

# THE INSTITUTE FOR INNOVATION & IMPLEMENTATION

Integrating Systems • Improving Outcomes

# The Role of the Workforce in Supporting Birth and Resource Parent Partnership

Maryland Center for Excellence in Resource Parent Development



**Primary Authors :**

Jennifer Kelman, PhD – Director, MD Workforce Training and Development Unit and the Child Welfare Academy  
Laura Teetermoran, LCSW – Training Program Manager, the Child Welfare Academy

**Contributors / Reviewers:**

Erik Johnson – Training Specialist, Child Welfare Academy

Erin Leech – Training Specialist, The Institute

Harry Morgan, MSW – Training Specialist, The Institute

Kira Silk, LMSW – Director, Grand Challenges for Social Work

Jessie Watrous, MPA – Interim Director, The Institute for Innovation and Implementation

Special acknowledgement to members of the CfE Steering Committee for their input and feedback.

*The Center for Excellence in Resource Family Development* is funded through the Children's Bureau, an Office of the Administration for Children and Families and represents a partnership between the Maryland Department of Human Services, Social Services Administration and the Institute for Innovation and Implementation at the University of Maryland, School of Social Work

Please do not copy, distribute or re-create the content of these slides without the express written consent of the developers.

# **Zoom Attendees Disclaimer**

**Attendees of this meeting should be aware that there are known and potential privacy and confidentiality issues with the Zoom System (Cloud Service, Web application, and/or Application).**

While every effort has been made to ensure the security of this meeting, factors out of the State's control introduce risk. Participants should evaluate the risk associated with the application and platform and determine if the risks preclude the use of the service.

**The State provides no warranty regarding the security of application**, confidentiality of the information discussed, or the privacy of information collected by the application and/or service. Security events impacting the confidentiality, integrity, or availability of meeting (e.g., ZoomBombing) must be reported to the State Security Operations Center ([soc.info@maryland.gov](mailto:soc.info@maryland.gov)).

**DHS Security Governance April 2021**

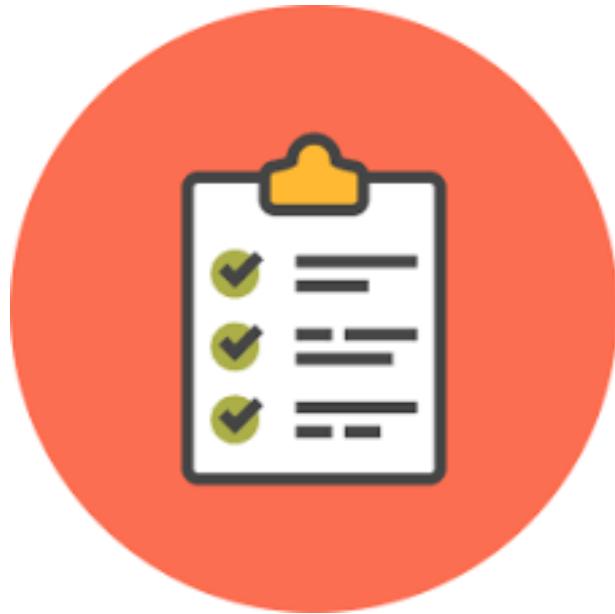
Please do not copy, distribute or re-create the content of these slides without the express written consent of the developers.



---

We're glad you are here!

# Training Logistics and Expectations



- Cameras on and faces visible
- Sign in/out at breaks
- Active participation in large and small group work.
- You can also use the raise your hand feature if you have a question or comment.
- Questions and comments can also be typed into the chat.



- Respect confidentiality
- Practice personal and group accountability
- Choose authenticity over comfort
- Be aware of equity of voice
- Assume positive intent
- Listen with an intent to “hear”, understand, and grow
- Expect and accept lack of closure
- Others?

---

## Community Agreement and Intention Setting

*WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO BE PRESENT AND FOCUSED IN THIS SPACE TODAY?*

# INTRODUCTIONS

- ❖ Name
- ❖ Jurisdiction
- ❖ Program Assignment



# Agenda

Welcome and Introductions!

Philosophy Behind Parent Partnership

Connecting the Integrated Practice Model (IPM) to Parent Partnership

Identify Barriers and Outline Effective Strategies

Action Plan to Support Parent Partnerships

# Learning Objectives



Following training completion, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the philosophy behind building and maintaining parent partnerships and the potential benefits for the child, birth parents, and resource parents.
2. Recognize how parent partnership aligns with the Integrated Practice Model and Maryland's child welfare transformation efforts, and supports desired safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children, youth and families.
3. Explain best practice components from Social Services Administration (SSA) Guidance on Promoting Parent Partnership including Comfort Calls, Icebreakers and Continuum of Contact.
4. Identify potential barriers to building and maintaining parent partnership including the impact of bias and trauma.
5. Outline effective strategies to facilitate and support parent partnership between birth parents and resource parents.
6. Develop an action plan for supporting parent partnership, informed by survey results, that considers the unique strengths, challenges and opportunities of the LDSS.



**Understanding the  
philosophy behind  
building and  
maintaining parent  
partnership**

---

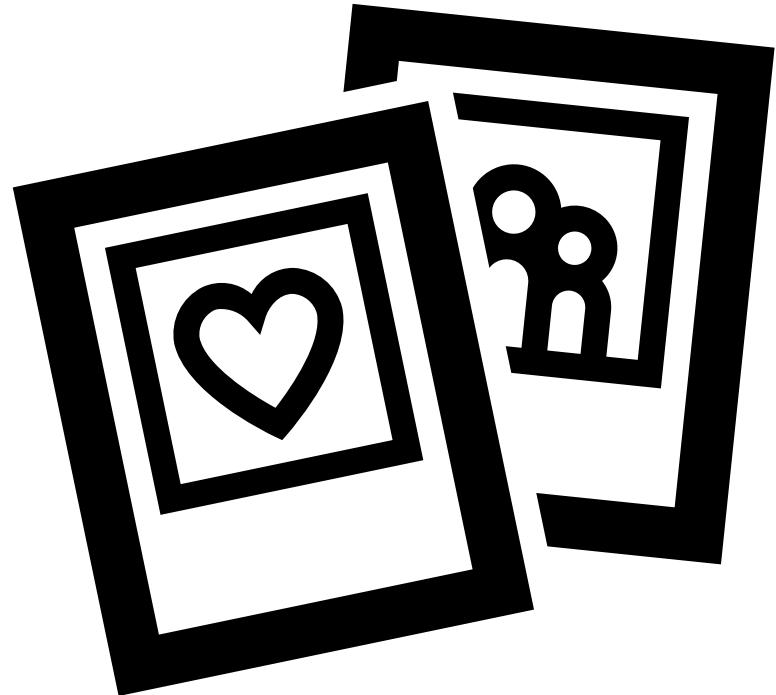
# Reflection Exercise

In the ideal world, what would a relationship between a birth parent and resource parent look like?

What would birth parents be doing and saying?

What would resource parents be doing and saying?





# Defining the relationship

How do you define parent partnership, co-parenting or shared parenting?

# Co/Shared Parenting Defined



Shared parenting is a practice that involves resource parents cultivating positive, supportive relationships/partnerships with birth parents to minimize further trauma for the child and prepare for eventual reunification. Shared parenting relationships are based on trust while keeping the safety and best interests of the child in focus.

<https://nacac.org/resource/co-parenting-or-shared-parenting/>



# What is Shared Parenting for Children in Foster Care?

---



# NASW Code of Ethics

Service

Social Justice

Dignity and Worth of the Person

Importance of Human Relationships

Integrity

Competence

## **Value: Importance of Human Relationships**

**Ethical Principle:** Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships. Social workers understand that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change. Social workers engage people as partners in the helping process. Social workers seek to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain, and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities.



## **Value: Dignity and Worth of the Person**

**Ethical Principle:** Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person. Social workers treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers promote clients' socially responsible self-determination. Social workers seek to enhance clients' capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs. Social workers are cognizant of their dual responsibility to clients and to the broader society. They seek to resolve conflicts between clients' interests and the broader society's interests in a socially responsible manner consistent with the values, ethical principles, and ethical standards of the profession.



