

TOGETHER FACING THE CHALLENGE

A Therapeutic Foster Care
Resource Toolkit
3rd Edition

Train-the-Trainer Manual



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INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to the 3rd Edition of the Therapeutic Foster Care Resource Toolkit, **Together Facing the Challenge!** This toolkit is designed for Foster Care programs looking to incorporate an evidence-based model into their existing structure and to enhance and improve the quality of training, service delivery, and outcomes for youth in their care.

This training curriculum was developed by faculty of Duke University's Services Effectiveness Research Program in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. The curriculum is the result of 9 years of National Institute of Mental Health-funded studies of therapeutic foster care (TFC) programs in 'usual care' practice – an observational study from 1998-2002 and the first randomized trial (2003-2008). A second randomized trial (funded by The Duke Endowment) from 2012-2015 is producing more evidence of the effectiveness of the curriculum. Together Facing the Challenge (TFTC) is one of only two Therapeutic Foster Care Programs in the nation that has received a rating of "Supported by Research Evidence" from the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare. This certification was based on the first randomized trial, during which TFTC showed clinically significant improvement on a wide range of youth-level outcomes.

Utilizing research and data from observational studies of therapeutic foster care in North Carolina, toolkit developers established a series of structured didactic and interactive training sessions for foster parents and agency staff to provide them with the tools and skills necessary to improve outcomes for youth in care. From previous research, we know that foster parents are more likely to use structured and effective behavior management strategies when they have involved and supportive relationships with their supervisors. Although foster parents have likely received training in using these strategies, they may have difficulty applying them to the children in their care. This curriculum provides effective strategies to staff and foster families to build upon three of the primary research-supported factors for success in foster care:

- Supportive and involved relationships between supervisors and foster parents
- Effective use of behavior management strategies by foster parents
- Supportive and involved relationships between foster parents and the youth in their care

In this 3rd Edition of the toolkit, the developers have included additional interactive activities, a training preparation guide (including a preparation checklist and tips regarding adult learners), a session dedicated specifically to welcoming diversity into the home, and a more robust set of appendices to support the materials and content of TFTC. In addition, elements of trauma-informed care are embedded throughout the curriculum to highlight awareness of past trauma and its impact on current functioning (see *Connections Between TFTC and Trauma-Informed Care*, pages 10-11). The intent of this toolkit is not to replace what an agency does but rather offer a low-cost approach to improving trauma-informed treatment practices and outcomes within the existing structure of the foster care program.

Two training manuals, a Train-the-Trainer Manual for agency staff and a Foster Parent Manual, present core concepts relevant to building relationships, understanding and managing behavior, self-care, and planning for the child's future. Additionally, supplemental staff training is provided to give additional guidance to the staff who support direct care providers. The TFTC curriculum builds upon research regarding what practices are most effective as well as what is already happening in many agencies. The goal of these materials is to provide focused training on the most effective treatment elements that are often under-utilized in foster care.

Follow-up consultation with TFTC trainers is a critical component of this comprehensive model. The structured consultative session format begins at the close of the initial 3-day train-the-trainer workshop and continues for a minimum of 12 months. The goal of this consultation element is to teach, support, and coach agency trainers as they work with their agency staff and foster families, offering a forum for ongoing dialogue with agency trainers to process issues around implementation of the various skills and techniques of TFTC. These regularly-scheduled conferences help to prevent potential implementation problems from becoming insurmountable barriers.

We are confident that the formal training based on the toolkit combined with follow-up consultation contributes to high quality implementation of TFTC. We look forward to supporting your efforts to improve outcomes for youth. If you have questions about the resource toolkit materials or trainers, please contact:

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SESSION 1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS

TFC Materials

PowerPoint

Foster Parent Manuals
(copies made by
agency)

Session 1 Activity
Materials Pack

On Your Own

Chart Paper

Index Cards

Sign-in Sheet

Materials Baskets (i.e.

Post-Its, markers,
scrap paper, pens,
etc.)

Timer

Table tents/ nametags

The participants will:

- Understand that TFC is an evidence-based practice
- Understand the correlation between relationships and outcomes
- Understand the impact of past trauma on current emotions and behaviors
- Understand how uncooperative behavior develops
- Understand the ABC model
- Understand the key components of tracking a behavior to assist in development of an action plan to address the behavior

“Research shows that when foster parents have strong relationships with their youth and agency worker, youth do better in foster care.”



ACTIVITY 1.C: THE INVISIBLE SUITCASE

Purpose: To improve understanding of children in care & to support them in overcoming effects of trauma

TIME:

5 minutes

MATERIALS:

Index Cards (4 per person: 3 white and 1 colored)

Clear plastic baggies
Pens/pencils

- Provide each participant with 4 index cards (3 white and one colored) and a clear plastic baggie
- Instruct participants to record their responses to the following with one response on each white index card:
 - Write down a statement that a child or youth in care may hold about themselves.
 - Write down a statement that a child or youth in care may hold about their caregivers.
 - Write down a statement that a child or youth in care may hold about the world in general.
- Have participants place their statements into their plastic baggie
- Explain the following in your own words:



- Youth in foster care often arrive to our homes with visible bags of clothes and prized possessions. However, each time they experience a placement they also bring with them an invisible suitcase filled with thoughts and beliefs informed by their lives in their family of origin and in their time in foster care. The contents of this invisible suitcase is often not shared in words, but expressed in the actions and attitudes of youth in our home. It is important to create a relationship that is emotionally and psychologically safe so that we can create an environment that is sensitive to the contents of our youth's invisible suitcase.
- On the remaining colored index card, have participants write down one thing they plan to do to help repack their youth's suitcase.

Source: National Child Traumatic Stress Network



HOW DOES TRAUMA AFFECT YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE?

Purpose: To improve understanding of children in care to support them in overcoming effects of trauma

TIME:

15 minutes

MATERIALS:

None

TI

Say to participants:

Understanding the contents of our youth's "invisible suitcase" is critical to understanding children in care and helping them to overcome the effects of trauma. Remember that what you wrote on your index card may be the kinds of thinking that is in their minds and drives their feelings and behaviors.

Generate a discussion regarding how we can help kids in re-packing their suitcase. Use the following bullet points.

- When we protect them from harm, children learn that the world is a safe place.
- When we nurture children's strengths and respond to their needs children and youth feel capable.
- When we provide affection and love, children develop self-esteem and learn they are loveable and worth loving.
- When we ask what happened to you versus what's wrong with you?
- When we understand what some of our child's triggers are, we can respond accordingly.

Explain the following in your own words:

TI

Children and youth in care frequently re-enact patterns or relationships from their past in their present interactions with their caregivers. They get your attention while keeping you at a safe (physical and emotional) distance to prove that the negative beliefs they hold in their "invisible suitcase" are accurate. It is often used as a vehicle to vent their frustration, anger and anxiety and as a means of protecting themselves. These are survival skills that have often worked for them in other settings.

- It is very important for our foster parents not to buy-in to their child's negative beliefs and expectations.
- It is very important for our foster parents not to react in anger or in the heat of the moment.
- It is very important for our foster parents not to take the child's behavior at face value. What is underlying the behavior?

- It is very important for our foster parents not to take it personally. Although the personal attacks are often directed at us, it isn't about us, we just happen to be there to be the recipient of the negative behavior.



Some of the key factors associated with promoting the physical, emotional, and psychological safety include:

- Help youth to be more familiar with their physical surroundings
- Give choices and responsibilities so they can experience a sense of control
- Set limits
- Provide information to inform youth about what is going to take place in the future.
- Provide opportunities for self-expression
- Help them maintain a sense of connection and continuity with their culture and their past