

**NRCFCPP Concurrent Planning Curriculum**  
**Module 1: *Nuts and Bolts of Concurrent Planning***



**National Resource Center for  
Foster Care and Permanency Planning  
Hunter College School of Social Work**

**Concurrent Planning for Timely Permanency**

**Overall Training Objectives**

- Enhance understanding of concurrent planning concepts and practices as a framework for child welfare practice.
- Expand knowledge and skills of engaging vulnerable families – respect, empathy, genuineness and full disclosure.
- Increase differential assessment skills and the ability to think critically about case potential and progress.
- Enhance professionalism and professional competence in helping families engage in the process of change.
- Enhance understanding of benefits and stages of family meetings to address safety, permanency and developmental well-being.

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### **Session at a Glance (2.4 hrs)**

#### **Welcome**

**Introductions** with Warm-up Values/Memories Exercise Children's Developmental Needs *45 Minutes*

**Training Assumptions** based on those needs ASFA Discussion (Dave Thomas Tape, optional) *30 Minutes*

**Discussion of State Program Performance Data and National Standards** *15 Minutes*

**Break** *15 Minutes*

Concurrent Permanency Planning Defined/Goals/Components *75 Minutes*

- What if this were your child?

#### **Discussion and Wrap-up**

- Family-centered/strengths-based, community-based, cultural competence, open and inclusive, non-adversarial and concurrent considerations of all options

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### **Session Objectives**

To discuss the legal framework for social work practice today – new laws and opportunities that impact on families and children and social work practice

- To identify a common definition of concurrent planning and discuss the benefits and their concerns about its goals and key practice components
- To discuss why concurrent planning is needed, its goals and key components in the context of enhancing “good” social work and legal practice in child welfare
- To review and discuss children’s developmental needs for timely permanency planning and decision-making to minimize the impact of separation, loss and unresolved grief while enhancing attachment capacity

*Time 3 hours*

### **Materials**

Overhead, Handout, Easel, flip chart, markers, tape

### **Handouts and Overheads:**

- Handout 1.1** Children’s Developmental Needs
- Handout 1.2** Concurrent Planning Guiding Themes
- Handout 1.3** PL: 96-272 and ASFA Provisions
- Handout 1.4** National Outcomes and National Standards
- Handout 1.5** Concurrent Planning Defined/Goals
- Handout 1.6** 9 Core Components of Concurrent Planning
- Handout 1.7** Responding to ASFA

### **Resource Materials:**

National CFSR Indicators  
Child Welfare Legislation Summary  
Family-Centered and Community-Based Practice  
Strengths-Needs Based Practice  
Roosevelt Case  
Permanency Definitions and Core Elements  
Impact of Placement on Children  
Twelve Concurrent Planning Pitfalls

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Concurrent Planning Steps to Implementation

### **Welcome/Introductions**

Welcome participants to the session – Concurrent Planning for Timely Permanency – and introduce yourself as the trainer. Then inform participants of the focus of the training what they can expect from the training – an opportunity to focus on how to achieve timely permanency for children in out-of-home care.

Ask participants to introduce themselves by sharing their name, their position with the Department, or where they work and how long they’ve been involved in child welfare, and to share a value or a memory that is important to them today that came from their family, their childhood or their community.

Some responses you might hear could include:

- The importance of family and family history – connections to genealogy and land
- Respect for others – especially elders
- Hard work
- Creating “family” when moving to a new town, and building new supports
- Faith – religion’s role in keeping the family together
- A sense of belonging to a family with history
- Bedtime memories
- Neighbors watching out for/reporting on children
- Aunts and uncles raising children when parents become ill
- Continuity of family relationships over time
- Family traditions and rituals – celebrations together at holidays
- Sharing of stories from generation to generation
- Support in difficult times
- Neighbors supporting one another
- Different cultures getting along
- Focus on education
- Mother’s strength in raising children alone

List the answers on a flip chart and thank each person after sharing their memories or values. Stories may be shared. After all have introduced themselves, the trainer should share the same information about him/herself and then thank the group for being so candid.

