

Welcome to supporting respectful partnerships, Coparenting,

and my name is Jamie Averett, and it is my privilege to work

with the Youth Law Center as a quality parenting initiative

advocate. And we are joined this morning by Dr.

McHale, who is at the University of South Florida St.

Petersburg, in the Family Study Center as the director and

Dr. McHale, thank you for being a partner to Pi and being

present with us this morning.

And if you would take the opportunity to introduce yourself

and some of your work and why co parenting is so important

from your perspective.

Okay, thanks.

And I've had a chance to be with KPI for a couple of other

webinars as well.

So some of what I'll say here is included in those, but very

briefly, I wanted to let folks know that the Family Study

Center at USF St.

Petersburg is relatively unique entity in the United States.

We are the only center for which all of the initiatives that

we undertake are concerned with co parenting, and we define

co parenting very broadly.

Co parenting is in every child concept, our family Study

Center. So we do work with married families with divorced

families, with never married families, with children growing

up in multigenerational family systems, being raised by parents

and grandparents.

We've consulted on projects with military families.

The concept is in every child concept.

Every child is co parented, and the only question is for

the important adults involved in their lives, which is how

we're here together today, because the co parenting relationship

for children who are in foster care is the relationship that

exists between the biological and foster families.

And I've intentionally put a picture of an infant in the

middle of the slide here and introducing the work of the

Family Study Center for two reasons.

One is to remind me to let our audience know that the majority

of the work at our Family Study Center is work that is concerned

with the families of infants and toddlers.

And so most of our initiatives are initiatives with children

from birth to age three.

Although certainly virtually everything we'll be talking

about today is equally relevant and pertinent to elementary

school age children and adolescents.

But if you detect a bias and what we're talking about towards younger children, that's the reason why the more important reason why the babies at the center.

And if you gaze into the baby's eyes, you'll really maybe remember it for the next hour that Coparenting is really a concept that is intended to see the world through the eyes of the child.

In fact, one of the curriculum that we've developed is call through the eyes of the child, with the idea being that if the adults in the child's world, the co parents are working well together, that is going to support the child's adjustment.

We tend to get so focused on what's happening between the grownups that often the children are sort of forgotten about.

And this is all about and for the kids.

And so we'll continue to come back to that.

But if a coparenting alliance is functioning effectively,

the child will know that and the child will benefit from

that. And if it's not, a child will know that and we'll struggle

because of the so that's sort of the reminder for me on the

first slide, a reminder for all of us during the Webinar

today that really co parenting is about the children, and

that's not trite.

It's not sort of a slogan.

It really is.

The reason that co parents need to work effectively together

is because it's going to optimally support children's assessment.

When that doesn't happen, we're going to see children struggling.

We'll talk more about that as we go.

That just reiterates to me.

One of the main goals for Quality parenting initiative is

to view everything through the focus and the lens of a child,

to keep us all centered and give us the ability to collaborate

and to work together, which makes are working together this

morning. Just a natural partnership as well.

Just a brief introduction and overview of our agenda.

We're going to focus on the foundational principles to developing

effective coparenting relationships.

We will look at how engaging in those relationships support

healthy development and children.

We will also explore potential harm to children that occur

when cohere relationships are not developed.

We are going to look at the successes and challenges of developing

coparenting relationships.

Also, how do we support the development of those relationships

and some tools that we can use to implement coparenting relationships?

So before we describe a cohering relationship, we would like

to hear from you of how you would describe a healthy cohering

relationship. Open communication, established boundaries

communications. A great deal of you are focusing on communication

interaction to support the needs of children healthy boundaries,

supporting one another role, positive encounters, focusing

on the needs of children.

So those are all and the ones really relevant.

Good, too.

Getting past assumption.

So a great sense of understanding from what we can see from

the chat answer.

So thank you for participating in that.

So we can kind of see where you're at and your foundation

for co parenting.

And at this time we will continue to allow Dr.

Michael to provide us with more information from his perspective

about what coparenting should look like and how it affects

the development of our children.

So it was terrific to have done that initially because virtually

every element of the definition of the positive coparenting

alliance was hit upon by one or more of the people that responded

there. So that can kind of shorten the amount of time that

I'll want to spend on all of this.

The one thing I did want to say to just reiterate what I

said at the outset is for us at the Family Study Center and

for the work that we've been carrying out for the last 25

years. We do view.

Coparenting is in every child concept.

And so the idea is that every child is co parented and sort

of the gold responsibility of those who are working with

families. This figure who are the important adults in the

child's life with them, they've developed bonds.

And so the imagery surrounding the definition of coparenting

here is intended to convey that there are many, many different

kinds of families, but that every child's coparent, of course,

for us here today, our focus on coparenting is really the

coparenting alliance that develops between the biological

and foster families.

