INTRODUCTION

THANK YOU, PARENTS COMMISSION.

• Alcohol & Substance Abuse Prevention Education
• Grant funding STEP parent education at Children’s Advocacy Center in Tucson

COLLABORATION FOR THE COMMON GOOD

• Parents, Courts, Education, Law Enforcement, Mental Health Services, and Drug Treatment
• Addressing the direct and indirect results of substance abuse.
CHILDREN’S ADVOCACY CENTER OF SOUTHERN ARIZONA
A safe, compassionate, healing environment for children who have been a victim or witnessed a crime
https://www.sacacenter.org/

A child-sensitive environment providing the following services in one place:
• Investigative and advocacy services to child victims & their non-offending family members.
• Expert medical evaluations, videotaped forensic interviews, crisis intervention and case coordination with law enforcement and Department of Child Safety
• Children who cannot return to their family home receive clothing, books, a blanket and teddy bear to take to temporary foster care. They are fed at the Center if they are hungry, and they are comforted and cared for by trained staff.

Community outreach to prevent child victimization and to stop the cycle of abuse:
• The Prevention Specialist teaches school age children annually how to keep themselves safe and report abuse.
• The Outreach Coordinator provides training to adult professionals throughout southern Arizona on the Mandated Reporting law, including staff from schools, day cares, hospitals and agencies working with children.
• STEP parent education classes
QUESTION FOR THE MONTH:

How can we best support all caregivers who answer the call to care for other people’s children?

Kinship caregivers
Foster parents
Permanent Guardians
Adoptive parents

...anyone who commits to caring for a child separated from birth family...
Alcohol & Drug Abuse IMPACT ON EDUCATION

EDUCATORS & SUPPORT STAFF face students who are…

• Hungry
• Chronically stressed
• Emotionally fragile
• Challenged in learning - brains changed by trauma and/or exposure to alcohol and/or drugs
• Grieving separation from parents
Alcohol & Drug Abuse

IMPACT ON CHILD WELFARE & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

CHILDREN REMOVED FROM HOMES…
FACE PLACEMENT in…
• Kinship Care
• Community Foster Care
• Permanent Guardianship & Adoption

GRIEVE separation, losses, abuses
SOME receive MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES…
SOME face JUVENILE DETENTION…
ALL involved in COURT HEARINGS.
THREE WISHES

- Multiagency collaboration
- Training for providers - how to support adoptive parents
- More support services for kinship, foster, & adoptive parents
TWO CAVEATS

• “Adoptive Parent”
• Shifting Perspectives
“ADOPTIVE PARENT”

For this presentation:

~ any person who is raising another person’s child - no matter the official or legal title.
SHIFTING OUR PERSPECTIVES

REACTIONARY
Why did he/she do that?! TO

REFLECTIVE
What happened to her/him that led to that behavior?
WHAT HAPPENED IN THAT YOUTH’S LIFE?

It is only as we “adults... pass tests of increasing difficulty that the most severely troubled youngsters begin to trust that [we] adults really care more about who they are rather than what they do.”

(Dennis & Lourie, Everything is Normal until Proven Otherwise, 2006, p. 71)
The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) requires that child welfare agencies find permanent families for children who cannot return to their birth parents.

- Kinship caregivers, if not,…
- Community foster parents…
- Adoption or permanent guardianship…
- Disruptions… why???
POST-PLACEMENT SERVICES

Historically, once a permanency plan is put into effect, information, support and services for kinship and adoptive families go away.

Efforts to provide post-placement services to families were not always considered necessary, nor the responsibility, of the child welfare agency.

“IT’S INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT TO RAISE CHILDREN IMPACTED BY THE EFFECTS OF EARLY TRAUMA. FAMILIES FALL APART. MANY ADOPTIONS FAIL. BUT IT DOESN’T HAVE TO BE THAT WAY. WHEN WE SUPPORT ADOPTIVE PARENTS, WE SUPPORT KIDS FROM HARD PLACES.”

-IACD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FORREST LIEN
AFTER PLACEMENT:
WAYS TO SUPPORT ADOPTIVE PARENTS
MULTIAGENCY COLLABORATION

- Governor’s Office
- Child Welfare
- Education
- Mental Health Services
- Drug Treatment
- Law & Courts
- Others…
Adoptive parents wish providers …

• Saw through a family systems perspective;

• Were culturally competent; and

• Used trauma-informed practices.
All families face challenges. However,…
adoptive families face complex issues different from birth families.
We need help addressing the effects of:
• adverse childhood experiences,
  • developmental trauma,
  • separation & losses,
    • grief,
• and long-lasting identity issues.
Adoptive Parents’ Wish List

• Kinship Support Services Centers & Kinship Navigators
• Peer Support Groups
• Trauma-Informed Parenting & Self-Care Education
• Respite Care
KINSHIP NAVIGATORS URGENTLY NEEDED!

Apply if you …

• Can listen to LONG stories without looking at your watch
• Have excellent connections in the community
• Are willing to look under & around rocks for solutions
• Are a non-dualistic thinker; love to be innovative
• Encourage self-empowerment and advocacy in caregivers
Adoptive parents who finally attend an effective support group,…

• Wish they had done so sooner
• Find companions who understand them
• Freely share what hurts most, parenting tips, resources, progress made by children, celebrations
• Guard their WEEKLY (or bi-weekly) meeting time
• Make lasting friends
Adoptive parents who invest in parenting and self-care education…

• understand their children’s behavior in the context of trauma,
• build their capacity to cope with challenges,
• identify appropriate strategies to meet their children’s needs,
• choose providers who are trauma-informed,
• are eager to pass on their knowledge, and
• reduce stress as they learn new skills.
Adoptive parents dream about respite care …

- Time to fill up their wells to keep going and giving to their children
- Not a luxury
- Especially needed by kinship caregivers – often grandparents on fixed incomes

RESPITE CARE URGENTLY NEEDED!
SPREADING THE PIXIE DUST

...by shifting our perspectives of how we view complex blended families... we begin to understand how we can be of greater support....

• Treat the family as a whole unit.
• Be culturally sensitive.
• Be trauma informed.

Continue to spread the pixie dust for collaborative efforts wherever we go!
YOUR REFLECTIONS

How does supporting adoptive parents align with your efforts in the prevention of alcohol and substance abuse?

What might you share from this presentation with others to garner more support of adoptive parents?

Questions?
References

