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Family Inclusion Strategies Hunter Building better relationships.. for kids
Why we formed...

Very high rates of children in care
Very high rates of Aboriginal children in care (NSW FACS, 2014 & AIHW, 2014)
Low levels of family inclusion (Thorpe, 2008)
High levels of supervised family contact with uncertain expectations of behaviour (Triseliotis, 2011)
A changing policy & legislative context in NSW (NSW FACS, 2013)
Knowledge that parents & family experienced exclusion, blame and stereotyping in the child protection & out of home care system
“How can we support parents & family to have better relationships with their children in out of home care?”
Forum outcomes

- Individual practice change is needed
- Partnerships between carers, family and the service system
- Different models of out of home care and earlier intervention
- Opportunities for innovation
- Systemic change
Voices of parents and family are crucial

Ongoing work of FISH
- Information, advocacy & resources
- Carer & worker training & support to make change
- Social advocacy eg: senate inquiry
- FISH meetings & collaboration
- Research
Practice and Research seminar 2015

- What is family inclusion?
- What is family inclusive practice from the perspective of parents & carers & what can be learned from this?
- Voices from research, parents, carers and practice.
**More than family contact**

Family inclusive practice is about all aspects of a case plan and a child’s life. It is not fragmented. Promoting ongoing parenting role. Non formulaic – there is more than one way to parent children.
Genuine Relationships

• **Informality** of relationships – getting to know one another
• Carers & parents should meet as early as possible
• Workers – role model & provide structure & support for carers and parents to build a relaxed relationship
• The relationship with workers is crucial to bring about positive change (Reimer, 2013)
• Trust and hope
Respectful relationships

“Little things are the big things.. Having a normal everyday parenting voice”
“It is a scary thing at the beginning but we are all the same, we are all human”
“Be open and willing to listen”
Power, equity & authority

“Up until the kids were 7 everything was run by DoCS & OOHC agency.”

“I only just started to get involved in case planning...I didn’t even know what a case plan was...after 4 years!”

“I didn’t know I had any rights”

“Everyone wanted me to stop, wanted me to fail...”
Language & practical support

• Use plain language that is used by parents and family.
• Develop genograms and other visual tools
• Use language that respects the expertise and ongoing role of parents & family
• Provide practical support linked to family inclusion
Flexible & informal contact

- Ask - Why supervise?
- Practical support when needed

“it’s become obvious he doesn’t know who I am”

Phonecalls, text messages, facebook, siblings, sleepovers at grandmothers etc etc..

“A child can live in care & have love for their family as well”
Innovation & systemic change

Aimed at family preservation, restoration & long term care
Advocacy to bring about system change & to help parents negotiate the system.
Leadership – from parents and family including peer support & a range of family decision making practices
New models of care including fostering the family (Brennan and Crowe, 2002)
Building better relationships... for kids

If we are better at family inclusion we can improve outcomes for children & young people in out of home care
So what is family inclusion?

Family inclusion is the active & meaningful participation of parents and family in the lives of children. It requires open, warm and trusting relationships aimed at building equity with workers & carers. It is underpinned by respect & trust.

“The least amount of judging we can do... the better off we are”
“Kids need their parents in their lives... one way or another”


Or at:

www.newcastle.edu.au/fac
References


References