child shows comfort in parent's presence
- The parent has raised the child for a significant period of time
- In the past, the parent has met the child's basic physical and emotional needs
- Parent accepts some responsibility for the problems that brought the child into care or the attention of the authorities

Strengths and Protective Capacities

PARENT SUPPORT SYSTEM

- Parent has positive, significant relationships with other adults who seem not to have overt problems (spouse, parents, friends, relatives)
- Parent has a meaningful support system that can help him/her now (church, job, counselor)
- Extended family is nearby and capable of providing support

Strengths and Protective Capacities

■ PAST SUPPORT SYSTEM

- Extended family history shows family members able to help out/provide support when one member is not functioning well
- Relatives came forward to offer help when child needed placement
- Relatives have followed through on commitments in the past
- There are significant other adults, not blood relatives, who have helped in the past
- Significant other adults have followed through on commitments in the past

■ FAMILY HISTORY

- Family's ethnic, cultural, or religious heritage includes an emphasis on mutual caretaking and shared parenting in times of crisis
- Parent's own history shows consistency of parent caretaker
- Parent's history shows evidence of his/her childhood needs being met adequately

Strengths and Protective Capacities

■ CHILD'S OVERALL DEVELOPMENT

- Child' shows age-appropriate cognitive abilities
- Child is able to attend to tasks at an age appropriate level
- Child shows evidence of conscience development
- Child has age-appropriate social skills
- Child's behavioral problems are managed/redirected positively
- Child's health care needs have been met routinely

“POOR PROGNOSIS” for Reunification INDICATORS

■ CATASTROPHIC PRIOR ABUSE

- Parent has killed or seriously harmed another child through abuse or neglect and no significant change has occurred in the interim (*)
- Parent has repeatedly and with premeditation harmed or tortured this child (*)
- Child has experienced physical or sexual abuse in infancy (treatment of parent may be so difficult and lengthy that child spends years in foster care)

“POOR PROGNOSIS” for Reunification INDICATORS

- **Parental rights to another child have been terminated** following a period of service delivery to the parent and no significant change has occurred in the interim (*)
- There have been three or more CPS interventions for serious separate incidents, indicating a chronic pattern of abuse or severe neglect
- In addition to emotional trauma, the child has suffered more than one form of abuse, neglect or sexual abuse

“POOR PROGNOSIS” for Reunification INDICATORS

- **Other children have been placed in foster care or with relatives for periods of time over 6 months duration** or have had repeated placements with CPS intervention
- This child has been abandoned with friends, relatives, hospital, or in foster care; or once the child is placed in subsequent care, the parent does not visit on his or her own
- Parent is under the age of 16 with no parenting support systems, and placement of the child and parent together has failed due to parent’s behavior

“POOR PROGNOSIS” for Reunification INDICATORS

- Parent has asked to relinquish child on more than one occasion following initial intervention
- Parent is addicted to debilitating drugs or alcohol and has been unable to provide consistent parenting or self-care
- Parent has a recent history of serious criminal activity and jail
- CPS preventive measures have failed to keep the child with the parent

IMMEDIATE SAFETY PLANNING

Looking for ways that the child can stay at
home safely...

Safety Planning

- Explicit search for services and supports that can wrap around the child and family to allow the child to stay at home safely
- Done rapidly—remember if a child is removed the chance of parents and children ever living together safely is diminished.
 - Longer a child is in care—less chance at successful reunification



Concurrent Planning: When a Child Is Placed

Recruitment of Resource Families

**Honoring/Evolving the Role of the
Resource Family**

Consider The Message

- What do we communicate with this message?
 - Utah's Message: Love a child...foster their family.
 - Alaska's Message: The Family is Alaska's greatest natural resource...become a foster family!
 - In a Concurrent Planning Environment—Resource Families must understand that their first task is to help support reunification efforts.
 - We need Resource Families with a willingness to carry out this important effort.

Definition of Resource Families

- **Resource Families:** Resource family refers to foster and adoptive families, relatives or caregivers who share parenting with the birth family as we seek to find permanence, safety and stability for the child.
- These individuals are willing to provide a permanent connection with the child, whether or not the child reunifies with their birth family.
- In many instances they are willing to provide a permanent placement for the child.
- They play an active role in linking the child to their past as well as guiding their future.