Say...	Try not to say...
Child in foster care	Foster child
Children and families	Cases
Foster or adoptive family	Foster or adoptive home
Child joining a family	Placement
Separated the child from his/her parent(s)	Removed
Family time	Visits/visitation
Transitioning to independence	Aging out
As a resource parent, I've cared for ten <u>children</u>	As a resource parent, I've had ten <u>placements</u>
His parents made a plan of adoption	His parents gave him up for adoption
Person with an addiction/substance misuse	Drug addict/drug abuser/junkie
Person who committed a crime	Criminal
Person with a mental health diagnosis (or need)	Mentally ill
Child with autism/child with special needs	Autistic child/special needs child
Has not begun/is ambivalent to change	Non-compliant
Undocumented person	Illegal alien

# Language Matters

HOW WE CAN SHIFT OUR LANGUAGE TO BE MORE PERSON FIRST, STRENGTHS-BASED AND TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE



**It is all about connection....  
It all begins with connection**

---

*Everyone has a need to feel  
heard, understood and “felt.”*

## **Small Group Sharing: Benefits of Parent Partnership**

In your small group, please do the following:

1. Assign a notetaker and someone who will report out to the larger group.
2. Brainstorm/discuss the benefits of parent partnership for your group's assigned entity. The four different entities/parties include:

**Birth Parents** (Groups 1 and 2)

**Resource Parents** (Groups 3 and 4)

**Child** (Groups 5 and 6)

**Worker/Agency/System** (groups 7 and 8)

3. Note the top three benefits to share out with the larger group.



# Benefits of Parent Partnership for Child

---

- Helps preserve heritage, culture and identity.
- Bonding and attachment with birth family is preserved.
- Decreased feelings of abandonment and rejection.
- Two families to love and be loved by.
- Decreased exposure to conflict and trauma.





# Benefits of Parent Partnership for Child

---

Smoother transitions.

---

Visitation is easier.

---

Resource and birth parents present united front.

---

Reduced feelings of divided loyalty.

---

Needs are better met.

---

Increased chance of ongoing resource parent connection

*"When youth enter foster care, the goal is usually reunification, and in my case, that is what happened. If reunification had not been possible, my connection to my mother still would have been just as important. If anyone had attempted to keep us apart it would have been devastating for me, and I know that the instant I turned 18 I would have been out looking for her. Even though I had great influences in my life throughout foster care, none of them would have been able to replace the relationship I had with my mother; **that bond is critical.**"*

Kodi Baughman, former foster youth (Iowa)

Kodi spent a year in kinship placement with his grandmother. He currently helps families whose lives are touched by the child welfare system and serves on the National Foster Youth and Alumni Policy Council.

Source: Birth and Foster Parent Partnership: A Relationship Building Guide (2020)

A publication of the Birth and Foster Parent Partnership, created with parents, in collaboration with the Children's Trust Fund Alliance, Youth Law Center's Quality Parenting Initiative and Casey Family Programs.



## Benefits of Parent Partnership for Birth Parents

---

Bonding & attachment preserved.

---

Feel more respected.

---

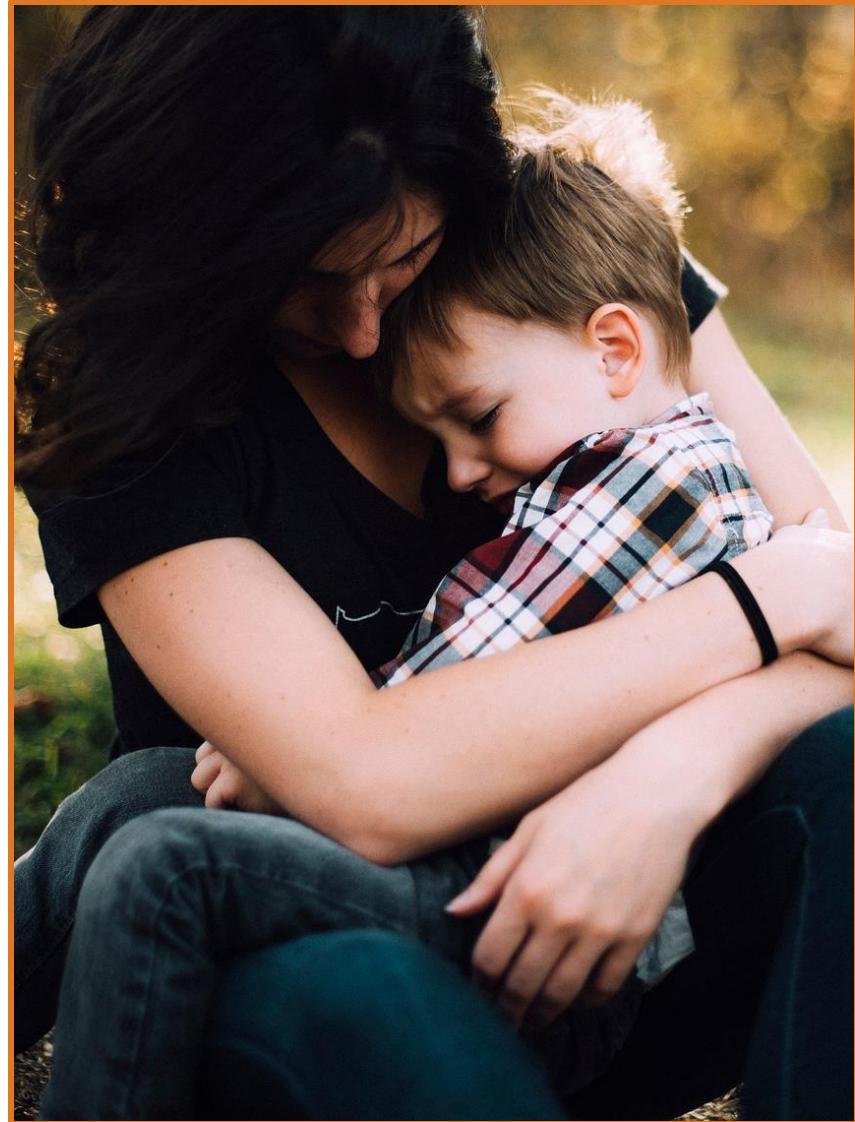
Reduced anxiety.

---

Decreased feelings of isolation and animosity.

---

Better communication.



# Benefits of Parent Partnership for Birth Parents

---

Roles and boundaries more clearly defined.

More knowledge of child's daily activities.

**Goal of reunification remains real. Keeps hope alive!**

Visitation is easier.

Ability to stay involved in child's life.

*“As parents the hardest thing in the world to face is not being able to meet the needs of our children and having to ask for help. We go back and forth in our thinking – should I pick up the phone and ask for help? Will you judge me for asking? Are going to call child protective services? All we want to do is provide for our children.”*

Kimberly Mays, birth parent (Washington)

Kimberly lost custody of nine of her ten children, and they have all reunited with her as adults. Kimberly now has a Master's Degree in Social Work and was instrumental in starting the first parent-for-parent program in Washington. She is a Social Services Worker with the Washington State Office of Public Defense, and a caregiver for relative and non-relative foster youth.

---

Source: Birth and Foster Parent Partnership: A Relationship Building Guide (2020)

A publication of the Birth and Foster Parent Partnership, created with parents, in collaboration with the Children's Trust Fund Alliance, Youth Law Center's Quality Parenting Initiative and Casey Family Programs.



## Benefits of Parent Partnership for Resource Parents

---

Visitation is easier and less stressful.

Reduced feelings of competition or jealousy.

Lifelong connection to child may be maintained.

Greater empathy and understanding of child's birth family.

# Benefits of Parent Partnership for Resource Parents

---

Better understanding of child's experience and where they have come from.

Opportunity to learn about child's culture and reinforce identity.

Less discord and animosity.



