



Supporting Relationships Between Children, Youth and Their Families

PRIDE In-Service eLearning

Course Description

This eLearning module includes 2 sessions that can be taken on your own schedule. Through this module, caregivers learn how they can support a child or youth's connections to their families. The first session discusses separation and loss in the context of children and youth coming into care. It includes information on what caregivers can do to help a child or youth feel more comfortable with the transition into a new home, through incorporating and respecting a child or youth's routines, traditions and culture. This training discusses how to show respect for, and support connections with a child or youth's siblings. As well, the concept of loyalty conflicts is reviewed, with an emphasis on how caregivers can support a child or youth when they experience them. In the second session, caregivers learn how a child or youth's loss and grief is complicated and ever present. Other topics covered include how family time can support a child or youth in managing their grief, yet still have an impact on their emotions and behavioural responses, and what a caregiver can do to support the child or youth. This includes supporting many forms of contact, as well as what they can do before, during and after a child or youth's contact, or family time, that can be of benefit.

Learning Objectives

Session One: Respecting and Supporting Children and Youth's Ties to their Families

- Understand that the importance of respecting differences among all children and youth, their families and your own is important to your success as a caregiver.
- Respect and support children and youth's need to maintain ties to their families, communities and other significant persons in their lives.
- Develop understanding and skills to support the diversity represented by those in your home and under your care.
- Describe what a loyalty conflict is and how you can support children and youth in your care to manage their feelings about their relationship with their families.
- Identify strategies to effectively communicate with a child or youth's family.
- Understand the importance of sibling connections and develop strategies to support sibling relationships.

Session Two: Supporting Family Time for Children and Youth

- Explain why ongoing contact between children and youth and their families is important.
- Understand what benefits a child or youth and their families experience through ongoing contact.
- Understand what matters are considered by the child or youth's case team when planning for and creating goals related to family time.
- Identify ways that a caregiver can positively prepare and support a child or youth for family time.
- Understand the challenges that may arise as contact increases between a child or youth and their family.

Guided Discussion Questions

1. How do you prepare and support the children and youth in your care both before and after Family Time? What strategies have you found that make the adjustment before and after Family Time manageable?
2. What are some things, aside from Family Time, that you can implement within your home to help strengthen the relationship between the child/youth and their family? How do you support children and youth to maintain their connection to and memories with their family?

Resources

For Ideas on how to work with the child or youth's family

Link: <https://creatingafamily.org/foster-care/fostering-blog/setting-yourself-up-for-a-successful-co-parent-relationship-in-foster-care/>

Link: <https://creatingafamily.org/foster-care/6-tips-for-co-parenting-foster-childs-birth-parents/>

For Support in managing any issues between siblings

Link: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/siblingissues.pdf>

Caregiver Tips for supporting visits between children, youth and their families and significant others

Family time can be difficult for all involved due to the complexity of the situation and emotions. It is in the children and youth's best interest that their family time with their parents or guardian be a success. Here are some suggestions on how to support the children and youth's family time.

Respecting the parent, guardian or significant others role in the life of the child or youth

Parents, guardians and significant others, have knowledge about the children and youth you are caring for that perhaps you are unaware of. It is important to engage with and ask questions. This shows that you are genuinely interested in the child or youth's relationship and what is important to them.

You can ask them to tell you about the child or youth in regards to:

- Family connections and supports.
- Cultural, religious and spiritual practices.
- Family traditions, customs and routines.
- The child or youth's likes and dislikes.
- Favourite toys, foods, music, books and past times.

To further support supervised family time you can also:

- Ask if they would like pictures taken together.
- Share information on the child or youth's daily activity and interests. You can include such things as progress, school work, report cards, sports, and cultural involvement.
- Compliment the parent/guardian or significant other as to what they are doing well during the family time.
- Provide art work or things that the child or youth has made to the parent/ guardian or significant other.
- Share updates on medical, educational and developmental milestones and provide videos or pictures as keepsakes.

Preparing for the visit

Speak to the Caseworker or Case team about any changes or updates prior to attending the family time with the child or youth. This way you are prepared.

Ensure that you are clear on:

- How often family time takes place
- The location and length of family time - Who is to be there
- Your role
- What to bring

Helping the child or youth

- Recognize the child's need to talk about their family and find ways to encourage the dialogue before and after family time.
- Talk about the upcoming family time, providing details as appropriate.
- Ask the child or youth if there is anything they want to take to their family time or to share with their parents or others.
- Include the child and youth's family in daily conversations.
- Maintain and review their memory book.
- Have a positive outlook during family time, as it is important for you, and those spending time together.

Ending the visit

This can often be a difficult time for everyone. If possible:

- Talk with the parent, guardian or significant person at the beginning of the family time as to how they would like to end their time together.
- Provide some time before the end of their family time to get ready to leave.