Successful Reconnections with Family Post-Foster Care

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Each year approximately 20,000 - 25,000 youths age out of the foster care system in the United States

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- 50% of the youths who exited foster care possessed less than $250 at the time of their release (Child Welfare, 2003)
- 38% were emotionally disturbed (Cook, 1991)
- 58% had graduated from High School by age 19, compared to 87% for national comparison group (Courtney et al, 2005)
- 33% had changed living situations 5+ times within 4 years (National Working Group on Foster Care & Education, 2007)
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84% of the youths will become a parent within 12-18 months after discharge

30% will have no health insurance

25% will become homeless

30% will receive public assistance

(U.S. DHHS Administration for Children & Families, 2005)
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Within 12-18 months after leaving foster care, almost as many former foster youth lived with a relative (31%) as those who lived independently (37%). Within 30 months, 54% will live with a relative.

(Courtney & Heuring, 2002)
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Possible Negative Outcomes: Re-victimization

- New incidents of Abuse and/or Neglect
- Exposure to, or participation in, highly conflicted and unstable interpersonal relationships
- Exposure to, or participation in, dysfunctional behavior(s)
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Creative Intervention...

...utilize a restorative dialogue process to facilitate the healthy reconnection between interested post-foster care youth and selected family members.
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Restorative Justice Movement

Restorative Justice Practices

Victim-Offender Dialogues in Cases of Severe Violence (VOD-SV)

Modifying VOD-SV for Post-Foster Care Reconnections

Special Consideration - “The Issue of Forgiveness”
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### Restorative Justice Movement

#### Retributive Justice:
- Harm Against State
- Focus on Law Breaking & Guilt
- Adversarial Process
- Affected People Sidelined
- Punishment (Deterrence)

#### Restorative Justice:
- Harm Against People, Relationships, & the Community
- Focus on Responsibility & Fulfilling Obligations
- Dialogue-driven, Collaborative Process
- Empowerment for All Affected by the Crime
- Restitution, Reparation, and Possible Reintegration
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Restorative Justice Practices

- Victim-driven Community Restitution
- Sentencing Circles
- Crime Repair Crews
- Surrogate Victim-Offender Panels
- Family Group Conferencing
- Victim Empathy Classes
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Victim-Offender Dialogues in Cases of Severe Violence (VOD-SV)

- Brief History of the VOD-SV Intervention
- Guiding Values of VOD-SV
- Six Stages of the VOD-SV Process
- Case Example #1: The Nagao Family (Big Island)
- Case Example #2: The Streufert Family (DVD)
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Modifying VOD-SV for Post-Foster Care Reconnections

• Case Example: The Johnson Family (Big Island)

• Recommended Practice Modifications

• Training & Supervision
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Special Consideration - “The Issue of Forgiveness”

• Benefits of Forgiveness
  – Physical (i.e., enhanced immune system)
  – Psychological (i.e., re-engagement with life)

• Costs of Forgiveness
  – Psychological (i.e., premature closure on grief work)
  – Interpersonal (i.e., inappropriate reconciliation with offender)
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Some Resources...


Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking (www.rjp.umn.edu)

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