*"It's most effective when the foster parent and birth parent work together to coordinate their efforts in caring for a child, particularly relating to culture and traditions. This helps the children and youth maintain their own sense of identity, family history and also increases connections that help them understand the new relationships in their life. This partnership hastens stable reunification because the child has more supportive people in their constellations and research has shown that this is really important to the child's future. These connections are critical to older youth who are close to aging out. In the end, this birth and foster parent partnership strengthens both families."*

Jessica Lloyd-Rogers, foster parent (Oregon)

As a former foster parent and the current President of the Oregon Foster Parent Association, Jessica believes in keeping children and youth safe and surrounded by caring adults who help them grow to become confident, caring, competent and contributing adult members of their community.

---

Source: Birth and Foster Parent Partnership: A Relationship Building Guide (2020)

A publication of the Birth and Foster Parent Partnership, created with parents, in collaboration with the Children's Trust Fund Alliance, Youth Law Center's Quality Parenting Initiative and Casey Family Programs.



## How Does Parent Partnership Benefit Workers and Child Welfare Systems?

---

- Placement Stability and Continuity
- Decreased Time in Foster Care
- Teaming to Support Desired Outcomes
- Increased Resource Capacity
- Improved Permanency Outcomes
- Timely and Lasting Reunification
- Fewer Re-entries
- Smoother Visitation and Improved Transitions
- Helps to Reduce System Bias

*“For such a long time, and it trickled down from the agency to service providers like us, inadvertently everything we do is unsupportive of these relationships. We **separate foster parents and birth parents**. We never give them a chance to have any kind of contact. We feel like we have to protect the birth parents from the foster parents and the foster parents from the birth parents. And looking back, **it makes absolutely no sense.**”*

*Evangeline, Program Director, Louisiana*

---

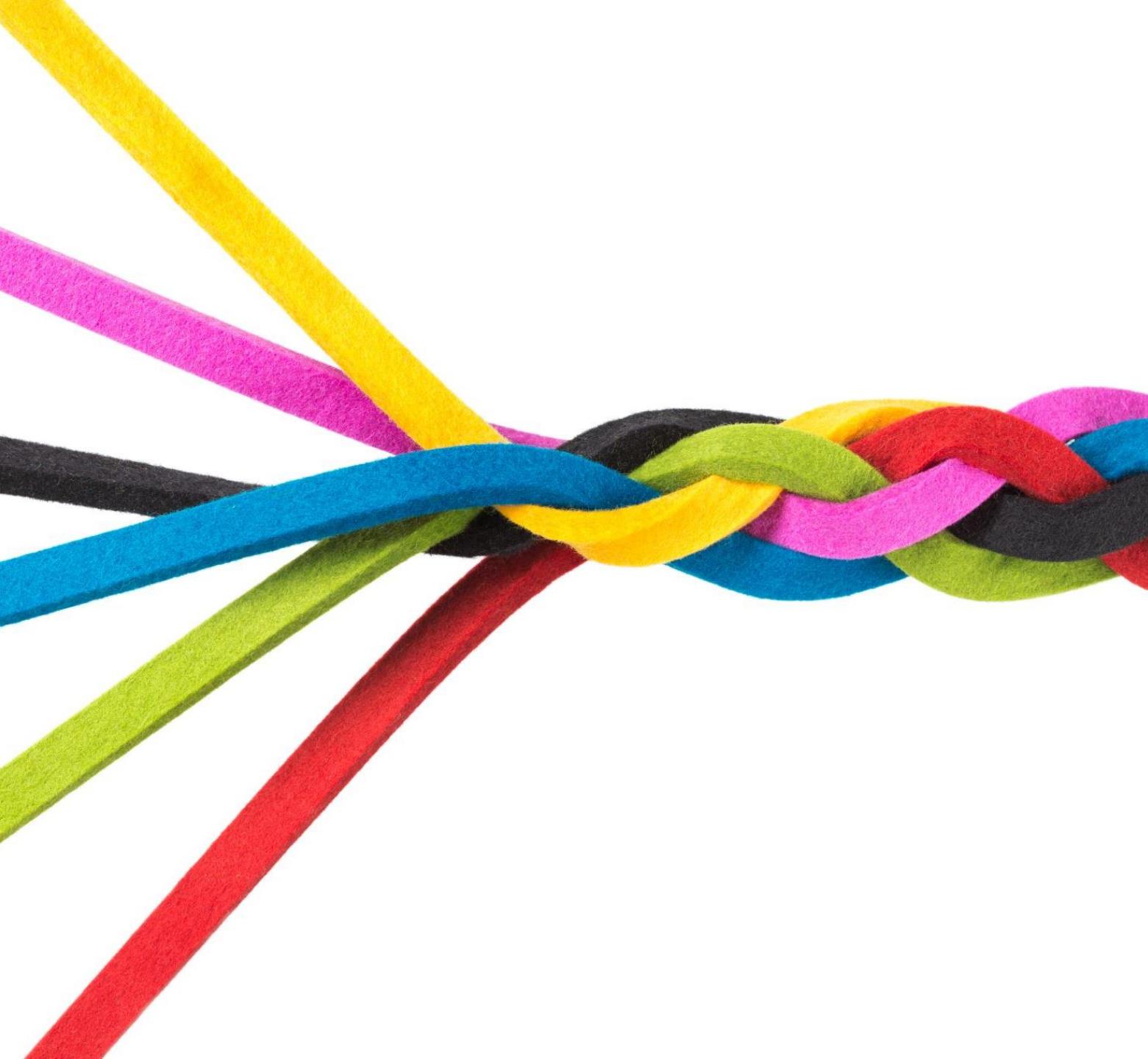
**Source:** Birth and Foster Parent Partnership: A State and Local Leader’s Guide to Building a Strong Policy and Practice Foundation (2020)  
A publication of the Birth and Foster Parent Partnership, created with parents, in collaboration with the Children’s Trust Fund Alliance, Youth Law Center’s Quality Parenting Initiative and Casey Family Programs.

# Yuvia's story

What factors contributed to a positive partnership between Yuvia's mom and resource parent?

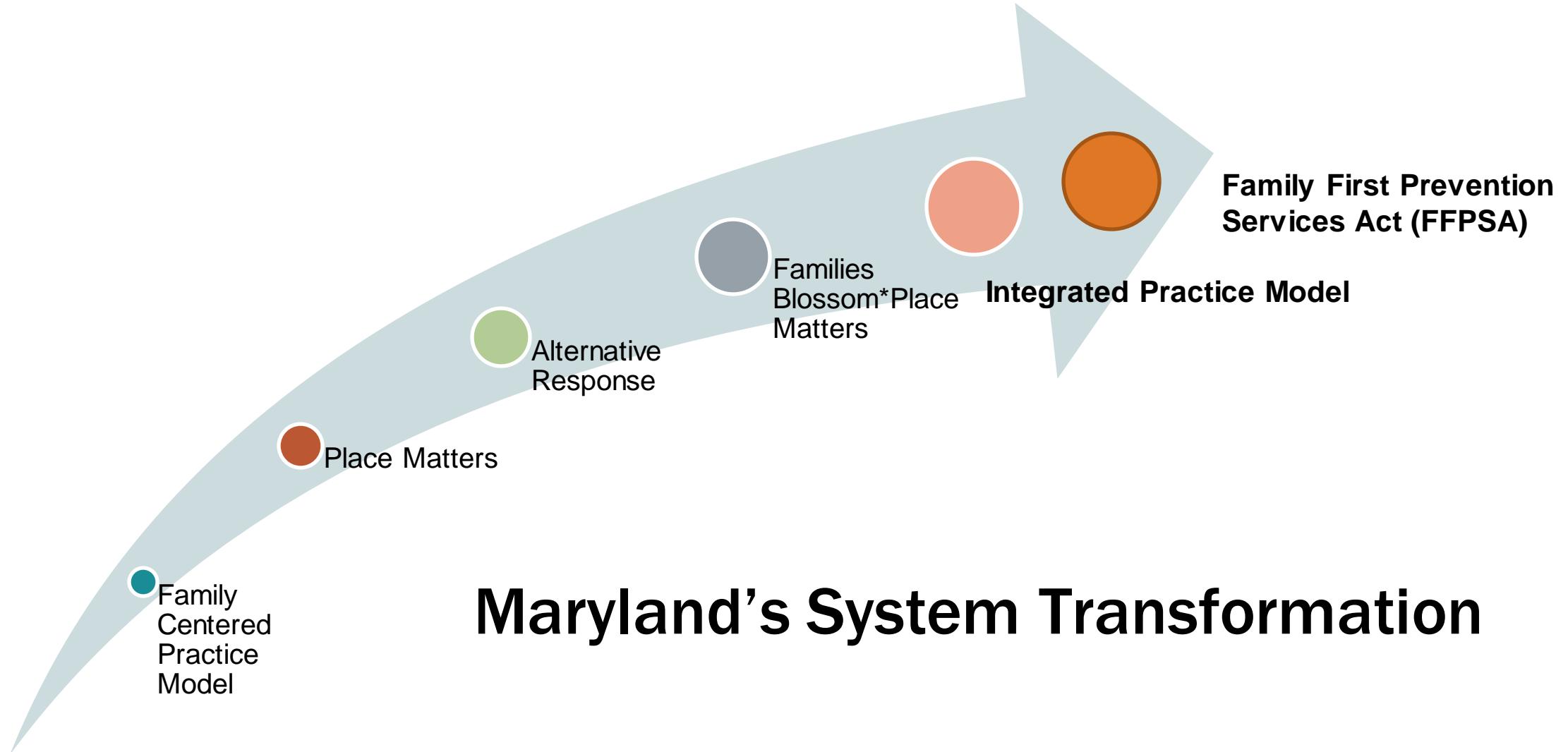
How did Yuvia, her mom, and the resource parent benefit from this relationship?





