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Maintaining Their Roots



Who am I?

- WORKED IN CHILD WELFARE FOR TWENTY YEARS
- OVERSEE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES FOR ARBOR CIRCLE WHICH INCLUDES CASA OF OTTAWA COUNTY
- LMSW/PRIVATE PRACTICE CLINICIAN
- MADE MISTAKES



Why is this topic important?

CHILDREN IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM OFTEN BECOME UNROOTED BOTH INTENTIONALLY AND/OR UNINTENTIONALLY

CHILDREN NEED STRONG ROOTS IN ORDER TO WEATHER LIFE'S STORMS

CASAS IN PARTICULAR CAN BE ONE OF THE STRONGEST ADVOCATES IN MAKING SURE CHILDREN REMAIN CONNECTED TO THEIR ROOTS



Children in the system often become unrooted, intentionally & unintentionally



INTENTIONAL

The purpose of removal is to take the child out of their current situation in order to keep them safe. This is intentional. We want or need to change their environment to meet their best interest.

UNINTENTIONAL

However, children are often placed far from their community of origin. This can be extremely detrimental to a child, even if the biological home was not a safe environment, the child may have found safety, comfort and consistency in other things such as a kind neighbor, a local favorite store, their school.

POTENTIAL IMPACT

The child experiences multi-layered loss, confusion, fear, distress, disoriented, Each move is a loss and each loss is a trauma.

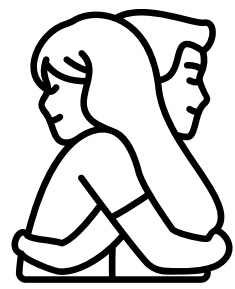


Strong roots help children weather life's storms

CONNECTION = RESILIENCE

- Psychologists define resilience as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress
-American Psychological Association
- Positive social relationships are key to resilience and overall well-being





Advocate for parenting time visits to be based on the child's best interest



Advocate for best placement(s) of the child throughout their time in care

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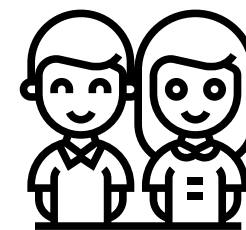


ONE OF THE GREATEST GIFTS WE CAN GIVE TO CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE IS TO HELP THEM MAINTAIN CONNECTIONS

So what do we do as CASAs?



Identify ways to maintain prior connections such as relatives

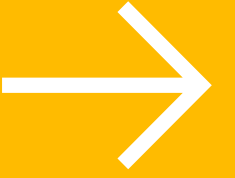


Prioritize sibling placements & relationships



Ensure cultural connections





- WELL-BEING & PERMANENCY OUTCOMES ARE POSITIVELY IMPACTED WHEN SIBLINGS ARE TOGETHER
- IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IS POSITIVELY IMPACTED WHEN SIBLINGS ARE TOGETHER
- SIBLING CONNECTIONS WHILE IN CARE HELP CHILDREN TO BE MORE RESILIENT AND MAINTAIN FAMILY BONDS
- SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS ARE OFTEN THE LONGEST LASTING RELATIONSHIPS PEOPLE HAVE

Prioritize Sibling Placement & Relationships



PARENTING TIMES



- Location, time, and place in the child's best interest
- Maintaining and strengthening the parent-child relationship
- Incorporating family traditions whenever possible
- Including other important people



- Relatives
- Siblings
- Near or in removal community
- Permanency planning
- Similar racial makeup
- Shared religious beliefs/practices

PLACEMENT ADVOCACY

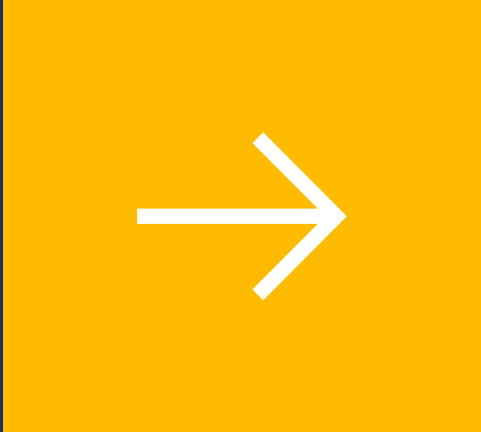




MAINTAINING OTHER CONNECTIONS



- Start by getting to know prior teachers, coaches, relatives, people who were important to the child
- Seek ways the child might continue those relationships (visits, fictive kin placement, letters/cards/emails, etc)
- At each placement, identify the child's positive relationships



- CULTURE OF REMOVAL COMMUNITY
- RACIAL & ETHNIC IDENTITY
- RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL CULTURE
- FAMILY TRADITIONS

Ensure Cultural Connections



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Questions?



Thank you for being a CASA!!!

References

VANDERVORT, F. E., HENRY, J., & SLOANE, M. A. (2012). BUILDING RESILIENCE IN FOSTER CHILDREN: THE ROLE OF THE CHILD'S ADVOCATE. MICHIGAN LAW SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP REPOSITORY, 1-25.
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