

Executive Summary

Course Title: Lifebooks as a Process: Supporting Older Youth in Working Through Their Life Stories

Target Audience: Both new and veteran child welfare workers, group home providers, foster/kin care parents, adoptive parents, CASAs, and ILP staff will benefit from this training. Adults not professionally affiliated, but who have made an emotional commitment to an older youth in foster care, are also welcomed and highly encouraged to attend. Older youth (12-19) are also welcomed, but it is recommended that they attend one of our workshops tailored for their learning needs.

Course Description: Lifebooks give youth a place to tell their story, and through the process of storytelling, youth may uncover or remember information that is difficult to accept. This workshop approaches Lifebook work as a therapeutic *process*, one which necessitates that adults play a supportive role in setting up and facilitating the Lifebook work for youth, and make a commitment to support the youth through the process. When approached with the support of a committed adult, the Lifebooking process can help youth accept their past, and open their hearts towards building trusting, supportive relationships with the adults around them. Unresolved grief and loss issues in older youth, and how this effects the formation of barriers to permanency, will be explored. The focus will be on using Lifebooks to address the emotional and behavioral blocks to permanency. Participants will practice the skills needed to set up and facilitate a Lifebooking process.

Outcome Objectives for Participants:

Knowledge Objectives

- Trainee is able to describe the various styles and intended applications of Lifebooks.
- Trainee understands the theories of grief and loss and how unresolved grief and loss affects behavior in older youth.
- Trainee recognizes that unresolved feelings of anger, fear and sadness may be barriers to making permanency connections.
- Trainee understands the need to anticipate loss and grief related behaviors in older youth, and help the youth plan for self-soothing and safety.
- Trainee can describe how Lifebooks can be used to address grief and loss and thereby make it possible for the older youth to make permanent connections to a supportive adult.

Skill Objectives

- By using the loss line/life line and corresponding Lifebook pages, the trainee will demonstrate the ability to engage older youth from a strength based and culturally relevant perspective.

- Through an interactive activity, the trainee will develop a contract for emotional safety to help the youth plan for feelings of anger or sadness that come up through the Lifebooking process.

Ways that Supervisors can support the Transfer of Learning from the classroom to the job...

BEFORE the training...

1. Supervisors will review with the trainee 2 cases of older youth who are struggling with behavioral and emotional issues. Supervisor can help the trainee think about instances of loss in that youth's life, and assess whether that youth has had support in grieving the loss.
2. Supervisor will review the values and principals of the Older Youth Adoptions Project with the trainee and support the trainee in processing their reactions to the statements. The trainee should be instructed to bring questions or comments to the training.

AFTER the training...

1. Supervisor will help the trainee identify a youth that might benefit from a Lifebooking process. Supervisor will help the trainee assess what adult might be interested in facilitating the Lifebooking process for the youth.
2. Supervisor should ask the trainee to share the family engagement summary that was prepared in the workshop with the families/significant adult supports of the youth identified in item one.

The Values and Principals of the Older Youth Adoptions Project:

1. All children and youth have the right to permanent legal and emotional connections.
2. A supportive connection to permanent family can be achieved for older youth in foster care.
3. Unresolved grief and loss issues can be barriers to establishing permanency for older youth.
4. The experience of anger, sadness fear and denial are a normal and healthy part of the grieving process for youth.
5. Supportive adults can help older youth overcome unresolved grief by making a commitment to provide emotional support to youth as they go through their Lifebooking process.
6. Maintaining a sense of respect and privacy for the intimacy that is shared through the Lifebook process is important for the supportive adults, including foster care providers, child welfare staff, group home providers and CASA.