



Meeting the Needs of Caregivers
Title IV-E Roundtable Conference
May 22, 2018

Caregiver Core Training is designed to provide families with a foundation to begin the process of acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to be a caregiver for children who have been removed from their homes due to child abuse and neglect.

The first four sessions are designed to help caregivers understand the Child Welfare System: its rules and language and the caregiver's role as part of the team surrounding and supporting the children in care. Sessions 1-4 also includes cultural considerations and how race/ethnicity and culture can influence how we connect with children. In addition, working with birth families and the benefits of doing so are discussed. The authentic voice of the birth parent is achieved by using a speaker or panel to share their journey while navigating the child welfare system. These sessions also provide participants with a "real world view" of becoming a licensed caregiver, including impacts on the caregiver family, potential allegations and cultural differences.

Between Session 4 and Session 5 participants have the opportunity to learn outside the classroom by choosing an activity that will give them more awareness of the experience of children within the system or of the role of a caregiver for children in the system. These activities may include attending foster parent support groups, attending a court hearing, or spending a day in one of the Children's Administration field offices.

The second set of four sessions focuses primarily on understanding a basic framework for parenting children in out-of-home care. These sessions cover attachment, trauma, grief and loss; their connection to behavior and how to manage it; and communication and crisis management. The training concludes with the "nuts and bolts" of preparing their family and home, as well as use of panels to capture the authentic voices of former foster youth and caregivers.

The curriculum is taught by two trainers, at least one of whom has been a foster parent or relative caregiver. By having at least one of the two trainers having had experience as a caregiver, the authentic voice of those who have "been in the trenches" is achieved. Throughout the curriculum the trainers have the opportunity to share personal stories and experiences, in addition to having several sessions with activity options to meet the skills and training style of the trainers and the needs of the classroom.

Session 1 is an overview of the Child Welfare System including a brief history of child

“They talked about how the point of foster care is reunification, and it was good to hear that over and over. It’s good to remember that it isn’t an adoption agency and it isn’t just going to be your new kid. It’s good to hear about resources, the importance of maintaining normalcy, the focus on culture, and minimizing trauma.”

welfare, important legislation that has influenced child welfare over time and an overview of how and when the agency becomes involved with a family. The session wraps up with an overview of dependency timelines, an explanation of what concurrent planning is and what that means for a caregiving family, as well as, what different permanency planning options are available in the event that a child is unable to return home.

Session 2 takes a closer look at the Child Welfare team members and their roles, recommendations regarding communication with team members, how to be an advocate for both themselves through utilizing the chain of command if necessary, and how to advocate for children. The session wraps up with discussions around confidentiality and the Prudent Parenting laws.

Session 3 focuses on working with birth families and the benefits for children in out of home care when there is a co-parenting approach used by caregivers. The session looks at the continuum of partnership and examines what each person (child, parent and caregiver)

“After visitations they may be upset or act up. I’m prepared for this because it’s happening today. I’ve never done this before so it’s new.”

may be experiencing during and after visitation. The session wraps up with a birth parent panel or speaker who shares their experience navigating the child welfare system and the role of caregivers in that process. If a panel is not available, a video is available to capture this experience.

“I loved the bio parents coming in because I think they are brave and coming in to tell the stories. We’re hopeful for an open adoption, but my husband is fearful of that. So he wanted to know more about the situation of why the kids were removed, it was helpful to humanize this figure we called the “bio mom” for me I’m a little more open anyways. So it just confirmed what I thought but it was a changer for him.”

Session 4 enhances the understanding of the caregiver with the differences between race, ethnicity and culture and how each home and family comes with their own unique culture. Activities focus on helping the caregiver to recognize and identify their own individual culture and how that may differ from a child who has been placed in out of home care. Discussion of disproportionality and the Native American experience, as well as, a look at the needs of LGBTQ youth enhances the need to understand and support children who may not be the same as the caregiver family. The session closes with discussions regarding how we interpret the intentions of others based on our own lens and how we can strive to keep a child connected to their own cultural connections.

"It gave us a lot to think about in terms of the level of intentionality that we would need to ensure that children are connected to their cultural roots and their heritage. As it will be different than ours... even if they are technically the same race, they will have a different background than us."

Session 5 looks at the impacts of neglect, abuse and trauma on brain development and how that may impact a child's growth, ability to form attachments, and essential connections. The session wraps up with a look at grief and loss and how to maintain the connections children bring with them when they enter into out of home care. The session also looks at safe sleep, the Period of Purple Crying, pre-natal exposure to drugs and alcohol, as well as, diagnosis and early intervention.

Session 6 examines the needs behind a child's behavior and how their life experiences impact their ability or inability to express those needs. The session asks caregivers to examine their own discipline techniques and provides opportunities to both learn and practice new ways of parenting children using techniques taken from Positive Discipline and the behavior intervention model.

"They taught me some ways of handling the kids' behavior. I tried some of them and it worked!"

Session 7 continues the discussion of managing children's behavior and the way that the caregiver has influence through the power of language through use of a growth mindset and praise, as well as, ways to build a child's self-concept. Guidance on what to do when a

"(The training) reaffirmed that we wanted to do this and having our eyes wide open about the challenges we would face and the different difficulties that kids in the system have, whether it is grieving issues or educational issues."

child makes a disclosure, as well as, what the difference between licensing violations and DLR/CPS allegations and how to avoid having allegations are discussed. The supports that are available if a caregiver is being investigated are also shared. Crisis intervention and crisis planning are discussed and a reminder of self-care and focusing on the fun parts of fostering lead into a youth panel consisting of youth who were in foster care end the session. If a panel is not available, an alternative video is provided.

Session 8 concludes CCT by focusing on the caregiving family. The session looks at how a caregiving family's life may be impacted by adding and removing children to their household. Activities are included that have the caregiver examine their current lifestyle and family calendar, as well as, their ability to provide the level of service a child may need and

"What I found most helpful, one of the trainers (and her partner) had their own kids and then were foster parents to a bunch more. She was an enormous asset to the training."

what a caregiving family should be considering when they receive notice of a child in need of placement. Transition, getting the home ready and what paperwork a caregiver should receive upon taking a placement is included in the final session discussion. The session and course wraps up with a caregiver panel made up of foster parents and relative caregivers.

Caregiver Core Training Evaluation

To assess knowledge gained from this course, trainees rated their knowledge prior to the training and after the training. Surveys from over 1100 trainees completed in 2017 found that there was an average increase of 1.8 points in knowledge.

	Average Rating out of 5
Pre-Knowledge of the subject	2.8
Post-Knowledge of the subject	4.6
Trainer's ability to engage	4.8
Foster parent co-trainer's ability to engage you and teach you well	4.7
Trainer(s) appeared to know the information	4.8
Overall usefulness of training	4.8
As a result of this training, I have enough information to make an informed decision as I move ahead in the process	4.6
The information is easy to apply to my role as a caregiver	4.5
I am motivated to continue learning in future trainings	4.7
I have more information about the types of supports that are available to me as a caregiver	4.6