

Engaging Child Welfare Involved Parents in Treatment

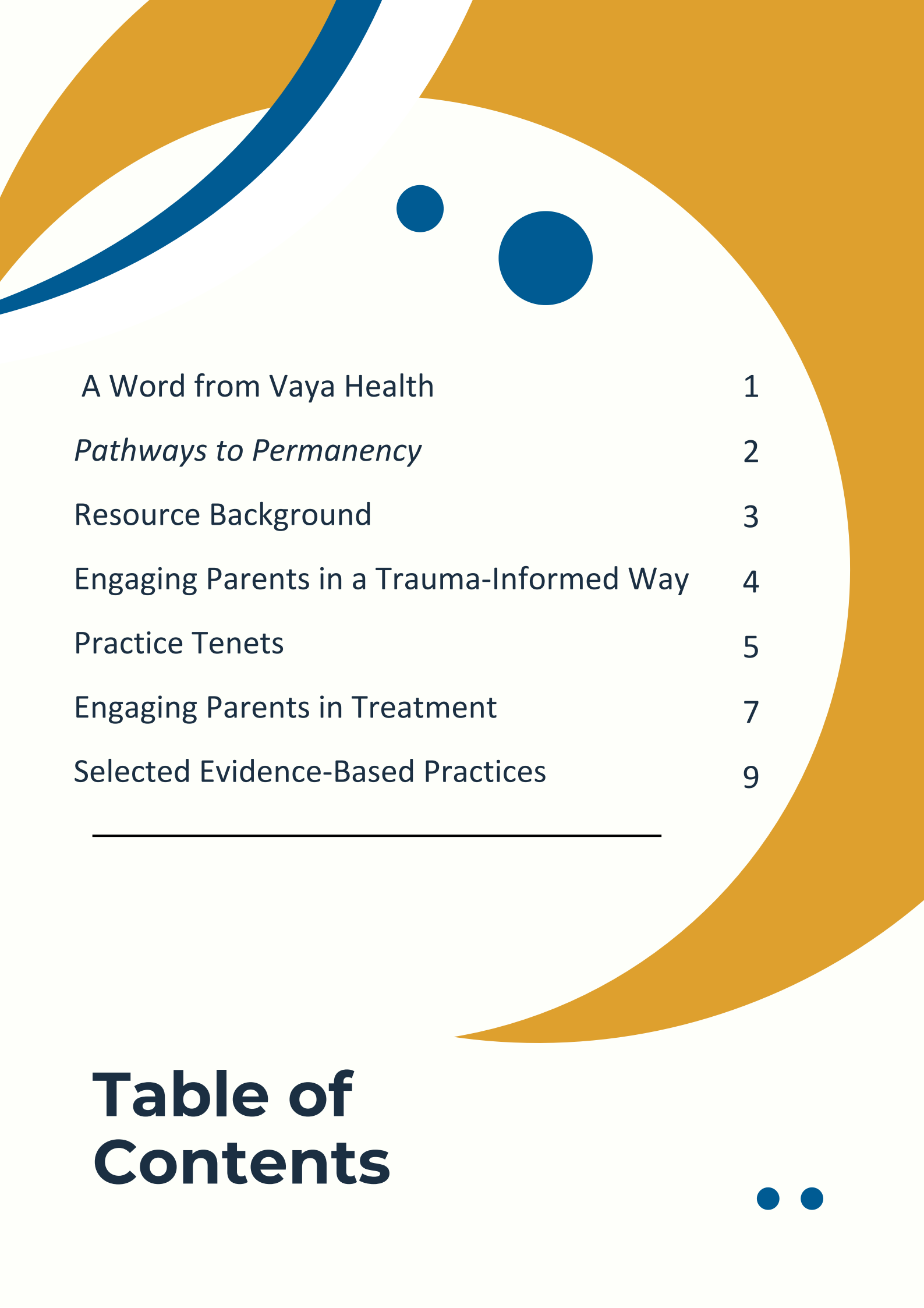
A Best Practice Guide



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A Word from Vaya Health



Thank you for investing your time in perusing this invaluable guide. Here at Vaya Health, we firmly uphold the significance of involving parents within the child welfare system. We recognize that a comprehensive approach is pivotal for us to collectively and effectively collaborate towards fulfilling children's requirements for safety, permanency, and overall well-being. A pivotal element of this endeavor involves actively engaging birth parents in the most suitable therapeutic services to facilitate their healing journey. In order to assist you in this endeavor, we have meticulously crafted this guide, equipping you with supplementary tools and resources to navigate this process successfully.