That alliance is going to be important in the same way as

it's important to all children.

So for all children, there are bumps in the relationship.

There's dissonance.

There's disagreements in families where the coparenting alliance developed in a positive way.

The grownups whomever they may be find ways to talk together about their areas of disagreement.

Work this out.

Obviously, in a family where the parents are coresident, you can do that at night, after the kids are down pillow talk you can talk about.

Do we really want her going over to that child's house?

What about the computer time?

Is that a good idea for sleep over those kinds of things that becomes more challenging if the adults are in different households. So for divorce, parents trying to have this communication

across different households, there's a greater challenge,

but it's equally important, maybe or more important.

And then as you get farther still, with parents who are incarcerated

with parents who are struggling with immigration issues,

with parents who are deployed in the military, that communication

becomes even more important.

And obviously here as well.

When you're trying to coparent across the households of the

biological and foster family, the and the co parenting alliance

that develops between those individuals, that family.

And we're going to use an unusual term.

Today, we're going to be talking about the biological and

foster family as the child's family, because I think it's

really, really important to recognize that through the eyes

of the child, if these adults are talking and communicating

with each other and the child sees all these ladies know

each other and they're talking regularly, and they're talking

about one another with me.

That is going to be to create a sense of family that's going

to benefit the child.

So if we can go to the next slide, these are the core components

of a co parenting alliance in any family system.

And before I go through the four of these, I'll do it relatively

briefly. But I also wanted to call attention to the volume

on the left.

So some of you may have seen when you registered for the

Webinar today that the term co parenting was spelled in the

hyphen. And this is the book on Coparenting published by

the American Psychological Association.

In the initial draft of the cover, they had a hyphen in the word coparenting, and I argued with them and we went back and forth for several months, 72 different emails back and forth. We're not going to publish the book if there's a high in it, because we're not concerned with co parenting.

We're trying to do co parenting, trying to bring the adults together for the child, not do like this.

And so, since the publication of this volume in 2011, as you read the literature, virtually all of those who are studying families are beginning to recognize the coparenting is really the bringing together.

It's not parallel parenting across two households.

And that's true for all different family systems, including post divorced families.

That having been said, the four elements on the right side

of this graph describe positive coparenting in any family

system, including the family systems that we're talking about.

Today.

We've already talked a little bit about the importance of

support and solidarity between the adults were coparenting,

the child, and many of the people who wrote their own definitions

of coparenting.

We're touching upon that their definitions.

What I wanted to talk a little bit about was the importance

of consistency and predictability in the approach is that

the two families or the two adults take in guiding the child's

development, because, as I said before, in any family that's

ever existed, there are disputes, disagreements about optimally

how best to raise a child.

Every set of coparent has those ideas about what's best and what they think isn't a child's best interest.

But it's especially important and especially challenging to make happen in families where the parents are not communicating with one another.

And so communication is so critically important that support solidarity between the adults.

We can take something as simple as the use of a pacifier with an infant.

And so if the biological family has been very sort of clear from the beginning that they didn't want to use a pacifier.

They wanted a child to develop trust in their own rhythms.

They wanted them to regulate without needing a prop.

They wanted them be able to do that on her own.

The foster family, after having many, much experience with

many kids, decided that a pacifier was a good idea, it's really helpful, especially with a distressed child that helps them to calm more quickly so they will use it with a child.

Now it's time for overnight for child's going back home.

And the if the biological family is not using a pacifier, the child gets disregulated, gets upset because back home people go, oh, it looks like there's some problems here.

I don't know if this is going to work as something as simple as not having communicated together about when and how to use a pacifier.

And that's an overly simplified example.

Maybe, but it steaks the importance of being able to communicate about some very basic important things to the child.

What are the level buys that call the child?

What are the kinds of foods that are going to get the child

to be upset.

So the kinds of things that we know with our own kids growing

up in our own family.

But when you're working across two different families, that

may not be as easy and it goes both ways.

So there may be some things that are happening in the foster

family home that they want the biological family to know

about. If you set up the communication, then those things

can be discussed and talked about a process together.

If you're just completely operating in separate ways, as

many post divorced families do, this is mom house.

This is Dad's house.

And remember the toy she'll need that then places the child

in this position where it's harder to get that continuity

and support.

The third is, I think, also very important security and integrity

of the family's home base.

That's the goal.

The goal of Copart between biological and foster family is

to give that child to such a security that my family has

got me, my family, in this case, the biological and foster

family they have me.

They got me in many families where there are some strains

and challenges.

The children will be accustomed to spending time in Grandma's

house. But Grandma's house is not being ripped away from

the family and sent this day of the relatives like Grandma's

house is home and they're going to be there for a period

of time, and then they'll be back with their mom brother

dad again.

And children are very adaptable.

Children learn to be able to move back and forth between

different households.

