

Wednesday, April 17, 2024
12PM/11CT

Clearinghouse on Supervised Visitation Phone Conference/Webinar Agenda



Discussion

1. **Welcome and Announcements – Everyone is invited!**
2. **Check the listings on the website to ensure your program information is up to date and correct for the quarterly report. If you need to add or change anything, email Lyndi Bradley at lbradley2@fsu.edu**
3. **May Phone Conference: May 22, 2024**
4. **Questions from Directors**
5. **[Dangers of non-professional supervised visitation](#)**
6. **Review Draft Therapeutic SV Report**
7. **New Video: [The Power of Play at Supervised Visitation](#)**
8. **April is Child Abuse Prevention Month**
9. **[Prevent Child Abuse Florida](#)**
10. **Review Protective Factors (drafts of updated E-Books)**



The Protective Factors

An E-Book Series for Supervised Visitation Programs



Nurturing and Attachment

The First Protective Factor in a Series of Six



Introduction

Research indicates that children with parents who nurture them and develop attachment with them are at reduced risk for child abuse and maltreatment. Nurturing children and developing attachment with them is the process of a parent bonding emotionally with his or her children through kind, supportive, age-appropriate behavior. In this process, the child learns to trust and feel secure with the parent. Nurturing and attachment are keys for developing bonds between parent and child.

Objectives

After completing this training, social service providers and supervised visitation personnel should:

- Understand what nurturing and attachment look like in a family setting and be able to describe different examples in the home.
- Learn about the importance of nurturing and attachment and the positive effects for children and families.
- Be able to explore strategies to help parents nurture and develop attachment with their children.
- Understand the specific ways supervised visitation personnel can help parents develop nurturing and attachment behaviors.
- Learn about the resources available to a social service providers and families looking for more information about nurturing and attachment.



Nurturing and Attachment

BELOW ARE SEVERAL EXAMPLES OF WHAT NURTURING AND ATTACHMENT MAY LOOK LIKE:



A father taking his son on a fishing trip.



A mother reading to her child.



A mother soothing her baby when he or she is fussy.



A father teaching his son to ride a bike and helping him when he falls down.

BELOW ARE SEVERAL INDICATORS THAT NURTURING AND ATTACHMENT ARE NOT PRESENT:



A parent frequently leaving a child alone at home without regard to his or her safety.



A parent unwilling to comfort the child when he or she is upset.



A parent refusing to hold his or her child.



A parent talking on his or her cell phone during a visit and ignoring the child.

The Importance of Nurturing and Attachment

Nurturing and attachment are very important in a child's development. They play key roles in the child's development of other social, emotional, and psychological skills.

CHILDREN WITH GOOD OR SECURE ATTACHMENTS:

Feel more comfortable learning new things.



Are more likely to build health and strong relationships with others.

Are better able to communicate their needs as they learn to speak.



Feel more comfortable and confident expressing their feelings.

CHILDREN WITH POOR OR INSECURE ATTACHMENTS:

May act out because they assume parents may not be present or concerned



May become overly attached to a parent and have trouble trying new things.

May feel as they are alone in the world.



Tend to withdraw from stressful situations and avoid dealing with their emotions.

Think about it....



What are the risks to families with parents who do not nurture and develop attachment to their child? How might the child, parent, or family as a whole be affected by this lack of nurturing and attachment?

Strategies for Working with Families

Social services providers can help parents learn about the importance of nurturing and attachment, and how to develop them. There are many different opportunities for social service providers to talk to parents. Some opportunities are described below:

- 1 Talking with parents during intake and follow-up procedures to social service delivery.
- 2 Talking with parents when they express things.
- 3 Talking with parents during supervised visitation.
- 4 Talking with parents about occupational, education, and social resources.
- 5 Talking with parents during pick up, drop off, or parent-teacher meetings.



Skill Building

There are different skills that help nurture and develop attachment with their children. Some are described below, along with information on how individuals who work with parents can help them to develop these skills both at visits and at home.

BEING ABLE TO COMFORT THE CHILD



- Talk to the parent about ways to soothe the child when he or she becomes upset or frustrated. These vary depending on the child's age. For a baby, this may be physically comforting the child by holding the child or using a soft voice to talk to the child. For an older child, this may be encouraging the child to express his or her feelings by sitting him or her down and asking the child how he or she is feeling.
- Encourage the parent to regularly communicate with the child. For a baby, this may be making eye contact and talking with the baby. For an older child, this may be encouraging the child to share what is happening in his or her life and letting the child know the parent is interested.

