



National Training and Development Curriculum

FOR FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS



ACCESSING SERVICES & SUPPORTS

MATERIALS AND HANDOUTS

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

- Remind participants that they have **Participant Handouts** available for this in-service theme.

MATERIALS NEEDED

You will need the following if conducting the session in the classroom:

- A screen and projector (test before the session with the computer and cables you will use)
- A flipchart or whiteboard and markers for several of the activities. A flipchart with a sticky backing on each sheet may be useful and will allow you to post completed flipchart sheets on the wall for reference.

You will need the following if conducting the session via a remote platform:

- Access to a strong internet connection
- A back-up plan in the event your internet and/or computer do not work
- A computer that has the ability to connect to a remote platform- Zoom is recommended

HANDOUTS

There are multiple handouts for this theme. However, there are also **Podcast Transcripts** on page 6 should participants wish to use them while listening to the podcast.

VIDEOS AND PODCASTS

Before the day you facilitate this class, decide how you will show/play the media items, review any specific instructions for the theme, and do a test drive.

The following media will be used in this theme:

- Accessing Services & Supports Video with segments included on the following slides: Slide 5, Slide 12, Slide 15
- My Story Podcast with Kim Stevens: Slide 16



THEME AND COMPETENCIES

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Prior to the session, review the theme and competencies. You will not read these aloud to participants. Participants can access all competencies in their **Participant Handouts**.

Theme: Accessing Services and Supports

Normalize the need to ask for services and the importance of being a life-long learner, recognize the need to become an advocate for children to ensure they get the services they need; recognize the importance of developing a support network (school, community supports, friends, medical), understand the types of services available including counseling for trauma and loss; understand the importance of medical/developmental screening and counseling; understand the value of support groups and peer-to-peer programs

Competencies

Knowledge

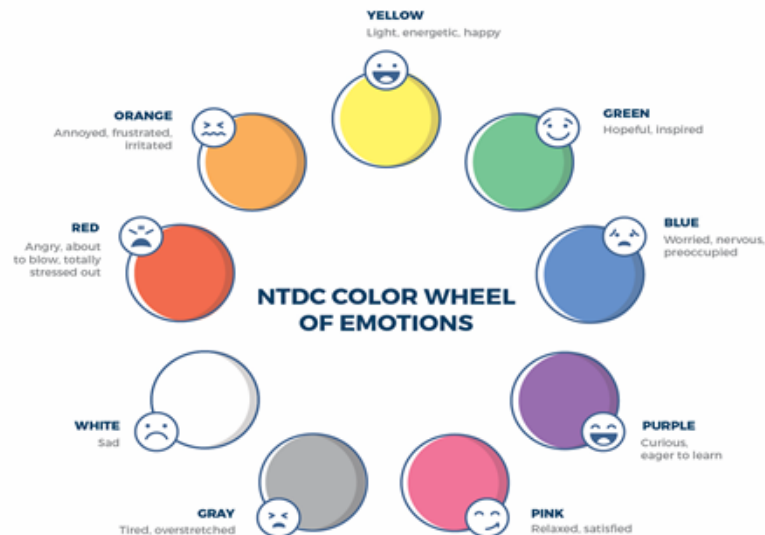
- Know key strategies to become an effective advocate for children.
- Understand the benefits of a support network and strategies to develop this type of network.
- Aware of the various types of services and supports available to children and the parents who are fostering and/or adopting them.

Attitudes

- Believe seeking services and supports for both the child and parent who is fostering and/or adopting is a sign of strength.
- Believe it is helpful for the children and for the parent to have access to a therapeutic network.
- Believe in advocating for the needs of children.
- Willing to seek out resources and assistance for any member of the family, including myself.



WELCOME TO THE NATIONAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM FOR FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS



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FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Have this slide showing onscreen as participants assemble for the first class of the day. As participants come in, welcome them back and ask them to take a few minutes to do a self-check using the Color Wheel. **NOTE:** The Color Wheel should only be done one time per day; before the first theme of the day. If combining several themes together on one day, facilitate the Color Wheel at the beginning of the first class of the day as participants are coming into the room.

COLOR WHEEL ACTIVITY:

PARAPHRASE

We are so glad that you have taken time out of your day to join us for an exciting learning opportunity. As you recall, tuning in to how you're doing on a daily basis may not be something everyone here is used to, but this type of regular self-check is critical for parents who are adopting or fostering children who may have experienced trauma, separation, or loss, as it will be helpful to become and stay aware of your own state of mind. It may seem like a simple exercise but be assured that knowing how we're doing on any given day strengthens our ability to know when and how we need to get support and/or need a different balance. Doing this type of check in will also help us to teach and/or model this skill for children! Please take a moment to look at the color wheel and jot down on paper the color(s) that you are currently feeling.

DO

Wait a little while to give participants time to complete the Color Wheel.

SAY

Now that everybody has had the opportunity to do a quick check in, would someone like to share what color(s) they landed on today for the Color Wheel?

DO

Call on someone who volunteers to share their color(s). If a challenging emotion or feeling is shared, thank the person and acknowledge their courage in sharing, pause for a moment, encourage everyone to take a deep breath, and transition to beginning the theme.



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FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Show this slide briefly just before you start the theme.

SAY

Welcome!

In this course, we will describe how to become an advocate for the children in your home to ensure they receive the services and supports that they need.

Throughout the course, emphasis is placed on being a life-long learner, recognizing the importance of developing a support network (school, community supports, friends, medical), and learning about the types of services and supports that you or the children in your home might find beneficial.

In this next section, we will discuss one of the most critical roles you will take on as a therapeutic kinship parent – acting as an advocate. Serving as an advocate for the children in your care who have experienced separation, trauma, and loss means you will need to speak out in the best interests of the child to help gain access to the services and supports they need to thrive.



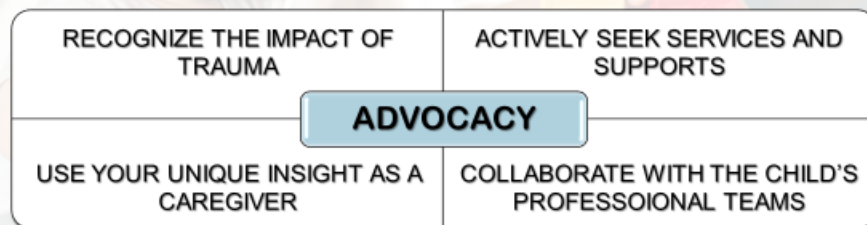
PARAPHRASE

To begin, we will break down what advocacy truly is and explore how you can serve as an effective advocate for the children in your homes.