They can still feel safe and secure in the family if the

grownups are helping them to feel safe and secure across

multiple domiciles.

That's what we're talking about here.

In just as an opposed divorced family with two different

homes, the parents can work well to build a bridge between

the homes, or they can be like walking on a tight rope between

the two homes and the post divorced families that work well

create that sturdy bridge.

The child feel safe.

That's what we're talking about today as well.

And finally, the last one.

And I'm embarrassed to say that when I first started talking

and teaching about coparenting, this last bullet wasn't there

until we realize that there are actually families with adults

are agreeing pretty well with one another, but they're not

paying attention to the child's needs and sensibilities.

And so we talked a little bit earlier before the Webinar

Jamie and I were talking about there's a condition called

tactical sensitivity.

Some children have heightened sensory experiences compared

to Uri.

They're listening to fireworks and they're a little bit too

noisy or the food tastes weird and they don't like it, and

they split it out and the texture is really odd, or the shirt

feels too scratchy.

And for most children, that's not a thing.

But for children who are experiencing things bigger than

they really are, it's really important to know and recognize

that so colleague and California talking about the child

who had to have their formula heat up for exactly 16 seconds

in the microwave.

And if you have a parent who's like, I'm not doing that,

that's baby and her, she just needs to walk it off and not

paying attention to the child's needs, then they could be

agreeing together that the kid needs to tough it out.

The child has not been coparent as well because the adults

are not attuned.

So that last piece, the attunement is really, really important.

And we're talking about attunement between the adults, not just your attunement to the child, my attunement child, but our attunement together.

So those elements you can't find a family system, co parenting a child where these elements are not important, and those are really the core components that we're thinking and talking about today in this webinar, I think, goes back to what you said the first part, to remember those big blue eyes in the center and the picture of the child, to remember that this is child focused and really concerned about the needs of the child and not necessarily that of the adults involved in the child's life, and to keep that as a center of the conversation as we learn how to coherent with one another in a most effective way.

Agree.

So this little fella is not very happy, and it is scary to meet new people, and especially if the new people don't know that what helps you go to sleep at night.

Michael Row was talking about the little corner of the trip that I would scratch when I was really upset, and it would help me to calm myself down and get to sleep.

But these new people don't know that, and I'm not able to tell them because I don't have a voice yet.

And so I said at the beginning that you might see a little bit of a bias with infants and toddlers, and especially for the youngest children who are not able to tell you that they have these needs, but they're suffering because the grown ups don't know that they have these needs.

This is where the communication between the household is

so important, what foods I'm going to spit out.

If you try to give them to me, they're going to make me upset,

what songs can kind of make me calm down a little bit.

What routines are soothing to me.

Mom and dad well know that the biological family will know

that, and the foster family will learn that.

And if there's communication that's going back and forth,

then the child can be met more quickly where they are and

helped to down regulate some of the grief that they're experiencing.

And I'm going to use the term grief today.

And that's not always a term that we use when children are

removed from the families in place in foster care, it's often

to keep them safe.

Something's happened at home where the parents have not been

able to provide for the safety in the way that the child

most needs.

And so the child is going to be safer for a period of time

with another family while the family works to try to reboot

and get things back on an even keel again.

But that doesn't mean that that same child is not going to

be warning the family that they've left.

And for the very small child is experiencing this grief.

They need to be helped with the grief, like all children

do. And the ones who are in the best of it and help them

are the foster parents who will be able to help them understand

a little bit more about what's happening.

And if the child fear about loss can be mitigated by reconnecting

with the family sooner.

And if the foster family can be talking about mom and dad

and grandma, aunt, read or whoever the child is missing sooner,

so that child knows that they still exist, that they're still

alive. And that connection, it could be made that's going

to reduce some of the grief that they're experiencing, some

of the distress that they're experiencing because babies

can't tell you that they're feeling this way, what do they

do? They acted out.

They show you their behavior, they're inconsolable.

They won't stop crying, they won't go down and sleep, they

won't take naps, they're spinning their food back up.

The showing the problems that we say are behavior problems,

but they're trying to help you understand how they're feeling.

So being able to understand that that's going to be a thing

for kids when they come to stay with you and with older kids,

too, not just with infants and toddlers, but especially with those early children.

It can be a thing.

And more importantly, or as importantly, we know that the

period from birth to age three is a period of the child's

life. When 80% to 85% of all brain development is occurring,

the child's brain is adapting to the life situation that

they're in.

Brains are very adaptive.

Baby's brain will accommodate acclimate the environment that

they're in.

But imagine a childhood is experiencing this distress, this

grief, this upset, and nobody's helping with it.

What that's doing?

Is it's imprinting the child's brain in a way that is helping

them to adapt and cope with a situation.

But in the longer term, it's not going to be healthy for

that child.