BEING ABLE TO BE SUPPORTIVE

- Talk to the parent about the importance of being present in the child's life at home, at school, or in the community. Help the parent understand the importance of spending time building a secure attachment. The child learns to trust that the parent will be there to support him or her.
- Talk to the parent about the importance of communicating with the child, as well as the importance of teaching the child to communicate with others. This shows the child that he or she is cared about the child and accepted.
- Encourage the parent to become involved in the child's school activities, such as going to a child's performance, sporting event, or other school event.



MAKING TIME TO PLAY TOGETHER

- Encourage the parent to spend time with the child doing activities, such as riding a bike, reading a book, or playing a game. Doing these activities allows the child to know that his or her parent wants to spend time with him or her and gives the child security in their relationship.
- Discuss with the parent the importance of helping the child learn to play a game and then playing the game together. This allows the child to feel supported by the parent while learning something new.
- Talk to the parent about identifying activities his or her child likes to do and make an effort to do these activities together. For example, if a parent knows his or her child is very interested in playing a sport, a good way to work on nurturing and developing attachment may be for a parent to practice with the child.



LEARNING AND KNOWING ABOUT THE CHILD

- Talk to the parent about the importance of nurturing the child and building attachment early on in a child's life. Help the parent identify ways to build that nurturing and developing attachment while the child is baby, such as through meeting the baby's basic needs, soothing the baby when he or she cries, and playing with the baby.
- Talk to the parent about the negative effects of not nurturing the child, which can lead to the child having poor attachments with the parent.



A Note on Cultural Competency...

Talk with parents about ways they express affection and show support within their culture. How was affection shown to the parent when he or she was young? Does the parent continue this same tradition with his or her child? How does the parent soothe or comfort the child? How does the parent communicate with the child? What are some things that the parent does to show the child that he or she care about the child? Work with the parent to identify ways through their own cultural context. **Approaches to raising children can vary from culture to culture. It is important to be respectful of differences.**

Case Example

Read this case example and answer the questions that follows.

A case manager is working with a female client who has a six month old baby boy. The client had the baby when she was sixteen years old and she is a single mother. The client is working with the case manager to develop parenting skills. The case manager watches the client interact with the baby and sees that the child does not know what to do with the baby. When the baby cries, the parent becomes overwhelmed and frustrated. She expresses to the case manager that she does not know why the baby is crying nor does she know how to make him stop.

Questions:

1. What are some possible reasons the baby may be crying? What are some steps the mother and case manager can take to address the possible issues?
2. What are some risk factors that might be present?
3. What are some feelings this client may be experiencing?
4. What steps can the case manager take to help this parent learn to nurture and develop attachment with her baby?

Possible Answers:

1. The baby may be crying because he is hungry, tired, has a wet diaper, has gas, or is simply upset. The case manager can help the mother by helping her identify ways to help the baby, such as by considering the last time the baby ate or slept, checking the baby's diaper, massaging the baby's belly, or comforting the baby by holding him and speaking softly to him.
2. The client may be dealing with poverty, a large amount of stress from the lack of support, and inadequate parenting skills as a young mother.
3. The client could be feeling overwhelmed, upset, frustrated and/or confused. She expresses that she does not know how she should deal with a crying baby.
4. The case manager can encourage the parent to hold the child to soothe him and to speak softly to the child. The case manager can also talk with the parent about ways to nurture and develop attachment specifically with an infant.



Supervised Visitation Chart

The chart below describes how supervised visitation personnel can take advantage of opportunities with parents to encourage the nurturing and development of attachment. The chart also describes the positive effect of these behaviors.

Opportunities for Supervised Visitation Personnel	What the Parent Can Do	Positive Effect on the Child
During intake, allow the parent to be open about feelings he or she may be experiencing by asking directly about his or her feelings.	The parent can model being opened about his or her feelings.	The child learns how to communicate with his or her family about feelings in a healthy way.
During parenting time, encourage the parent to select or help the child select an activity that allows them to work together.	The parent can work with the child during the activity and express care and support for the child.	The child will feel encouraged to work together with the parent and develop trust.
When the child becomes upset, encourage the parent to find out what is wrong and soothe the child.	The parent meets the child's needs, and soothes the child to communicate.	The child feels comforted when he or she is upset and learns to trust his or her parent to help.
When the parent becomes frustrated, encourage the parent to take a step back from the situation so he or she does not become upset at the child.	The parent understands that he or she should calm down and not yell at the child in frustration.	The child learns that even when the parent is upset or frustrated, the parent still loves the child.

Case Example

Read this case example and answer the questions that follows.