# Parent Partnership and the IPM

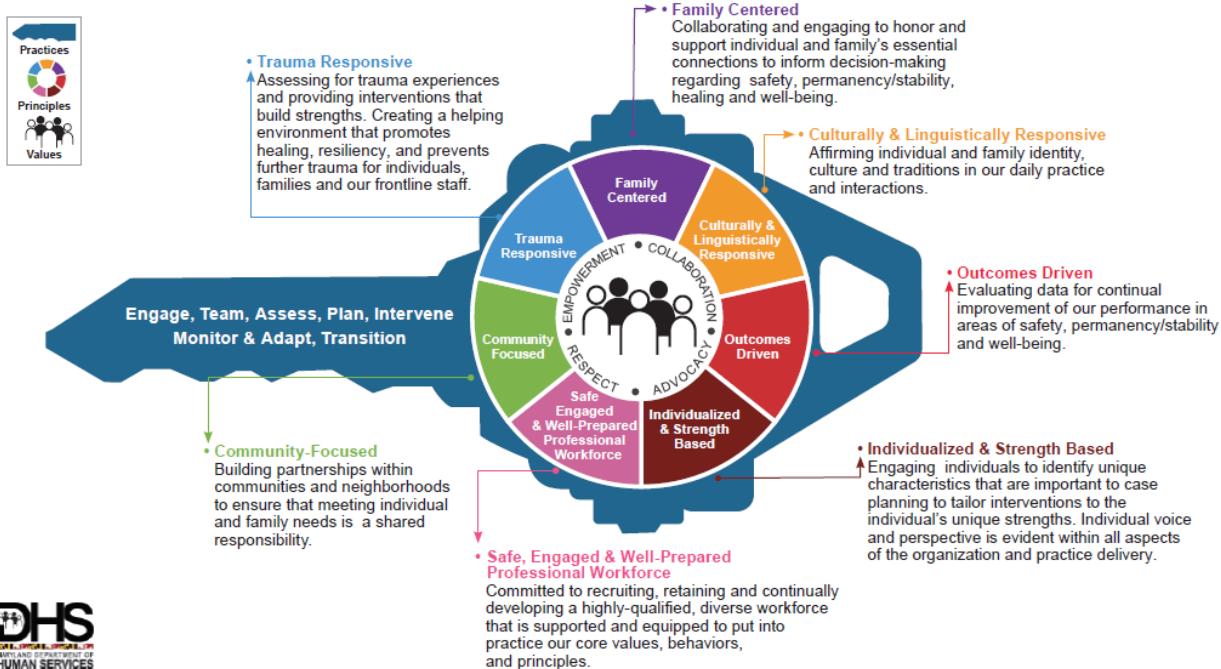
Tying it all together



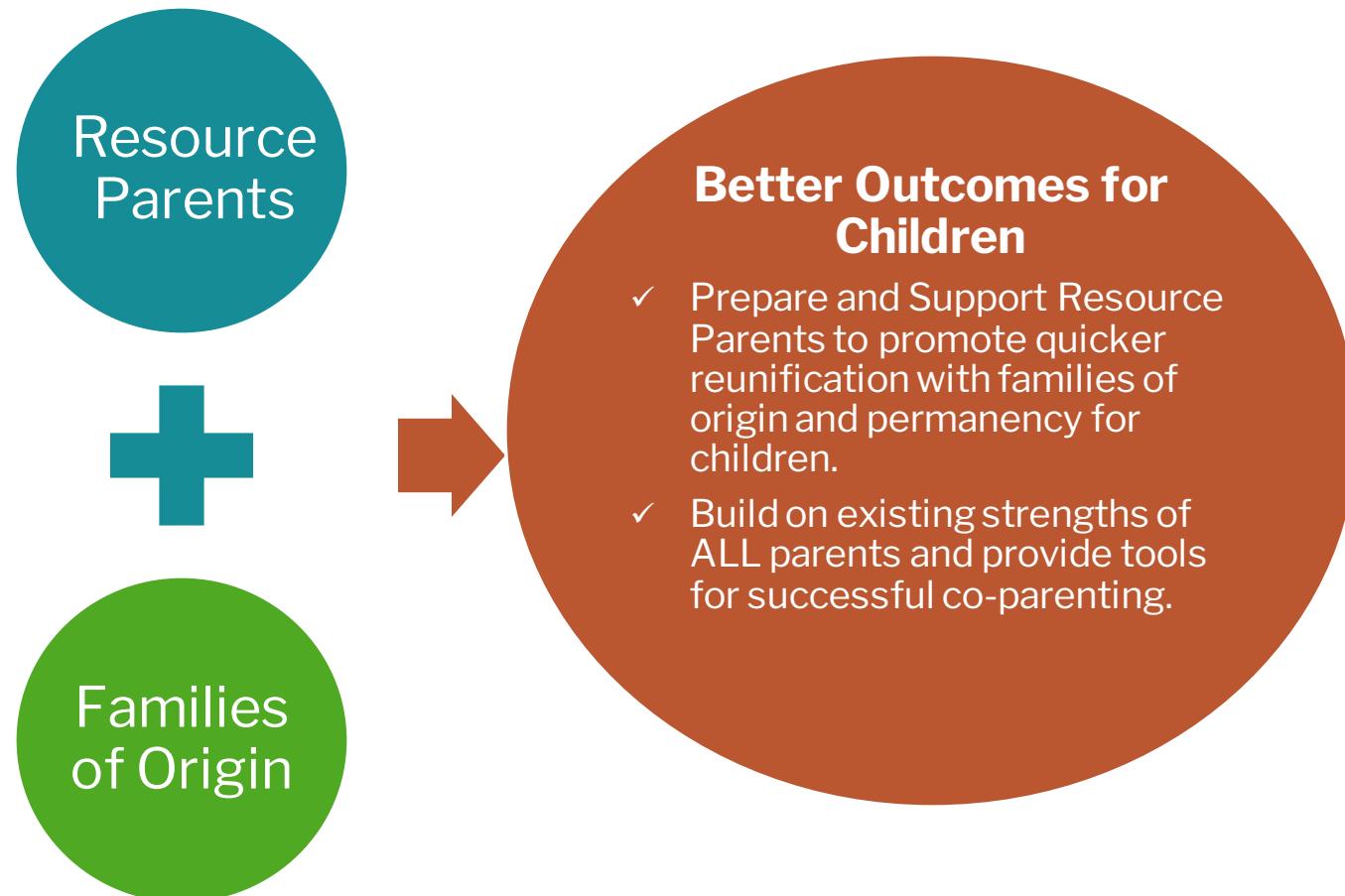


## Maryland's Integrated Practice Model: The Key to SSA's Strategic Vision

*Our Core Practices, Principles & Values*



# What is the Ultimate Goal of the CfE?



**Participation from 5 local DSS Sites:**  
Baltimore County  
Carroll County  
Frederick County  
Montgomery County  
Prince George's County



