

Safe Babies Foster Parent Training Program

Module 7:

Caring for substance-exposed infants

A foster parent's perspective

Learning outcomes:

- Develop an awareness of the commitment, knowledge and skills required
- Identify care strategies with the discomforts and behaviors commonly experienced by infants
- Understand practice issues for foster parents working with MCFD
- Understand the stressors experienced by foster parents and discuss strategies to maintain well-being

Characteristics of an effective caregiving environment

- Consistent routine
- Ability to control stimulation in environment – activity, sound, light
- Consistent caregivers
- Provision of stimulation that meets the level of readiness of the infant
- Prompt and accurate response to the needs of the infant
- Supported caregivers



How caregivers can help assist infants in dealing with stress

- Make environment calmer
- Allow baby to look away
- Talk quietly and slowly
- Swaddle, rock, cuddle
- Provide pacifier



Key caregiving challenges for baby care:

- Irritability and crying
- Irregular sleeping patterns
- Feeding
- Managing visitation
- Supporting transitions



Prolonged crying

- Move to a dark quiet room
- Swaddle baby
- Hold baby against your chest
- Try side to side rocking, patting back rhythmically and firmly

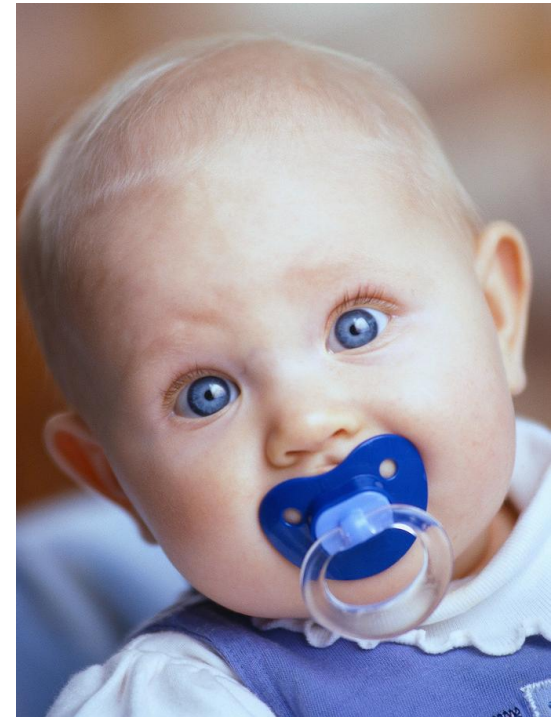


Sleep disturbances

- Provide a dark quiet room
- Avoid chaos and sensory stimulation
- Swaddle or use snugli carrier
- Avoid unnecessary visitors
- Develop consistent bedtime routines
- Identify comforting textures
- Use white noise (fan, soft music)

Calming

- Before baby reaches a frantic state, calm her as soon as possible
- The sooner you intervene, the better
- Swaddle to help control movement
- Give baby a pacifier – non-nutritive sucking



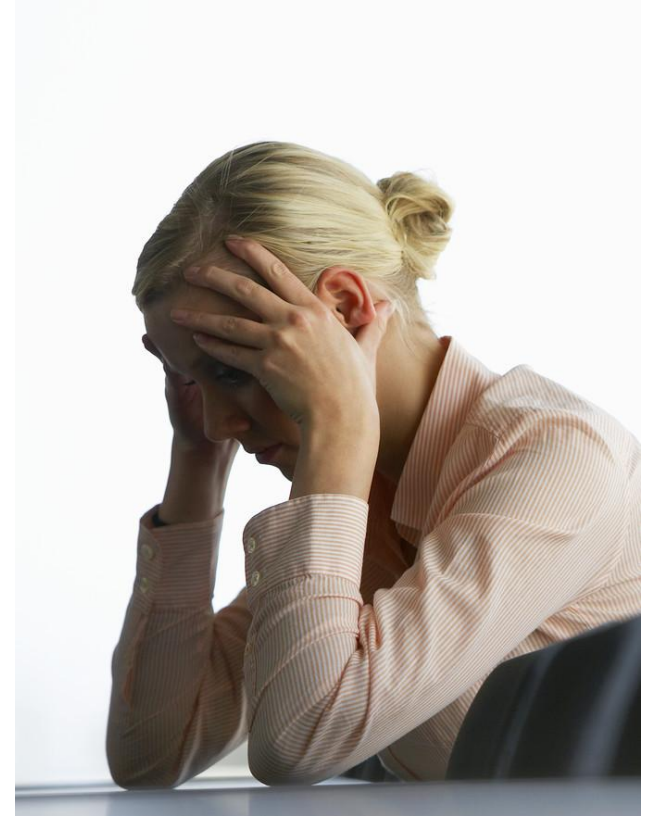
If baby is overstimulated

- Give a warm bath
- Swaddle
- Rocking may help
- Listen to quiet music
- Move to a darkened room



Stressors experienced by caregivers of substance-exposed infants

- Lack of sleep
- Inconsolable crying
- Doubt in parenting abilities
- Less time for family and self
- Worry about infant's health (ie. SIDS)
- Dealing with multiple professionals



Stressors continued...