Role of Resource Families

In CP the Resource Family plays a critical role. The way in which resource families work with the birth family and support reunification is fundamental to successful reunification or alternative permanency placement.

- Social workers must help the resource families address the tension that naturally exists between helping the birth family and wanting to adopt the child.
- Frequent updates on case status is important to Resource Families.
- If Resource Families are sabotaging the reunification process they must be called on their behavior.

"I met Mama J. and the first thing she said was, 'I don't want your children to live with me forever, so you figure out how to get them back.' It made me laugh, and it was such a relief, you know, that she did not want to take them from me."

Initial Team Purpose

- 24-72 Hour Meeting Purpose:
 - To ensure that the birth family and resource family meet one another.
 - To plan for a shared parenting approach.
 - To learn about the child's needs.

Characteristics of Resource Families

Who Can Carry Out This Work:

- Resource Families See Themselves as a Support to the Birth Family.
- Resource Families Support and Encourage Frequent and Consistent Visitation Between the Child and his/her Birth Family.
- Resource Families are willing to share the child with those who are important to the child.
- Resource Families appreciate and understand cultural connection throughout the life of a child.

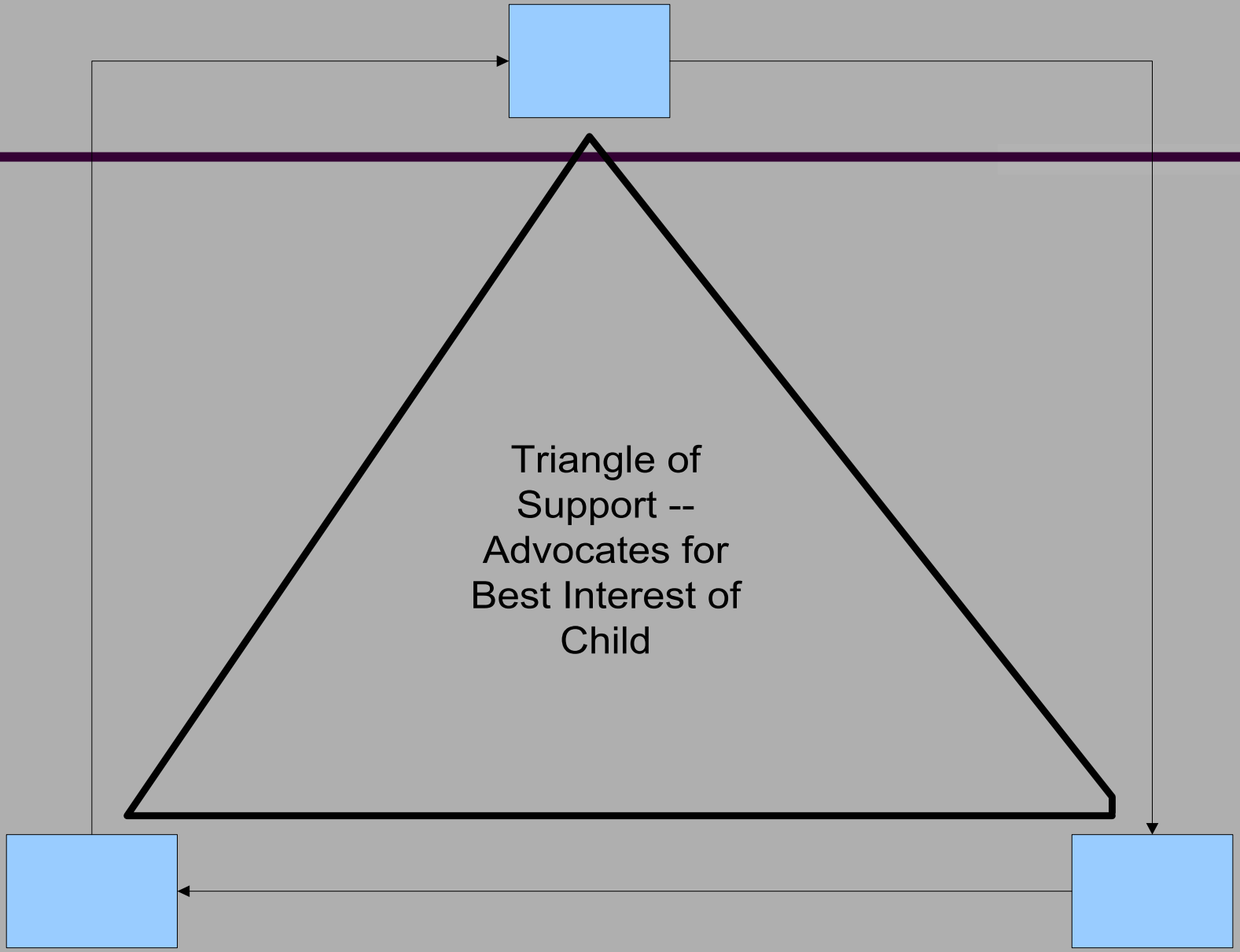
Some of the Questions to Help Assess These Characteristics:

