

NTI Overview of Child Welfare Supervisory Lessons

~ Snapshot ~

In addition to the Child Welfare Professional Training, an additional 3 hours of lessons will help supervisors support their staff to apply learning in their daily casework practice. A downloadable workbook provides supervisors with a variety of activities to choose from to use with their teams or staff individually.

The most salient points or takeaways are summarized and guiding principles that provide the foundation for the module are highlighted. Suggestions are provided to help build or strengthen staff skills and to address common challenges supervisors may encounter from staff. The activities are listed by lesson within each module.

Suggested Activities:

- **Team discussion or self-assessment about attitudes, biases, concerns**
 - (Conversation prompts to discuss worker biases about placing children with relative caregivers)
- **Review of a case and discussion/processing of learned concepts**
 - (Have workers review an assessment and discuss child's risk and protective factors; what additional information would be helpful to have?)
- **Roleplay of applied skills**
 - (What conversation starters would workers use with parents to discuss the importance of honoring their child's culture; How could workers better prepare or transition a child for a move to prevent abrupt separation and re-traumatization?)
- **Shared activities as a team**
 - (Develop a format for Life Books if there is not already one in use; invite a panel to come to team meeting to discuss an issue, share information.)
- **Trial of suggested tools**
 - (Have workers use the ACE survey with prospective parents to assess their trauma history and discuss what they learned; Discuss questions that could be added to your intake/assessment process to better assess a child's trauma history.)

Activity Example:

Below is an excerpt from the *NTI Supervisor Coaching and Activity Guide: Module 5 Lesson 3: The Role of Child Welfare Professionals in Helping Children Deal with Loss and Grief*.

Lesson 3's primary objectives for applying knowledge in practice

- Engages children in discussions related to their loss experiences and responds appropriately to address their feelings and thoughts.
- Understands the key elements of addressing grief with children and youth.
- Understands the 3-5-7 model and seeks to apply it where applicable in their work with children.

Lesson 3's suggested activities

1. As a team, have workers discuss the 8 suggestions listed below for helping a child struggling with loss, and the extent to which they carry these out in their practice, including in their work with parents. How might their practice be enhanced?
 - Help the child face reality. The pain needs to be acknowledged and the grieving process supported.
 - Encourage the child to express feelings. Support the child by explaining the reasons for the separation without denigrating the parents.
 - Tell the truth. Depending on the child's developmental level, the message should be that the parent(s) were not able to take care of the child. The permanency of the separation needs to be clear.
 - Encourage the child to ask questions. Be as truthful as possible without hurting the child. Never lie to the child. Prompt the child to ask questions that are on his mind.
 - Process with the child why the losses occurred. Ask the child what his ideas are about the reason for the moves and losses he has experienced.
 - Spend time with the child. Children who have experienced these profound losses will feel rejected, and sometimes guilty, as though they caused the loss. Spending time with the child talking about his feelings can build a trusting relationship and pave the way for other healthy relationships.
 - Encourage information about the past. This is a good time to use the Life Book to help the child recognize the continuity of his life, and to build the child's story. We have talked about the Life Book process and how important the child's story is. (Module 2, Lesson 3)
 - Understand your own feelings. It is difficult to share the pain of separation with a child and to be the one to voice the facts of the child's situation. As a child welfare professional it is important that you are able to hold the pain for the child while supporting him. If his feelings are not expressed and acknowledged, they will be suppressed and will re-emerge later, possibly jeopardizing a future placement.
2. As a group, discuss how workers' own painful feelings are triggered when they are working with children who are experiencing emotional pain. How might this impact their work? What can they do

to cope with their own feelings and still address the child's issues? How can you, as a supervisor, support workers in managing their painful feelings?

3. Have workers review the case of a child who demonstrates a significant grief reaction to moving to adoption or guardianship. What strategies from the lesson can you use to help him or her? Review the 5 goals of pre-placement work with children listed below and discuss how these might be addressed by workers or parents. Have workers roleplay how to have a conversation with parents about this work.
 - Diminish fears and worries of the unknown – This is for the child, the foster parents and the adoptive or guardianship parents.
 - Transfer attachments – The stronger the attachment to the previous parent is, the more important the transfer of attachment is. Contact between the current and future parent is important and may minimize divided loyalties.
 - Initiate the grieving process – Painful emotions can surface during the pre-placement visits, along with behaviors that can lead to hurrying the move. This could be a mistake. It is best not to move the child during the shock or denial stage of grief. It is better to move the child during the “sad” or “mad” stage of grief when the new parent can join the child in acknowledging the loss and help to use the strong emotions to aid in attachment.
 - Empower new caregivers – The new parents provide emotional nurturing and structure to create a safe environment for the child, and feel entitled to parent.
 - Encourage making commitments for the future – Everyone involved needs to make commitments about how they will work together on behalf of the child, including the child himself. This includes how contact will be maintained with important relationships, including siblings, therapist, former foster parents, and extended family members. This will help to minimize losses.
4. Have workers review Darla Henry's 3-5-7 model and discuss how these steps might be used in their work with a specific child who is approaching adoption or guardianship. How might the 3-5-7 model be incorporated into practice on a regular basis?
5. Ask each worker to practice using one tool from Module 5 to help children process grief.
 - Conversations with children about loss and grief
 - Supporting a child through separations
 - 3-5-7 Model
 - Life Books
 - Providing transition to Adoption or Guardianship