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To summarize, weave their responses into a discussion connecting these values and memories about security, safety, family connectedness, caring communities, respect, etc. to the types of memories/values we hope that all the children we deal with in our child welfare system will have about their childhoods and their experiences – within the child welfare system and within safe and stable permanent families we will help to strengthen or we will help to find for them. State that we need to be sure that each child has the opportunity to have a safe and stable family to meet their urgent developmental needs.

Share story that during one training exercise, a participant reflected that he was presently working with a child who could clearly articulate that what he wanted when he grew up was to have good memories of his childhood – he was asking the worker to help him get those memories...and that is our job with each child we work with now...to help them have the positive memories of their childhood experiences...

### Children’s Developmental Needs

Using **Handout 1.1** comment that all children have basic needs that families and communities nurture, safeguard and protect. Concurrent planning is rooted in these basic needs and core theories of child development. Through our work with families and children we help children to feel connected to the past, secure in the present, and hopeful about the future.

Explain that Concurrent Planning builds on what we know children need for their healthy growth and development – consistency and continuity in their family relationships – no matter what their cultural background. Concurrent Planning is meant to minimize the negative impact that separation, loss and unresolved grief can have on children; and it is meant to reduce the relationship disruptions children experience even if they must be placed in foster care to protect them from abuse or neglect.

Continue by explaining that *Concurrent Permanency Planning strengthens and enhances the child-focused and family-centered child welfare practice framework – with younger and older children alike.* When we are using a Concurrent Planning practice framework, we are working towards reunification – when reasonable efforts are required – while also implementing an alternative or back-up permanency plan if reunification is unable to be accomplished within the timeframes we are now asked to work within.

Using **Handout 1.2**, review the key themes that will be addressed through this training:

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### **Concurrent Planning Training Themes**

- Child Welfare mission is to achieve safety, permanency and developmental well-being of children and families.
- No child should grow up in foster care.
- The social work role is to help families make the changes that will allow them to safely care for their children or make informed decisions about who will.
- The role of parents is to change – with the right education and supports from the social worker and other agencies.
- Adults should take risks, not children.

### **Discussion:**

Ask for reactions to this set of Guiding Themes. Is the group in agreement with them? Would they add any other guiding themes to this list? One group added: “the solutions lie within the family”.

Summarize this section by explaining that throughout our training on Concurrent Planning, we will be reviewing together the answers to three questions; trainer should list them on a flip chart.

### **Concurrent Planning Training Framework Questions:**

- Why Concurrent Permanency Planning now?
- What does Concurrent Permanency Planning involve?
- How do we do Concurrent Permanency Planning?

Explain that the training will involve a mix of information sharing (knowledge) and activities (to build competencies) that will allow participants to ‘do business’ with the concepts and the skills required to more effectively help families change, and to support the placement of children with foster families – relatives or non-relatives – who have the capacity to support reunification while at the same time serve as a permanency resource if reunification should not work out. Comment too that the training is designed to give information and get information from the participants.

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*Comment:* Let's begin to answer our first question:

### **Why Concurrent Permanency Planning Now?**

#### *The Current Legal Context in Child Welfare Today*

Review ASFA principles/provisions directly or use the Dave Thomas Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) Tape here. This video summarizes the need for the Adoption and Safe Families Act and forms the basis for the discussions about national standards for practice that emerged from ASFA.

Debrief the video by asking if there are questions/comments. Then let participants know that there is more information on ASFA and PL-96: 272 in Handout 1.3, as well as reference materials at the end of Module 1 about other child welfare legislation.

#### ***Federal Law and Regulations***

Explain that the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) encouraged the use of concurrent planning. Make the following points about ASFA:

- ASFA passed in 1997 to: address concern about high profile child deaths and safety of children in their own homes and within our child welfare system; clarify confusion around what constitutes 'reasonable' efforts and for how long; and reduce delays in achieving permanency for children.
- ASFA imposed new timeframes for service delivery and decision-making about where children will grow up
- ASFA mandated studies on kinship care and the inter-relationship between child welfare and substance abuse – emerging trends within the families we serve that impact the system's capacity to achieve timely decisions about safety, permanency and developmental well-being.
- ASFA promotes accountability and innovation, and a framework for reform.
- Leaves to states the task of change – at the family, agency and systems levels; leaves to the states the task of planning, implementing, sustaining and evaluating needed changes...no easy task!

