# Slide 1: Helping Children of Addicted Parents

# Foster Parent Training

# Slide 2: Content

1. Addiction as a family disease
2. Understanding feelings and experiences
3. Information about Recovery
4. Information and Supportive Services

# Slide 3: Addiction: A Family Disease

There is a higher risk of children of addicts becoming addicted due to genetics and the family environment. Permissive attitudes about drugs also create a high risk.

Family conflict arises due to the lack of parenting, poor home management, and lack of communication skills.

Factors associated with alcoholism include disorganization, family isolation, family stress (work problems, illness, marital strain, financial, frequent family moves.)

There tends to be less structure and discipline with an increased risk of child abuse and neglect.

Children of addicts experience higher levels of depression, anxiety, and other psychosocial problems. There is greater physical and mental health problems, ADHD and ODD, lack of empathy for others, decreased social and interpersonal abilities, low self-esteem, lack of control over environment and more school absenteeism.

Children of addicts also can have increased resilience, reliance on support of the non-addicted parent, extended family member, or other adult. They may have increased independence and social skills and better coping skills.

Building self-esteem helps children of addicts with relationship skills, expression of feelings and self-efficacy.

# Slide 4: Statistics

* Three of four (71.6%) child welfare professionals cite substance abuse as the top cause for the dramatic rise in child maltreatment since 1986.
* Three of four child welfare professionals (75.7%) say that children of addicted parents are more likely to enter foster care.
* Children of addicted parents exhibit symptoms of depression and anxiety more than do children from non-addicted families.
* A sample of children hospitalized for psychiatric disorders demonstrated that more than 50% were children of addicted parents. (<http://www.hopenetworks.org/addiction/Children%20of%20addicts.htm>)

# Understanding Feelings and Experiences

# Slide 5: Messages for Children

It’s important that Children of Addicts understand:

* You are not alone.
* Lots of other kids are living in families like yours.
* It’s not your fault. You didn’t cause it and you can’t cure it.
* You deserve help.
* Addiction is a disease.
* It’s OK to share your feelings with safe people.
* It’s important to express your feelings, even anger, and you can learn to do it.
* Most young people with addicted parents do well, and you can too.
* Everyone in the family gets hurt by addiction.
* Addicted parents can and often do get better. Even if they don’t, you can still get help to feel better and to be safe.
* Recovery can take a long time.
* Stopping the use of the drug is only the beginning.
* Parents may not be able to meet your needs or care for you at times, but there are other trustworthy adults who can. It is healthy to ask them for help.

# Slide 6: Skills to Teach Children

It’s important that children of addicts have the following skills:

* Problem solving.
* Be able to identify safe adults and have a safety plan.
* Communication skills that allow them express their feelings.
* Ability to reframe experiences to build strengths and resilience.
* Ability to cope and take care of self.
* Relationship skills that allow for building healthy relationships and connect to supportive adults and peers.
* Ability to deal with a previously absent or incarcerated parent.
* Ability to learn skills through hobbies, groups, or other healthy activities.
* Able to deal with the possibility of relapse.

# Slide 7: Neglected Children

When a mother or father abuses substances, a child’s ability to bond with their children may be weakened. In order for an appropriate attachment to form, parents must be aware of their child’s attempts to communicate. If their perception or response time is dulled by drugs, parents may have difficulty noticing babies’ cues. When parents repeatedly miss their babies’ cues, babies eventually stop providing them. The result is disengaged parents with disengaged babies.

Neglected children who are unable to form secure attachments with their primary caregivers may:

* Become more distrustful of other and may be less willing to learn from adults
* Have difficulty understanding the emotions of others, regulating their own emotions, or forming and maintaining relationships with others.
* Have a limited ability to feel remorse or empathy, which may mean that they could hurt others without feeling their actions were wrong.
* Demonstrate a lack of confidence or social skills that could hinder them from being successful in school, work, and relationships.
* Demonstrate impaired social cognition, which is awareness of oneself in relation to others as well as others’ emotions. Impaired social cognition can lead a person to view many social interactions as stressful.