- Lack of control over what happens with placement of infant
- Lack of respite support
- Negative public perception of fostering
- Worry about safety of family (ie. Infectious diseases, violence)



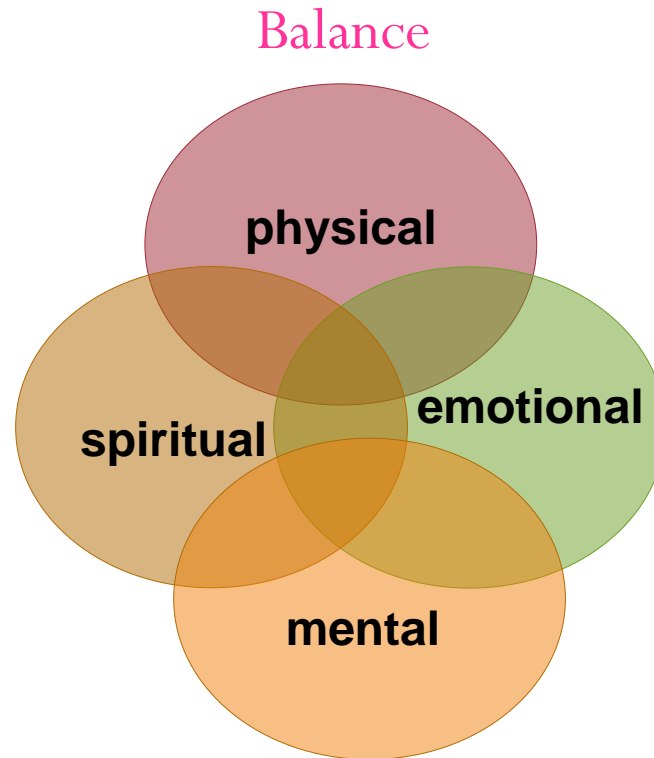
Identifying stressors..

- Form small groups of 5-6
- Select three stressors and identify ways of coping with them
- Keep in mind the balance quadrants – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual

Looking at your supports and relationships



Care for the Caregiver



Grief and loss for the caregiver

- Same stages may apply as with birth parents, but with different reasons and outcomes
- Ways we can say goodbye to someone that we have cared for and we may have developed an attachment to
- How can we help ourselves and others in our family to cope with the loss?