ADVOCACY IN THERAPEUTIC KINSHIP PARENTING

Being an advocate for a child means that you use your voice and perspective as the child's primary caregiver to promote the wellbeing of the child.

Your role as an advocate is to always act with the child's best interests in mind.



PARAPHRASE

All children in foster care have experienced some level of separation, loss, and grief. Even if the placement is positive and the relationship is strong, these experiences can affect a child's development in many ways. Children's social skills, emotional development, cognitive abilities, and physical development can be negatively impacted.

As a result, it is important for foster/kinship parents to remain engaged and continue to seek out services and supports by serving as an advocate for the children in their care.

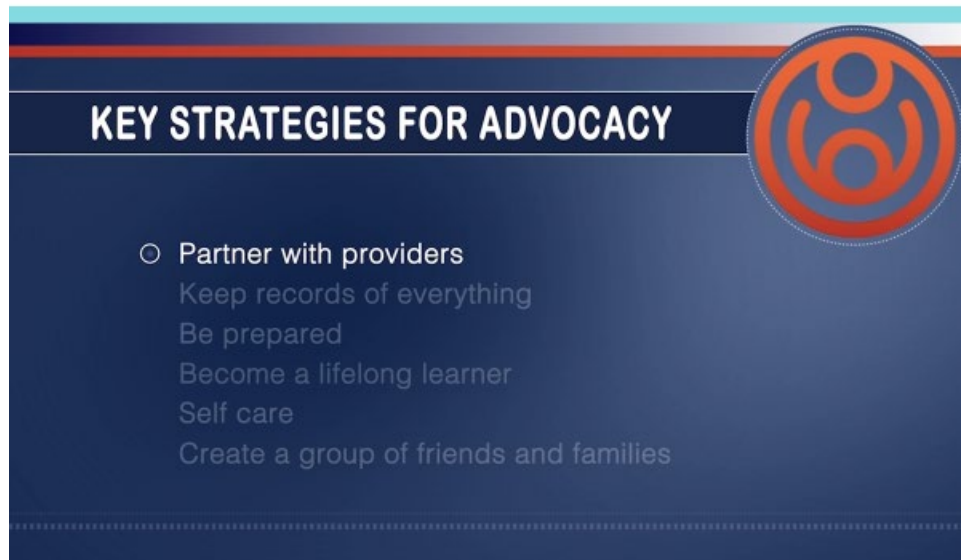
Being an advocate for a child means that you speak out in the best interests of the child.

Advocacy can mean that you push for something, speak in favor of or against certain services, or even plead for something that the child needs. Advocacy can occur in numerous places, including in the child's school, on the child welfare team, and with local service providers. A caregiver who is fostering or adopting has unique knowledge that comes from living with the child and understanding the child's needs and how those needs are changing over time.

Be sure to work in partnership with the child welfare team and case manager before you begin any type of advocacy.



KEY STRATEGIES FOR ADVOCACY



KEY STRATEGIES FOR ADVOCACY

- Partner with providers
 - Keep records of everything
 - Be prepared
 - Become a lifelong learner
 - Self care
 - Create a group of friends and families

PARAPHRASE

It is important to normalize the need to ask for services. Being a foster, adoptive, or kinship parent does not mean that you need to have all of the answers. Parents should think of themselves as life-long learners, ready to seek out help and information to meet the unique and individual challenges of every child placed in their home.

Let's watch a video to gain more insight into these key strategies for advocating for the child in your care.



EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR ADVOCACY

- ✓ Attend meetings and events, and stay informed about the child's progress in school and other areas
- ✓ Keep record of services that the child has been offered and those that have been requested
- ✓ Use child-first language to identify the issue or need in a way that refers to the child first and the issue/need second
- ✓ Assume that everyone has the child's best interests at heart
- ✓ Express the issues of concern clearly and state the outcomes you want
- ✓ Understand and address the issue not only from your viewpoint but also from the opposing point of view
- ✓ Talk less and listen more
- ✓ Bring a backup if needed – someone who can be neutral, take notes, and keep you focused on the goal



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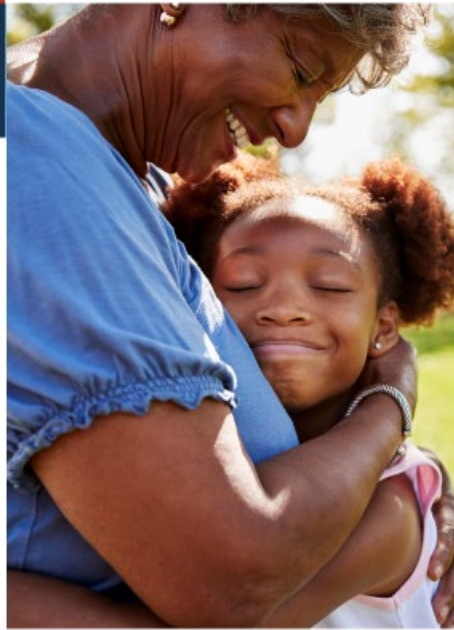
PARAPHRASE

Let's add to the insight shared from the video previously and discuss some additional steps to take when advocating for your child's needs.

Opportunities and strategies for advocacy might include:

- Attend meetings and events, and stay informed about the child's progress in school and other areas.
- Keep a record of services that the child has been offered and those that have been requested.
- Use child-first language to identify the issue or need in a way that refers to the child first and the issue or need second. For example, instead of saying "an autistic child," say "a child with autism." Instead of saying "Jayme is developmentally delayed," say "Jayme has difficulty being focused and completing tasks."
- Assume that everyone has the child's best interests at heart.
- Express the issues of concern clearly, and state the outcomes that you want.
- Understand and address the issue not only from your own viewpoint but also from the opposing point of view. This will help you to anticipate questions and to reduce the potential for a "No" response.
- Do your research; know what is available and what is required.
- Talk less, and listen more. Often, the other party eventually will get to the answer you need if you let that person talk.
- Bring a backup. Having someone with you will help you to stay focused on your goal. Your backup can take notes and offer suggestions. Choose someone who is emotionally neutral, professional and able to act as a notetaker.





CASE STUDY: ADVOCATING FOR JAYDA

- Jayda is an 9-year-old girl who lives with her aunt, Maria
- Jayda has experienced physical abuse and multiple removals from her home before being placed with Maria
- Jayda is having outbursts at school and issues with “defiance”
- Jayda shuts down during therapy sessions
- Maria is worried that Jayda’s needs are not being understood and she is being labeled instead of supported



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PARAPHRASE

As kinship caregivers in a therapeutic foster care setting, you know your child better than anyone else on the team. But sometimes, in meetings or systems—like school, therapy, or child welfare—it can feel like your voice isn’t heard. This activity will help you practice speaking up clearly and confidently for what your kids need.