- Would you like to share a little bit about their philosophical, spiritual or religious belief system and how it helps you?
 - *Follow up by asking who might define themselves as altruistic?*
- What would you say to birth parents who said they were sorry for abusing or neglecting their child?
- How do you imagine sharing your foster child with other important people in his or her life?
- Is it important to you to be certain about the outcome of your placement? Why or Why not?
- Please describe how you've recovered when you experienced losses in your life.

Relationship Is Critical

- Resource Family-Birth Family-Agency relationship is critical to the success of the implementation of Concurrent Planning
- Birth Families have to trust that the system is really committed to reunification and will help support them in becoming more effective parents.
- If not, Concurrent Planning feels like a fast track to TPR/Adoption

Triangle of
Support --
Advocates for
Best Interest of
Child



According to Numerous Surveys with Resource Families and State workers, Tension occurs because:

- Resource families, birth or extended may not always receive the information that they need.
- Resource Families are afraid of, or simply do not like the Birth Family.
 - Do not believe that they are good for the child.
- Resource Families may not be fully trained to understand natural grief, loss and attachment issues of children.
 - Misinterpret anger after a visit or ambivalence about seeing a parent.
- Community “values” result in the judging of birth families
- Resource Families struggle to manage the ambiguity of not knowing what might occur next, this impacts their interactions with the agency.
 - Resource family grieving



Tension Points (cont)

- The perspectives of the resource families may not be fully considered during the case planning and case review process.
- Resource families are not viewed as a “professional”
- We allow our mistaken views of confidentiality to inhibit information sharing....
- Birth families are scared....down deep in their hearts they do not believe they can parent as well as the resource family—so they lash out....

Questions to Ponder....

- Does the relationship between child welfare staff and resource families actually impact the life of a child?
 - How?
- Does the relationship between the child welfare staff and resource families impact the quality of reunification?
 - How?
- We have to work through these troublesome questions that continue to be raised:
 - “What are the real motives of resource families?”
 - “Should resource parents really part of the *professional* team?”
 - “Should I trust the resource family’s perspectives?”

Role of Resource Families

-  **When a child is placed, the team plays a vital role in child permanence and feelings of emotional safety.**
-  The way in which the team supports one another in the placement process is fundamental to successful reunification or alternative permanency placement.
 - Share as much with the resource family as is known about the child/family.
 - The team must address the tension that naturally exists between resource family and birth family.
 - **CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE CHILDREN DON'T FEEL LIKE THEY HAVE TO CHOOSE!!**

**Full Disclosure To Birth Family
and Resource Family—and the
child as age appropriate!**

Full Disclosure

Honors the integrity of the permanency planning process and ensures that birth parents and resource parents have the same information, thereby allowing them to make informed decisions.

Full disclosure provides the birth parents with a “lay of the land” and a road map of what needs to occur and when, if their children are to be returned home.

