



About Family to Family

Family to Family includes principles, strategies, and tools to confront the real problems faced by child welfare systems. These include:

Strengthening the network of families available to care for abused and neglected children in their own communities;

Building partnerships with at-risk neighborhoods toward that end; and

Tracking outcomes for children and families, so that child welfare systems can better learn from their experiences.

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In The First Person-A Foster Youth's Perspective on Family to Family

By Sean Dachtler- Former Foster Youth

I was eight years old the first time I was taken from my mother. My school found bruises on my brother and I that were left by my first stepfather. I never missed my mom and stepfather as much as I did then, even though they caused the harm. When my brother and I were sent back to my parents three months later, the abuse continued, verbally, physically, and emotionally.

From the time I was three, when my birth father left my mother alone with my brother and I, we moved from city to city quite frequently. In fact, I only stayed at a school for a whole year once until I went to high school. I lived everywhere from Mississippi to just about everywhere in California.

Drug abuse was a huge problem in my life. My mom and now second step-dad continuously had problems with this. By the ninth grade I was living in Los Angeles and I had no longer kept in regular touch with my three other brothers who were spread out in different parts of California. I struggled to keep a place to stay. I lived in the living room of a one-bedroom apartment and barely had clothes on my back. With these struggles in front of me, I found a way to face them. To keep food in my stomach and clothes on my back I started committing crimes and selling drugs. As a result I was arrested and sent to jail. When I was 16, my mother's husband had told her, "it's me or your

sons." She made her decision.

I lived with some of my friends for a while after that. In my life at that time I had realized that no one really cared...no one. I was sent to jail again and taken to a placement where I was introduced to the Orangewood's Children Foundation and Orange County Children and Family Services where I learned that people do care and so can I.

I now work for the Orangewood Foundation as a foster youth peer mentor and attend college.

Through The Foundation I was introduced to and began working with Family to Family, including speaking at numerous functions and taking part in Family to Family planning activities.

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Parents Anonymous[®] Support Groups now in Orange County

The FaCT Family Resource Centers in partnership with Children and Family Services of Orange County proudly started the Parents Anonymous[®] Support Groups in April of this year.

The goals of these groups are to decrease the amount of time for reunification and to increase the family stability. Another goal is to help Orange County families who are reunifying as well as those who have completed the reunification process.

What makes these groups so

effective and different is their simplicity and ability to empower parents to recognize and take responsibility for their problems and to develop their own solutions through peer-to-peer support and encouragement. In addition, all parents are encouraged to take on leadership roles. These combined factors have led to many long-term positive changes for many families in groups from other regions.

Currently, there are four Orange County groups

available: Two in Santa Ana (Spanish), one in Garden Grove (English) and another in Anaheim (English).

Participation in all of the groups is free, it is confidential, it meets weekly, and provides a Children's Program. To check out a group, participants simply need to show up; a commitment or referral is not required.

For more information call: Gabriel Camarena, FaCT Parent Programs Coordinator (714) 704-8206
Gabriel.Camarena@ssa.ocgov.com
www.factoc.org

Healthy Tomorrows and Family to Family

By Irene Briggs, Senior Social Services Supervisor

F2F Quickfact:
Approximately 1500
TDM's have been held
since March of 2004.

The adoption of the Family to Family philosophy by Orange County Children and Family Services is a catalyst to further develop existing programs in the community and to look for new opportunities to initiate plans that will result in building relations in the communities. This proposal is based on ideas from existing parenting programs in Healthy Tomorrows, and also lessons learned in working intensely with a variety of school communities in Santa Ana. The work that has been accomplished by Healthy Tomorrows in the last 11 years has made it clear to all involved that for Children and Family Services social workers to be successful in the community, they must

first develop non-threatening relationships with residents and trusted community agencies. These relationships must be seen as educational and helpful, and they must be culturally sensitive, with services delivered where the families reside.

Additionally, they must reflect the true needs of the community we are hoping to serve. The Healthy Tomorrows program is in some ways a laboratory for studying community development. Each of the 10 elementary schools in Healthy Tomorrows represents a separate community, with the school at the center. Each of these communities is different and requires a different approach to achieving similar goals.

What we are striving for is that we can increase the partnership of Social Services Agency and the communities, and that in doing so we can put a "kinder, gentler face on Social Services Agency." That face will be the Senior Social Worker coordinating this effort. Concurrent with increasing our partnership, we want to build trust for the purpose of promoting community-parent leadership and partnership with Social Services Agency for the ultimate purpose of preventing child abuse and preserving community connections for children already in care.

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Family to Family Updates

F2F Coordinator Retired! -

After 34 years and 11 different promotional assignments beginning in 1969 as a typist clerk, F2F Coordinator, Carol Greenwald retired on July 7th. Her tireless vision, guidance, knowledge and support will be deeply missed by all that have had the honor to work with her. We wish her a relaxing and enjoyable retirement.

New Family to Family Coordinator Announced!

Anne Bloxom has been named the new Family to Family Coordinator in Orange County. The start date will be announced soon!

Deputy Director to retire!

After 25 years with Orange County, Adrienne Garrison will be retiring from the County! Her knowledge,

expertise and hard work will be greatly missed. We wish her all the best!

Family to Family Training-

Orange County's Training and Career Development continues to offer Family to Family Training for community-based organizations, foster parents and staff. These trainings will be held at Orange County's Training and Career Development Center, which is located at 1928 S. Grand Avenue, Santa Ana, Room 110. For upcoming dates and to register call (714) 435-7200.