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Using **Handout 1.4** explain that it has been the intent of ASFA to promote accountability and timely outcomes for children and families. ASFA required that DHHS submit annual reports to Congress about how children welfare agencies across the country are doing – what kind of safety, permanency and well-being outcomes they are achieving for children and families – with the first report issued in 2000; and that National Performance Standards were issued in 12/28/00.

### ***Trends or Data about children in care***

Review data about the State’s children in care and try to find these numbers:

- Numbers of Children in Care
- Average Length of Stay
- Average Length of Time to Reunify
- Average Length of Time to Finalize Adoptions
- Average Number of Moves Experienced By Children in Foster Care

Explain that in December 2000 the Children’s Bureau issued its National Standards that States will be expected to aim for and will be measured against through the federal Child and Family Services Reviews that will be taking place over the next three years (comment about the timing of the State’s CFSR). These reviews are mandated by amendments made in the Social Security Act in 1994 and are aimed at assisting States to assess their performance on the three goals of safety, permanency and well-being; as well as in the areas of 7 systemic factors that affect the quality of services delivered to children and families and the outcomes they experience: Statewide Information System, Service Array, Case Review System, Staff Training, Quality Assurance System, Agency Responsiveness to the Community, Foster & Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment & Retention.

Using **Handout 1.4**, review State Data that is relevant to the National Outcomes and Standards and that will be impacted by Concurrent Planning.

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**Child Welfare Data**

*(Adapted from National Outcome Report –2000)*

<b>Data</b>	<b>Alaskan/ Native</b>	<b>Asian/ Pacific</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>White</b>
_____ Child Maltreatment Victims					
_____ Children in Foster Care					
_____ Children Adopted					
_____ Children Waiting to be Adopted					
_____ Children Freed for Adoption and Waiting to be Adopted (does not include children 16+ who are freed with goal of emancipation)					

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**See Handout 1.4**

### **State's Relationship to National Standards**

#### ***Recurrence of Maltreatment***

National Standard – 5 % or fewer of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during the first 6 months of the period under review had another substantiated or indicated report within 6 months after the first report

**State Performance:**

#### ***Incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care***

National Standard – 0.4% or less of all children in foster care in the State during the period under review, were the subject of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by foster parent or facility.

**State Performance:**

#### ***Foster Care Re-entries***

National Standard – 6% or fewer of all children who entered foster care during the year under review re-entered foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care placement.

**State Performance:**

#### ***Stability of Foster Care Placements***

National Standard – 89% of all children who have been in foster care less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal have no more than 2 placement settings

**State Performance:**

#### ***Length of Time to Achieve Reunification***

National Standard – 78% or more of all children who were reunited with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care were reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from the home.

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### **State Performance – 73%**

National Standard – 36% or more of all children who exited foster care during the year under review to a finalized adoption exited care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from the home.

### **State Performance – 27%**

Comment that the unit for measurement for the national standard is the 75<sup>th</sup> quartile – the number that is better than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of how the states have performed on a certain indicator becomes the national standard; as states improve, the percentage for each indicator should increase.

### **Conclusion**

Summarize this section by acknowledging that these pieces of legislation together create a framework for child welfare practice that is about improving outcomes and the experience of children and families who are involved with the child welfare system. Concurrent Permanency Planning is one way to effectively and respectfully improve outcomes and experiences that families and children have with the child welfare system.

Let them know we will continue after a short break with our second overall question.

### ***What is involved in Concurrent Planning?***

***Break – ask participants to take a 10-15 minute break.***

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### **What is Involved in Concurrent Planning?**

#### **Exercise:**

#### **What if this were your child?**

Welcome participants back from their break. Let them know that we are now going to engage in a brief exercise to highlight the components of effective concurrent planning.

Ask them to take out a picture of a child who is special to them from their wallets or bags. If they don't have one, they could write that child's name down on a piece of paper, or if they are artistically inclined, they could draw a representation of that special child. Ask them to sit back and relax; to think of this special child – or another child who is special to them – their own son/daughter, a niece/nephew, a god -child or grandchild or someone they have known in some other arena. Think about what that child looks like, feels like when you give him/her a hug, act like when misbehaving, how they respond when they need to go to bed or are playing with their friends.

