Implementing a Therapeutic Foster Visitation Program within Systems of Care

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Panel

- Marian Silverman, Psy.D., Assistant Professor Pediatrics
  Albert Einstein College of Medicine
- Adam Stein, Ph.D., Senior Consultant
  Albert Einstein College of Medicine
- Discussant
  Peter Pecora, Ph.D., Director of Research
  Casey Family Programs, Seattle, WA

Partners

- Albert Einstein College of Medicine, The Early Childhood Center
- Partnership for Family Supports and Justice: The Highbridge Bridge Builders Collaborative
- New York City Administration for Children’s Services
- Bronx Family Court
- Children’s Village
- Family Support Services Incorporated
- Jewish Child Care Association

Types of Partnership

- Grass Roots
  Community Based Stakeholders
  Biological Families & Children
- University Based
  Early Childhood Intervention Services
  Therapeutic Foster Visitation
  Foster Care Agencies

Overview

- Rationale
  Typical foster visitation:
  - Minimal intervention to change
    - parenting behaviors
    - risk factors
  Therapeutic Visitation
  - Assessment
  - Theory
  - Evidence based intervention
Theory

- Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory
  - **Microsystem**: A child's immediate environment (home, family, school, self).
  - **Mesosystem**: Interaction between two microsystems (home and foster care agency).
  - **Exosystem**: Larger social system in which child does not function directly (i.e. child welfare).
  - **Macrosystem**: Larger socio-cultural context.

Goals

- **Exosystemic Change**: Change how the system views visits and promotes/fosters improved visits.
- **Mesosystemic Change**: Promote and Support Reunification and Expedite Permanency Planning (i.e. TPR).

Goals (continued)

- **Microsystemic Change**: Facilitate visits that are child centered, family oriented and that promote:
  - Child Emotional Needs
  - Parent Positive Parenting Experience
  - Child Developmental Needs
  - Parent Emotional Needs
  - Child Safety Needs
  - Parent Attachment
  - Child Permanency

Development Timeline

Highbridge Consortium and Bronx Co. Family Court Decide to improve foster visitsation

Highbridge Awards Planning Grant to AECOM

AECOM Collaborates with stakeholders to determine viability of TVP

Far Fund and Viola W. Bernard Foundation Fund TVP

AECOM and ACS initiate TVP

ACS Creates Training Unit for Staff Pursuing Graduate Degrees/Assigned to TVP

CPI initiated

Intervention

- **Systematic Assessment**: guides the intervention and identifies needed service areas.
- **Visit Coaching** (Beyer, 2005):
  - Emphasizes mutually agreed upon goals under professional guidance.
  - Empowerment: building on family strengths.
  - Empathy: identifying parent’s needs.
  - Responsiveness: helping families manage conflict between parent and child needs.
  - Active Parenting: helping families learn how their child’s behavior is shaped by the adult’s words, actions, and attitudes.

Intervention (continued)

- **Nurturing Parenting Program** (Bavolek):
  - Designed for prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.
  - Evidence based: found to improve parenting attitudes, knowledge and behavior and reduce recidivism.
  - Flexible, topic based modules can be delivered based on need and ability.
Nurturing Parenting

Visit Coaches -> Parents

- Importance of Visiting
- Review of Nurturing Parenting
- Philosophy and Assessing Parenting
- Strengths
- Assessing Families’ Needs
- Growth and Development of Children
  - Ages and Stages
- Working with Difficult Clients
- Developing Empathy
- Developing Nurturing Routines
- Understanding Appropriate Expectations
- Managing and Expressing Feelings
- Communication Skills
- Understanding Discipline
- Alternatives to Spanking

Assessment tools and outcome measures

- Basic demographics
- Family Needs Scale
- Family Supports Scale
- Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2)
- Nurturing Quiz
- Working Alliance Inventory : Foster Care (WAI:FC)
- Ages and Stages Questionnaire
- Parenting Stress Index, 3rd Edition
- Symptom Checklist-90-R
- Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL)
- Visitation / Service Plan Review

Therapeutic Visiting Program

Steps Involved

- Parent is referred to program
  - from Family Court, Foster Care Agency, or walk-in to the Highbridge storefront.
- The program is described to them
  - participation is voluntary
- A first meeting is arranged
  - parent interviewed by program Director and/or a Visit Coach.
- Questionnaires and assessment tools are administered.

Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate of children placed in care</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York City: 10.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Bronx: 14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highbridge: 18.9%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate of Recidivism (NYC)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-12 months: 13.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-3 years: 9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+ years: 8.1%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Demographic & Preliminary Baseline Information

- Race/Ethnicity
  - African American: 42%
  - Hispanic: 58%

- Single vs Dual Parent Households
  - Single Parent: 82%
  - Dual Parent: 18%

- Number of children per household
  - Mode: 4
  - Median: 4.65
  - SD: 7
  - Mean: 18
  - Max: 6
  - Min: 0

Reasons for Entering Care

- Domestic Violence/Excessive Corporal Punishment
- Substance Abuse/Neglect
- Excessive Corporal Punishment
- Substance Abuse/Parental Neglect
- Domestic Violence
- Psychiatric Hospitalization
- Neglect: Educational, Medical, and Nutritional
- Inappropriate Sexual Contact
- Neglect/Mental Illness/Substance Abuse
- Excessive Corporal Punishment

Visitation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitation Status</th>
<th>Visits Scheduled</th>
<th>Visits Kept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family #1
- Older children in placement 7 years: Domestic Violence in Aunt's home
- Younger children in placement 4 years: excessive corporal punishment
- Entered TVP: October 2006
- This week's court date will likely award weekend unsupervised visits

Family #2
- Child entered placement 12/05: excessive corporal punishment
- Entered TVP: October 2006
- Weekend overnight visits as of November 2006

Family #3
- Children in placement 4 years: Excessive Corporal Punishment
- 14 different homes
  - Partially due to problems with father's attitude and allegations towards foster homes
- Entered TVP: October 2006
  - Father's visits recently suspended

Individual Successes Towards Permanency

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Accomplishments/What We Are Learning

- Created a collaboration between systems of care stakeholders
  - through ongoing planning meetings
  - through the use of group training and supervision

As a result future project development and expansion is taking place within a larger system
Accomplishments/What We Are Learning

• Collaboration and forming relationships with families makes the difference
• Relationship building helps repair attachment challenges
• Supervisory process is central to intervention
• Preliminary data suggests that families have more consistent visits and these visits are more positive and rewarding

Challenges

• Integrating a research and evaluation protocol into child welfare agency practices
• Balancing supervision between clinical trainees and child welfare personnel
• Consistent and continuous “adoption” of TVP by foster care agencies

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