A supervised visitation staff member is supervising a visit between a non-custodial father and his two year old daughter. The father has a history of alcohol use and violent outbursts with his family. The father has been attending AA meetings and trying to stay away from alcohol. The father's goal for supervised visitation is to try to build a better relationship with his daughter. While the father is playing with the daughter, she notices his phone on a nearby chair. She grabs the phone and begins to play with it. The father asks her to hand him the phone and she yells, "NO!" -- he takes the phone from her hands and she starts to have a temper tantrum. The father tries to calm the child, but she just keeps crying loudly. The father becomes very frustrated. He shouts, "Take her away from me!"

Questions:

1. What are some risk factors that might be present?
2. What are some feelings this client may be experiencing?
3. What steps can the supervised visitation worker take to help this parent learn to nurture and develop attachment with his daughter?

Possible Answers:

1. Some risk factors are the father's anger issues and frustration at his daughter. He may have poor relationships and poor coping skills due to his difficulty coping with his anger and frustration.
2. The father may be feeling self-blame, frustration, feelings of being overwhelmed, and possibly anger.
3. The worker can help the father take a step back from the situation and try to calm down. Then the worker and father can discuss techniques that the father can use to calm down when he gets angry or frustrated with his daughter, so that he does not damage his relationship with her. The worker and father can also discuss appropriate ways of dealing with his daughter's temper tantrum.



Other Resources

- **Strengthening Families:** This guidebook offers information for social service providers on how to teach the protective factors to families.

<http://www.cssp.org/publications/neighborhood-investment/strengthening-families/top-five/strengthening-%20families-a-guidebook-for-early-childhood-programs.pdf>

- **Bonding with your Baby:** This webpage offers information specifically for bonding with a baby. It includes information on how to bond with babies and the importance of bonding with babies.

http://kidshealth.org/parent/pregnancy_newborn/communicating/bonding.html

- **Zero to Three:** This webpage offers information on the first three years of a child's life, including behaviors, development, and child care.

<http://www.zerotothree.org/>



Affirmation Cards

Affirmation cards allow parents, children, and supervised visitation staff a chance to verbalize successes and congratulate families when they act positively.

Each card congratulates the child or parent, and provides a line for the supervised visitation worker to describe what the child or parent did to get a card. Below are some examples for children by age group, and parents.

CHILDREN (3-6 YEARS)

Thank you for:

- Saying please and thank you when asking to play a game
- Taking turns when playing with blocks.
- Sharing with your brother/sister.
- Using your inside voice.
- Talking about your feelings.
- Calming down after getting upset.
- Following the visitation rules.

CHILDREN (7-17 YEARS)

Thank you for:

- Calming down after getting upset.
- Talking calmly about a problem you have.
- Sharing with your brother/sister.
- Working hard and improving your performance at school.
- Being a good sport after playing a game.
- Following the visitation rules.
- Asking for help when you need it.
- Treating your parent/staff with respect.

PARENTS

Thank you for:

- Arriving on your visit on time.
- Expressing your frustrations calmly, instead of yelling.
- Correcting your children's behavior in a calm manner.
- Teaching your son/daughter something new.
- Following through with your case plan.
- Having a great visit.
- Following the program guidelines.
- Encouraging your child.
- Being sensitive to your child's needs
- Being a caring mom/dad!

References

Administration for Children and Families. (n.d.). The six protective factors. *US Department of Health and Human Services*. Retrieved from: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth/factors.cfm>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Child maltreatment: Risk and protective factors*. Retrieved from: www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/riskprotectivefactors.html

Lubell, K., M., Lofton, T., & Singer, H., H. (2008). *Promoting healthy parenting practices across cultural groups: A CDC research brief*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

Whittmer, D. (2011). *Attachment: What works?* US Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from : http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/briefs/wwb_24.pdf

Next Step:

Read about **Knowledge of Child Development**, the second protective factor in the E-Book Series for Supervised Visitation Programs.



The Protective Factors

An E-Book Series for Supervised Visitation Programs



Knowledge of Child Development

The Second Protective Factor in a Series of Six



Introduction

Research indicates that children with parents who understand child developmental stages are at reduced risk for child abuse and maltreatment. Knowledge about child development is gained through the parent learning about how the child changes emotionally, physically, and mentally, and the needs that accompany these changes. This knowledge allows parents to have realistic expectations of a child's behavior and abilities, as well as to be able to fulfill the child's needs from birth to adulthood.

Objectives

After completing this training, social service providers and supervised visitation personnel should:

- Understand what having knowledge of child development looks like in a family setting, and be able to describe different examples in the home.
- Understand the importance of having knowledge of child development and the positive effects for children and families.
- Explore strategies providers can use to help parents develop knowledge of child developmental stages.
- Understand the specific ways supervised visitation personnel can help parents develop knowledge of child developmental stages.
- Learn about the resources available to social service providers and families who are looking for more information about child developmental stages.