# What is Authentic Partnership and Engagement?

---



# Family Teaming Policy



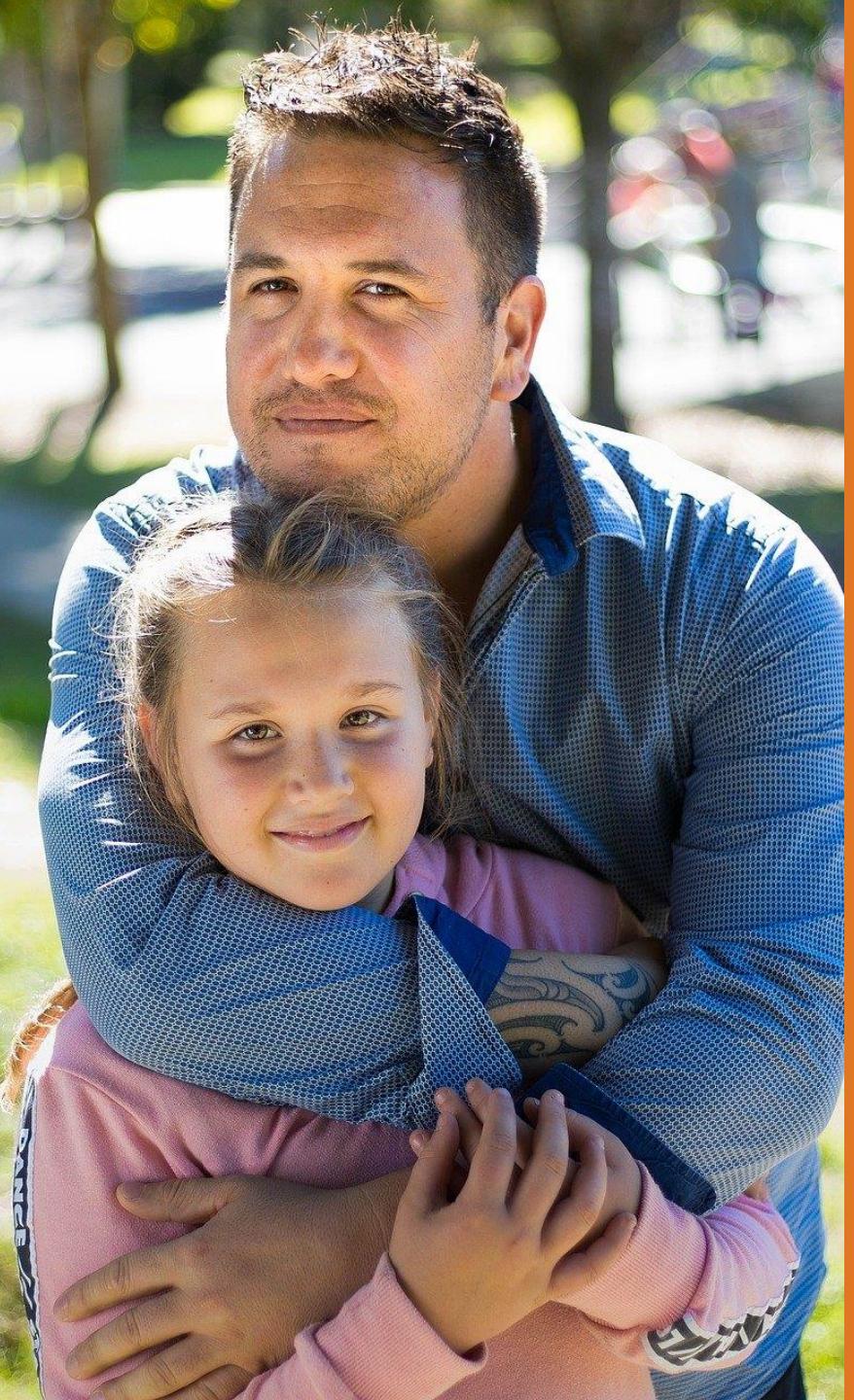
- Every family served by MD's child welfare system must have a family team.
- Family meetings and facilitated meetings are an expected part of practice.
- The development of a family team should begin upon contact with family and continue throughout child welfare system involvement.
- Members of the team may include extended family, close friends, community resources, attorneys, court appointed special advocates, and resource parents.

**TEAMING** = The collaborative practice of identifying, assessing, building and utilizing a family team to support the goals of a family, youth or child.

# What does the SSA Visitation Policy say?

- Weekly Visits: Mandated between parents and child if permanency plan is reunification.
- Visitation Plan: Developed within 3 days of child being placed in out of home care.
- First Parent/Child Visit: Within 5 business days from time child is removed.
- Inpatient or Incarcerated Parents: Still entitled to visitation.
- Sibling Visitation: At least once per month.





*"My visits with my daughter are the most important 90 minutes of my whole week. I do everything I can to be prepared and stay positive because I know that time is important to her too. Those visits with my daughter help me stay focused on what's really important in my life and what my priorities are. For me that's being the best father I can be for her."*

—Jacob, Parent from Oregon

# Sarah and Samantha

**As you watch the video, make note of the following:**

- Biases on the part of both resource and birth mom
- Trauma reactions and responses
- Feelings of the resource and birth mom





# Equipping Families of Origin to Partner With Workers and Resource Parents

What do they need from the LDSS?



- Authentic communication and trust
- Engagement as true decision-makers and partners
- Belief in their ability to change
- Follow-through on commitments
- Choice and voice
- Recognition of successes and progress
- Cultural humility
- Matching strengths and needs with solutions and services
- Listening with empathy and without judgement
- Concrete tips/strategies for engaging with resource parents
- Acknowledgement of socioeconomic stressors and institutional biases that may impede progress
- What else?

# IPM Resource Parent Practice Profile

## Resource Parents.....

- are an integral part of the family team.
- should be involved in developing goals, addressing concerns, assessing progress, shared decision-making and creating plans that build upon strengths, resiliency and other protective factors.
- should be fully represented, informed and utilized to support children, youth and families.

## Goals:

- Create a safe and supportive environment
- Be equipped with knowledge and training to address complex needs
- **Develop relationships with birth parents** to provide support and mentorship
- Partner with children, youth and families as family team members
- **Partner with birth parents and families of origin** during visits to model useful parenting strategies and promote reunification





# Resource Parent Practices

---

- ✓ Routinely participate in the Family Team and Permanency Planning process
- ✓ Routinely support family in efforts toward reunification
- ✓ Build initial relationships
- ✓ Routinely support child/youth to maintain family ties/culture
- ✓ Routinely support family time
- ✓ Routinely communicate with family
- ✓ Offer family post-reunification support
- ✓ Discuss any challenges with the above with your caseworker

# How are we ....

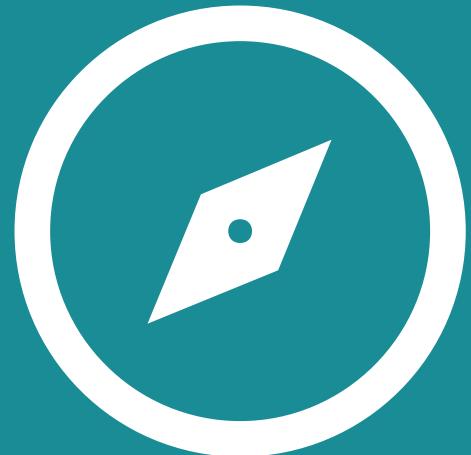


## Equipping Resource Parents to Actively Partner with Birth Parents...

- Does our messaging emphasize reunification and parent partnership as a system-wide value and priority?
- Are we adequately preparing resource parents to be partners in reunification?
- How do we know whether we are effective at this?
- What skills and attitudes do resource families need to actively partner with birth parents? How are we developing these skills?
- How are we supporting resource parents through the challenges, complex dynamics, and grief and loss they will likely encounter as they take on this work?
- What feedback loops do we have in place to continue to learn from resource parents about what they need to be effective partners in reunification efforts?
- What resources and supports do we, as workers, need in order to effectively support our resource parents to partner with birth families?
- Are we modeling authentic engagement and partnership with birth families?

