

Hempfield Behavioral Health, Inc.

Strengthening Resource Families

The Strengthening Resource Families program was developed to address the need in child welfare services to improve the stability of placements for children in out of home care and to contribute to the goal of permanence. Families who act as resource or adoptive parents often experience additional demands, responsibilities, and difficulties resulting from this new or expanded caregiver role. Resource/adoptive parents frequently are challenged with the reality of the placement not matching their expectations, as children with a history of trauma and loss tend to need different parenting responses. The Strengthening Resource Families program operates from a foundational understanding that children heal in the context of relationships. Research has indicated that the key component to building resiliency for children is a responsive relationship with a caring adult; challenging child characteristics, poor parent-child interactions, family discord, unrealistic expectations, and service issues are common barriers to the creation of the necessary responsive relationship. Research also indicates that reducing caregiver strain impacts effectiveness in the caregiver role and ultimate child outcomes. Thus, the focus of Strengthening Resource Families program is on increasing the protective factors and decreasing the risk factors of resource/adoptive caregivers.

Target population:

Resource families (i.e., families who contract to be foster/adopt resources) are the target population. The biological and extended family of both the resource family and the youth are secondarily involved. The Strengthening Resource Families program is designed to work with families at varying stages of their experience, from the beginning stages of the youth's introduction to the home, establishment of permanency, and through post adoption discord. The dosage and type of intervention varies based upon the needs of the family.

Staff Qualifications:

The Strengthening Resource Families program utilizes an LSW clinician with a minimum of five years experience in child welfare, or a MSW with a minimum of five years experience in child welfare under the supervision of a qualified LSW, to meet with resource families in their own homes and communities.

Method:

The Strengthening Resource Families program is a home and community based service that can be delivered along a continuum from prevention to crisis intervention. The clinician meets with parents in the household to build rapport, engage them in services, and conduct assessments relating to the presence of protective and risk factors. This information is used to inform an intervention plan with goals designed to build on family strengths and address risks that might negatively impact the success of the stability and permanency.

Multiple assessment tools are utilized to help inform this assessment, including the Parenting Stress Inventory (PSI), the Family Advocacy and Support Tool (FAST), and the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS).

The clinician utilizes the results of the assessment to place the family at the appropriate level of intervention within the program, either Selective or Intensive. These are further described below:

SELECTIVE level families will receive a minimum of three face to face visits with the clinician for the purpose of assessment upon a child being matched with the family. The purpose of these assessments is to understand the impact this child is having on the family system, and the caregiver's perceived capacity to care for the child. If no risk factors are identified, the family will have monthly visits with the clinician to check in and assess for changes in a preventative manner.

INTENSIVE level families are those for whom risk factors have emerged. They will receive clinical coaching that enhances caregiver skill directly. The clinician will provide evidence-informed components to achieve more responsive parenting, greater family cohesion, greater parental resilience, build a functional support network, and improve children's emotional and social competence. Intensive families receive face to face contact every week, and phone contact as frequently as needed.

As families attain mastery of skills, or face new challenges it is likely that there will fluidity in movement between these levels. As such, a clinician caseload should be no more than 1:14.

Cost:

The cost of the Strengthening Resource Families program is based on the Commonwealth of PA approved fee schedule for Family Based In-Home services: \$29.50/15 minutes.