Our job is to help the child to down regulate, be more peaceful,

be more calm, be more comforted.

And we can't do that if we don't know what the baby needs.

And so you and I are sitting here today with brains that

were created and developed from birth to age three, and we

continue to use them as adults.

So it's different now from when we were one, two, three years

old. We now have the cortex fully developed, the talking

part of the brain that can tell us it's okay.

Calm down.

Don't be upset.

You're gonna be fine.

But babies don't have that.

Babies haven't developed that part yet.

So the grown ups have to provide that for them.

So it's so important in those early hours and days and weeks

after the child has been removed, to be doing all we can

to help, to collaborate, so that we're seeing this terrifying

new situation through the eyes of the child and doing all

we can to help reassure the child and help the child to feel

centered and safe and comfortable.

A couple of things that you have pointed out, the word grief

is something that think sometimes we forget that the parents

who then removed from their children and separate it from

their children are also experience in grief, and that's a

real thing that we have to recognize working with them in

developing this relationship as well.

And I think we have a video a little bit later of a parent

who maybe struggled for longer than she ought to have because

she wasn't able to connect as soon as she wanted to.

Parents are, as you're saying, experiencing the grief and

feeling the empathy for their kids as well, the sooner they

can lay eyes on and have that initial contact, and the better

that initial contact can go, the more they can down regulate,

the more hope they will have, and the more they'll be able

to be a participative partner.

So thank you for reminding us of that.

I think that's so important.

And I know and a lot of the work that we have done.

And when we are dealing with children with this population,

a lot of times, those children all the chronic chronologically,
maybe a certain age developmentally, they are not at that
age. And so when we're taking those things into account,
and even when you're talking about the brain development
and my understanding, the last part of your brain that actually
develops is the part that helps you regulate impulse control
and make good decisions and judgments.

And so those are our adolescents.

And so some of those things we have to keep in mind how those
things affect the children that we're working with as well.

Absolutely.

And, you know, I think you'll often have a four, five, six
year old who developmentally is still struggling with the
issues that this little guy is here because the basic safety
and security needs have not been met.

And so the over exaggerated behaviors to try to help me,

I need somebody over here pay attention to me no longer all

that adaptive.

First, maybe they were fine for a one year old, but for six

year old, not so adaptive, but they're playing a similar

function. And as you're saying, with the older kids, too,

you know, that early brain development has occurred in place.

That's what the child's ceiling.

But you can definitely help them with the talking part of

the brain and the regulation.

So I do feel like that it's not a window that closes on that.

And I'm grateful for you also bringing it back to the older

kids. Count on you to do that throughout our presentation

today. Alright, on our next slide here, we have 25 years

of research on co parenting and child development.

We have less than 25 years of research on co parenting between

biological and foster families.

But these are some of the early lessons that come out of

some of the work that's been done.

So I think that these are important to talk about a little

bit, some of them we've talked about already.

Remember the basic adage that what we're talking about is

a family like any family.

It happens to be that this child is being co parented by

these grown ups for this period of time in their life, and

so the healthier, that relationship will be the healthier,

the outcome will be for the child.

And somebody said you're reading through people's definitions

really quickly.

Somebody said shared decision making.

That was somebody type that in.

And yes, that's really what it is that we're talking about.

So it's not unilateral decision making.

It's not that you're going to agree on every decision, but

the important decisions are being vetted and talked about

and that's not going to go smoothly at first and many families.

But you can get there if you begin to develop the report

the relationship over time.

The goal, I think, would be for really important decisions

to be consulting on those remembering also that the parents

are the expert on the child and will have information that

they can share with the foster family that will be helpful

in the foster family care of the child early on.

So connecting as soon after placement as possible.

The data that we have suggest that that leads to time Lier,

reification and permanency the contact the time that families

are spending together.

It's not just spending time together, spending quality time

together. We were talking earlier that you can almost predict

that the first visit or two the child has after having been

separated may be messy, and it doesn't mean that the parents

do anything wrong.

If something bad going on there, it's the child is really

anxious and upset and is feeling confused.

And so we can almost predict to the parents it may not go

as well as you might envision and that we can kind of guess

it's kind of there gonna go better the second little better

the fist that there's let insect and you have that kind of

conversation going between the grownups about the child that

then helps the time spent together to go better for the child.

If you're not talking about it at all, then you can start

getting your own head about what's going on and be making

assumptions, one family about the other, that may not you

right. If I recall to somebody chatted in getting rid of

misassumptions as part of cone.

And it's interesting that you say that of us forming assumptions

that may not be correct because you're not engaging in relationship

and communication with one another as the adults.

That's why I want to remind us, too.

We're talking about family systems.

There's nothing uniquely special about this is this is true.

In every coparenting relationship.

There can be misassumptions.