# Slide 8: Problems Children Face

Children who experience either prenatal or postnatal drug exposure are at risk for a range of emotional, academic, and developmental problems. For example, they are more likely to:

* Experience symptoms of depression and anxiety.
* Suffer from psychiatric disorders
* Exhibit behavior problems
* Score lower on school achievement tests
* Demonstrate other difficulties in school.

These children may behave in ways that are challenging for biological or foster parents to manage, which can lead to inconsistent caregiving and multiple alternative care placements.

# Slide 9: Adolescent Children of Parents with Substance Abuse Disorders

Teens of parents with SUDs:

* They are more likely to develop SUDs themselves.
* They mimic behaviors they see in their families, including ineffective coping behaviors such as using drugs and alcohol.
* More likely to have poor academic performance
* More likely to be involved in criminal activities
* Many of these children also witness or are victims of violence.

It is hypothesized that substance abuse is a coping mechanism for such traumatic events. (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/usermanuals/substanceuse/chapterthree.cfm>)

# Information about Recovery

# Slide 10: Children’s Needs

Children of parents with Substance Abuse Disorders need:

* To be screened for developmental delays, medical conditions, mental health problems, substance abuse problems, and appropriate follow-up needs to be provided.
* Counseling or support groups.
* Consistent, ongoing support and caregivers who keep them safe and help them recover over the long period of time.
* The opportunity to identify and express feelings with a safe and trusted adult.
* Information about substance ab use and the disease of addiction so that they know they are not blame.

# Slide 11: Nurturing Family Settings

Children need nurturing family settings for positive social and emotional development.

* Caregivers are predictable
* Daily routines are respected
* Everyone recognizes clear boundaries for acceptable behaviors.

These circumstances often are missing in the homes of parents with SUDs. As a result, extra supports and interventions are needed to help children draw upon their strengths and maximize their natural potential despite their home environments. Protective factors, such as the involvement of other supportive adults (e.g., extended family members, mentors, clergy, teachers, neighbors), may help mitigate the impact of parental substance use disorders (SUDs).

# Slide 12: How You Can Help

What foster parents can do:

* Learn more about drugs and alcohol and its impact on children
* Help them learn to take care of themselves and that it is OK to think ab out their own safety when faced with dangerous situations.
* Help them to learn to have fun.
* Talk about honesty and its rewards.
* Bring them to structured support groups where they can share their experiences with others.

# Slide 13: Things to Remember

* It may take quite a while to gain the child’s trust.
* Opening up is difficult.
* Create a safe atmosphere for talking freely.
* Children from addicted families have learned to survive by suppressing their emotions. Let them know that it’s OK to have feeling and that they won’t be rejected for having them.

# Slide 14: Talking Points for Foster Parents

* “Addiction is a disease. Your parent is not a bad person. She has a disease. The alcohol or other drugs cause your parent to lose control. When they drink or use drugs, parents can behave in ways that do not keep you safe or cared for.”
* “You are not the reason your parent drinks or uses drugs. You did not cause this disease. You cannot stop your parent’s drinking or drug use.”
* “There are lots of children like you. In fact, there are millions of children whose parents are addicted to drugs or alcohol. Some are in your school. You’re not alone.”
* “Let’s think of people whom you might talk with about your concerns. You don’t have to feel scared or ashamed or embarrassed. You can talk to your teacher, a close friend, or to an adult in your family that you trust.”

# Slides 15-16: Activities

* Letters to Addiction
* Letters to Recovery
* Serenity Worksheet
* My Rules for Safe Communication
* Safe People
* Fill in Your Feelings
* Family Self-Care Map
* Drinking and Drug Problems
* Basic Steps in Problem Solving and Decision Making
* True/False Quiz on Alcohol and Drug Addiction
* Many People Can Help Me
* Comfortable and Uncomfortable Feelings
* Dealing with Anger
* Anger Intensity
* Helpful vs. Hurtful Scramble

# Slide 17: Information and Supportive Services