• [Adoptuskids.org/for-professionals](http://Adoptuskids.org/for-professionals)

# As a worker, do I....



Provide agency expectations, guidance, advice, and suggestions in building a relationship with the family of origin and resource home?

Seek communication and collaboration with each parent every step of the way?

Provide clarity about roles and responsibilities within the relationship?

Coach and provide insight to the larger context of the relationship?

Involve both families in determining what is safe and comfortable for all parties involved, keeping the goal of co-parenting at the forefront?

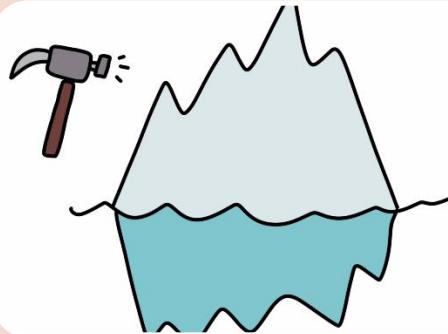
Explore other family members who may be willing to connect when/if birth families are unable to engage?



# Shared Parenting: Reunification is the Key Video



# Promoting Parent Partnership Guidance



Comfort  
Calls

Ice-  
Breakers

Continuum  
of Contact

# Reflecting on Current Practice

## Polling questions

How often does your agency implement comfort calls?

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Usually
5. Always
6. Don't Know

How often does your agency implement Ice-Breakers?

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Usually
5. Always
6. Don't Know

## In your small group, please discuss the following:

- What is going well in your jurisdiction specific to comfort calls and icebreakers?
- What barriers have you encountered?
- What strategies have been successful in addressing barriers?
- What do you still need help with?

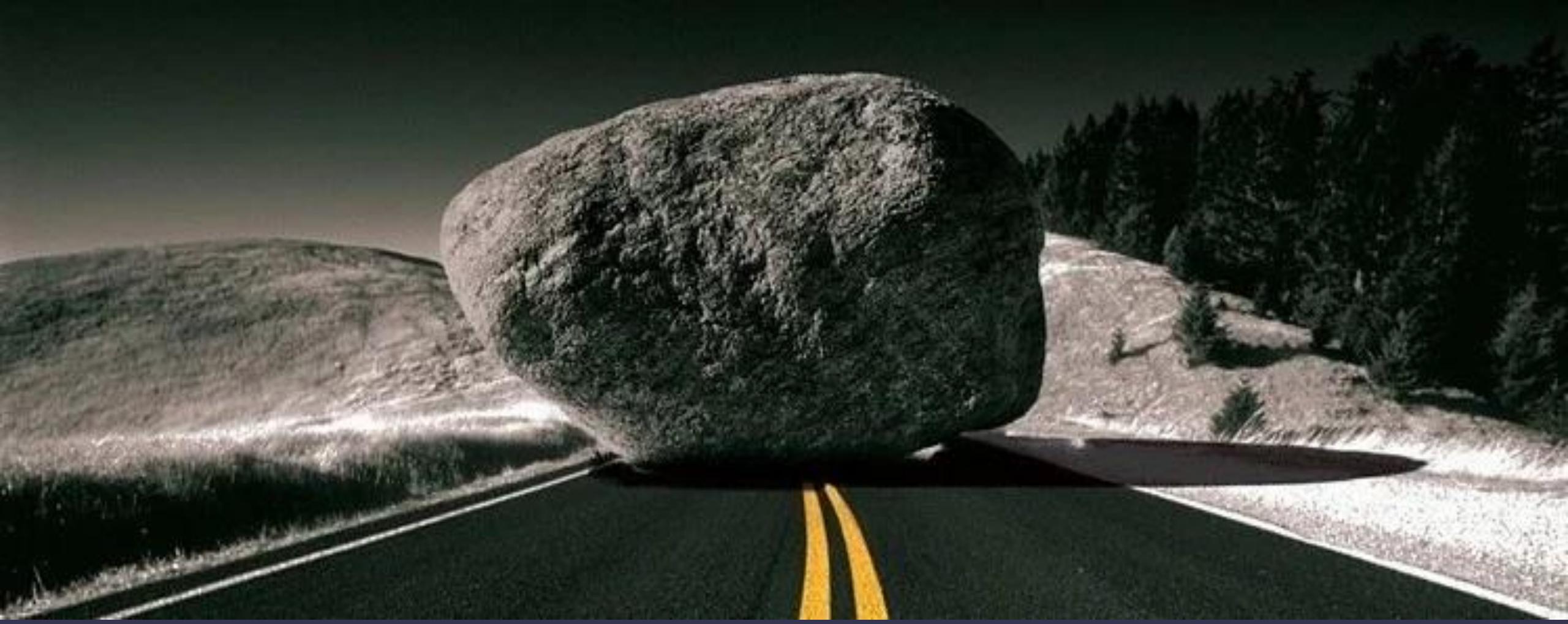


What does this look like in your jurisdiction?

# **Each group summarize what was discussed.....**

- What is going well in your jurisdiction specific to comfort calls and icebreakers?
- What barriers have you encountered?
- What strategies have been successful in addressing barriers?
- What do you still need help with?





What else could go wrong?

# Realistic Barriers to Building Partnership



- Vulnerable and worried families
- Unreceptive or mistrusting families
- An inherent power imbalance
- Role confusion
- Caseworker turnover and/or high caseload
- Logistical challenges
- Incarcerated or missing birth parents
- Family stressors
- Confidentiality concerns
- Implicit bias (ours and theirs)
- Resource parent concerns regarding impact of contact on children



## Benefits of Comfort Calls

- Sets foundation and promotes immediate communication between foster parent and birth parent
- Helps build trust between worker and parent
- Sets the stage for ongoing focus on the well-being of the child
- Reinforces idea that the birth parent is the expert
- Minimizes trauma of separation for both the child and birth parent
- Reinforces commitment to maintaining connection and contact
- Establishes partnership with the agency
- Facilitates a smoother transition into the foster home
- Sets the stage for the icebreaker meeting



# Setting the Stage for Comfort Calls

## Preparing Birth Parents

- Validate and normalize feelings of anger, fear, anxiety and upset
- Remind them that they are the experts on their child.
- Provide them with examples of key topics they may want to raise in the initial call to ensure the comfort and well-being of their child
  - o Sleep/Bedtime routines
  - o Toileting habits
  - o Bathing/showering habits
  - o Food or medicine allergies
  - o Specific fears
  - o Comfort items and calming techniques
  - o Food likes and dislikes



# Setting the Stage for Comfort Calls

---

## Preparing Resource Parents

- Validate and normalize their feelings of anxiety and discomfort
- Prepare them for range of birth parent emotions
- Encourage them to validate feelings of birth parent
- Assist them with preparing a few questions to ask about the child
- Encourage them to initiate the dialog if birth parent is unwilling or unable to do so
- Remind them that the parents are the experts on their child.



## Benefits of Icebreakers

- Reduces trauma for the child
- Reinforces that the birth parent is the expert
- Expedites the exchange of information
- Helps birth parents feel more at ease about their child's safety, well-being and placement
- Shows the child a united front
- Creates opportunity for shared goals and collaborative parenting
- Provides resource parents with important information re: the child's traits, likes, dislikes, needs, culture, and history in order to provide quality care
- Reduces placement disruption
- Establishes the foundation for building a positive partnership between birth and resource parents

# Icebreaker Meeting Agenda

---

Explain the purpose of the meeting

---

Introductions

---

Resource parents share information about themselves

---

Parents share information about their child

---

Opportunity for questions from the child

---

Visitation and communication plan

---



# Sample Co-Parenting Agreement

As co-parents, we agree to do the following:

- Work together to compile and maintain a life book to document the child's successes, memories and important connections. This will be provided to the child.
- Collaborate and participate in services and resources to meet the needs of the child.
- Strive towards addressing partnership challenges with each other in a respectful and solution focused manner.
- Provide positive coaching to each other and share information that will help support the child.
- Strive to keep visitation schedules to ensure consistency and predictability for the child.
- Share transitional and other important objects/items to increase child's comfort in out of home care.
- Seek feedback from each other about the care being provided to the child and will work through concerns together.
- Respect each other's right to some privacy but will share relevant family and child history in order to provide high quality care.
- Collaborate about food and snacks during visits for consistency.
- Respect each other's boundaries and develop mutually agreed upon plans for communication and information sharing.
- Speak positively about each other in front of the child and will model partnership to decrease confusion and anxiety for the child.