READ CASE STUDY:

Maria is caring for her 9-year-old niece, Jayda, through a KTFC placement. Jayda has experienced physical abuse and multiple removals before being placed with Maria. She’s been having daily outbursts at school and has recently refused to go. The school has called multiple times about her “defiance.” Jayda has a therapist, but Maria feels the therapy isn’t helping because Jayda shuts down during sessions. She’s worried her needs aren’t being understood—and she’s being labeled instead of supported.



CASE STUDY REFLECTIONS



What key points should Maria bring up with the school, caseworker, and therapist to advocate for Jayda?

KEY POINTS

- "Jayda has been through a lot of trauma, and her behavior is a reflection of that—not just bad choices."
- "She needs trauma-informed support, not just consequences."
- "She shuts down in therapy—I think the approach isn't helping her feel safe enough to open up."
- "I see a different child at home—she's funny, caring, and smart. But she needs help regulating her emotions."
- "We need to work as a team. I can share what works at home and help bridge the gap."
- "Labeling her as 'defiant' is unfair—she's communicating the only way she knows how."

ASK:

If YOU were Maria, and you were preparing to speak in a meeting with the school, the caseworker, and the therapist, what key points would you want to bring up to advocate for Jayda?

Potential Answers:

- "Jayda has been through a lot of trauma, and her behavior is a reflection of that—not just bad choices."
- "She needs trauma-informed support, not just consequences."
- "She shuts down in therapy—I think the approach isn't helping her feel safe enough to open up."
- "I see a different child at home—she's funny, caring, and smart. But she needs help regulating her emotions."
- "We need to work as a team. I can share what works at home and help bridge the gap."
- "Labeling her as 'defiant' is unfair—she's communicating the only way she knows how."

CASE STUDY REFLECTIONS



What support would you ask for to help Jayda?

KEY POINTS

- "More trauma-informed training for school staff so they can respond to Jayda with understanding."
- "A therapist who uses play therapy or other approaches that don't rely on verbal sharing."
- "Help from a behavior specialist who can observe her at school and suggest strategies."
- "Regular communication between me, the school, and the therapist to stay on the same page."
- "A calm-down space or sensory support at school instead of suspension or being sent home."

ASK:

If YOU were Maria, and you were preparing to speak in a meeting with the school, the caseworker, and the therapist, what supports would you ask for to help Jayda?

Potential Answers:

- "More trauma-informed training for school staff so they can respond to Jayda with understanding."
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PARAPHRASE:

In this next section, we'll talk about the importance of the therapeutic network of support.

THE THERAPEUTIC NETWORK OF SUPPORT

Therapeutic kinship parents take on a lot of roles – it's okay to feel overwhelmed!

But you are not alone – being proactive means recognizing the need for support.



The Therapeutic Network of Support:

- Includes professionals, providers, and program leaders working together to meet a child's complex needs.
- Ensures that no single person carries the full responsibility
- The child's case manager usually leads the formation of this network
- Your role as part of the therapeutic network is vital – you offer daily insight into the child's emotional behavior
- Effective advocacy means sharing what you observe so the team can respond effectively



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PARAPHRASE

As we have been discussing all the components within kinship therapeutic foster care, you may be feeling overwhelmed by the many roles and responsibilities that kinship parents juggle. Being proactive – and recognizing that you can't do it all alone – is essential! That's where your therapeutic network of support comes into play.

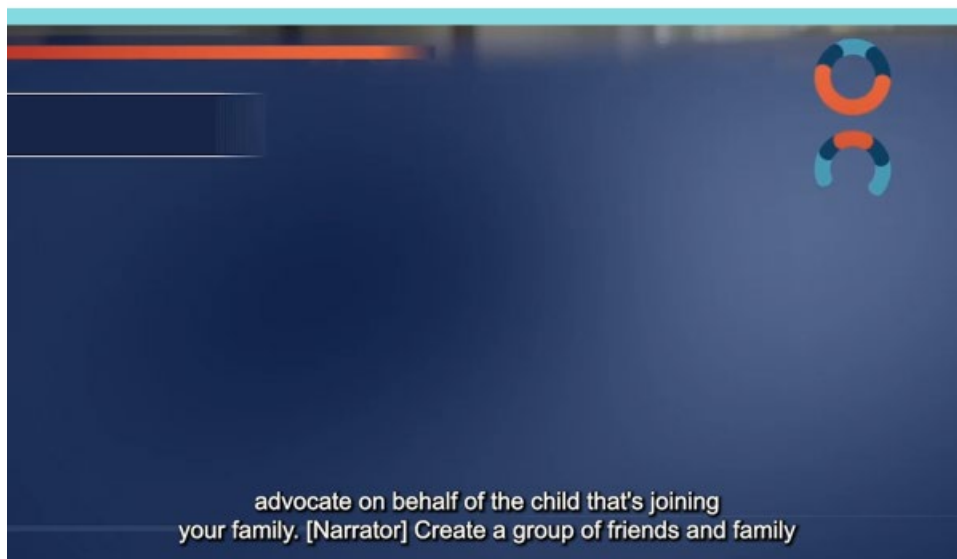
A therapeutic network is made up of professionals, providers, and program leaders who are working together to meet all of a child's needs. In other words, the purpose of a therapeutic network is to make sure that there is a group of professionals surrounding the child and family who understand the child's needs and are actively working together to meet those needs.

If the child is in foster care, the child's case manager will be primarily responsible for developing the therapeutic network. Remember that you are a crucial part of this network as the advocate for the child. The insights you have about the child's behavior and emotional patterns on a daily basis is vital information for the network in determining how best to meet the child's needs.





BUILDING YOUR THERAPEUTIC NETWORK



PARAPHRASE

Let's watch a video and gain some ideas about accessing services and building a network of support. Building a network of support for yourself and the child is essential as you navigate your role as a therapeutic kinship parent.

DO

Play the video clip. Afterward, ask if anyone has any insights they would like to share. Then review the information included in your notes and the participant handouts regarding local resources that may benefit families in training.

PARAPHRASE

Building a therapeutic network is an important element of meeting the needs of the child placed in your home. We want to take the time to briefly discuss some of the resources available to you in WV. Please refer to your handouts and make sure that you remember to ask your workers about the services and supports that may be beneficial to you and your children.