Knowledge of Child Development

BELOW ARE SEVERAL EXAMPLES OF WHAT KNOWLEDGE OF A CHILD'S DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE MAY LOOK LIKE:



A father understanding why his seven month old baby cannot be potty trained.



A mother understanding why her thirteen year old son wants to spend a lot of time with his friends.

A parent understanding toddlers, and why toddlers have tantrums.



A father understanding that his newborn sleeping a total of 20 hours per day at intervals throughout the day and night is normal.



BELOW ARE SEVERAL INDICATORS THAT A PARENT DOES NOT HAVE ADEQUATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHILD'S DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE:



A parent yelling at a baby for not listening or following directions.



A mother insisting that her six year old can supervise a toddler.

A father allowing a young child to be alone in the home.



A parent becoming upset when a two year old cannot speak in full sentences.



The Importance of Knowing the Child Developmental Stages

A parent knowing about child developmental stages is important for the parent and for the child. The parent is better able to recognize when a child is not on target for an appropriate milestone. The child will feel secure in his or her development because the parent will have reasonable and achievable expectations of the child.

A PARENT THAT UNDERSTANDS:

Encourages age-appropriate behavior that helps the child develop.



Helps the child to feel encouraged & capable of achieving goals.



Will have appropriate expectations of what a child can do.



Is in a better position to notice when a milestone has not been reached.



A PARENT THAT DOES NOT UNDERSTAND:

May negatively impact the child's ability to learn new things when a parent expects too much or too little from them.



May have a child that has difficulty expressing their feelings.



May have unrealistic expectations of the child & set goals that the child cannot achieve.



May harm the child's self-esteem & confidence because the child will not understand why they cannot succeed or fulfill parent's expectations.



Think about it....



Now that you know about the importance of understanding a child's developmental stages, what are the risks to families with parents who do not know about them? How might the child, parent, or family as a whole be affected by this lack of knowledge?

Strategies for Working with Families

Social services providers can help parents learn about the importance of understanding the developmental stages of children. There are many different opportunities for social service providers to discuss child developmental stages with parents. Some opportunities are described below:

1 Talking with parents during intake and follow-up procedures to social service delivery.

2 Talking with parents when they express things.

3 Talking with parents during a problem in supervision.

4 Talking with parents about occupational, education, and social resources.

5 Talking with parents during pick up, drop off, or parent-teacher meetings.



Skill Building

There are different skills that help parents understand child development with their children. Some are described below with information on how individuals that work with parents can help them to develop these skills.

HAVING AGE- APPROPRIATE EXPECTATIONS



- Encourage parents to engage in activities with the child that the child can understand and will be appropriate for his or her attention span.
- Talk with parents about setting age-appropriate limits for the child. For instance, not allowing a five year old ride his or her bike to school alone even though the child's 13 year old sibling does.
- Talk with parents about different discipline techniques and what is most effective for the child. For example, parents may not punish a four year old by not allowing him or her to go out with friends, but with a time out. Conversely, parents would be more likely to ground a teenager than give a time out. Discipline is more effective and nurturing when parents know how to encourage appropriate behaviors based on child development.
- Talk with parents about developmental challenges that the child may be facing.

HELPING THE CHILD ACHIEVE GOALS

- Encourage parents to make an effort to help their children learn new games and new skills. Teaching new games will allow the children to grow and challenge their current abilities.
- Talk with parents about age-appropriate games they can play with the child. These games will allow parents to strengthen their bond with the child and allow the child to feel that the parents understand and respect his or her abilities. Talk with parents about age appropriate rating and posting on games, movies, and other activities, and why these are important for parents to understand.
- Discuss with parents ways that they can support their child in trying new activities. A child trying something new may feel nervous. Having parental support will enable the child to build confidence in his or her developing abilities.



ABILITY TO HELP THE CHILD GROW

- Encourage parents to learn about their child's developmental stage and how to challenge the child within that stage. The parent can encourage the child to try new activities and learn new things. This allows the child to develop skills without the fearing of failing.
- Help parents understand ways to help a child when he or she is trying to develop a new skill or learn something new. For instance, show the parents how to guide in how to do something without actually doing it for the child. Parenting is teaching!
- Talk with parents about child safety concerns, including child-proofing homes, safe eating and sleeping habits for infants, shaken baby syndrome, and SIDS.



KNOWING WHAT A CHILD CAN AND CANNOT DO

- Explain to parents the importance of having realistic expectations about the child. Understanding where the child is developmentally helps parents know what to expect. This, in turn, helps the child to feel capable, successful, and the child will feel secure.
- Help parents identify unrealistic expectations for their child based on developmental stage or abilities to help ease further development, and how parents can encourage appropriate behavior through positive behavior modeling and discipline.
- Discuss with parents the importance of having age-appropriate consequences so the child is able to learn from his or her mistakes.