Full Disclosure Means

- **Open, honest, respectful discussion with birth family and resource family (*Children too depending on age*) of rights, responsibilities, timeframes, permanency options, consequences, expectations of the agency.**
- **Don't let the myth of confidentiality stop sharing!!!**
- **Everyone knows what everyone knows!**

-

State's Models to Support Full Disclosure

Texas—“...We have developed what we call Success Quest. It is a parent orientation provided by our Intensive Permanency Specialists for all birth parents who have had their children removed within the past two weeks. In a sensitive, non-threatening manner, Success Quest lets parents know exactly what is happening to their family. We walk through the law, we describe what will happen in court and tell them exactly when court hearings will be held we and we thoroughly inform parents of their rights and responsibilities. We describe our Permanency Planning Teams and we go over a generic service plan to show them what they look like and what will be submitted to the court. Additionally, a judge who is very committed to kids and families, created a video for our use. The video that is about 20 minutes long and further answers families’ questions about the law and the judicial process...”

State's Models to Support Full Disclosure

- *North Dakota*-“...Full disclosure is what makes the process honest and Concurrent Planning possible. When you lay out the options clearly for birth parents and then give them every opportunity to succeed, provide the services that all agree are needed and still the family still does not make the changes required to allow them to safely parent their children, you know at the end of the day, when you file the TPR, you have done your job...”
- The more respectfully this occurs the more involved the parents may stay in the life of the child-even though they cannot be the full time caregiver.

Full Disclosure... Worker Did You?

- **Ask the birth family about their understanding of the circumstances that caused placement?**
- **Share with the birth family - respectfully, but directly - the official reasons for placement?**
- **Discuss service plan and assessment process with birth family?**
- **Explain permanency planning timeframes to the birth family and the resource family?**
- **Discuss the range of permanency planning options with the birth family and the resource family?**

Full Disclosure... Worker Did You?

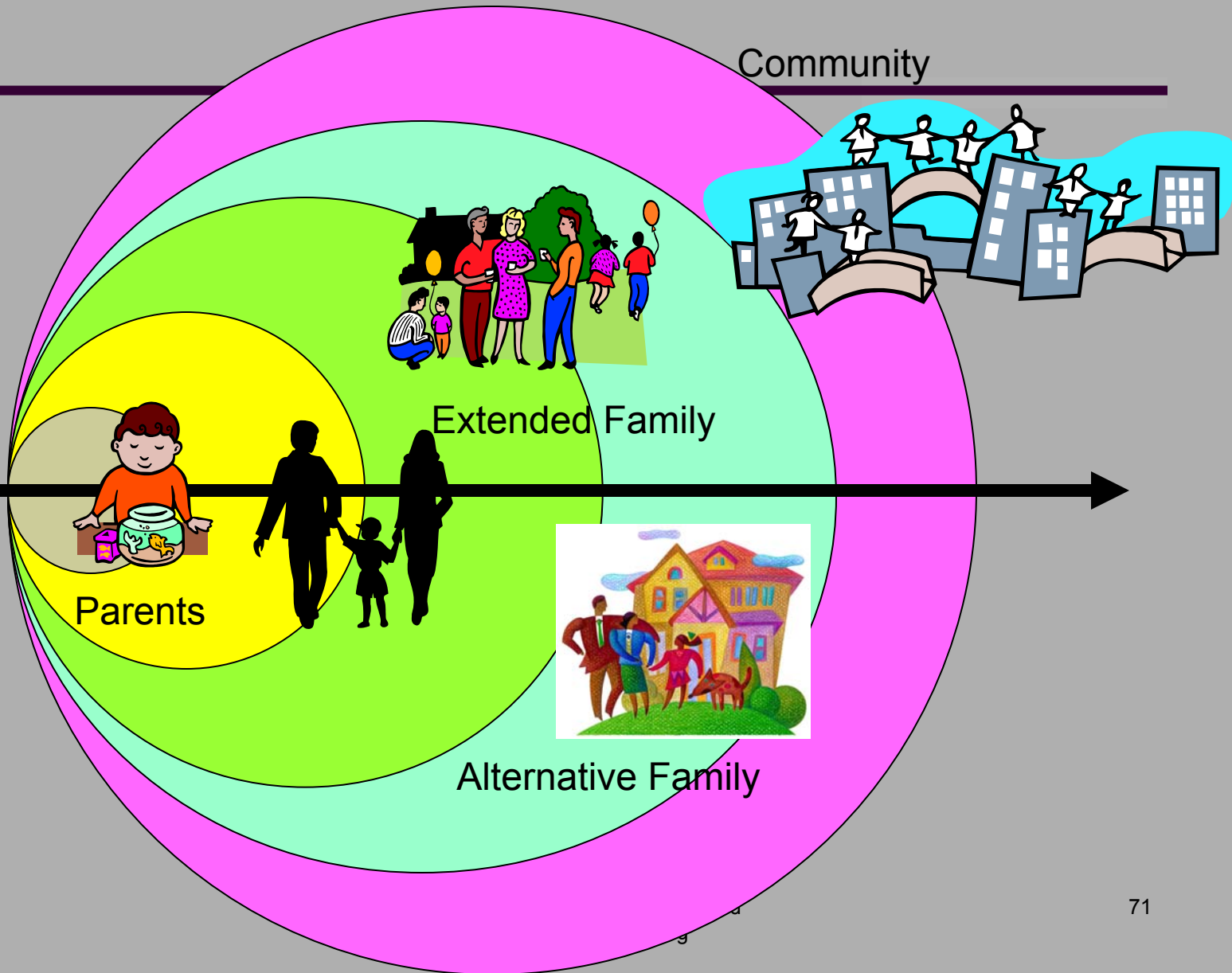
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- **Verbally advise birth parents/family of their rights?**
- **Discuss concerns about past involvement or present barriers to permanency planning with birth family?**
- **Discuss consequences of following through/not following through with the plan?**