CONSIDER YOUR OWN CIRCLE OF SUPPORT

FORMAL SUPPORT

- 1) Who provides guidance or services?
- 2) Who can help you access resources?
- 3) Who supports the child's mental/physical health?

- Caseworkers or agency staff
- Therapists or counselors
- School staff (teachers, IEP)
- Doctors, specialists, or in-home services
- Respite care or crisis support hotlines
- Emergency dispatch services (911)

INFORMAL SUPPORT

- 1) Who can you call in a crisis?
- 2) Who listens without judgment?
- 3) Who can encourage you emotionally?
- 4) Who can help with errands or childcare?

- Family members
- Friends or neighbors
- Faith/community contacts
- Other kinship or foster parents

PARAPHRASE

Caring for children with therapeutic needs is rewarding — but also challenging. You don't have to do it alone. Let's take a few minutes to think through your **support circle**.

As we heard in the video, there are lots of different ways to build your supportive network. It is important to think about your support systems *before* you need them so you know exactly what to do and who to turn to when things get difficult.

Remember, there are two aspects to support – formal and informal supports – and you should have ideas for both of them! We will take a few minutes to brainstorm who to turn to when you need help.

ASK

When you think about FORMAL SUPPORT, think about the questions listed on the slide:

- Who can provide guidance or services to you?
- Who can help you access resources for yourself and/or the child?
- Who supports the child's mental and/or physical health?

What formal supports come to mind when you ask yourself those questions?

DO

Wait for participants to come up with ideas – ask them to come off mute or enter their thoughts into the chat. If in person, ask for participants to share a few ideas. Then reveal and review the additional answers on the slide.

SAY

Great job everyone. Now let's think about the possibilities for those who would fit into your informal network of support.

- Who can you call in a crisis?
- Who listens without judgment?

- Who can encourage you emotionally?
- Who can help with errands or childcare?

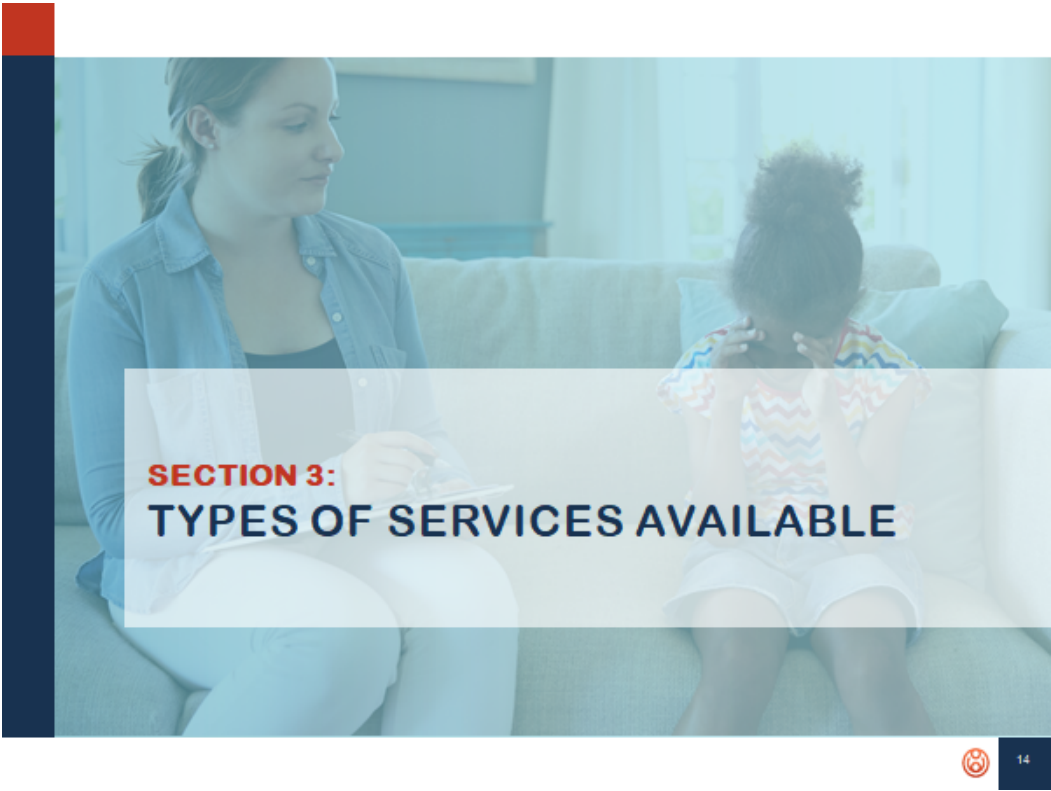
DO

Allow participants to share ideas again – then reveal the remaining examples on the slide before moving on.

SAY

Thank you all for sharing your ideas. Taking the time to consider who to call on during stress points is critical to taking care of yourself and meeting the child's needs. By thinking of these informal and formal supports before you need them, you are being proactive in effectively responding to potential difficulties that may occur throughout your role as a therapeutic kinship caregiver. Remember to check in with your caseworkers for additional resources.



A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a light blue button-down shirt over a dark top, sits on a light-colored couch. She is looking down at a small object in her hands. A young child with dark hair in a bun, wearing a colorful patterned shirt and white shorts, sits next to her, also looking down. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor space. A semi-transparent white box with text is overlaid on the image.

SECTION 3: **TYPES OF SERVICES AVAILABLE**



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PARAPHRASE

In this section, we will listen to additional videos and podcasts to review the varying types of services available for children in your care.





TYPES OF SERVICES AVAILABLE

Events that can be triggers for children:

- Birthdays 
- Anniversaries of placement
- Holidays and ceremonies
- School projects 
- Medical visits
- New pregnancy and birth 
- Divorce
- Contact with birth parents or relatives
- Death of family member or pet
- Child and/or family members move

into be aware of these triggers and to plan for them well in advance. In general there are many



PARAPHRASE

As we heard from our experts, a therapeutic network - all of the people who can help you care for the child you are fostering - is extremely important.

Let's listen to some discussion about the types of services available, and how to continue building your therapeutic network.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

Remind participants that the key points to the videos for this theme are included in their manuals on pages 2-5.



MY STORY PODCAST

ACCESSING SERVICES & SUPPORTS

(Podcast Transcripts on Page 6)



Guest: Kim Stevens

Host: April Dinwoodie



PARAPHRASE

My Story Podcast are short podcasts that feature individuals talking about the theme based on their life experience.

In this podcast, you will hear from **Kim Stevens**. Transcripts for this podcast are included in your handout packet on page 6.