If the grown ups aren't talking about this, it's like you

always did.

And I was like, what are you talking about?

When you're not communicating about them regularly?

You can hold onto this and confessed her and it can grow

and it can become bigger than life.

And it's not even what's going on.

So every family does this, but it's more likely to happen

in families with a communication is not occurring because

the parenting happening at a distance.

And the last bullet on here, I think that's really important

has to do with the fact that we're talking about the co parenting

alliance between the two families, but an equally important

partner. And this is the case manager, the person who is

with the agency who is really the glue that's kind of holding
this together.

And as we'll talk later, someone who is attending to all
of this, talking to the parents about how co parenting is
going, kind of helping to kind of step in if some additional
assistance support is needed can really help this to move
along, because everybody needs help and co parenting we all
do in case managers can play an important function.

And if they're supported by their agencies and playing that
supportive function, then the likelihood that the co parenting
alliance will evolve and develop in a positive way is great.

But if the case managers are not as involved and I think
we have a video a little a little bit later talking about
a family that had both experiences, a very involved, supportive

case manager, and then some transition where they weren't getting the same level of support.

And so we talked a lot about triangles, the biological family, foster family and the child that triangle.

But this is a triangle as well with the biological and foster family and the case manager where the agency providing the support. So we'll get more into that later because I did notice we had a number of agency staff are on the on the Webinar today, and this does kind of just reiterate the same point that co guarantee within the context that we're talking about include really all of the adults that are interacting with a child.

And I know we've had a lot of conversation before that.

Really co parenting relationships start before a foster parent and our parent may ever meet each other, because the case

manager and the person from the agency who's having that

initial contact with his family and how their interacting

with that family and either empowering them or not to develop

these relationships begins immediately, even before children

may be placed in that first home.

I was thinking also, if you are saying that sometimes even

before the case managers on the scene with the child protective

investigator who will say something to the foster family

about the biological family, the home the child has left,

and that can set a stage.

So I think that we will try to talk a little bit later about

some of the challenges to this work.

We're not presenting this work as though it's sort of a very

easy undertaking.

It's a very challenging undertaking.

The best of cases.

But I think that the the mental image that you have is you

start the work.

I think the goal, the ideal, what we should all be trying

to do is so we're going to do this.

We're going to do this in every case, unless we discover

that there's some dangerousness, that there's some boundary

violation, that there's something going on, where it's not

going to be in the child's best interest.

But I think historically we started with the other model.

It started saying, okay, if the family sort of shows up and

everything's going well, I'll consider working with them,

but I'm going to be very cautious about doing that.

I'm not sure if it's going to be in the child's best interest.

I'm gonna just play it by year and we'll see how it goes.

I think, to be fair, I think that there have always been

families who did the co parenting thing right from the start.

Mentors, big brothers, big sisters, kind of took on the biological

family. But I think as we think about it was system.

It's been kind of a little bit, maybe overly cautious in

the beginning, if a family was to have a child dropped off

and I said, wow, that removal was tougher.

Let me tell you about this family.

Still, I think the ideal is that in the mind of the post

prints like, well, let's see how it goes.

Let's see what the contact looks like, rather than I've been

put on notice.

I'm not sure that this is going to be a good idea to try

to coparent here.

And we will talk more to as we continue ways to do that connection

very quickly and how case managers.

And even if it's the investigator who's doing the removal

and placement of how we can engage those relationships very

quickly. And we've talked a little bit about potential harm

that can you talk a little bit more about this just other

being a really fantastic ideal.

And we know that there are great benefits.

But what is the harm that could actually occur to our children

when we're not engaging in co parenting and moving forward

in this context, I think that we intentionally put a triangle

up here not only to remind us that it is a triangle we're

talking about, but also the child can be caught in that triangle.

The term triangulation is a term again, that characterizes

every child and every family.

And the problem comes when the adults are not communicating.

So there can either be a disconnect and disengagement or

there can be actual conflict that occurs and the conflict.

You just think about this in in a family system, what does

damage to a child, the adults arguing about the child with

a child there, when a child feels caught in between one adult

disparaging the other adult and talking negatively about

the the other parent to the child when that parents not there.

So I think that these are some of the things that are normative

family processes and concur in any family system.

But when they occur here when the child is experiencing the

conflict between the families, when the child is hearing

one parent bad mouth the other.

And it doesn't matter if the foster parent badmouthing, the biological parent, the biological parent badmouthing and the foster parent.

Those are the kinds of things that places a child in the middle, that's actual damage that can be done to the child on top of some of the other distress at they may be experiencing just from having been separated from their family.

So those are the kinds of things that in the ideal we get rid of completely and try to find some ways to begin building the the alliance in the relationship, but really trying to not do the negative contact behavior because I think that that's the thing that does harm and answer your question.