Full Disclosure in Jennifer's Story?

Case Planning

Connection and Stability



Involvement of the Birth Parent:

Part of the Plan Development

- Sound CP requires that you immediately let the birth parents know that they matter to you.
 - What they think matters
 - How they feel matters
 - You are seeking to understand their loss and fear.
- We emphasize the need for permanence in the life of their child and explain what we know about child development, loss and bonding. Many parents do not understand these complex emotional issues.
- Birth parents need to be active members of the case planning process.
- They need to be included in all team planning and review meetings.

Case Planning

- Requires the ability to integrate the information gleaned from the assessment into the case plan.
- Do we really understand how to use strengths effectively to mitigate the poor prognosis indicators?
 - What are the specific protective capacities that we can build on in the plan?
 - Know how to get food for the children—use of community resources
 - Shelter
 - Has people to call for help
 - Employed and able to ensure children have what they need
 -
- We must glean from the assessment those key services and supports that are going to best assist the family.
- We are actively working toward reunification while putting other pieces in place to support another permanency option for the child...

Voice of the Youth

- Hear their voice...but also hear their intent
- Children deserve families...even if they say that they don't want families...
- What happens when kids are raised by the state system....
- We owe kids more than this...

Case Planning

- Plan A: Reunification
 - Visits
 - Counseling
 - Parenting Classes
 - Mentoring by resource family
 - Substance Abuse/UA
 - Frequent Case Plan Reviews
- Plan B: Adoption or legal guardianship with relative
 - Identification of kin caregiver
 - Visitation
 - Ensuring relatives are licensed/background check/home study
- Conversations and ongoing discussion re permanency timeframes (Full Disclosure)

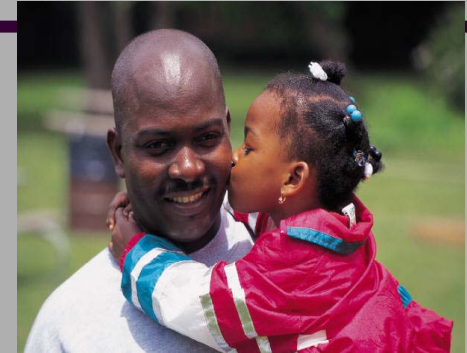


Frequent Visitation: Part of the Case Planning Process

Family Visits for Concurrent Planning Cases

Purposes:

- Preserve family relationships
- Further assess parenting and attachment
- Encourage and teach parenting skills
- Provide hope of reunification for parents



The Visitation Plan

- Mutually developed with family and caregivers
- Least restrictive setting with open communication
- Enhanced frequency and flexibility of visits
- Consideration of safety and children's developmental needs
- Visitation plan frequently evaluated and adjusted

Frequent Visitation

The most critical involvement parents can have is frequent and consistent visitation with their children.