Kim Stevens, a parent of four children adopted from foster care, has worked in the adoption field for many years. She has worked with the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC) since 2006. Her work at NACAC includes training and supporting foster/adoptive parents/young people who have been in foster care or who were adopted, and advocating for improved training and support for foster and adoptive families. Kim provides training and technical assistance, reviews and disseminates best practice models, provides consultation, and serves on many national task forces. Her professional experience includes 8 years with Massachusetts Families for Kids where she established the Speak Out Team, a nationally recognized model for foster/adopted youth advocacy, training and awareness raising. She also launched the Lifelong Families for Adolescents initiative with the Massachusetts Department of Social Services and assisted in successful advocacy for post-adoption services in Massachusetts. Kim has provided training and consultation on child welfare, foster care, adoption, parenting, positive youth development, advocacy and leadership, trauma and recovery, and youth permanency issues both nationally and internationally.

DO

Refer participants to podcast transcripts so they can follow along as well. These are located on page 6 in the participant handout packet for this training.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

This podcast is 15:45 minutes. Feel free to pause the podcast and discuss with families to keep this part of the training engaging, and if you are running short on time, highlight key points after listening to important sections of the podcast before moving on.





SECTION 4: **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**



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PARAPHRASE

Before we wrap up, let's review some additional key points on accessing services and supports, including some frequently asked questions.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is It important for caregivers who are fostering, adopting, or providing kinship care to connect with services and supports in their community?



- The needs of children who have experienced separation, trauma, or loss are different from the needs of other children without those experiences.
- Children's adverse experiences often leave long-lasting effects on all areas of how a child functions.
- You may need additional trauma-informed parenting techniques to add to your parenting toolbox to better meet the needs of the children in your care.



PARAPHRASE

The needs of children who have experienced trauma, separation or loss due to abuse or neglect differ from the needs of children who have not had those experiences. These experiences often have long-lasting effects on all areas of how a child functions, including physical, mental, behavioral, and social.

The parenting skills that you have developed (or learned from your parents) might not always be effective with children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss. You may need to find support and assistance from professionals and other families who have fostered or adopted children. It is important for you to identify the services and supports available in your community.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

Remind participants that they have a summary of these FAQ's along with additional questions/answers in their Manuals to refer back to on page 12-18.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can a caregiver be
proactive in meeting a child's
needs?



- Getting to know the services in your area and how to access them before a need arises is a positive, proactive approach.

- 1) Staying connected with your caseworkers and other professionals can keep you connected and aware of up-to-date information.
- 2) Partnering with your caseworker to understand the child's history can help you identify needs that may arise in the future.



PARAPHRASE

Getting to know the service system and how to access services before a need arises is a positive, proactive approach.

Proactive steps include:

- 1) Staying connected with your caseworker or the local child welfare agency so that you have up-to-date information about new services and training opportunities available to you.
- 2) Working with your caseworker to understand the child's history and life story, which can help you to identify needs that may arise in the future.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

Remind participants that they have a summary of these FAQ's along with additional questions/answers in their Manuals to refer back to on page 12-18.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are some strategies that caregivers who are fostering, adopting or providing kinship care can use to find local services?



- Connect with other kinship/foster parents!
- Consult your child's caseworkers and other professionals.
- Contact your local Department of Human Services (DoHS).

WV RESOURCES

- Mission WV
 - Kinship Navigator
- Birth to Three
- CSED
- Women, Infants, & Children (WIC)
- WV Foster, Adoptive, & Kinship Parents Network (Facebook)

PARAPHRASE

One of the most effective ways to find local services and supports is to ask other parents who have experience fostering, adopting or providing kinship care. They can tell you which professionals or services they have used that truly understand the unique needs of children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss.

If you are fostering a child, the child's case manager should be able to connect you with services and supports. Likewise, if you have adopted a child, you can contact the local child welfare agency for help finding local services and supports. These will vary greatly from one community to the next, but almost all communities will offer training opportunities at various times during the year.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

Remind participants that they have a summary of these FAQ's along with additional questions/answers in their Manuals to refer back to on page 12-18.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is it important for caregivers who are fostering, adopting, or providing kinship care to find providers and programs that are trauma-informed?



- Trauma-informed services recognize that separation, loss, and trauma has long-lasting effects on an individual's life.
- Providers without special training in trauma or adoption don't fully understand the complex issues that can arise.
- When behaviors are misdiagnosed, the treatment provided doesn't actually address the child's core issues.

PARAPHRASE

The term trauma-informed refers to care and services that recognize that experiencing trauma, separation, or loss has long-lasting effects on an individual's life.

Because providers without special training in trauma or adoption don't fully understand the complex issues that can arise, they may end up treating a child as if the child had a mental-health diagnosis versus treating the separation and loss that may be at the core of the child's issues. When behaviors are misdiagnosed, the treatment provided doesn't actually address the child's core issues.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

Remind participants that they have a summary of these FAQ's along with additional questions/answers in their Manuals to refer back to on page 12-18.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a therapeutic network, and how do you develop this type of network?



- The purpose of a therapeutic network is to make sure that there is a group of professionals surrounding the child and family who are actively working together to meet the child's needs.
- If the child is in foster care, the child's case manager will be primarily responsible for developing the therapeutic network.
- ***Remember that you are crucial to this network as the advocate for the child!***

PARAPHRASE

A therapeutic network is made up of professionals, providers, and program leaders who are working together to meet all of a child's needs. In other words, the purpose of a therapeutic network is to make sure that there is a group of professionals surrounding the child and family who understand the child's needs and are actively working together to meet those needs.

If the child is in foster care, the child's case manager will be primarily responsible for developing the therapeutic network. Remember that you are crucial to this network as the advocate for the child. The insights you have about the child's behavior and emotional patterns on a daily basis is vital information for the network in determining how best to meet the child's needs.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

Remind participants that they have a summary of these FAQ's along with additional questions/answers in their Manuals to refer back to on page 12-18.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When should foster/kinship caregivers begin to look for supports and services?



- The best time to locate services is **BEFORE** you need them.
- Be proactive when possible!
- Be prepared to address issues that a child is currently facing but also those that may come up as the child ages and develops.
- The more supports that can be put in place early on, the better prepared you will be to handle the future!

PARAPHRASE

The best time to locate the services and supports available in your community is **before** you need them. Finding providers who are available and have expertise in the areas needed may take time. Families need to be proactive not only in identifying these services but also in contacting the service providers before a specific service is needed.