And I think we have touched on this a little bit, but sometimes even the case manager gets caught in being part of that triangulation, maybe choosing siding with a foster parent versus a birth

parent. And can you talk a little bit a little bit about

how that can be harmful to that code here in a relationship

as well?

Well, I mean, I think that if you think about what happens

in the most harmful post divorce cases, you have this win

win scenario setup.

I'm going to win.

I'm going to win.

And so it's set up as the zero sum game as opposed to we're

just trying to communicate.

We're trying to do this so that we're helping a child to

feel secure.

So that what we've done is we've created a bridge across

the two homes that the child can walk across securely rather

than being on a tight rope.

That's the same thing here.

We can predict.

We can assume that there are going to be some disputes, some

disagreements. If the ethic that has been set up is we're

in a partnership together.

When we hit a rough passenger road, we're going to figure

it out together.

And our case manager is going to help to help us to do that.

If we can't do it alone, then that's a very, very different

situation. Like, okay, now we set up this sort of life and

death struggle here.

Who's going to win, who's going to come out on top and all

of this?

What's the eventual outcome going to be?

Kind of a narrative is always going to be nothing but damaging

for the child.

And so the narrative really needs to be a problem solving

narrative. And the case manager trying to help the adults

when they're not able to get that problem solving down on

their own.

And that's going to probably happen in every case to a certain

extent, and to really again make that focus what's the best

needs for the child and not creating alliances between at

all. What is going to be the best for the child in the situation

and trying to see it through the child size?

Okay.

I think we've talked about most of these.

I don't think that we need to deliver these very well, but

the two here that I think are the most important, really
is that when parents are co parenting, what you've got is
a more supportive relationship that evolves between the two
adults that can continue to potentially even post unification.

And so rather than being another loss in the child's life
as they go back home after unification and they lose foster
family, if there's been a good relationship that's developed,
that foster part may still be on the scene is kind of like
a godparent or big sister available Perth parties for a call
from the families when times are rough and the family continues
in the child size now they're back home with their biological
parents again.

But that's a positive outcome that can occur in some cases.

And if we have time today, I think we have a video of a family
where that was the case and more timely permanency for the

kids, they'll be back home again, safer, sooner and with

a more positive waiting environment for them when they get

home. So in the end, that's the goal is to surely try to

put everything together so that when the child is back home,

there's been enough communication that the planning has occurred

as well and as deeply that needed to have and the children

aren't losing relationships and connections that they have

developed that are positive for them.

So you have heard us talk a little bit about co parenting

and some of the developmental functions of that, and we would

like to move to the next slide and engage you now in another

question. So the question is, what do you see as barriers

to developing cohering relationships?

We have acknowledged that this is not easy work and there

are challenges.

So if you will please take an opportunity to chat in your

answers for potential barriers, and we are going to try to

address some of those barriers next case management, turnover,

protective capacity for children, potential manipulations,

lack of support, unrealistic expectations, different ideas

of what is in the best interest of children fearfulness lack

of understanding cultural barriers.

So definitely think these are all things that our potential

barriers and challenges to developing co parenting relationships.

And we acknowledge those and certainly want to kind of move

forward and using what we see as challenges, but really going

back to the role of problem solving and how do we implement

some tools to overcome these challenges?

And part of the way that we have been working to do that

is to really listen to what our foster parents and our birth
parents have to say about some of these situations and their
experiences with the system and co parenting.

And you said earlier that some of this has been happening
without the support of the system.

And that is something that we have certainly learned in focus
groups with birth parents and foster parents is that co parenting
has been happening for a very long period of time without
the support of the system and for a great deal of the foster
parents and birth parents that we've had the opportunity
to work with, they want to co parent.

They want these relationships and we're going to stop and
actually let you listen to the description of this from a
foster parent and birth parent and these videos that you

are seeing our families from the state of Florida, from focus

groups that were conducted by Pi with both parents and foster

parents. And so we will listen to the first clip and hear

what they have to say.

It takes too long.

She didn't know for weeks, other than what her case manager

told her, the kids are okay.

This is what's going on.

She had no idea what our homes look like.

She has no idea what schools they've been put into because

they were put in different counties, and she's trying to

get herself together.

And those are all her stuff.

And they worry about these children, and that's why I feel

it's so important that somehow we work together as a team,

all of us, and that there aren't so many separate steps that we can work together and get parents and little ones, so at least to know everybody's okay, and they're going to have times back together.

Sometimes it's really hard to me that doesn't about these things because it's more than a year.

They took my kids away from me and first the three, two weeks.

Then I don't know where they ask, I don't know who's taking care of them.

I've been going to the office of that lady, came to me in to the kids and go in the office every day to ask, Can I at least talk to them if they're okay?

It did not cry because I'm not a perfect mom.

I've been to in a lot of things and just to know if my kids

are okay.

