

Description of the TIPS-MAPP Preparation and Selection Program Meetings

Each family interested in becoming a foster or adoptive parent will attend 30 hours of TIPS-MAPP (Trauma Informed Partnering for Safety and Permanence – Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting). This is less a formal training and more a mutual selection process, meaning that it helps you and the department to make an informed decision as to whether you can parent these children and work in partnership with the department, other social service agencies, the birth families (if and when appropriate) and other foster families to meet the needs of the children. Below is a summary of topics that are generally covered in the meetings.

1. WELCOME TO THE TIPS-MAPP PREPARATION AND SELECTION PROGRAM

Acquaints leaders and participants with the TIPS-MAPP Program and each other. This meeting explains the process of becoming a foster or adoptive parent and the legal foundation for child welfare services. With a focus on safety, well-being and permanence, you will meet several children and parents (in a video) who have been involved with foster care and adoption.

During Meeting 1, every family receives a copy of a PROFILE. The Profile gives prospective foster and adoptive families an opportunity to describe themselves in their own words. The Profile becomes part of the information used to help in the decision about fostering or adopting. It also becomes part of the information kept by the agency to help children, birth families and child welfare workers get to know the foster or adoptive family better. The Profiles are returned by Meeting 2, if possible. If absolutely necessary, the family may work on it for an extra week and return it by Meeting 3.

2. WHERE THE MAPP LEADS: A FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION EXPERIENCE

This meeting provides an overview of a foster care and adoption experience from the perspectives of clients (children and parents), foster parents, adoptive parents, and child welfare workers. Case examples of eight children will be used to help participants consider the safety, well-being and permanence needs of children who have been abused, neglected or maltreated.

3. LOSSES AND GAINS: THE NEED TO BE A LOSS EXPERT

Explores the impact of separation on the growth and development of children, and the impact of foster care and adoptive placement on the emotions and behaviors of children and parents. Examines personal losses (death, divorce, infertility, children leaving home) and how difficult life experiences affect success as adoptive parents or foster parents. Emphasizes the partnership roles of foster parents, adoptive parents, and social workers in turning separation losses into gains.

4. HELPING CHILDREN WITH ATTACHMENTS

Explores the subject of attachment and child development. Focuses on how attachments are formed and the special needs of children in foster care and adoption (especially in the areas of building self-concept and appropriate behavior). Discusses the partnership roles of foster parents, adoptive parents and child welfare workers in helping children form new attachments.

5. HELPING CHILDREN LEARN HEALTHY BEHAVIORS

Discusses techniques for managing behavior, with an emphasis on alternatives to physical punishment. Topics include special issues related to discipline for children who have been physically or sexually abused or neglected. Techniques to be discussed include being a “behavior detective,” reinforcement, time out, mutual problem solving, structuring and setting limits, negotiating, and contracting. Emphasizes the partnership among foster parents, adoptive parents and child welfare workers.

6. HELPING CHILDREN WITH BIRTH FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Examines the importance of helping children in care maintain and build upon their identity, self-concept, and connections. Considers issues such as how children’s cultures and ethnic backgrounds help shape their identity; the connections children risk losing when they enter care; and why visits and contacts with birth families and previous foster families are important.

7. GAINS AND LOSSES: HELPING CHILDREN LEAVE FOSTER CARE

Discusses family reunification as the primary case planning goal as well as alternatives like foster care, adoption, and independent living. Examines disruption and its impact on children, families, and agency staff. This meeting also focuses on the partnership role of child welfare workers, foster parents, and adoptive parents in helping children move home, into an adoptive home or into independent living. The meeting features a video of a mother, foster mother and worker planning the return of the mother’s children to her home.

8. UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF FOSTERING OR ADOPTING

Previous meetings included discussions and experiential activities to find out what foster care and adoption are all about. Participants learned about separation and attachment, how to build and maintain relationships with children and how to support them in working out the emotions they have for the important people in their lives. In Meeting 8 prospective parents explore the impact of fostering and adopting on their own families. Discussions and activities examine how fostering and adopting can affect prospective parents’ marriages, own children and relationships with extended family.

9. PERSPECTIVES IN ADOPTIVE PARENTING AND FOSTER PARENTING

This meeting continues the examination of the impact of foster and adopting on families and builds skills for shared parenting. The meeting features a video of a parent talking about her experiences when her daughters were in foster care. A special children’s group will be part of this meeting, designed especially for children and youth from families who are thinking about becoming foster or adoptive families.

10. ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS

The important tasks of this meeting will be to assess group members’ strengths and needs as foster parents or adoptive parents. There also will be some time to say good-bye ... the ending. As the preparation/mutual selection process is coming to an end, so begins the transition into becoming a foster family or adoptive family ... the beginning.