- It is better for a child to have coped with real parents that may be flawed, who bring a mixture of love and rejection, than to reckon with fantasy parents.
- If the visitation can be provided in natural and neutral settings with opportunities for comfortable child-parent interaction.
 - Kansas Model
- CP opens lines of communication between birth families and resource families--if the resource family can openly support the visit, then the child knows the parent and resource family are together...working for what is best..




Frequent visits are a cornerstone of Concurrent Planning

- Frequent visits foster secure relationships, motivate parents to work toward service plan outcomes, and decrease the amount of time that children remain in care.
- Frequent visits offer opportunities for parents and resource parents to communicate, share support and engage in mutual learning and growing.

Case Review Process

Frequent and Timely

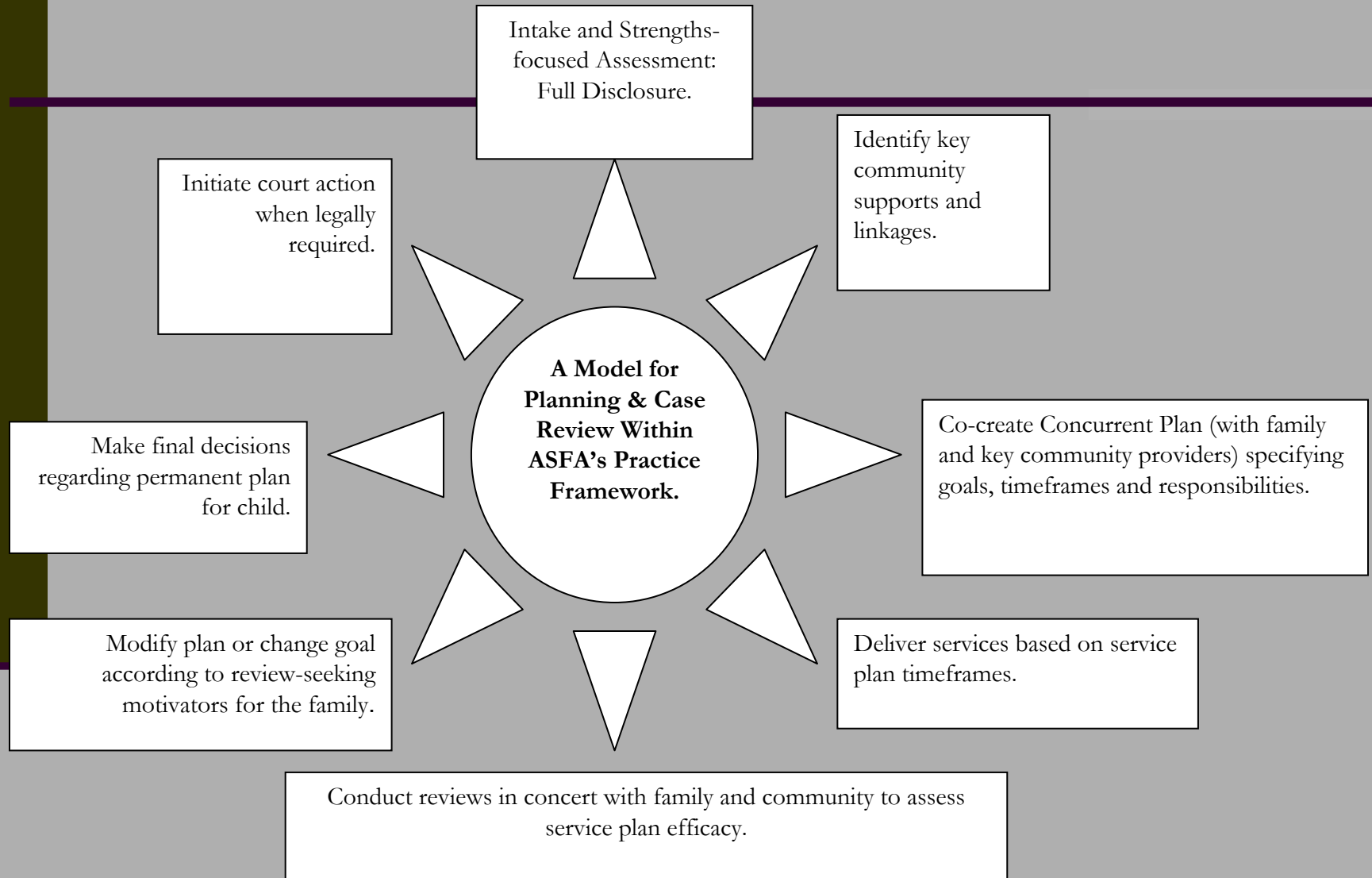
Case Reviews

-  Implementation of CP has significantly impacted the frequency in which case reviews are conducted because permanency decisions have had to be made within one year of a child entering care.
-  3 months is not frequent enough!
-  Consider the frequency of review and modification of case plan.

Case Review

- Create an environment where all voices are heard.
 - Safety
 - Location
 - Participants
 - Around a table or in the living room
- Remember that the case plan is only a hypothesis.
- Purpose of case planning and case review is to test the efficacy of this process.

Family Centered Assessment, Case Planning And Case Review





Recognizing and Exploring Ambivalence

Recognizing, Exploring and Resolving Ambivalence

Recognizing

- Redefine Success-Permanency for children
- Listening for clues with parents
 - Statements regarding relinquishments
 - Considered abortion options
 - Previous relinquishment of a child.
 - Statement of not wanting or being incapable of parenting.
 - Negative comments about the child.

Recognizing, Exploring and Resolving Ambivalence

Exploring

- Exploring and sorting out the clues with parents
- Look at your own biases about ‘giving up a child’ and seeking clarity about clients’ right to resolve things this way
- Assume respect for client’s decisions, allowing them some control over the outcome of their child’s life
