



MAPP

Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting

MAPP provides a structured format through which prospective foster (and adoptive) parents can be selected and prepared to work with child welfare agencies as team members in helping troubled children and teens. It provides these parents with information about children's feelings regarding their birth families, the realities of separation and attachment, the impact of a new child on one's own family, and how to parent children who have been sexually abused.

MAPP is designed to provide a foundation for foster parents as they move through this selection process to the placement of children in their homes and, hopefully, placement stability. MAPP cannot guarantee a trouble-free placement in the prospective foster parent's home. The effectiveness of foster parents who participate in the MAPP program depends upon the quality of their preparation as well as the degree to which they are reinforced and supported for working with the agency.

The MAPP program of combining the preparation of foster parents and conducting a home study is based on the Nova University model of foster family preparation and selection. It is reinforced by a team approach developed by the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC). Both the Nova and the NACAC models encourage a positive approach based on shared decision making, problem solving and mutual selection, all of which are necessary to building mutual trust and teamwork among all participants.

People waiting to become foster parents need a complete understanding of their role and the rights and obligations that come with that role. They also need guidelines to function as partners in the delivery of foster care services. Generally, MAPP is made up of ten preparation sessions (meetings) and a home study. These are designed to enable participants to develop a knowledge of foster parenting and the attitudes and skills needed to be effective and satisfied foster parents. Documented experience in other states that use the MAPP program shows that training for foster parents reduces disruption in their homes, reduces the length of time a child spends in care, and reduces foster parent turnover. Prepared foster parents not only are less likely to request a child's removal from their home, but they are more likely to be of great help for children who have special needs. Because foster parents have round-the-clock close contact with the children in their homes, they have the most influence on the children's adjustments to care, their relationships with their birth parents, and their ability to move successfully into an adoptive placement or other permanent situations. Therefore, foster parents must work effectively as team members as they care for those kids.

The results of foster care can be either devastating or growth producing. Foster parents who accept the awesome challenges of parenting children and youth with special needs are the keys to the success of the foster parent program. With the right attitude, skills and proper support, foster parenting can be a very rewarding experience for all the people involved.