A Note on Cultural Competency...

It is important to recognize that there are common values across cultures. Research indicates that parents, across cultures, **have common expectations for their children**. Some examples of such expectations are: to be respectful, well-behaved, and honest; to do well in school; and to share with others. Parents from different cultures also seem to have some common approaches to disciplining children. Examples include: expressing disapproval through talking with, or making gestures to, the child; establishing rules and expectations; and having consequences for breaking rules. When working with families, **be open, non-judgmental, and flexible** when you encounter unfamiliar parenting practices, preferences, and perceptions of a child's behavior.

Case Example

Read this case example and answer the questions that follow.

A child protection agency is working on parenting skills with a couple. The couple has two children: an eight year old daughter and a five year old son, both neurodivergent. The parents report that they have more trouble with their daughter than their son. The parents don't understand why their daughter acts differently than their son did when he was five. Both parents become very frustrated with the daughter. They think she should understand more than she does and that she should be able to do more things on her own than she does.

Questions:

1. What steps can the child protective worker take to help these parents understand their daughter's development?
2. What are some possible risk factors with regarding to child maltreatment?
3. What are some feelings these clients may be experiencing?
4. What are some feelings the daughter may be experiencing?

Possible Answers:

1. The child protective worker can talk with the parents about the dynamics of raising a neurodivergent child. The worker can also talk with the parents about how their daughter's development may differ from their son's. The worker may also be able to suggest some activities the parents can engage in with their daughter, or some resources (or referrals) where the parents can access some appropriate services for their daughter in order to assist with age development activities.
2. These parents may be dealing with a lack of parenting skills and stress from the challenges that can arise when raising a neurodivergent child, which could put both children at greater risk of abuse.
3. These parents may be experiencing frustration, anger, and confusion, which, again, could potentially put both children at greater risk of abuse.
4. The daughter may be feeling...(examples include sad, like a failure, fearful, ashamed, stupid, etc.)



Supervised Visitation Chart

The chart below describes how supervised visitation personnel may take advantage of opportunities with parents to help them gain knowledge and understanding of a child's developmental stages. The chart also describes the positive effect of these behaviors on the child.

Opportunities for Supervised Visitation Personnel	What the Parent Can Do	Positive Effect on the Child
During intake, talk with the parent about the child's age and developmental stage. Discuss typical behaviors during that stage of development.	The parent can know what a reasonable expectation of the child is.	The child can understand and learn what the parent expects from him or her.
During parenting time, encourage the parent to select an activity that the child will be able to understand and enjoy.	The parent chooses an activity or game that the child can understand at his or her age.	The child feels as if he or she has the power to understand, achieve, and grow.
When the child becomes upset, encourage the parent to think about the child's developmental stage and how to deal with the situation.	The parent learns the importance of the developmental stages of the child during the time when the child becomes upset. Based on the reason the child is upset, the parent identifies the correct way to handle the situation and assist the child.	The child understands what the parent expects from him or her and is able to learn new things, and feel capable.
When the parent becomes frustrated, discuss the importance of the child's age and development. The parent may not understand why the child cannot do something.	The parent understands that because of a child's developmental stage, the child may not understand the situation and may act out in confusion. The parent learns these limitations and is better able to help the child accomplish his or her goal.	The child feels that the parent understands his or her abilities and feels supported.

Case Example

Read this case example and answer the questions that follow.

A supervised visitation staff member is supervising a visit between a father and his two year old son. During the visit, the father learns that the son is not potty- trained yet and is still using diapers. The father becomes frustrated at the child for not knowing how to use the bathroom yet. He starts to yell at the child and the child becomes upset.

Questions:

1. What are some possible risk factors for child maltreatment that might be present?
2. What are some feelings these clients may be experiencing?
3. What are some feelings the child may be experiencing?
4. What steps can the supervised visitation worker take to help this parent understand more about his son's developmental stage?

Possible Answers:

1. Some risk factors are the father's anger and frustration, as well as the father's lack of understanding about his son's developmental stage.
2. The father may be feeling frustration, anger, confusion, and embarrassment
3. The child may feel...(examples include sad, frustrated, confused, unsure, scared, etc.)
4. The worker needs to encourage the father to take a step back from the situation and to calm down. Then the worker and father can discuss his son's developmental stage, and the father can learn about potty training, and better understand his son's mental and physical capabilities. Explain to the parent that not all two-year-olds are potty trained yet, and it is something that takes time.