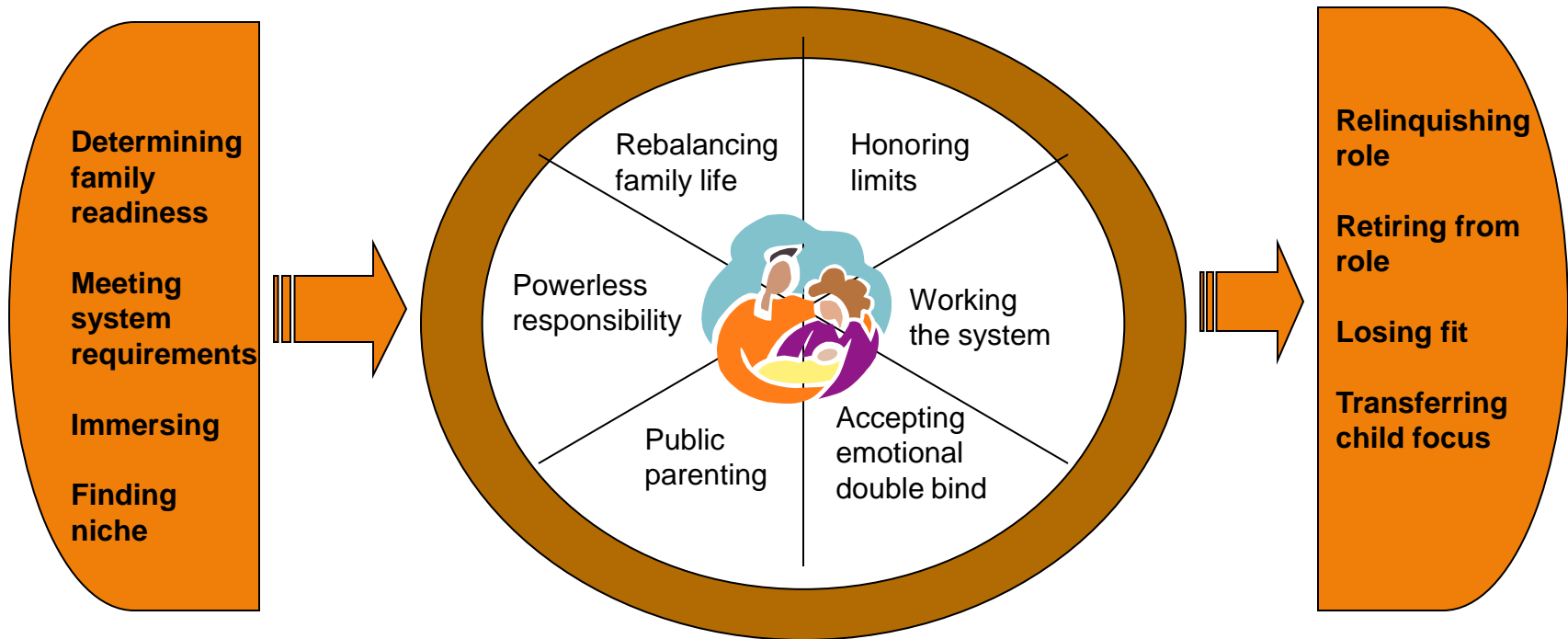


Infant Foster Family Care Model

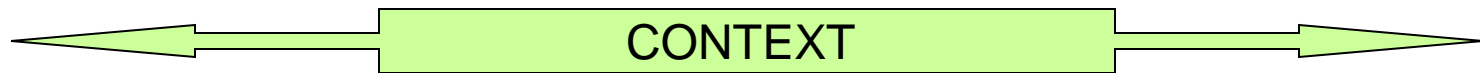
**Phase 1:
Starting out**

**Phase 2:
Living as a foster family**

**Phase 3:
Moving on**

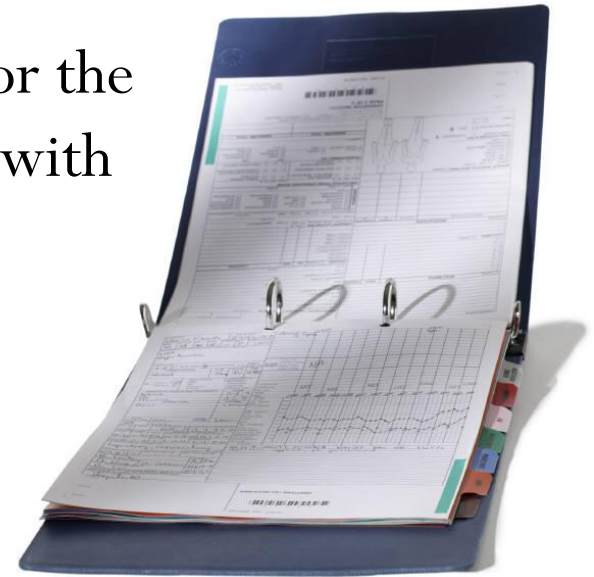


Political climate....Media representation of fostering....Children's Ministry priorities...Birth families



Why documentation is important

- Maintains a permanent record of the child's time in your home and in care with the ministry
- Helps with long term placement planning for the child. records may be used in court to assist with custody decisions
- Documents the child's health, social and developmental status.
- Can protect caregiver against allegations
- Important part of your agreement with MCFD



For substance-exposed infants, daily documentation is important because:

- Helps recognize patterns in behavior and health
- Helps recognize effective strategies with each particular infant
- Identifies progress, or lack of progress made by infants, often not noticeable daily but over a longer periods of time when records are reviewed
- Two components – daily records and lifebooks



Daily written records

- Form groups of 5-6
- Discuss and record possible key points that you would record regarding the following:
 - Visits with birth parents, either out with a supervisor or in your own home
 - Daily routines
 - Appointments with health and social service providers

Keeping documentation neutral

- Include what you actually saw, heard, felt or smelled
- Observable, measurable movement, activity or actions
- Verbalizations (what was said), and non-verbal behavior
- For example – “I heard ___”, “I saw___”

Lifebooks

A Lifebook is an informal record of the people and events in a child's life while they are in care. It provides a sense of personal history and continuity.

“You can't get that time back, you won't be there to share stories when the child grows up so it is really important to get the stories written down. This will tell the child that someone loved them enough to notice when they took their first step or said their first word” (Rae, foster parent)

Suggestions for Lifebooks

- Double or triple prints of photos, extra memory sticks
- Include personal thoughts with pictures and what it was like to care for the infant
- Funny stories
- Try to create a family tree of pictures if available
- A small personal album for the child
- Include artwork, footprints, handprints, baby bracelet from hospital, hair lock, etc

Lifebooks continued

- Document and include milestones
- Information about their stay in hospital – birth history, doctor or midwife’s name, birth time
- Record favorites – songs, games, books
- Consider using a video camera
- In the first few months take pictures at least every few weeks



Key expectations for Safe Babies homes:

- Initial training program
- Initial practical training
- Completion of BC Foster Care Education Program
- Ongoing training, Refresher Safe Babies training
- Participation in support and mentoring activities
- Infant CPR

Reflection

Do you have any questions or comments that you would like to share with the group?



*Thank you for
participating.*



*Please remember to complete
your evaluation form.*