But they said, I don't know.

You need to wait till your case manager is going to be contacted

with you and all that been waiting and waiting.

In fact, almost a month.

And I said I have to go to I have to go to the course.

If I have to do anything I have to do, I'm going to do it.

So we see here the same thing that we've been talking about,

just the anxiety of a parent needing that contact quickly.

And that was a continual thing that we learned from both

parents and foster parents that the quick connections were

so important for them and also learning that they want to

engage in meaningful relationships with one another and both

really have the desire and the need to be valued as partners

in these relationships.

And if we will play this clip as well from another birth

parents and foster parent perspective, I think one thing

that would best support co parenting in the system is really

that initial contact.

I wish we had contacted each other sooner and had already

started that relationship and built upon it because it was

so successful.

I feel like it would have been great to have him more involved

earlier in the process.

So kind of getting over that awkward first introduction with

the help of a CPI or with the help of a case worker.

I think that would have really gone far in our case, something

I had to learn the hard way and now have to do on my own.

I was fortunate to have a good case manager in the beginning.

That pushed me to talk to chill.

I mean, we met in court, which is always awkward.

Put up case manager said, yes, messenger is open for co parenting

is like what's co pain.

But now my case manager are complete opposite of that.

So it'd be nice to have some kind of continuity between.

I don't know how many cases and that one is so fortunate

with her.

It would be nice to have constant in the whole process.

It's okay today may not be okay tomorrow.

I think the role of the case manager and closing that triangle,

as opposed to kind of being disconnected in his comments

and his voice as he reflected on the different folks he had,

we're working with him and foster family.

Just the importance of case managers.

And if we can go ahead and send the last ten minutes focusing on some tools that actually can help you begin implementing successful coparenting.

And one of those things is the use of comfort calls, and that may be called different things in different areas, but essentially it is going back to having contact as quickly as possible.

And the ideal of this is for whether it be the investigator or whoever's doing the placement of the children to facilitate a conversation immediately at the time of placement between the birth parent and the foster parent.

And that does several things that can reduce the anxiety that we've heard about from the biological parent, that they know that their children are okay, that they're in a place

that their children are going to be taken care of and especially
for older children.

They also sometimes have anxiety about the wellbeing of their
parents and to relieve that anxiety so they know that their
parent is going to be okay.

And it also becomes a great opportunity for the worker who
is facilitating this call to say, Would you like to talk
to the parent and the biological parent have an opportunity
almost immediately to talk to the foster parent and begin
this communication to learn some of the things that you've
said, what's going to help them sleep well tonight?

Are they allergic to anything or their medications that they
need to be on?

But to immediately begin that sense of communication, to
break down some of those defense of barriers that go up to

reduce the adversarial nature of the process of child welfare.

And to begin that relationship quickly.

And we've heard and seen the word trust come up, and this

creates an opportunity for the agency to establish trust

pretty quickly with that parent that although that we're

in this really bad situation, we want to support you.

We want to empower you and I'm going to do this.

It's really making a promise to that parent to support them

as part of this comfort call and to do that very quickly,

not to wait till core order some formal structure, but to

make intentional efforts to create that ability to work together

immediately, as some people were talking about what some

of the challenges are.

One of the viewers Typed in the amount of time it can sometimes

take to get to an Icebreaker meeting.

And so the comfort calls are really like an immediate way

of connecting and so important in the overall landscape of

trying to build that relationship.

The ice breakers in our jurisdiction were done systematically

for a while by our lead agency and are still in the mix and

available to families.

The ice breakers came from the Case Family Foundation work,

which is bringing the biological and foster families together

to meet to get to know one another.

The line that has always stayed with me from the video is,

I'm not here to take your child away from you.

I'm just here to take good care of Virgil.

She's able to be back with you again to establish the nature

of the relationship.

It's also a time for the parents again, as the experts on their child to be able to communicate some things about the child who are the important people in their lives.

What are some of the comfort routines and so forth?

And we do the icebreakers systematically in our early childhood court and Panels County.

But what I wanted to say about ice breakers is that folks are not just put together in a room to meet one another and say, okay, go, there's some preparation that occurs ahead of time and by way of preparation, both the biological parents and the foster parents are asked to think a little bit about the relationship that they might want to build.

And these are just a few of the questions that we talk with both biological and the foster families about, and it's framed

in our court as a questionnaire or a set of statements, and

the person says, I'm not going to do that or I've never thought

about that or I'd be willing to try.

But I'll need some help.

I was like, yes, I'm going to do that.

And these are just a few of them.

I'll try on purpose to talk to the child's parents about

important things they know about their baby and how they

parent their baby.

I'll try on purpose to say or do things.

Let I'm alone with the baby to talk about the birth parents

in a positive way.