A Note on Child Development

A parent may notice that his or her child is not developing at a normal pace, or is missing developmental milestones. Parents whose children are not developing at a normal pace may feel that they have failed as parents, or that their child will never be “normal.”

However, many children are able to catch up to their peers through early intervention. Parents, doctors, and teachers can help children grow when they recognize the children’s needs.

Parents who are concerned about child development can contact their pediatrician or child’s health care provider to learn more about development, and to have the child’s development assessed by a professional.

For parents with children in dependency cases, these issues can also be discussed with the case manager, therapist, and other professionals involved with the child. Encourage parents to express these concerns to supervised visitation staff, case managers, teachers, day care personnel or other professionals who can help or who can refer the parent for assistance.

Other Resources

There is an opportunity to share resources and explore solutions to family problems when parents and social service workers communicate about child development. Materials on child development and parenting can usually help parents realize their child's skills and where he or she stands in relation to other children. The following resources can further assist parents in understanding and meeting their child's needs.

- **Play at Different Ages and Developmental Stages:** This webpage lists different play activities based on a child's age. It discusses different actions to expect from each.
<https://www.familyeducation.com/entertainment-activities/toys/play-different-ages-developmental-stages>
- **Early Childhood Development Kit:** This document offers a wealth of information on different age-appropriate activities for children in early childhood. It includes different types of games and activities.
<https://www.unicef.org/supply/media/631/file/ECD-early-child-development-kit-activity-guide-english.pdf>

References

Administration for Children and Families. (n.d.). The six protective factors. *US Department of Health and Human Services*. Retrieved from: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/preventionmonth/protective-factors-conversation-guides/>

National Resource Center from Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention. (n.d.). *Protective factors*. Retrieved from: <http://friendsnrc.org/cbcap-priority-areas/protective-factors>

Next Step:

Read about **Parental Resilience**, the third protective factor in the E-Book Series for Supervised Visitation Programs.



The Protective Factors

An E-Book Series for Supervised Visitation Programs



Parental Resilience

The Third Protective Factor in a Series of Six



Introduction

Research indicates that children with parents who have resilient coping skills are at reduced risk for child abuse and maltreatment. Parental resilience is defined as a parent's own inner resources and coping skills that help them to handle stress and crises. Resilient coping skills allow a parent to be able to solve problems, keep calm and collected when upset, and make it through challenging times. When parents are resilient, they are better able to build strong and resilient families.

Objectives

After completing this training, social service providers and supervised visitation personnel should:

- Understand what resilient coping skills look like in a family setting and be able to describe different examples in the home.
- Recognize the importance of parental resilience and its positive effects on children and families.
- Explore strategies to help parents develop and use resilient coping skills.
- Understand the specific ways supervised visitation personnel can help parents develop and use resilient coping skills.
- Recognize resources available to social service providers and families looking for more information about parental resilience.



Parental Resilience in the Home

BELOW ARE SEVERAL EXAMPLES OF WHAT PARENTAL RESILIENCE MAY LOOK LIKE:



A mother counting to ten to calm down when she is frustrated by a toddler's tantrum.



A father recognizing his need to de-stress and finding a responsible caregiver to supervise his children while he takes time for himself.

A father calmly handles a financial crisis in the family without raising his voice or lashing out physically or emotionally

BANK



A mother takes time to work with a child who is acting in a challenging way



BELOW ARE SEVERAL INDICATORS THAT PARENTAL RESILIENCE MAY BE LACKING:



A parent exploding in anger at a child physically or verbally.



A parent refusing or hesitant to plan for the future.

A parent unable to get out of bed after encountering a difficult situation



A parent avoiding conflict resolution.



The Importance of Parental Resilience

Though some parents deal with stress in negative ways, such as drinking alcohol or becoming violent, parents with resilient coping skills are able to handle stress in healthy ways and model effective coping skills for their child.

Parents who are emotionally resilient have a positive attitude, creatively solve problems, effectively address challenges, and are less likely to direct anger and frustration at their children. In addition, these parents are aware of their own challenges—for example, those arising from inappropriate parenting they received as children—and accept help and/or counseling when needed (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.).

PARENTS WHO HAVE RESILIENT COPING SKILLS:

May relieve stress through physical exercise.



May cope with problems by talking with friends or family.



Use activities to help them deal with difficult times.



Use methods for remaining calm in frustration situation.



PARENTS WITHOUT RESILIENT COPING SKILLS:

Often feel overwhelmed and frustrated



May develop health problems related to stress.



Are less able to address marital and family problems in a healthy, productive way.



Are at increased risk for drug and alcohol use.



Think about it....