Then ask them to imagine that you returned home from work one day to find that this child had not returned from school or day care, and had been taken into protective custody due to a report that was filed.

Imagine the following:

- How you would be feeling?
- What you would want to know?
- How you would want to be treated?
- How you would want your child to be treated?

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### Discussion:

Ask participants to form groups of 4 and begin to answer these questions together; put the questions on a flip chart so the groups can refer to them. Allow the groups 10 minutes to meet to answer the questions. Ask that they appoint a recorder. When they are finished, ask each question and ask different groups to share their responses, making one list for each question on the flip chart.

Comment after all answers have been shared that through their responses, the participants have described what would be an effective concurrent planning program.

- Acknowledge the range of feelings and conditions that parents are faced with; and the phases of shock, depression, anger, bargaining and acceptance that people go through when in crisis and faced with deep loss
- Respect parents' need to have information about what they can expect and what they need to do to get their children back
- Involve parents and families respectfully in the planning and decision-making about strengths, services needed and where their children will be placed and potentially grow up if they couldn't provide the care needed
- Provide a way for children to have stability and continuity in their living arrangements

Ask for reactions from the group before moving on to review the definitions and core components of Concurrent Planning.

Using **Handouts 1.5 and 1.6**, review the State's Definitions and Goals for Concurrent Permanency Planning – or use the general definitions/goals developed by the NRCFCPP and the 9 Core Components of Concurrent Planning with the group, linking the discussion to the information the group said they'd like to know and the ways they'd like to be treated if it were their child placed in the foster care system. Introduce the discussion by referring to the following items appearing in the Federal Regulations.

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### **Concurrent Planning – From the final Federal Regulations**

- Effective Tool to Expedite Permanency
- May Not be Appropriate for Each Child
- Not a Requirement, but Encouraged
- Requires Individualized Assessment and Decision-making
- T/TA, Supervision are Critical Components
- States have the option to make reasonable efforts to make and finalize alternative permanency placements concurrently with reasonable efforts to reunify a child with his/her family.
- States are required to make reasonable efforts to find permanency for children who cannot return to their biological parents.
- States must concurrently identify, recruit, process and approve a qualified adoptive family for a child when it files or joins a petition to terminate the parental rights of that child.

Then share the definitions and components to guide the discussion.

#### ***What is Concurrent Planning?***

- Working towards reunification while at the same time establishing and implementing an alternative permanency plan
- Concurrent rather than sequential planning efforts to more quickly move children from the uncertainty of foster care to the security of a safe and stable permanent family

#### **What are the Goals of Concurrent Planning?**

- To support the safety and well-being of children and families
- To promote early permanency decisions for children in out-of-home care
- To reduce the number of moves and relationship disruptions children experience in foster care
- To decrease children's length of stay in foster care

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Lead into the following discussion of the Nine Practice Components of Concurrent Planning by summarizing that Concurrent Planning is about:

- Engaging families in early case planning, case review and decision-making about permanency options to meet children’s urgent need for stability and continuity in their family relationships.
- Developing a network of foster parent (relatives or non-relatives) who can work toward reunification and also serve as a permanency resource for children, and
- Maintaining continuity in children’s family, sibling and community relationships

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### **Handout 1.6: 9 CORE CONCURRENT PLANNING COMPONENTS**

*(Adapted from Concurrent Planning Materials of Lutheran Social Services of Washington and Idaho)*

#### **Success Redefined**

- Early permanency for children is the goal

#### **Differential Assessment and Prognostic Case Review**

- Culturally respectful family and child assessments - strengths, needs, core problems
- Tentative, reasoned hypothesis about the probability of the child's returning home, and the family's capacity to benefit from reunification services, and the need for an alternative plan.

#### **Full Disclosure**

- Respectful, candid discussion early on about the impact of foster care on children, clarity about birth parents' rights and responsibilities, supports agency will provide, permanency options, and consequences of not following through with case plan
- Open, honest discussions with all parties - biological families, relatives, foster/adoptive families, attorneys, other service providers
- Use of family group decision-making/conferencing strategies to involve families in early planning.

