Assessing Readiness for Reunification

Putting Knowledge into Practice: Simulated Family Treatment Court Staffing and Status Review Hearing

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Key Takeaways

A shared definition of success is essential

Recovery is multi-dimensional

Aligning recovery and reunification takes a coordinated effort
What is Recovery?

**SAMHSA’s Working Definition**

Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential.

Access to evidence-based substance use disorder treatment and recovery support services are important building blocks to recovery.

Recovery is not treatment!
# Four Major Dimensions

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<th>Health</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Community</th>
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<td>Overcoming or managing one’s disease(s) or symptoms and making informed, healthy choices that support physical and emotional well-being</td>
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<td>Maintaining a stable and safe place to live</td>
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<td>Conducting meaningful daily activities, such as a job, school or volunteerism, and having the independence of income, and resources to participate in society</td>
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<td>Having relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope</td>
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**Do parents know what they need to do to reunify?**
What does the research say about successful and timely reunification?

**Factors for Successful Reunification**

- Family-centered approach to services
- Collaborating with agencies across systems to build a family-centered model
- Coordinated case work
- Parenting and sibling time
- Supporting reunification, post-reunification and preventing re-entry

Sources: Supporting Reunification and Preventing Reentry Into Out-of-Home Care (February 2012) and Family Reunification: What the Evidence Shows (June 2011) - Child Welfare Information Gateway, Children’s Bureau/ACYF
Phases as an Engagement Strategy

- Leverage the phase structure to create a behavior-based, family-centered program
- Allow parents to see how their progress through the phases moves them to THEIR goal
- Creates shared goals and coordinated case plans for all partners including the family
- Focus on vital services
- Lay out steps towards reunification

Rethinking Readiness to Reunification

- When the parents complete all of the steps on the case plan, will you be comfortable allowing the children to go home?
- Is there any step in the case plan that, if not completed, will keep you from allowing the child to go home?
Compliance vs. adherence
Safe vs. perfect
Attendance vs. behaviors
Relapse vs. lapse

Rethinking Readiness
How will we know?

What Questions Can Drug Testing Answer? … & What Can it Not?

• Whether an individual has used a tested substance within a detectable time frame
• A drug test alone cannot determine the existence or absence of a substance use disorder
• The severity of an individual’s substance use disorder
• Whether a child is safe
• The parenting capacity and skills of the caregiver
Practice Innovation: Reunification Group

- Participation begins during unsupervised/overnight visitations through 3 months post-reunification
- Staffed by an outside treatment provider and recovery support specialist (or other mentor role)
- Focus on supporting parents through reunification process
- Group process provides guidance and encouragement; opportunity to express concerns about parenting without repercussion

Building Protective Factors to Strengthen Families

- Social Connections
- Parental Resilience
- Nurturing and Attachment
- Concrete Support for Families
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children