

MODULE IX: UNDERSTANDING PRIMARY FAMILIES

Note Taking Guide

At the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Discuss common reactions to loss the primary parents may experience when their children are in out-of-home care
- Discuss the advantages to the child when there is positive interaction between primary parents and caregivers or adoptive parents
- Discuss ways caregivers or adoptive parents can involve the primary parents in decisions regarding the care of his or her child
- Explain the importance of maintaining strong sibling connections

Introduction

- Working with the primary family is an essential part of being on the child welfare team.
- Caregivers and adoptive parents need to have an understanding of the dynamics of primary families.



Collaboration

Caregivers and adoptive parents must be aware of cultural differences and misassumptions that may be barriers to collaboration.

A significant number of primary parents have trauma histories.

Strategies for collaboration include:

- Respect for one another
- Seek conflict resolution
- Permission for honesty
- Focus on the best interest of the child
- Communication



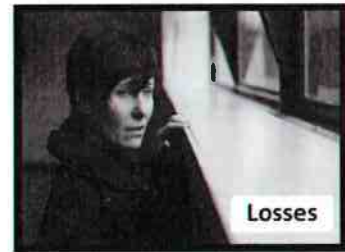
Reactions of Families with Children in Care

Families experience:

- Psychological distress or trauma
- Threats to self-esteem
- Subjected to criticism and shame
- Conflict with strong cultural values
- Reduced income and financial security
- Emotional changes

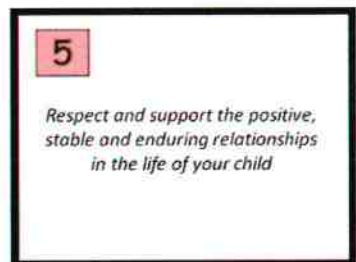
Reactions:

- Shock or denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance



A Continuum of Contact

- Positive, stable relationships play a vital role in helping children heal from trauma.
- Primary parents with children in temporary custody retain residual parental rights.
- Frequent contact with primary family can help ease behavior problems, anxiety, and depression.
- Strategies for maintaining contact include:
 - Be a support system
 - Mentor
 - Allow time for trust to develop



Sibling Connections

- Siblings should be placed together. If that isn't possible, they should have frequent opportunities for visitation.



List three ways you will use the information from this training:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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Individual Reflection

Please take a few minutes to reflect on what you have learned in the Preservice training and how it applies to you. Give this sheet to the agency worker who is completing your homestudy.

1. What are your biggest fears in working with primary families? What do you think will help ease your fears?

2. What strategies do you plan to use to keep the primary parents involved the child's life?

3. What strategies do you plan to use to help the child maintain connections with siblings, if he or she has any?