#### **Crises and Time Limits as Opportunity**

- Placement and clarity about time limits designated by law can create crises for families
- Using time limits and the "crisis" of the placement as an opportunity to make change
- Time limits based on children's urgent need for a stable, caring and permanent family

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### **Motivating Parents to Change**

- The role of the worker is to engage families in planning, to motivate them to change and support the process of change
- The role of the parent and/or family is to change

### **Frequent Parent-Child Visitation**

- Parents who visit regularly have the best chance of reunification with their children
- The more structured the visitation plan, the more likely parents will participate
- Involving foster parents in parent-child visits promotes more supportive relationships

### **Plan A and Plan B: Permanency Planning Resource Families**

- Having a back-up contingency plan
- Options counseling
- Early search for and involvement of absent fathers & immediate and extended family; early Indian heritage identification
- Foster parents as permanency resources if reunification doesn't work out
- Completion of an early home study for resource family
- Partnerships between biological parents, agency workers and foster parents

### **Written Agreements, Scrupulous Documentation and Timely Case Review**

- Short-term immediate goals and long-term permanency goals - Who will do what, when and how?
- Service linkages are key - drug treatment, domestic violence, mental health, family support
- Writing down goals, tasks and time frames helps motivate parents to follow through
- Documentation of services provided and case progress - behavior, not promises is the only evidence that can be reported on in court
- Early and ongoing case review to assess progress, review continuing needs, plan for the future

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### **Legal/Social Work Collaboration**

- Consideration of due process and parental rights when children are first placed in care
- Early determination of paternity and search for relatives, absent parents
- Consultation and support from legal staff assures legally sound case work and case planning
- A good social work plan is a good legal plan
- Use of non-adversarial child welfare mediation strategies to resolve conflicts

As you review these components, encourage reaction and questions from the group. Engage in sharing examples from your own practice or ask if participants have had experiences with these components that they would like to share.

### **Discussion:**

Conclude this discussion by commenting that we will now review a case that will allow us to apply some of these concepts while also renewing our commitment to the urgent need for permanency planning.

### **Why is Permanency Planning Concurrent approach needed?**

#### **Exercise – Case Application: *Roosevelt***

Ask the group to review the case of Roosevelt (see Resource Materials), commenting that this was a case that appeared in 1999 in the NY Times the Neediest Cases, a holiday series that features “success stories” to raise money for non-profit agencies in NYC. Roosevelt was 14 at the time.

Ask that they form small groups of 4-5 and review the following questions (write on a flip chart):

- What strengths does Roosevelt have?
- What red flags should we be concerned about?
- What permanency options exist for Roosevelt today?
- What permanency options existed for Roosevelt in the past?
- What would you do next?

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### Discussion:

Allow the groups 10 minutes to discuss Roosevelt’s case situation and then reconvene the group, leading a discussion guided by the questions – strengths, red flags and permanency options today and in the past, and what they might do next. Ask if they think this is indeed a ‘success story’?

Link the discussion to the importance of early attachments, continuity of care and permanency for children

Remind the participants of the definitions of permanency planning that have emerged over time (See Resource Materials):

- A process: “... of helping a child to live in a home which offers the hope of establishing lifetime family relationships...all children have a right to a permanent family. It is our job to ensure that they get one and in a timely manner (Terpstra 1986).
- A philosophy: “... that seeks first to preserve and support the child's biological family environment... and when this is not possible, to secure an adoptive (or guardianship) family...(Cole 1985)
- A collection of services and programs: “... delivered in behalf of children...in the effort to secure for each child a caring, legally recognized, continuous family in which to grow up...(Cole 1985)
- A strategy: “ ... designed to help children live in families that offer continuity of relationships with nurturing parents or caretakers and the opportunity to establish lifetime relationships (Maluccio and Fein 1983)

Go on to review the core elements of Permanency Planning ...