Community Forum

Postponed! -The Next Family to Family Community Forum originally scheduled for Wednesday July 20th has been postponed to

Wednesday October 19th.
 More details coming soon!

Former Deputy Director accepts director position.

Former Deputy Director, Mary Harris has accepted the position of director with San Diego department of Children and Family Services. Mary's vision and dedication will be a tremendous asset to San Diego.

Celebrating Families II-

On Wednesday June 15th the second Celebrating Families event took place. Twelve families were honored by the Agency for their hard work in reuniting their families. If you have families in mind that you would like to recognize for their successful reunification with their children, please forward their contact information to Bea Avcollie at (714) 704-8008

F2F Quickfact:
52% of children for
whom a placement
preservation meeting
was held were either
maintained in their
current placement, or
moved to a less
restrictive placement.

In The First Person (Continued from Page 1)

Family to Family is a great program, but unfortunately it was not available when I was in the system. If it was available to me I believe that it would have been very beneficial in many ways including keeping me in my own environment instead of bouncing around from home to home and school to school. Also, instead being removed from my birth mother the Family to Family program may have helped maintain a healthy relationship between my birth mother and me.

Family to Family has created a program of planning between resources in the community, the social worker and the birth parents. This program set up in a way to provide earlier engagement and to show a helping hand not only from the

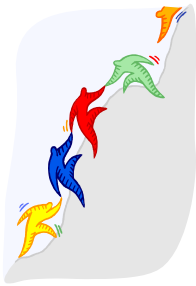
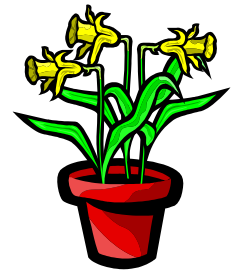
social worker, but from the community as well. Although the household in which youth live in may not be healthy, the community may be of great importance and assistance in their life.

I think that Team Decision Making Meetings are an important part of Family to Family. In the situation that I was in, this would have benefited me greatly by having people that cared about me there for support and to help locate and maintain the best placement possible for me.

My birth mother was not fit to care for me because she needed help and guidance. Family to Family encourages the resource parents to work with the birth

parents and keep them involved! Rehabilitation of the birth parents is vital if any progress is to be achieved in reengagement of the youth with the birth parents. The mentoring and community involvement that is built into this program encourages and supports this. This further assists and creates a map of a healthier future for foster youth.

While I was unable to benefit from this program as a foster youth, I am pleased to be a part of its implementation now as I can see the difference that it can make in the lives of both birth parents and children.



F2F Quickfact
78% of Initial removal TDM's that occur when the prior to the time that the child is removed from the home, result in the child remaining in the home.

Healthy Tomorrows and Family to Family (Continued from Page 2)

Four schools were selected to be part of the initial implementation based on their location and high interest in Family to Family. Information is gathered to identify needs and existing resources through communication with members of the community including school personnel, outreach workers, parent volunteer groups and other members of the community. Each school program is individualized, as each school is different. Efforts to recruit foster families will be coordinated with licensing, and will be presented in conjunction with other work in this program, not solely a foster care recruitment effort. In addition education and trust building with the Social Services Agency is emphasized. Parent and Community leaders are then

identified and supported to mobilize and create support in the community and parenting classes and other supportive services are offered in these communities.

Patricia Huerta-Perales has been leading the way and providing the education, coordination and support for these sites. The goals for the first year of this program include:

Development of a core of 75 volunteers to assume greater responsibility for the program as well as to aid in the ongoing assessment of community needs. Currently there are 45 volunteers.

Parent Education and training was provided to 500 adults. Present graduating classes total 350 parents and children

Development of a tool to

measure the community's view of the Social Services Agency including a pre and post test to see how these views may have changes. Increased trust will likely aid in the recruitment of foster parents from the areas that they are needed the most.

Building relationships and partnerships with the community requires a great deal of coordination, persistence and nurturing. Patricia Huerta-Perales has done a wonderful job in the implementation and expansion of this program. The many accomplishments and goals of this program will lay the foundation that is critical for both the success of Family to Family as well as for the further growth and development of the community support systems..

Contact Us

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Team Decision Making-Progress Update

Orange County has completed approximately 1,500 Team Decision Making Meetings. These meetings continue to be very successful both in the Emergency Placement Meetings as well as Placement Move meetings. The data below illustrates the results of these meetings from October 2004 to December 2004.

Orange County Children and Family Services TDM Imminent Risk of Placement and Emergency Placement (Removal) Meetings October 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004			
Purpose of Meeting:	Number children	Number children return or remain home	% of children return or remain home
Imminent Risk of Placement*	37	28	78%
Emergency Placement**	155	27	17%
Totals for both meetings	192	55	29%

* Imminent Risk of Placement meetings are held when the assessing social worker determines that a child is at risk of removal from his or her parents or guardians due to unresolved safety issues. The child is NOT in protective custody at the time of the meeting.

** Emergency Placement meetings are held within one business day following the emergency removal of a child from his or her parents or guardians due to unresolved safety issues. The child IS in protective custody at the time of the meeting.

Orange County Children and Family Services TDM Placement Move Meetings October 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004		
Decision Made	Number of Children	% of Children
Change to less restrictive placement	16	10%**
Maintain child in present placement	70	42%**
Change to same level placement	57	34%
Change to more restrictive placement	25	15%
Totals	168	

52% of children for whom a placement preservation meeting was held were either maintained in their current placement, or moved to a less restrictive placement.

SOURCE: TDM DATABASE