"Pathways to Permanency" Project

The Pathways to Permanency project aims to coordinate efforts between Vaya, County DSS (Department of Social Services) offices, and mental health providers to ensure youth in foster care have access to high quality behavioral health services. To this end, multi-sector focus groups conducted at the onset of this project highlighted needs related to shared understanding, accessible quality behavioral health assessments and interventions, and safe and supportive homes. Workgroups of cross-system stakeholders were then developed to generate, plan, and implement solutions for each of the identified needs.

Resource Background



The "Engaging Child Welfare Involved Parents in Treatment" guide was conceived through the collaborative efforts of the Pathways to Permanency project's "Accessible Quality Continuum of Behavioral Health Services" workgroup. This group engaged with birth parents who had prior involvement with the child welfare system, and a key insight emerged: effective engagement with providers was pivotal for successful treatment and eventual reunification with their children. To address this, the workgroup diligently researched and compiled a guide based on evidence-based practices that had demonstrated high levels of parent engagement and satisfaction. This guide serves as a resource for providers, offering strategies and approaches to genuinely connect with birth parents. By incorporating these proven practices, providers can significantly enhance the experiences of birth parents within the child welfare system, fostering successful treatment outcomes and ultimately reuniting families.



Engaging Parents in a Trauma-Informed Way

Engaging child welfare-involved birth parents in a trauma-informed way holds significant importance due to its multifaceted benefits. Firstly, it acknowledges and respects the individual journeys and traumas these parents have undergone, fostering an environment of empathy and understanding. This, in turn, establishes a foundation of trust, essential for meaningful interactions that can lead to positive outcomes.

Secondly, a trauma-informed approach prevents the inadvertent re-traumatization of birth parents, recognizing that certain interactions or processes can trigger past traumas. By being sensitive to these triggers, professionals create a safer space that encourages open communication and engagement.

Furthermore, such engagement empowers birth parents by validating their emotions and experiences. Feeling heard and understood enhances their self-esteem and confidence, driving a greater willingness to actively participate in their own growth and healing. The far-reaching impact of trauma-informed engagement extends to the well-being of children involved. When birth parents are supported and provided with tools to address their own challenges, they are better equipped to create stable and nurturing environments, directly benefiting the children under their care.

Beyond individual cases, adopting trauma-informed practices contributes to a more compassionate child welfare system at large. This approach shifts the focus from punitive measures to recognizing the complexities of each person's circumstances, thereby humanizing the system and treating birth parents with dignity and respect.

Practice Tenets

Therapeutic providers should recognize several important factors when engaging child welfare-involved adults in treatment:

Trauma-Informed Approach

Many child welfare-involved adults have experienced trauma, which can affect their engagement and responses to treatment. Providers should approach them with sensitivity, understanding the potential triggers, and creating a safe and supportive environment.

Non-Judgmental Attitude

Providers must adopt a non-judgmental stance to establish trust. Child welfare involvement can be complex, and parents might be dealing with challenging circumstances. An empathetic and understanding attitude is crucial for building rapport.

Collaborative Partnership

Viewing parents as active partners in treatment enhances engagement. Involving them in decision-making, setting goals, and planning interventions fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to the process.

Cultural Competence

Recognizing and respecting diverse cultural backgrounds is vital. Providers should tailor their approaches to align with the parents' cultural values and beliefs, ensuring interventions are relevant and effective.

Strengths-Based Approach

Identifying and building on parents' strengths can boost engagement and confidence. Acknowledging their capabilities empowers them to actively participate and make positive changes.

Feedback and Progress

Regularly discussing progress, celebrating achievements, and adjusting goals as needed keep parents engaged and motivated throughout the treatment journey.

Communication

Clear and open communication is essential. Providers should explain treatment goals, processes, and any legal requirements in straightforward language, ensuring parents understand and can ask questions.

Flexibility and Accessibility

Child welfare-involved parents often face logistical challenges. Offering flexible scheduling, remote options, or support for transportation and childcare can facilitate their participation.

Goal Clarity

Clearly defining the benefits of treatment for both parents and their children can enhance motivation and engagement. Showing how the therapy can positively impact their family's well-being can be a powerful motivator.

Respect for Autonomy

While collaboration is crucial, parents' autonomy and decisions should be respected. Providers should offer guidance without imposing solutions, allowing parents to make informed choices.

Continuity of Care

Ensuring consistent and stable care contributes to engagement. Minimizing changes in providers or treatment plans can help build a reliable and dependable therapeutic relationship.

Addressing Stigma

Child welfare involvement can carry a social stigma. Providers should address any feelings of shame or guilt parents may have and help them develop coping strategies.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Collaborating with child welfare agencies, case workers, and other relevant professionals can provide a comprehensive and coordinated approach that supports parents in various aspects of their lives.