Permanency for children implies strengthening or finding families that can provide:

- **Intent** - while a permanent home or family may not be *certain* to last forever, it is one that is *intended* to last indefinitely and offers the hope of lifetime connections and support.
- **Commitment and continuity in family relationships** - a permanent family is meant to survive geographic moves and the vicissitudes of

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life because it involves commitment and sharing a common future - whether with the family of origin, an adopted family, or a guardianship family

- **Sense of ‘belonging’ to a family** - evolves from commitment, continuity, and social/legal status - is critical to security and positive self-esteem, and paves the way to healthy growth and development
- **Legal and social status** - there is a need to overcome the second class status associated with temporary or long-term foster care, and legitimize a child’s place in a legally permanent family; a family that offers a child a ‘*definitive legal status*’ separate from the child welfare system protects his or her rights and interests, and promotes a *sense of belonging*.

*(Adapted from "Renewing Our Commitment to Permanency for Children", a joint project of the National Resource Center for Permanency Planning and the Child Welfare League of America; and Permanency Planning for Children: Concepts and Methods, Maluccio, Fein and Olmstead, 1986.)*

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Briefly review the range of permanency outcomes we are looking to achieve: (see Resource Materials):

### **Permanency Outcomes**

- Children remain safely with their parents or relatives
- Children are reunified safely with their parents or relatives
- Children are safely adopted by relatives or other families
- Children are safely placed with relatives or other families as legal guardians
- Children are safely placed in another planned alternative permanent living arrangement

### **Discussion**

Which should be a review for participants – related to how concurrent planning supports secure attachments and prevents foster care drift – by minimizing the number of moves children experience and helping children to adjust to the separations, losses and unresolved grief that they experience when abused and neglected and when they are placed away from their parents to protect their safety.

Comment that the challenge of concurrent planning is to recognize that the rights and needs of parents and children change with the passage of time and that delays in decision-making can bring harm to children and families.

### **Preventing Foster Care Drift – *Rationale***

Trainer’s Note: This exercise may be done after the lunch break and before the differential assessments module – linking it to one purpose of the Differential Assessment for the Potential of Reunification which is to identify those families in which children would be at high risk of foster care drift.

Comment that one of the most important goals of concurrent planning is to reduce the number of moves and relationship disruptions that children experience if they must be placed in foster care. Remind participants that this goal emerges directly from children’s developmental needs (use handout/overhead 1.1 again) for continuity, stability and predictability in their family relationships.

Comment that Concurrent Planning is designed to meet children’s urgent needs for continuity and stability by identifying resource families that can

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work towards reunification or commit to be a permanent resource for the child.

Thus, Concurrent Planning is based on theories of child development, attachment and bonding, and the impact of separation and loss on children's capacity to form meaningful attachments and relationships (See Erickson's Stages of Development in Resource Materials) which has an overall impact on how well children move through the developmental phases of their short childhoods.

Explain that we want to spend a short amount of time refreshing our memories of why secure attachments are so important for children – to give us the words we may need in talking about children's needs with parents, foster parents, judges, attorneys, and service providers. Then move into the next exercise.

### **Table Exercise**

#### **Children's Developmental Needs, the Importance of Secure Attachments**

Ask participants to write the words that come to mind in answering the following question the question -

- Why are secure attachments so critical for children's healthy growth and development?

Allow them 3-4 minutes to write down their answers. Then ask them to share their answers with the group while you write them down on the flip chart. Expect that the groups will have conversations that address the following ideas. Secure attachments are important for children because:

- Leads to the capacity to trust
- Leads to the capacity to form meaningful relationships with parents, peers and in adulthood
- Research findings show that nurturing and positive stimulation contributes to secure attachments and healthy brain development
- Helps children move through the stages and challenges of childhood with self-confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging
- Contributes to positive identity formation

