FAMILY AND CHILD ASSESSMENT

Note Taking Guide

Day I

At the end of Day I, you will be able to:

- Articulate the purpose of a family assessment
- Explain how personal values and biases impact the assessment process
- Define diversity competence
- Explain the goals of the family assessment
- Define or give examples of the strategies used for assessing the three behavioral levels of family functioning
- Explain the purpose of a Large Family Assessment and identify considerations involved in this type of an assessment

Section I: Introduction and Ice Breaker

- The family assessment is a comprehensive process.
- It engages an Assessor and a family in a mutual process for determining a family’s readiness, appropriateness and motivation for an adoptive or foster placement.
- The family assessment includes a range of topics for an Assessor to consider

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Family and Child Assessment: 201-A1B-S
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Section II: What’s in it for Me?

• Effective Assessment includes a prescribed set of knowledge and skills needed by an Assessor to complete a thorough and accurate assessment.

Section III: Values and the Family Assessment Process

• Personal biases can influence or interfere with the outcomes of a family assessment.
• Assessors must recognize how personal values may surface and affect their decision-making during the assessment process.
Section IV: Diversity Issues in Assessment and Placement

- Diversity competence is a requirement for conducting a quality family assessment.

- Assessors will serve clients from vastly different backgrounds from their own.

- A diversity competent Assessor understands the countless factors that create an individual's diversity, and will respond accordingly during the assessment process.

Section V: Purpose and Goals of the Family Assessment

- The terms, “family assessment” and “homestudy” are used interchangeably.

- An in-depth and complete adoptive/foster family assessment is a critical first step towards the successful placement of a child and requires a high degree of competence and skill.
Section VI: The Family Assessment – Assessment Categories

- The ten assessment categories used to conduct a family assessment include:
  - Attitudes and Beliefs Regarding Foster Care and Adoption Issues
  - Motivation and Expectation of adoption
  - Personal and Emotional Maturity
  - Stability and Quality of Interpersonal Relationships
  - Resilience, Coping Skills, and History of Stress Management
  - Openness of Family System
  - Parenting Skills and Abilities
  - Empathy and Perspective Taking Ability
  - Entitlement
  - Ability for “Hands-on” Parenting
  - Lifelong Commitment
  - Religious Affiliation and/or Spiritual Beliefs

- Families enter the assessment process functioning at one of three behavioral levels on a continuum: Strength; Minimal; or Caution. The family assessment helps determine a family’s level of functioning for each of the assessment categories.

- A variety of strategies can be used during the family assessment to gather important data about the applicant family. The interview is perhaps the most used strategy.

- Assessors can glean more effective data during an interview by using behavioral vs. theoretical questions.

- Trauma history is an important area to explore during the family assessment to ensure a family’s ability to manage any trauma triggers which might surface throughout their parenting.

- A large family assessment is a part of the family assessment process and requires additional considerations when there will be a total of five or more birth, kinship, foster, or adopted children in the home.
Section VII: The Family Assessment–Areas Explored

- The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 allows states to waive non-safety licensing standards on a case by case basis to eliminate barriers to placing children safely with relatives in licensed homes.
  - The potentially waivable standards can be found in OAC 5101:2-5 and 5101:2-7
- There are four criminal offenses considered non-rehabilitative that would preclude a family applicant from adopting or fostering children. They are felony convictions for:
  - Spousal abuse
  - Rape
  - Sexual assault
  - Homicide
- There are certain behaviors not specifically included among those in the OAC as non-rehabilitative, but, as best practice, should be categorized as behaviors that put children at risk, and therefore should automatically preclude an applicant from becoming a foster caregiver or an adoptive parent. We refer to these behaviors as “No-Nos”. They
  - Histories of sexually abusive behaviors (e.g. pedophilia, voyeurism, exhibitionism, etc.)
  - Current substance abuse
  - Severe, untreated mental health
- It is necessary to conduct “second look” assessments for prospective applicants who may have questionable criminal factors or other issues in their backgrounds prior to placing children in the home.
Day II

At the end of Day II, you will be able to:

- Identify interviewing skills needed during a family assessment
- Articulate the purpose of a child assessment
- Explain the components needed to assess the strengths and needs of children
- Explain how to use the Prediction Path as a tool in child assessments
- Explain the process used in matching and selecting families for children
- Articulate the purpose and process of both the Pre-adoptive Staffing and Matching Conference
- Explain in general terms the origins of the Indian Child Welfare Act and the Multi-Ethnic Placement Act and their connection to the matching and selection process

Section VIII: Interviewing Applicants

- An effective interview builds trust, facilitates effective communication, and gathers critical information needed to complete a family assessment.
- An Assessor may use a variety of interviewing strategies to gather data and regulate the interview process during the family assessment.
Section IX: Finalizing Approval

There are three outcomes to the family assessment. The family may be:

- Approved
- Deferred
- Denied

An assessor should use skill and diplomacy when disapproving a family for an adoptive placement and notify the family in writing regarding the reasons for the decision for each of the three outcomes.

Section X: Documenting the Family Assessment

- The family assessment should be completed thoroughly by an Assessor and presented in language that is clear, concise and accurate.
- Assessors should consider taking advantage of trainings available to enhance their writing.
Section XI: Assessing the Strengths and Needs of the Child

- The Child Assessment is a critical first step towards selecting a family who can meet the child's ongoing needs and be the best “match” for the child, either temporarily or on a lifelong basis.
- An Assessor is responsible for thoroughly assessing the needs of each child and knowing where to gather critical information about the child's background.
- The prediction path is a strategy used to conduct child assessments. It contains three parts:
  - The Placement Trail
  - The Strengths/Needs Sheet
  - The Prediction Narrative

Section XII: Matching and Selection of Families for Children

- The Matching and Selection process provides steps for an Assessor to consider in order to make good matches between a child and an adoptive family.
- An Assessor must consider the federal and administrative requirements during the matching and selection process.
- A team approach is a positive strategy for making sound matching and selection decisions of family resources for children.
Section XIII: Conclusion and Evaluation

- Assessor should consider enrolling in a companion Learning Lab to this training for instruction on how to document the Home study in Tier I Assessor Training Family and Child Assessment: 201-A1B-S Developed by IHS for the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program – Revised February 2019

List three ways you will use the information from this training.

1. __________________________________________

2. __________________________________________

3. __________________________________________