

SELF – STUDY COURSE

CASE BUILDING FOR PERMANENCE
PART 1 AND 2

Jane Malpass and Jane Thompson

This self-study course for 4.0 credit hours is based on the following sources:

- **DVD** Jane Malpass and Jane Thompson's presentation at the 2007 Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect Conference in April 2006, in two parts, a total of 2 hours, 44 minutes in length
- Handouts from Jane Malpass and Jane Thompson, 11 pages
- Post test which requires some personal reflection on the concepts in this course

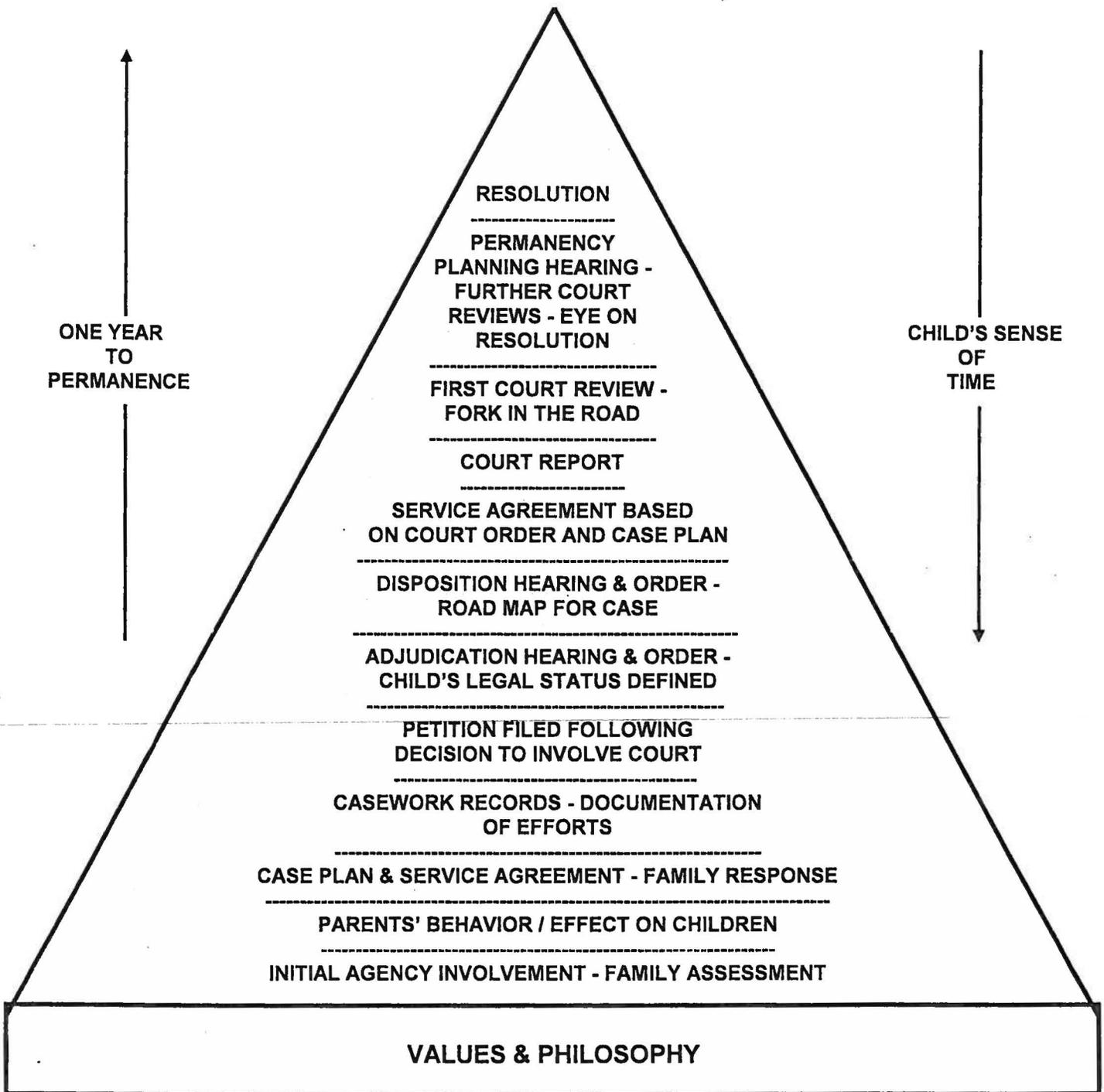
The questionnaire/post test on page two of this course is a way to check your understanding and a means for your Family Resource Specialist to assess that you have processed and understood the majority of the information provided. In order to obtain credit for this course, please review the DVD (available online) and give your completed questionnaire/post test (available online or directly from your FRS) to your Family Resource Specialist at your Child and Family Services office. Your FRS will score the post test and may credit your training record with 4.0 hours.

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services
Child and Family Services Division Training Unit

**Thank you to our valuable resource parents who are
dedicated to the care and protection of children.**



CASEBUILDING TO PERMANENCE



Jane Malpass
Jane Thompson

CORE VALUES

- ◆ Every child has the right to a safe, permanent home at a minimum level of care.
- ◆ A range of parenting styles and practices is acceptable, if minimally adequate care is provided.
- ◆ We must work to remove risk from children, not children from risk.
- ◆ People have the right to decide not to change – but must take the consequences of that choice.
- ◆ Permanence is achieved only when the child has a legal relationship with an attachment figure.