- Promoting the relationship between the birth parents and resource parents allows birth parents to see how child is being cared for—this assists in the decision making process for the birth parents.

Recognizing, Exploring and Resolving Ambivalence

- When parent raises issues related to relinquishment, avoid trying to immediately reassure...
- Ask open ended questions to explore parent's fantasies about who can do it better or where or with whom child would be better off
- Give parent "permission" to make the decision not to parent and facilitate parental involvement in alternative decision-making: using FGDM, Mediation, Parenting Options Counseling

Recognizing, Exploring and Resolving Ambivalence

Resolution

- Help parent follow-through on decisions made
- Respect and control remain paramount if parent decides on relinquishment
- A supportive relationship with resource parents helps—we need to consider optimal connection.
- Whenever appropriate, consider and negotiate an open adoption agreement which must include consultation with parent's attorney

Recognizing, Exploring and Resolving Ambivalence

- Schedule a court hearing as soon as possible following the decision to relinquish
- Prepare the parent to be involved in/the one who informs the child about the decisions made allowing the parent to give the child permission to fully connect with adoptive family—
- OPTIMAL CONNECTION!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Adoptive families need to understand how grief and loss will impact the child through the developmental life stages...so they make wise decisions about continued involvement of birth parents in the life of the child.

Children **NEED** Preparation Too!

- What do we do to ensure that children and youth are kept fully involved in the conversations:
 - Do we ask:
 - What They Want?
 - What They Need?
 - Who They Want To Stay Close To?
 - What They Are Afraid Of?
 - What They Dream Of?



Lessons Learned to Date About Successful Concurrent Planning

Lessons Learned

- Must involve resource family community
- This is not an easy or “natural” practice model—we are more accustomed to sequential as opposed to concurrent permanency planning.
- Risk Can Be Both Emotional as well as physical-this is important to remember.
- Frequent Visitation is a Predictor or successful reunification.

Lessons Learned

- Front Loading Services is Necessary as such must ensure a comprehensive array.
- Ambivalence is a worker dynamic as well as a client dynamic—must be addressed during supervision.