<https://www.ylc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Supporting-BPRP-Partnerships-Beyond-the-Bench-Workshop-12.18.19.pdf>

*"A **strong relationship** between a birth parent and foster parent can make a huge difference for a child and their birth family. I think it is awesome to **know that your child is safe.** I especially appreciate that the foster parent wants to know what practices I use to care for my child. I also have some comfort knowing that the foster parent cares about me. In this way, **I can move forward with my own healing and also work on a plan for a better life for me and my family.**"*

Shana Hunts Along, birth parent (Minnesota)

Shana is a citizen of Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota. She overcame major substance use challenges and successfully turned her life around and reunified with her two children. Today, Shana works as a parent mentor and community outreach advocate with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Law Center in Minneapolis and she provides support to American Indian families affected by the child protection system.

---

Source: Birth and Foster Parent Partnership: A Relationship Building Guide (2020)

A publication of the Birth and Foster Parent Partnership, created with parents, in collaboration with the Children's Trust Fund Alliance, Youth Law Center's Quality Parenting Initiative and Casey Family Programs.

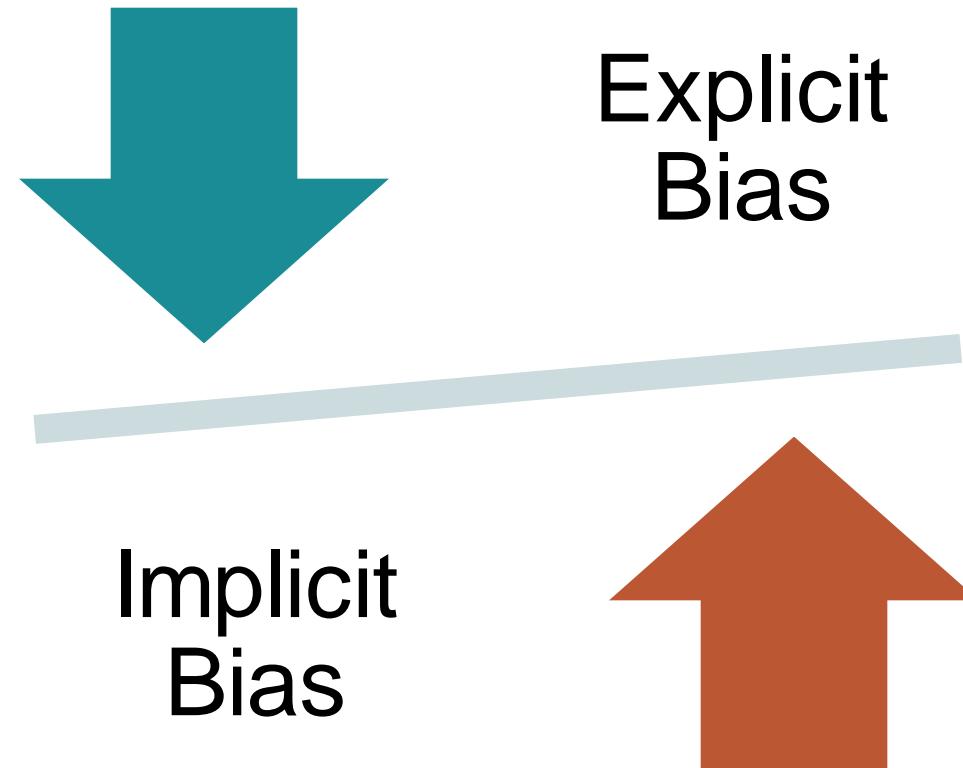
# Myth, Reality or a Little Bit of Both?



- Birth parents will be grateful to resource parents.
- It will be easy to understand and relate to birth parents.
- Birth parents will do and say all the right things in the best interests of the child.
- Birth parents will be resistant and hard to “work” with.
- Birth parents are not willing or able to put their children first.
- Children will be harmed by contact with birth parents.
- Children are often better off being placed with families that can provide them with a “better life”.
- Birth parents who use substances or have mental health conditions are not able to keep their children safe
- Many resource parents are only in it for the money.
- Visits with birth parents will make children confused, anxious or upset.
- Children may reject resource parents in favor of birth parents.
- Children may play two sets of parents against each other.
- Kinship care is always a better option than non-relative care.
- Many resource parents would prefer not to have contact with birth parents.
- Contact between birth parents and resource parents creates drama and added stress.



**Explicit Bias** = Consciously held, self-reported attitudes and beliefs that influence behavior towards a particular person or group. It is above the surface and accessible. Individuals may choose to conceal to be socially or politically correct.



**Implicit Bias** = Attitudes and beliefs that affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an **unconscious manner**. Activated involuntarily and outside of awareness.



- Physical or Sexual Abuse
- Intimate Partner Violence
- Community Violence
- Poverty
- Previous Child Welfare Involvement
- Ambiguous Loss

## Parents and Trauma



## How Can Trauma Affect Parents?

- Compromised ability to make appropriate judgments about safety (their own and child's)
- Impaired decision-making ability
- Maladaptive coping strategies
- Difficulty regulating emotions
- Increased vulnerability to other life stressors
- Difficulty forming and maintaining secure and trusting relationships
- Present as hostile, resistant or jealous
- Feel powerless and out of control
- Triggered by certain sights, sounds, smells
- Become numb or distant

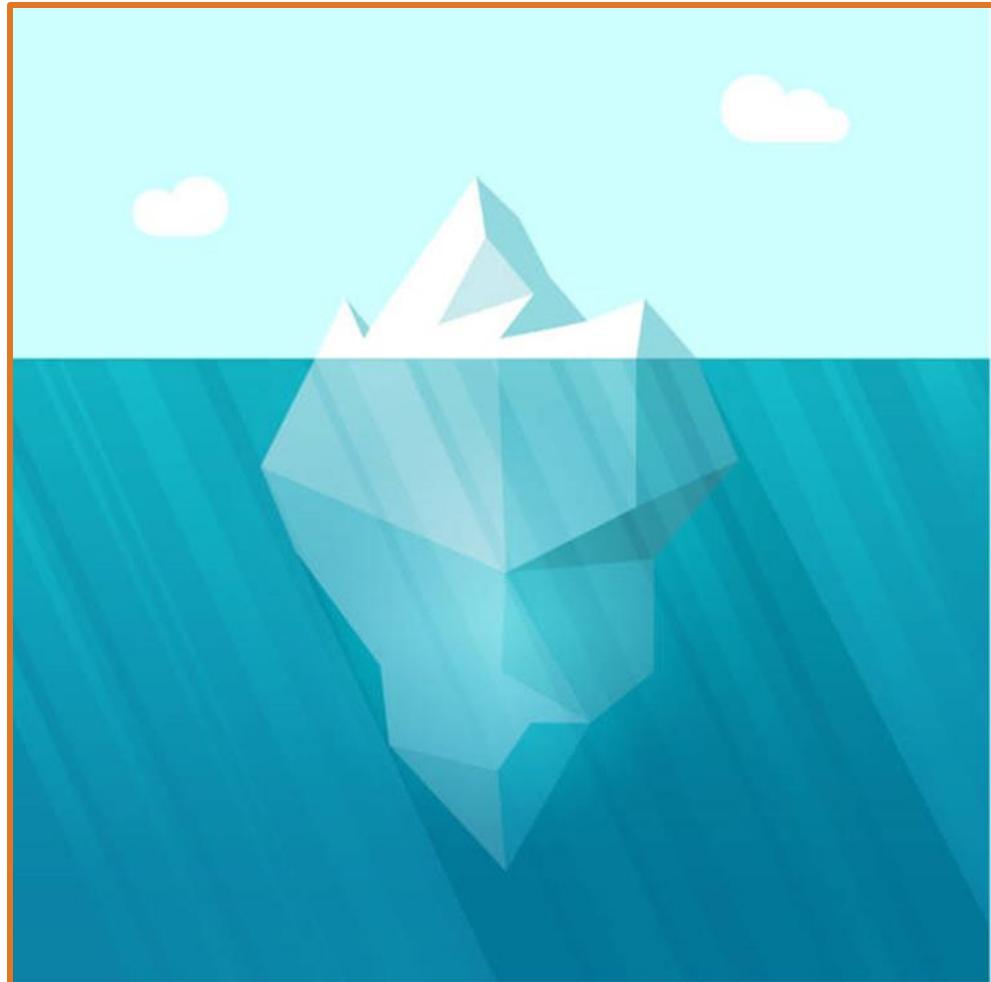
# What's behind the behavior?