Seeking services is a normal part of preparing to foster or to adopt because a family needs to be prepared to address issues that a child is currently facing as well as the challenges that might arise as the child ages and develops. The more supports and services that can be put in place early on, the better prepared a family will be to handle whatever situations arise.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

Remind participants that they have a summary of these FAQ's along with additional questions/answers in their Manuals to refer back to on page 12-18.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can caregivers who are fostering, adopting, or providing kinship care be effective advocates?



- Being an advocate for a child means that you speak out in the best interests of the child.
- Advocacy can occur in numerous places, including in the child's school, on the child welfare team, and with local service providers.
- A caregiver who is fostering or adopting has unique knowledge that comes from living with the child and understanding the child's needs and how those needs are changing over time.
- Be sure to work in partnership with the child welfare team and case manager before you begin any type of advocacy.



PARAPHRASE

Being an advocate for a child means that you speak out in the best interests of the child.

Advocacy can mean that you push for something, speak in favor of or against certain services, or even plead for something that the child needs. Advocacy can occur in numerous places, including in the child's school, on the child welfare team, and with local service providers. A caregiver who is fostering or adopting has unique knowledge that comes from living with the child and understanding the child's needs and how those needs are changing over time.

Be sure to work in partnership with the child welfare team and case manager before you begin any type of advocacy.

Opportunities and strategies for advocacy might include all of the areas we discussed earlier:

- Attend meetings and events, and stay informed about the child's progress in school and other areas.
- Keep a record of services that the child has been offered and those that have been requested.
- Use child-first language to identify the issue or need in a way that refers to the child first and the issue or need second. For example, instead of saying "an autistic child," say "a child with autism." Instead of saying "Jayme is developmentally delayed," say "Jayme has difficulty being focused and completing tasks."
- Assume that everyone has the child's best interests at heart.
- Express the issues of concern clearly, and state the outcomes that you want.
- Understand and address the issue not only from your own viewpoint but also from the opposing point of view. This will help you to anticipate questions and to reduce the potential for a "No" response.
- Do your research; know what is available and what is required.
- Talk less, and listen more. Often, the other party eventually will get to the answer you need if you let that person talk.
- Bring a backup. Having someone with you will help you to stay focused on your goal. Your backup can take notes and offer suggestions. Choose someone who is emotionally neutral, professional and able to act as a notetaker.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can a kinship caregiver become an active partner with the child welfare team to ensure that the child's needs are being met?



- Keep open communication with the child's team
- Work with the professional team to fill gaps in the child's history
- Offer your day-to-day insight about the child's behaviors and needs
- Effective documentation:
 - Challenging behaviors
 - Strategies that do and do not work
 - Record milestones and successes
 - Attend meetings and share with the child's professional team

PARAPHRASE

Open communication with the child welfare team is essential to making sure that the child's needs are met. The team can help complete the child's history along with your knowledge, but you have the day-to-day information about the child. Together these produce a full picture of the child's needs.

Keep track (preferably in a logbook or notebook) of all the issues and strategies you have used successfully to address the child's needs. Document milestones and important events as well to keep a record of the child's successes, interests and talents. Keep the case manager informed of the child's progress, and alert the case manager about any issues that arise. Attend meetings held by the child welfare team; bring along documentation related to the child's school, medical care, dental care and mental health providers.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

Remind participants that they have a summary of these FAQ's along with additional questions/answers in their Manuals to refer back to on page 12-18.

REMEMBER TO ACCEPT HELP AND TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

GET HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT

Asking for and accepting help is not selfish or a sign of weakness - it is selfless and a sign of strength!

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

You must recognize that you must take care of yourself before you can care for the children in your home who have histories of separation, loss, and trauma.



73

PARAPHRASE

Remember: All parents need help. Children and youth in foster/kinship care often have additional challenges that require extensive support. It is important to advocate on behalf of the child placed in your home and ask for the support you need.

Asking for help is not selfish, it is selfless - you are recognizing that other people have strengths and abilities that may benefit the child in your care.

Likewise, when you are at the end of your rope, you will not be able to effectively advocate for the child or youth in your care.

Give yourself opportunities for self-care, including sleep, exercise, healthy food, and time to focus on your primary family relationships.

FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

Remind participants of a resource in the back of their Manuals in this section on page 19. This resource is called Raising Your Kin, and it provides additional tips for advocacy and accessing services relevant to kinship caregivers.





National Training and Development Curriculum

FOR FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS



SENSORY INTEGRATION

MATERIALS AND HANDOUTS

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

- Remind participants that they have **Participant Handouts** available for this in-service theme.

MATERIALS NEEDED

You will need the following if conducting the session in the classroom:

- A screen and projector (test before the session with the computer and cables you will use)
- A flipchart or whiteboard and markers for several of the activities. A flipchart with a sticky backing on each sheet may be useful and will allow you to post completed flipchart sheets on the wall for reference.

You will need the following if conducting the session via a remote platform:

- Access to a strong internet connection
- A back-up plan in the event your internet and/or computer do not work
- A computer that has the ability to connect to a remote platform- Zoom is recommended

HANDOUTS

There are multiple handouts for this theme.

VIDEOS AND PODCASTS

Before the day you facilitate this class, decide how you will show/play the media items, review any specific instructions for the theme, and do a test drive.

The following media will be used in this theme:

- Sensory Integration Video - segments included in the PPT slides.



THEME AND COMPETENCIES

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Prior to the session, review the theme and competencies. You will not read these aloud to participants. Participants can access all competencies in their **Participant Handouts**.

Theme: Sensory Integration

Understand sensory integration, aware of how to be a sensory detective to identify children's needs; develop strategies to meet children's sensory integration needs; aware of techniques to help children with sensory integration needs.

Competencies

Knowledge

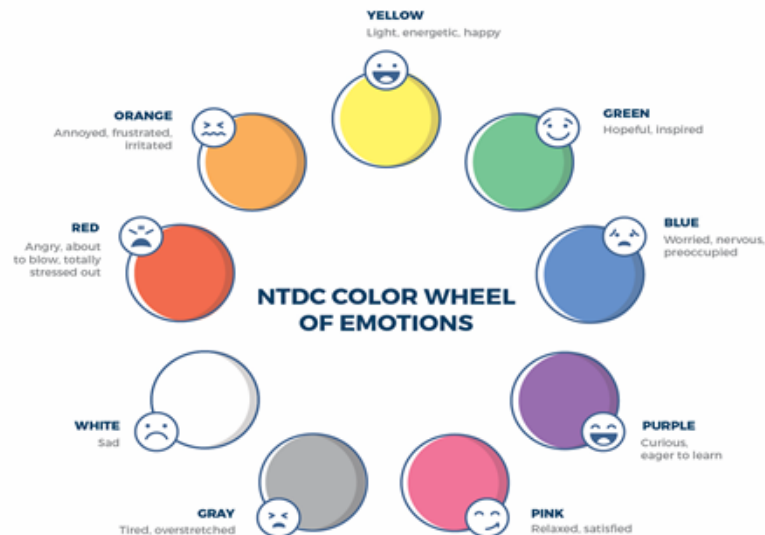
- Able to identify and explain strategies to respond to children who have sensory seeking and sensory avoidance behaviors.
- Define sensory integration processing disorder and provide examples of sensory seeking and sensory avoidant symptoms that children can experience.
- Understand how sensory integration needs can affect children at home, in school and in the community.