I'll try to be open minded about cultural traditions the

birth parents share with the baby, like special events, religious

activities, hairstyles and so forth.

These are things that you're checking in with a foster family

in the co parenting relationship you developed.

How interested in willing would you be able to do these things?

Same kinds of questions asked about the birth parents.

Can you imagine talking together with a foster family?

Can you imagine when the child is with you supporting the

things that the foster family is doing to take care of and

support your baby and so forth?

So you're doing this before you even bring them together.

And I never thought about that.

Well, that's what co parenting is.

Oh, maybe I might be willing to try.

I'm not sure I could do that.

So that when they meet together, there's some definition

of what coparenting is the guy on the video.

So what is my coparenting?

I've never heard that before.

But what we're really talking about is kind of building that

communication together.

So if we can go back to the previous slide in addition to

the ice breaker, the communication plan is so important.

What I saw is people were typing in their answers.

What are some of the obstacles that could get in a way is

like boundary violations, parents who are being manipulated

these kinds of things.

Communication plan, a good communication plan getting should

set up those expectations.

The foster friendly is not expected to bend over backwards

and be evolved at a women to sort of be changing their lives.

But there needs to be mutual accommodation.

I think that the mutual accommodation is the piece.

If you think about the grandest wars that post divorce families

get into it's about being in there at 530, not 515 at the

drop off point.

At this time, you have to set up those kinds of really clear

plans. But the pictures on the side here the baby talking

to mom, the face time with the little one when they conceive

Daddy's Mommy's face.

If you can set up a plan that allows for those kinds of very

short, brief but safe contacts.

If the foster family is not about giving out their personal

home phone number or contact information.

There are Google options that one can use, but that has to

be written into a communication plan that you then kind of
broker together.

The case manager oversees and you problem solve if it's not
working and you come back to it again.

But the more that that can be outlined specifically through
the eyes of the child, what's going to help the child to
have the maximum face time and contact, the more effective
that that can be.

That's the place where you deal with some of the manipulatives
where you deal with some of the boundary issues, and we're
maybe occasionally diagnosed this might not work because
that is going to happen in a small fragment of cases.

Right.

So that will allow you to kind of be revisiting the communication
plan to see how it's going.

Can we tweak it, or do we need to rethink this whole thing

and mentor programs?

We frequently hear about there being mentors for foster parents.

But one of the things that we have learned in our conversations

with both both parents and foster parents is the importance

of having those support for both biological families and

biological parents, as well as the caregivers I'm navigating.

Child welfare is very difficult even for those of us who

do it on a daily basis.

But to having people to come.

Besides, you to support you when you're having some of these

frustrating challenges of how can we best walk through these

things and share experiences?

And so those are some of the things that we have learned

that support coparenting.

And one of the things that we're just reiterating as we have

this discussion, co parenting is an intentional purposeful

relationship that we are building.

A lot of language that we use may not be shared by the folks

that we are working with and people's expectations are not

the same.

So having an opportunity where we are intentionally setting

out what those expectations are preparing for, how we're

going to embrace and overcome challenges, making intentional

efforts to facilitate those relationships.

And that goes back to the use of our case managers and support

staff and all of the professionals who are working with these

families. But I think it's a very intentional act.

And though it has challenges, the outcomes and the benefits

to our children and our families, certainly outweigh those
challenges and the time that it takes to develop a relationship.

And there's one to end.

On a high note, there we go, another cute baby and a video.

It can work.

Foster parents and by parents can get along and both reasons
and make it work.

Give you my sister name, my son's home.

Now, I say that when one family like a child so completely
right, they sacrifice everything.

And sometimes that even means they're hard.

Right?

So we raise these children and just emotionally give them
everything we have and there is no better way to to protect

your heart.

And then to know that you have a black, long relationship

with their family.

Because I know that at any point in time, I can call Josh,

and I just say, How's our baby boy and I get a picture.

I got a phone call, right?

Hey, Josh, you want to go to Cabos?

We go out to eat, right?

And I know that to work just like any relationship, right?

When you want to be friends with somebody and you want them

to be in your life, you invest time and energy into them.

And if you love this child so completely, invest the time

and energy so you can have them in your life for the rest

of yours and theirs.

We have provided a list of resources so you can continue

to learn more about co parenting and some of the research

that we have mentioned.

The QP Florida site has a great deal of information about

co parenting and other videos that have been done with more

specific things that can be addressed through co parenting.

If you can contact myself at Javert at pic.

Org.

And if you want to send in other questions, I will make sure

those are facilitated to Dr.

Michael.

Since we have run out of time and cannot answer those on

the webcast, we will certainly continue to try to help you

move forward with co parenting, so please feel free to do

that. And we appreciate again you being available.

We appreciate you.

You're choosing to learn about this and making intentional

efforts to build coparenting relationships to serve our children

and families.