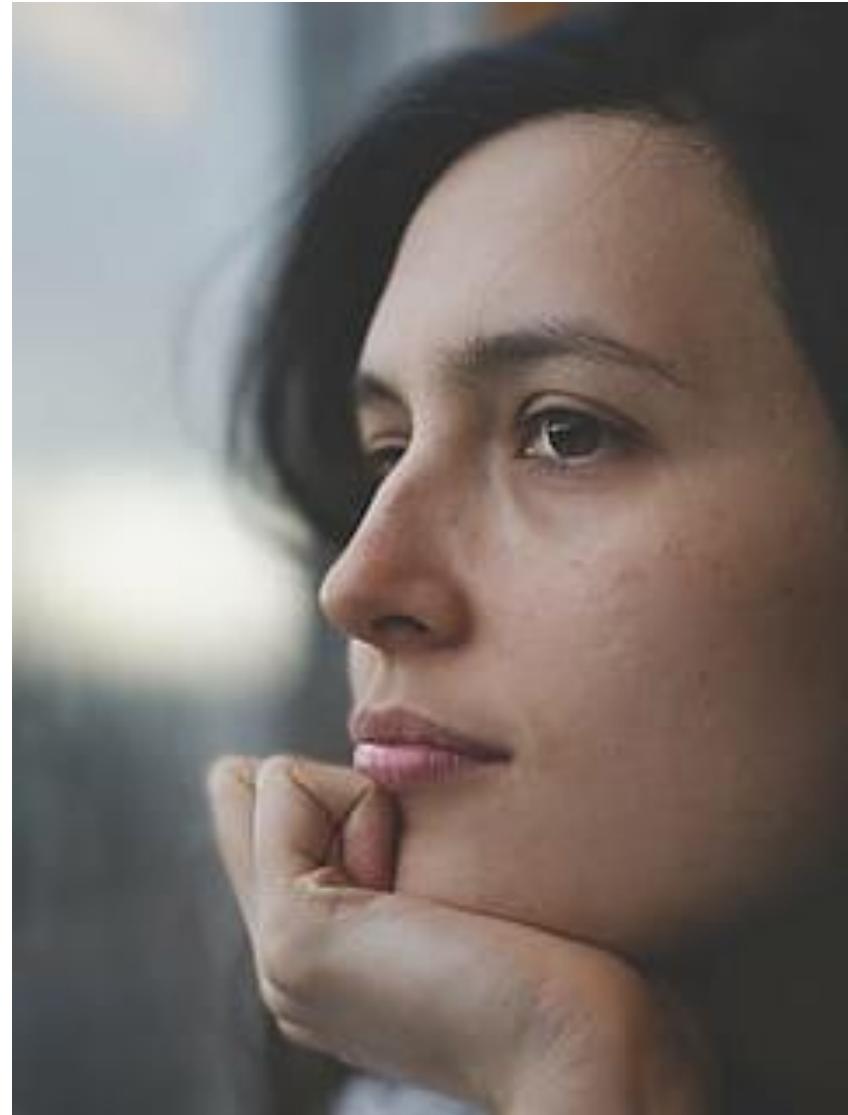
## How a parent (or caregiver) might be acting:

- Resistant to change or help.
- Shut-down or closed-off.
- Suspicious and resentful.
- Hostile and angry.
- Irresponsible and unaccountable for actions.

## How a parent (or caregiver) might be feeling:

- Loss of power and control.
- Distrust
- Shock and denial.
- Anger and frustration.
- Feelings of guilt, shame and failure.
- Loss of self-worth, identity and self esteem.
- Fear of the unknown.





# Resource Parent Feelings

- Anxious and Uncertain About Process
- Sad and Grieving Own Losses
- Angry or Sad About What Child Has Been Through
- Resentful and Cheated
- Threatened and Insecure
- Identity Issues (Are you a “real” parent?)
- Powerless to Protect Child
- Excited About Possibility of Adoption
- Frustrated with the ‘System’
- Other Feelings?



# Trauma Responsive Beliefs and Practices

- Believe in the capacity of people to change.
- See birth parents as human beings who have experienced challenges. They are not “bad” people.
- Look for strengths and positives. Notice what they are doing right.
- Express genuine care and concern.
- Be honest and authentic with birth parents.
- Let birth parents know that your goal is to help them reunify with their children.
- Acknowledge and validate their anxiety and fear.
- Assume that things will go well.



## More Trauma Responsive Beliefs and Practices

- Look for ways to break down barriers and increase connection.
- Assume a supportive (not dominant) role.
- **Acknowledge that the parents are the experts on their life and their child.**
- Empower parents to maintain some sense of control.
- Don't take their words or actions personally. This is not about you!
- Avoid blame, shame and judgment.
- Watch your tone, body language, eye contact and choice of words.





---

*"Hearing my mom's story, it's kind of sad, but **gives me hope** that there's good stuff in life and my mom has found something good that she can build off of. So it's amazing to **watch it all grow, and her become a better person each and every day.** When we're [with resource family and family of origin] all here, and we all have dinner together, I think: ***family, family, family is HERE.***" — Yuvia, Youth previously in care*



# Willingness Capacity Confidence

---



## Small Group Activity: Personal Intention

---

1. In your current role, how are you currently supporting parent partnership?
2. Discuss what you are willing and able to do differently in your current role to support parent partnership.



*“My daughter and I were blessed with an opportunity to connect with her foster parents almost a year after our case closed. I saw how bonded they all were and embraced the notion of them being extended family. As a result, they have shown us nothing but positive support and assistance, such as child-care. I would love to see a system where these opportunities to partner between birth parent and foster parent become the norm since we are all coming together on behalf of the child.”*

—Alise Hegle, Birth Parent National Network,  
Washington



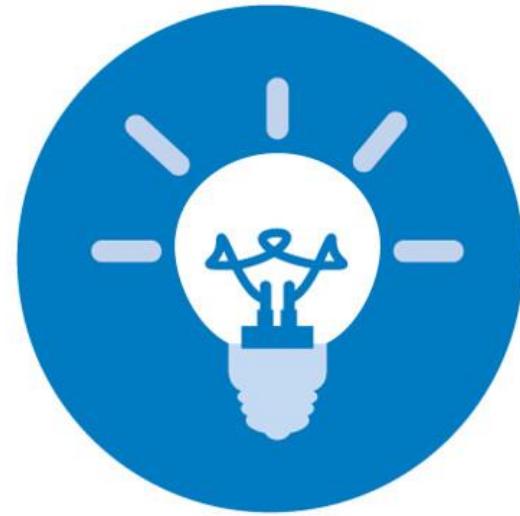


# The Journey from Foster Care to Reunification



The Journey  
from Foster Care  
to Reunification

# Where do we go from here?



## Possible Transfer of Learning Supports:

- Learning Collaboratives
- Micro-learning Lessons on Comfort Calls, Icebreakers and Continuum of Contact
- County Specific TA
- Tip Sheets
- Other Needs and Ideas?