Attitudes

- Committed to the role of sensory detective to determine children's needs and patterns.
- Open to learning proactive and new parenting techniques that ensure children's sensory needs are being met.



WELCOME TO THE NATIONAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM FOR FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS



1

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Have this slide showing onscreen as participants assemble for the first class of the day. As participants come in, welcome them back and ask them to take a few minutes to do a self-check using the Color Wheel. **NOTE:** The Color Wheel should only be done one time per day; before the first theme of the day. If combining several themes together on one day, facilitate the Color Wheel at the beginning of the first class of the day as participants are coming into the room.

COLOR WHEEL ACTIVITY:

PARAPHRASE

We are so glad that you have taken time out of your day to join us for an exciting learning opportunity. As you recall, tuning in to how you're doing on a daily basis may not be something everyone here is used to, but this type of regular self-check is critical for parents who are adopting or fostering children who may have experienced trauma, separation, or loss, as it will be helpful to become and stay aware of your own state of mind. It may seem like a simple exercise but be assured that knowing how we're doing on any given day strengthens our ability to know when and how we need to get support and/or need a different balance. Doing this type of check in will also help us to teach and/or model this skill for children! Please take a moment to look at the color wheel and jot down on paper the color(s) that you are currently feeling.

DO

Wait a little while to give participants time to complete the Color Wheel.

SAY

Now that everybody has had the opportunity to do a quick check in, would someone like to share what color(s) they landed on today for the Color Wheel?

DO

Call on someone who volunteers to share their color(s). If a challenging emotion or feeling is shared, thank the person and acknowledge their courage in sharing, pause for a moment, encourage everyone to take a deep breath, and transition to beginning the theme.



4



SENSORY INTEGRATION

2

FACILITATOR'S NOTE

Show this slide briefly just before you start the theme.

SAY

Welcome!

This course will help you identify behaviors related to sensory integration difficulties and give you strategies to aid a child with sensory integration challenges in the home, school, and community.

Learning objectives for this course will help you:

Recognize examples of sensory seeking and sensory avoidant symptoms that children can experience. Learn proactive and new parenting techniques that ensure children's sensory needs are being met.

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, sits on a light-colored couch. A young child with dark hair in a bun, wearing a colorful patterned shirt, sits next to her, facing away from the camera. The scene is indoors with soft lighting. A semi-transparent white text box is overlaid on the image.

SECTION 1: **DEFINING SENSORY INTEGRATION & SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER**



3

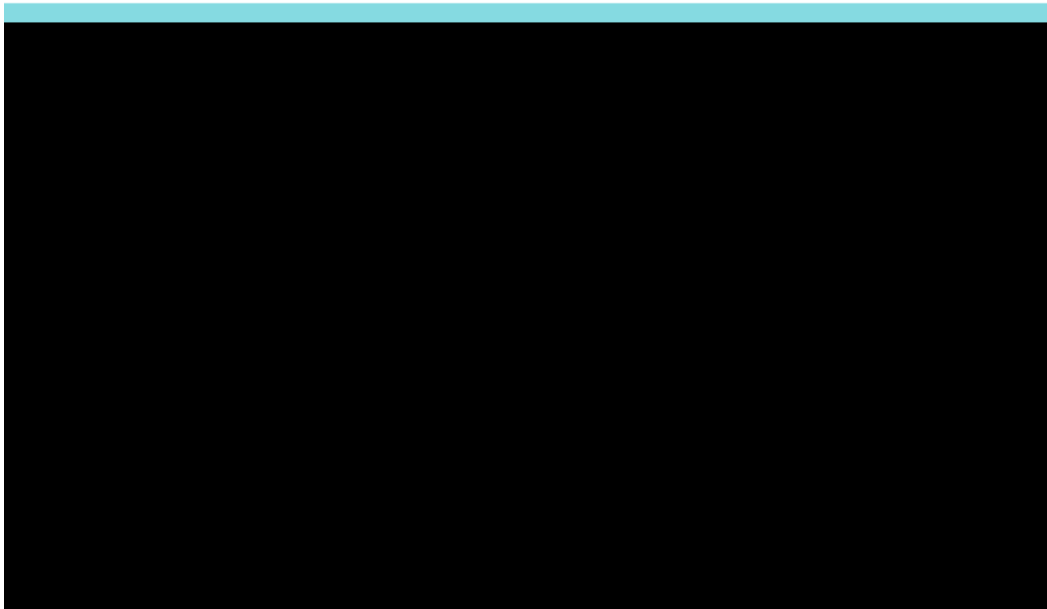
PARAPHRASE

We will start off with a video clip that features parents and experts sharing how early childhood trauma may impact a child's ability to process, organize, and act upon sensory stimuli.





INTRODUCTION TO SENSORY INTEGRATION



DO

Play the video and take time to reflect on key points with families afterward before moving on.

Consider reflecting with families about their own abilities to take in a lot or a little bit of sensory input and then consider what this looks like for the children in their home – do they have all big cups or little cups or a mix? Which cups (i.e., types of sensory inputs) are bigger or smaller?

Cups is the example used in the video which refers to the threshold an individual may have when it comes to sensory input.

PARAPHRASE

This video gives us a lot of information and a great introduction to sensory processing issues you may see in your homes.



SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER (SPD)

Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD): A condition in which the brain has trouble receiving and responding to information that comes into the body through the senses. A person with SPD cannot process all the information entering through the 7 senses.

What are the implications of SPD?

- Our sensory processing abilities allow us to understand our environments and determine if we will act appropriately and successfully in a given situation.
- SPD impacts a child's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

Trauma impacts children's sensory processing abilities.

- An estimated **2 out of 10 children** who have had healthy developmental experiences will have sensory processing challenges.
- Estimates are that **18 out of 20 children** who have experienced trauma, separation, or loss will have sensory processing challenges.