Engaging Parents in Treatment

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) TIP (Treatment Improvement Protocol) 57, titled "Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services," provides guidance on engaging individuals in treatment, including those with a history of trauma. While the primary focus of TIP 57 is trauma-informed care, it recognizes the importance of engagement as a foundational element of effective treatment. Here are some key points from TIP 57 regarding engaging people in treatment:

Establishing Trust and Safety

Creating a safe and supportive environment is crucial for engagement. Staff should prioritize building trust and rapport with individuals by demonstrating empathy, respect, and cultural sensitivity. This helps create a sense of safety and encourages open communication.

Trauma-Informed Approach

Recognizing and addressing the impact of trauma on individuals is essential for engagement. Providers should understand the prevalence and effects of trauma and strive to create trauma-informed treatment environments. This includes understanding trauma triggers, avoiding re-traumatization, and offering choices and control to individuals whenever possible.

Screening and Assessment

Implementing trauma-informed screening and assessment tools can help identify trauma-related symptoms and guide treatment planning. This can contribute to a more personalized and relevant approach, increasing engagement and treatment success.



Person-Centered Care

Engaging individuals in treatment involves actively involving them in decision-making and treatment planning. Providers should take into account the person's preferences, strengths, cultural background, and goals. Collaborative goal-setting and shared decision-making increase engagement and motivation for change.

Strength-Based Approach

Identifying and building upon individuals' strengths and resources is key to engagement. Recognizing their resilience and highlighting their capabilities helps foster a sense of empowerment and self-efficacy.

Motivational Enhancement

Using motivational interviewing techniques and interventions can effectively engage individuals who may be ambivalent or resistant to treatment. Practitioners can help individuals explore and enhance their motivation for change by eliciting their reasons for seeking help, identifying their goals, and addressing any barriers or concerns.

Outreach and Engagement Strategies

TIP 57 emphasizes the importance of outreach efforts to connect with individuals who may be reluctant to seek treatment. This may involve community-based initiatives, collaboration with other service providers, and utilizing peer support services to establish trust and engagement.

Cultural Competence

Acknowledging and respecting individuals' cultural backgrounds and beliefs is essential for effective engagement. Cultural competence promotes trust, engagement, and the development of a therapeutic alliance.

Selected Evidence-Based Practices

Engaging parents involved in child welfare cases in effective treatment is crucial for promoting child well-being and family reunification. This guide aims to provide an overview of various models and strategies that can be utilized to engage parents in treatment.

Motivational Interviewing (MI)

Motivational Interviewing is a collaborative, goal-oriented approach that aims to elicit and strengthen an individual's motivation for change. Key components of MI include empathy, reflective listening, and open-ended questions. When engaging child welfare-involved parents, MI can be used to explore ambivalence, enhance intrinsic motivation, and address resistance to change. Practitioners should emphasize the parent's autonomy and support their decision-making while gently guiding them towards positive behavioral changes.

Adult-Focused Family Behavior Therapy (AF-FBT)

AF-FBT is a comprehensive, evidence-based treatment model that targets both substance abuse and child neglect. It focuses on improving parenting skills, strengthening the parent-child relationship, and addressing substance use disorders. AF-FBT utilizes a combination of cognitive-behavioral therapy techniques, family therapy, and motivational enhancement strategies. This model recognizes the importance of addressing both parental and child needs concurrently to achieve positive outcomes.

Families Facing the Future (FFT)

FFT is a strengths-based, trauma-informed model that emphasizes family engagement, cultural sensitivity, and individualized treatment planning. It recognizes that child welfare-involved parents often face multiple challenges, including trauma, mental health issues, and substance abuse. FFT promotes collaboration between service providers and families, employing a team-based approach to treatment. It incorporates evidence-based practices such as trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy and substance abuse interventions.

Multisystemic Therapy (MST)

MST is a family- and community-based model designed to address serious behavioral problems in adolescents. It recognizes that the behavior of young people is influenced by multiple systems, including family, school, peers, and the community. When engaging child welfare-involved parents, MST focuses on enhancing their parenting skills, improving family functioning, and reducing risk factors associated with child maltreatment. MST therapists work intensively with families in their natural environments, offering comprehensive and flexible services.

Family Actively Improving Relationships (FAIR)

FAIR is a strengths-based model that targets families involved with child welfare due to substance abuse. It aims to enhance family functioning, increase parental motivation for change, and promote healthy relationships. FAIR utilizes a collaborative and non-confrontational approach, drawing upon motivational interviewing techniques and cognitive-behavioral strategies. It involves intensive case management, individual and family therapy, parenting education, and support for sustained recovery.

Matrix Model

The Matrix Model is an evidence-based treatment approach for individuals struggling with substance use disorders, including parents involved in child welfare cases. It integrates various therapeutic components, including relapse prevention, cognitive-behavioral therapy, family education, social support, and drug testing. The Matrix Model provides a structured and comprehensive treatment framework that emphasizes self-help participation, accountability, and skill-building for both the parent and their family.