Knowing the importance of parental resilience, what are some of the risks to families with parents who do not have good coping skills? How might the child, parent, or family as a whole be affected?

Strategies for Working with Families

Social service providers can help parents learn the importance of having resilient coping skills and how to develop them. There are many different opportunities for social service providers to discuss resilience and healthy coping strategies with parents. Some opportunities include:

1 Talking with parents during intake and follow-up procedures to social service delivery.

2 Talking with parents when they express things.

3 Talking with parents during a supervised visitation.

4 Talking with parents about occupational, education, and social resources.

5 Talking with parents during pick up, drop off, or parent-teacher meetings.



Skill Building

As parents begin to discuss their worries and anxiety, supervised visitation monitors have a chance to help build resilience and coping strategies. Because parents may not recognize the ways stress may impact their interactions with their child, supervised visitation monitors can help parents to understand the importance of coping with stress in a healthy, positive way and modeling coping behaviors for children. Monitors can work with parents to understand what causes and triggers stress, currently inappropriate or unhealthy coping methods and the impact of stress on the family dynamic. After identifying stressors and existing coping skills, monitors and parents can identify healthy coping skills and preventative methods to reduce stress. Preventative methods can include pre-planning, recognizing triggers and when stress is building, using appropriate coping skills to avoid a blow-up, and communicating clearly to avoid misunderstandings. Supervised visitation monitors can also work with parents to help build self-care into coping skills and daily routines, as parents who do not care for themselves are unable to care for their children. Below are several different skills to help parents to develop resilient coping strategies.

TAKING STEPS TO PREVENT STRESS

- Discuss with parents how to avoid potential stress through engaging in alternative activities, such as listening to music, taking a walk, or other activities the parents like to do to relax.
- Talk with parents about the importance of communication and positive coping skills to avoid tension building and stress triggers. Help the parent to pre-plan and set goals to avoid future stress to the greatest extent possible.
- Talk with parents about what activities he or she likes to do to relax, such as physical activity, art, or yoga, and help him or her make time for these activities in his or her schedule. If the parent engages in negative coping behaviors such as abusing drugs or alcohol, have the parent identify positive and negative consequences of their negative coping behaviors. For example, if the parent copes by doing drugs, a positive consequence may include forgetting reality for a bit, but a negative consequence may be losing custody of his/her child, or endangering his/her child. Do the same for positive coping skills, to help the parent see the difference in positive and negative consequences and use positive coping skills in the future.



STAYING PHYSICALLY HEALTHY

- Help parents identify physical activities they can do with or without their child to relieve stress, such as running, yoga, or swimming.
- Encourage parents to make sure they take care of themselves physically by exercising and eating healthy. Remind parents their physical health is as important as their child's.
- Encourage parents to visit the doctor regularly to ensure they are healthy and not experiencing any negative health consequences from stress. Negative health effects of stress may put more stress on the family.



STAYING EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY

- Talk with parents about child-related stress. For instance, take a breath and count to ten instead of immediately punishing the child for age-appropriate behaviors, such as needing to be reminded of instructions, or not cleaning up after themselves.
- Help parents identify supportive social systems they can turn to when they experience stress or feel overwhelmed.



LEARNING ABOUT SOURCES OF STRESS

- Talk with parents about what parts of his or her life are causing stress and recommend some resources to help reduce stress. For instance, if parents feel stressed about child care, it may be helpful to suggest some low-cost child care options.
- Encourage parents to talk about how they feel when they are stressed. Help parents identify feelings they may be experiencing. This allows the parents to name their feelings, while also modeling healthy labeling for their children.



Every parent has ways to manage stress, regardless of cultural context. **Have a conversation with the parent about how he or she has handled stress in the past.** Work with the parent to identify activities that are relaxing and what resources are utilized for support, **while exploring the parent's perception of a healthy lifestyle.**

Case Example

Read the case example below and answer the following questions.

A supervised visitation monitor meets before a visit with the single mother of two brothers who have been recently suspended from school for continuously disrupting class. The supervised visitation monitor learns that the mother receives little financial support from the boys' father. During the first meeting, the mother seemed very overwhelmed by all of her responsibilities. The mother became emotional and told the supervised visitation monitor that she does not know how to handle everything and has been getting angry with her sons because she feels constantly overwhelmed.

Questions:

1. What steps can the supervised visitation monitor take to help this parent with the stress she is experiencing?
2. What are some possible risk factors with regards to child maltreatment?
3. What are some of the feelings this parent may be experiencing?

