INFORMATION PACKET:
Family Preservation

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Family Preservation is often linked with Family Support but they are different. Family Preservation is only warranted when a potential threat of child maltreatment has occurred. Preservation is in place to prevent an out-of-home placement and is a crisis intervention, whereas support may be provided for families with less severe problems. Preservation is often also called Intensive Home-Based Services (IHBS) because of the focus on in-home work. Families who receive family preservation services are given a case worker who is available to them 24 hours a day. The service is time-limited with most families receiving this care within a six month period. Counselors assist with multiple needs of the family from parent training, to counseling to providing material assistance. Family preservation can also be used for reunification and preparing adoptive parents.

Some of the goals of family preservation are to resolve the immediate crisis, maintain safety of children at home, support families preparing to reunite or adopt, to be culturally competent and appropriate, to prevent out-of-home placement, and to break the multi-generational cycle of violence.

The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (AACWA) of 1980 discouraged the placement of large numbers of children in foster care and asked for frequent case plans and reviews for each case. It also provided federal funding for the adoption of special needs children. Because of this act, less children were placed in foster care in the ‘80s (Crosson, 1998). In the 1993 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, New legislation provided funds for family preservation and support services (Factsheet #37, 1994). Both of these acts were pro-family preservation.

The 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act legislative focus was placed on adoption, permanency and child safety. Though child safety is always important as well as family preservation, in troubled families these two ideas clash. There has long been a practice tension between the interest of the individual child and that of the whole family.
Facts

- Most families, when properly assisted, can care for their children successfully.
- Children need to be with their families, and even in the most troubled families, separation is a traumatic event for both child and family.
- Within 24 hours of a referral to Family Preservation Services (FPS), a response is made to the family.
- Evaluation of FPS programs around the country report on average 80 percent of families that have received FPS remain together after one year.
- In 1981 the federal funding ratio of foster care to preservation was 2 to 1. In 1992 the ratio was 8 to 1.
- Number of kids in foster care on March 31st, 2000: 588,000
- Mean age of kids in foster care on 3/31/00: 10.1
- Percentage of kids in placement settings who are in foster family homes with non-relatives: 48% Percent with relatives: 25%
- Mean length of stay in out-of-home placement: 33 months
- For 43% of cases in out-of-home placement the goal is reunification
- The outcome for 60% of those leaving foster care is reunification
- 1 in 3 children will be poor at some point in their childhood
- 1 in 5 was born poor
- 1 in 5 is born to a mother who did not graduate from high school
- 3 in 5 preschoolers have their mother in the labor force
- 1 in 6 is poor now
- 1 in 6 is born to a mother who did not receive prenatal care in the first 3 months of pregnancy
• 1 in 7 has no health insurance
• 1 in 15 lives at less than half the poverty level
• 1 in 24 lives with neither parent
Policies and Legislations

The Purpose of the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, (PL 96-272) was to promote permanency and to lessen the load of children placed in long-term foster care. This act pointed to the fact that foster care was being greatly overused at the cost of children. However this act focused mostly on permanency rather than preservation or reunification.

The first important legislation dealing with family preservation was passed into law in 1993. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993, P.L. 103-66 amended title IV-B by adding subpart 2. This new legislation provided funds "for the purpose of encouraging and enabling each state to develop and establish, or expand, and to operate a program of family preservation services and community-based family support services." (Factsheet #37, 1994).

The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 again called for permanency in adoption for children. The focus was not upon the family unit but rather was placed on the health and safety of the child above all. Though a child’s safety and health are indisputably of paramount concern, some claimed that this act marked a lessening of focus on the importance of preservation. For instance, since ASFA, no new federal funding has been allocated towards family preservation.(Day, Martinez and Redhorse, 2001).

The most recent legislation concerning preservation was the Child Welfare Policy Manual released by the Children’s Bureau on September 24, 2001. While this is not law, it is an interpretation by the Department of Health and Human Services that consolidates and clarifies issues associated with the Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Program. This manual focuses a good deal on “reasonable efforts”. Agencies are expected to make reasonable efforts to prevent out-of-home placement for children (except for in severely dangerous situations). If reasonable efforts are not shown to be made, funding for an entire foster care episode will not be provided. This
most recent bill is once again placing great importance upon preservation and preventing out-of-home placement for children.
Practice Tips and Model Programs

A report from the Department of Health and Human Services from 2001 focusing on family preservation did not produce much evidence to document the effectiveness of preservation services. However the report did not identify preservation as a pointless effort, but rather that professionals needed to improve upon the models presently used. For instance, the report noted that preservation needs to be more specialized to fit individual needs of families. The authors of the report also suggested that many of the problems people are faced with may be chronic and therefore short-term crisis intervention may not be appropriate.

Others have had more positive findings pointing to the benefits of family preservation. They have identified some good models and practice tips. For instance, two researchers found that a strong relationship between the family and worker produced positive outcomes in preservation services (Meezan & McCroskey, 1996).

Researchers in Baltimore and Portland found that length of preservation services were more effective (Nelson, Tyler, & Richardson, 1996).

Smith (1995) came to the conclusion that three factors attributed to program success in family preservation:

1. Highly motivated clients who may have come to the attention of child protective services for the first time.
2. Intensive intervention by a social worker with proven skills in work with families
3. Families who were followed up upon by the same social worker who they worked with all along.

One model program took place in North Dakota in a center whose population includes the Arikara, Hidatsu and Mandan Indian tribes. This program has been so successful in decreasing
out-of-home placement (from 185 kids in out-of-home placement 20 years ago to just 9 in 2001). Day, Martinez, and RedHorse (2001) found this program so successful partly because of increased funding by the government and lighter caseloads for workers, but mostly, they believe the success of the program comes from the cultural continuity between workers and clients and the fact that workers consider themselves part of the community. They state that although Social Work knowledge is important for case workers, cultural knowledge is more important in family preservation.
**Resource list and suggested readings**


**Websites**


On this page you will find information about ACF, staff, offices as well as financial data and news items and research.

Casey Family Programs. [http://casey.org](http://casey.org).

This site gives a comprehensive view on children and youth with a focus on foster care.

Preservation is only briefly mentioned, but the site is useful in having a wide range of foster care-related information.


This site is a comprehensive site with data and information regarding the welfare of children. It is unique in some of its programs such as “The Black community crusade for children”, “CHIP” and the “Parent Resource Network”. Has never received government grants.

Child Welfare League of America. [http://www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org) Offers a really clear, easy to read background on family preservation. An excellent compilation of several research studies on family preservation. Breaks each author down into results and conclusions. Acknowledges limitations as well. CWLA’s position is very much on the interconnectedness of community, society, family, and child.

This website takes has a radical, angry vibe in support of child preservation. It is a good site for a strong stance against the separation of the family. The coalition advocates for systemic change.


NFPN is the national membership and advocacy organization which provides information on Intensive Family Preservation (IFP) and reunification services.
