Building Relationships Filled with Hope

Parenting Resources · https://bridges4mentalhealth.org/hub/parenting-resources/building-relationships-filled-with-hope/

Summary: This 50-minute training addresses how foster parents and birth parents can build stronger relationships.

Application: It is always better for children and youth to remain with their birth families if it is safe to do so. When foster care is necessary, the goal is to provide a temporary safe, stable, and nurturing environment for children and adolescents while actively seeking and supporting reunification with their families. A robust relationship between a child or youth's birth parents and foster parents or kinship caregivers can help achieve this outcome and reduce trauma for everyone. These relationships are best nurtured when child welfare staff, parent partners, court and legal personnel, court advocates, foster parent organizations, and other service providers are supportive and help facilitate early and ongoing communication.

The Birth and Foster Parent Partnership (BFPP) was formed in 2016 to support birth parents, foster families, kinship caregivers, and staff in improving relationships building connections, and using their collective voices to transform systems, culture, policies, and practices to improve outcomes for children and families. The partnership is being managed through a collaboration between Children's Trust Fund Alliance (formerly known as the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds), Youth LawCenter's Quality Parenting Initiative, and Casey Family Programs. As a collective group, the partnership is working together to accomplish the following goals:

- Identify strategies to help birth parents, foster parents, and kinship caregivers work together to keep children and youth safe at home whenever possible and to facilitate reunification and prevent re-entry when foster care is necessary.

- Increase involvement of birth parents, foster parents, and kinship caregivers in advocacy for improved policies and practices that benefit families, children, and youth.

- Change culture and practice in child welfare systems to recruit and retain foster parents and kinship caregivers eager to and capable of partnering with birth parents.

Children and youth are most likely to benefit and thrive when the important adults in their lives cooperate with each other and share responsibilities and decision-making. Through the BFPP, we are working to promote lasting relationships between birth and foster parents and kinship caregivers to support families and to help child welfare systems improve their practices around supporting these relationships. In 2019, birth and foster parents/kinship caregivers from across the country worked with the Children's Trust Fund Alliance, Youth Law Center, and Casey Family Programs to create two complementary documents – one that is most useful for birth and foster parents/kinship caregivers working to build and sustain relationships and another that is most useful for staff and administrators working to create systems that will best support these partnerships.

Source: National Foster Parent Association

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