- ◆ We should have the same standards for intervention - and expectations for change – throughout our involvement with the family.
- ◆ Our major challenge is to balance the responsibility for family preservation and the mandate of child protection with a commitment to permanence.

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EFFECT OF PLACEMENT ON CHILDREN

Any separation has a negative effect – even when the reason for the separation is in the child's best interest. Any break in attachment will affect the child always – even when a new attachment is made. **Children need continuity and reciprocity as well as appropriate care to survive. Children cannot survive multiple placements.** They must constantly deal with grief without reaching resolution and they must constantly face the loss of those they love.

SEPARATION CAUSES GRIEF:

Grief effects development – losses at different ages have different results. Grief takes energy and keeps children from using that energy to master appropriate developmental tasks.

Grief may cause children to be labeled as abnormal because they act out their grief and often exhibit difficult or concerning behaviors

Grief separates children from their peers – sadness, anger, and depression and the behaviors that result are not “normal” childhood experiences.

SEPARATION BREAKS ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment is necessary for emotional health.

Attachment is necessary for cognitive and intellectual development.

Attachment is necessary for conscience development.

SEPARATION OFTEN BEGINS A CYCLE OF LOSS:

Loss breaks continuity and reciprocity and the sense of identity and self-worth they allow to develop.

Loss causes mistrust of authority figures – there is no one permanent person that the child can count on.

Loss negatively impacts self-esteem – “nobody’s child” comes to believe that he is nobody.

CASEBUILDING WITH COURT HEARINGS

TEMPORARY CUSTODY HEARING – determining the child’s placement prior to adjudication and “jumpstarting” the case

- ◆ Begin process of identifying parents or possible parents of all children and their whereabouts.
- ◆ Begin process of identifying all relatives who could be placement/information resources.

ADJUDICATION – finding the facts of the case and the appropriate status of the child under the juvenile code.

- ◆ Start with a petition alleging all material facts of the case.
- ◆ End with an adjudication order that “tells the story” of the case.

DISPOSITION – could be at same time as adjudication or a later time. Focuses on placement of child and necessary services for child and family.

- ◆ Start with a court report that recommends a “road map” for the case based on history of case and information about all parents and appropriate relatives.
- ◆ End with disposition order that contains “reasonable efforts” findings and mandates a “road map” for the case.

REVIEW HEARINGS – required at certain intervals during the case to review progress of the case and determine what must happen next.

- ◆ Start with court report that informs the court what changes have been demonstrated by the parents and what remains to be done.
- ◆ End with court order that includes “reasonable efforts” findings and mandates next “road map” for the case with “an eye on the clock”.

PERMANENCY PLANNING HEARING – to determine the permanent plan for the child and how to effectuate it.

POSSIBLE ROLES FOR RELATIVES

At abuse/neglect investigation: Is the relative able and willing to protect the child?

- ◆ The relative must be assessed by DSS prior to placement of the child.
- ◆ A written safety plan must be signed by the parents and relative.
- ◆ The placement must be monitored by DSS.

At treatment/case management: Is the relative able and willing to protect the child AND cooperate with the DSS plan for return home of the child?

- ◆ The relative must be able and willing to care for and protect the child for a longer period of time.
- ◆ Will the relative sabotage the agency's plan either by returning the child too soon or setting up roadblocks to any return?
- ◆ Will the relative return the child when the parents do improve?
- ◆ If the child cannot return home and the relative remains an appropriate placement, the treatment case may not be closed without court action by DSS or the relative to obtain legal rights to the child.

At foster care: Is the relative able and willing to protect the child AND cooperate with any initial reunification plan AND commit to providing a safe, permanent home for the child if return home is not possible?

- ◆ Will the relative expect for the parents to improve and resume a parental role even after a "permanent" placement with the relative?
- ◆ Does this relative have a substantial connection with the child? Must the child break attachments to foster parents willing to provide permanence in order to be placed with this relative? Could the relative retain a relationship after the child is adopted by others?
- ◆ Does this relative placement have the support of the parents and the child?
- ◆ Is the relative related to and willing/able to take all the siblings, if appropriate? Can each child's special needs be met?
- ◆ Do problems exist with the relative's care, as existed with the parents?
- ◆ Would this relative consider adoption?

Long Term Foster Care – An Impermanent Solution

Often we end up with the plan of long term foster care because we have older or difficult children for whom we have no identified family. Sometimes these children are actually placed in a family setting, but their caregivers do not want to adopt them. **In any case, when the plan is permanent foster care, what we are actually doing is planning for these children to belong to no one.** We are planning for them not to have a family or an identity. Clearly this is unacceptable. When we are faced with this as the “only” alternative, it is our obligation to insist that this not be the end of the planning process, but rather the beginning of a new dialogue around how to make permanence a reality, even for the most difficult child. Begin this dialogue with these questions:

- What other options have been explored?
- Does the child need specialized care? Is it possible for him to have a legal and emotional attachment with a person with whom he does not live?
- Is there a significant role model or mentor involved with this child? What barriers prevent them becoming the legal parent?
- What are the barriers to the caregiver adopting? How can these barriers be removed?
- Have all adoption subsidies, other financial resources, and continuing services been explored and offered?
- What have been the child’s connections and attachments in the past? Can any of them become involved now?
- What are the child’s attachments and connections in the present? What is their involvement?
- What family or kin connections are available – especially with siblings?
- Can parents or other kin be involved anew in this stage of the child’s life?
- What does the child want?
- What resources and attachment figures will be available when this child is an adult?
- Who will be this child’s family for the rest of his life?