Possible Answers:

1. The supervised visitation monitor can help the mother identify what parts of her life are causing her stress and then refer the mother to resources to help deal with these stressors. The supervised visitation monitor could recommend different resources available in the community or at school for the boys, such as afterschool care, tutoring and behavioral counseling. The supervised visitation monitor can also recommend the mother try to seek out some systems to help her with self-care. For example, she can try and identify a friend, maybe a parent from school, who can help watch the boys while the mother takes some time for herself. If the case is a dependency case, the monitor should ensure that the case manager is aware of the problems and is offering assistance to the mother. At a minimum, the monitor can direct the mother to the Office of Child Support Enforcement.
2. This parent is dealing with high levels of stress caused by being a single parent, having a limited support group, and also experiencing some financial instability.
3. This parent may be experiencing a heightened emotional response due to stress, including depression, frustration, and feeling overwhelmed. She needs resources and help.



Supervised Visitation Chart

The chart below describes how supervised visitation personnel can take advantage of opportunities with parents to help them develop resilient coping skills. The chart also describes the positive effect parental resiliency can have on children.

Opportunities for Supervised Visitation Personnel	Opportunities for Parents	Positive Effect on the Child
<p>During intake, talk with the parent about ways he or she handles stress. Discuss stressful events the parent might have going on in his or her life.</p>	<p>The parent has the opportunity to identify how he or she copes with stress and can learn new and healthy ways of coping.</p>	<p>The child may adopt and replicate effective coping skills when the parent exhibits them.</p>
<p>During parenting time, encourage the parent to choose an activity that will be low stress for the parent and child.</p>	<p>The parent chooses a low-stress activity in a potentially high-stress situation, or when the parent is feeling stressed. Parent and child can enjoy time together without heightened emotions and tense interactions.</p>	<p>The child also gets to participate in a low- stress activity in a potentially high-stress situation, or when the parent is feeling stressed.</p>
<p>When a child becomes upset, help the parent learn to comfort the child and not become overwhelmed by the upset behavior.</p>	<p>The parent learns ways to comfort the child and avoid more potential stress.</p>	<p>The child feels comforted by the parent and will imitate the parent's reaction and demeanor</p>
<p>When a parent becomes frustrated, help him or her use resilient coping skills to calm down before reentering a stressful situation.</p>	<p>The parent learns to effectively use his or her coping skills in a stressful situation.</p>	<p>The child sees his or her parent use coping skills to deal effectively with crises.</p>

Case Example

Read the case example below and answer the following questions.

A supervised visitation monitor is supervising a visit between a father and his six year old son and eight year old daughter. When the father arrives for the visit, he appears tired. Before the visit, the father mentions to the supervised visitation monitor he has recently lost his job and is searching for a new one. The father tells the supervised visitation monitor he is having trouble paying his bills and he doesn't know what to do. During the visit, the father seems distracted from his activity with the children.

Questions:

1. What steps can the supervised visitation monitor take to help this parent with the stress he is experiencing?
2. What are some of the risk factors this parent may be experiencing for child maltreatment?
3. What are some of the feelings this parent may be experiencing?
4. What are some activities or strategies you can use to help the dad to de-stress, build resilience and engage with his kids?

Possible Answers:

1. The supervised visitation monitor can recommend community resources to the father and help the father identify support structures in his life. For instance, the monitor could recommend different financial support resources or resources to help find a job.
2. This parent is dealing with a high level of stress caused by unemployment and financial strain, which may impact the parent's patience and tolerance, and lead to possible child maltreatment.
3. This parent may be experiencing feelings of self-doubt, anger, frustration, loneliness, and high levels of stress.
4. The supervised visitation monitor could help the dad by providing access to a phone onsite to communicate with employers and listen to the difficulties the dad is experiencing, to help him handle his emotions. Additionally, the monitor could play soft music and help the father brainstorm resources within his social support network to help improve his situation.



Other Resources

Families: This website from the American Institute of Stress discusses the impact of stress on the whole family. This includes different family dynamics or family structural changes that may cause stress.

<http://www.stress.org/families/>

Practical Ways to Handle Stress: This webpage includes a step by step list of ways to avoid stress and cope with stress.

<http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2011/07/11/10-practical-ways-to-handle-stress/>

Strengthening Families: This guidebook offers information for social service providers on how to teach the protective factors to families.

<https://cssp.org/our-work/project/strengthening-families/>

References

Administration for Children and Families. (n.d.). *The six protective factors*. US Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/preventionmonth/protective-factors-conversation-guides/>

American Psychological Association. (2019). *Stress in America 2019 report*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2019/stress-america-2019.pdf>

Next Step:

Read about **Supportive Social Connections**, the fourth protective factor in the E-Book Series for Supervised Visitation Programs.

**Contact the Clearinghouse at
850-644-1715**