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- Weave in the following background information about the importance of family stability and continuity for children’s healthy growth and development:
- Children require stimulation of their social, emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual areas of growth
- Children need opportunities early in life to learn to trust - Basic trust/mistrust is the first stage of development
- Children need care and nurturing from at least one consistent adult in their first year of life for basic trust and positive attachments to emerge - they need someone to “love them to death”, to make them feel special
- The way children’s needs (for food, clothing, changing, sleep, play, overall developmental stimulation) are met - especially in first year of life - will influence whether the child sees the world as a pleasant, safe place to be
- Trusting relationships emerge when children feel safe, secure, and that they belong to a family - however it is structured
- The family setting is the child’s first socializing experience - hence the family holds great importance for how the child comes to view the world and forms relationships with significant others
- When children feel safe and secure, it is easier to move through the other stages of developmental challenges (see Erickson’s stages of development)
- When children do not have daily, consistent and nurturing caretakers, or when their relationships/attachments are disrupted through removal from the family/home, they are traumatized from the loss of the known relationship and find it difficult to trust new caregivers - no matter how serious the need for removal and how well-meaning new caretakers may be
- Secure attachments are formed through consistent daily care giving that meets the child’s physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual needs

## **NRCFCPP Concurrent Planning Curriculum**

### **Module 1: *Nuts and Bolts of Concurrent Planning***



- When the child's needs are met, a reciprocal interaction emerges...the child relaxes/is satisfied, the parent relaxes/is satisfied - and a bonding between the two develops
- While there are cultural differences in how this process of attachment and bonding occurs based on different cultural norms, this process is a universal one...children need consistent, nurturing care-giving for their healthy growth and development
- Comment that recent research is now beginning to show the importance of early life experience and secure attachments for the healthy brain development of young infants and toddlers.
- We are learning that early life experiences shape the way that the brain develops with the potential of laying the foundation for future functioning
- Nurturing or non-nurturing experiences shape the pathways that are formed in the brain which in turn determine that kind of responses the child will develop and carry with him/her into childhood and adulthood.
- Thus children are learning biologically as well as emotionally whether the world is a safe place to be.

Comment that the child welfare system has an obligation to meet children's urgent need for stability and consistency - and to do so in the following ways:

- To strengthen family functioning and prevent unnecessary out-of-home placements when possible
- To provide the needed goal-oriented family support, education and therapeutic services aimed at timely decisions about family reunification, or
- When that is not possible, timely decisions about other permanent family options for children in foster care.
- Need to view the child's behavior and reactions to the separation as expression of LOSS and GRIEF, rather than pathology; and we need to avoid labeling them as "bad" "troubled" "emotionally disturbed"

*Notes*

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- Try to understand what stage the child is experiencing in the continuum - shock, denial, bargaining, anger, depression, and acceptance.
- We need to identify those children who have the greatest likelihood of spending long periods of their childhood in foster care - children for whom intensive reunification efforts would lead to faster decisions about return to family or relatives - or clear documentation to make faster decisions about other permanent family options.

#### **Children at risk of “foster care drift”**

Ask the group if they know which children spend the longest time in foster care.

Discuss the fact that foster care placements are on the rise - with younger children, being placed with relatives, and staying longer in out-of-home care - and all children experiencing multiple moves in out-of-home care.

As many as 25-30% of children exiting the system entered at an early age and leave without a permanent family.

We want to prevent as much as possible the long term drifting of young and older children in the foster care system – a need Concurrent Planning is meant to address.

Comment that when children have been abused and/or neglected, and then experience separations and associated losses and grief, they have a mix of feelings that are exhibited in a variety of ways – feelings and behaviors we need to be attuned to and able to respond to, including:

*Notes*

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## **Module 1: *Nuts and Bolts of Concurrent Planning***



### **Upon Separation Children Feel**

- Abandoned
- Disoriented, confused
- Anxious
- Rejected
- Fearful
- Ashamed
- Guilt
- Self-blame
- Responsible
- Unworthy

### **And Logically, We See...**

- Anger
- Hostility
- Violence
- Withdrawal, sadness, depression
- Lack of concentration, memory
- Inability to distinguish right from wrong
- Difficulty forming meaningful relationships
- Mistrust
- Difficulty working through past hurts, pressing needs, developmental conflicts
- Difficulty playing with others – children and adults

### **Thus Children Need....**

- Someone to listen, hear their stories, stay with their pain
- Respect so they can develop respect
- Information about who they are: Where am I? How did I get here? What will happen to me next?
- Reconnections/New connections
- Opportunities for growth, to work through the past, to learn to trust (again)
- Permission to move on
- Hope for the future
- Possibilities
- Sense of permanence, structure, comfort, quality care

*Notes*