PARAPHRASE

SPD is a condition in which the brain has trouble receiving and responding to information that comes into the body through the senses. Our brains constantly are filtering and reacting to all of the stimuli or inputs from our senses. The brain of a person with sensory processing disorder cannot process all the information entering through the seven senses at the same time to develop a clear picture of what's happening internally and externally.

Our sensory processing abilities allow us to make sense of the environment and will affect whether we will be successful or act appropriately in a given situation. Therefore, sensory challenges will have an impact on every area of a person's life, including a child's social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.

It is estimated that 2 out of every 20 children who have had healthy developmental experiences will have sensory processing challenges.

In contrast, current estimates are that **18 out of every 20 children** who have experienced trauma, separation or loss will have sensory processing challenges.

Children who have had early experiences of trauma or neglect, including children who have lived in orphanages or in group care settings, have often been deprived of basic sensory or relational experiences.

Let's consider how early experiences of trauma, neglect or both may be affecting a child's current sensory needs.

BABIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

- Early relationships and experiences shape how we learn to interact with people and the world
- Infants are entirely dependent on adults for nourishment, safety, and stable environments
- Young children continue to rely on adults to meet most physical and emotional needs
- Consistent nourishment (sleep, food, water, movement, and meaningful interaction) is essential for healthy development
- Lack of consistent nourishment impacts arousal, self-regulation, and cognitive development



PARAPHRASE

Much of how we learn to interact with people and the world around us is learned through our earliest relationships and experiences.

Babies are completely dependent on adults to meet all of their nourishment needs and to provide a safe, stable environment that is ideal for growth and development. Young children as well depend on adults to provide almost everything that they need for a safe, stable environment.

When the brain and the rest of the body are not given the nourishment that they require consistently (restful sleep, adequate food and water, purposeful movement and meaningful interaction), everything is impacted including arousal status, the ability to self-regulate, and cognitive development.

BODY MEMORIES

- Children's earliest memories are stored in the body (sensations and feelings)
- Everyday experiences (touch, tone of voice, sounds) send messages to the brain about safety
- The brain connects current experiences to past ones and decides if the situation is safe or unsafe
- When something feels unsafe, a child may respond with fight, flight, or freeze behaviors
- Verbal memory develops later, so children may react without being able to explain why



7

PARAPHRASE

Our earliest memories are body memories, not verbal memories.

What our body experiences sends a message to the brain, which then links that experience with a positive or negative experience from our past. The brain categorizes the new experience as either safe or unsafe.

If the event (such as a touch or a sound) is classified as unsafe, this might trigger a trauma response known as the fight, flight or freeze response. Verbal memories come later in development and enable the brain to define the “who, what, where and when” of an event.

Memories of past trauma can trigger exaggerated responses to sensory inputs in the present.



SENSORY CUES LINKED TO RELATIONSHIPS

- When early relationships are inconsistent or unsafe, children may misread relationship cues later
 - Sensory experiences linked to past harm (tone of voice, touch, closeness) can feel unsafe even when another adult's intent is caring
 - A child may react negatively to calm voices or gentle touch because their body associates these cues with past trauma
- Humans are wired for connection, but early harmful or neglectful relationships can disrupt a child's trust in adults
- Children who do not trust adults to meet their needs may try to meet those needs on their own



PARAPHRASE

If a child's early relationships are inconsistent or unsafe, the child later might misinterpret the sensory cues linked to relationships.

For example, if a perpetrator of sexual abuse always spoke in a kind, calm manner and stroked the child's arm in a gentle way before the abuse occurred, the child now might react negatively when the parent who is fostering or adopting speaks in a calm manner or strokes the child's arm while asking about the child's day at school.

Human beings are designed to be in relationships with one another. If a young child's early interactions with adults were harmful, scary or neglectful, then that child likely will not grow up trusting an adult to meet the child's needs.

In these situations, the child will try to begin to meet their own needs in an attempt to emotionally and physically self-regulate, but in ways that are faulty or inappropriate.

EARLY ADVERSE EXPERIENCES IMPACT BRAIN DEVELOPMENT



- Early childhood trauma affects brain growth and overall development
- The emotional (survival) parts of the brain may become overactive, while the thinking parts may be underdeveloped
- When a child's brain is focused on survival, learning and reasoning are harder
- These brain changes can affect sensory processing throughout a child's life



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PARAPHRASE

Early childhood trauma impacts brain growth and development.

The emotional parts of the brain often become exaggerated and grow physically larger due to the early experiences of a child subjected to trauma, separation, and loss. The thinking parts of the brain are often underdeveloped when the brain and body resources have to be dedicated to survival.

This can impact sensory processing throughout a child's life.



SIGNS OF SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER (SPD)

- **Sensory Seeking:** A child may seem to require “more than usual” amounts of certain inputs or actions.
- **Sensory Defensive (Avoidant):** A child may seem “overwhelmed” by certain situations and sensations; so, they try to avoid these in any way that they can.
- **Sensory Discrimination (Under-responsive):** A child may struggle with determining differences in sizes, shapes, and textures or may have difficulty determining the sources of sounds and the position and movement of their bodies.



PARAPHRASE

Let's consider some signs of sensory processing disorder. Children with sensory processing disorder may engage in seeking, discriminating or defensive behaviors or a combination of all three of these.

Sensory Seeking: A child may seem to require “more than usual” amounts Sensory seekers may:

- Stand too close when talking to others and not have a good sense of personal space.
- Have an unusual tolerance for pain.
- Walk with loud, heavy steps.
- Enjoy jumping, hopping, and bumping and crashing into things and people—sometimes to the point of being unsafe.
- Not know his own strength. (He may rip paper when writing, break toys or hurt others by accident.)
- Prefer “rough play” on the playground.
- Touch people and objects often.
- Seek out or make loud noises.
- Chew on shirt sleeves or collars and other non-food items.

Sensory Defensive/Avoidant: A child may seem “overwhelmed” by certain situations and sensations; so, they try to avoid these in any way that they can.

- A sensory avoider may:
- Not liked being hugged or kissed, even by family.
- Be startled and frightened by unexpected sounds and bright lights.
- Hear background noises other people aren't able to detect.
- Worry about being bumped in line or touched by other kids while playing.
- Refuse to wear scratchy, tight or otherwise “uncomfortable” clothes.



- Be wary and avoidant of swings and other playground equipment that provides vestibular or proprioceptive input.
- Have trouble knowing where his body is in relation to other people or objects.
- Prefer to be in quieter environments and avoid crowds.

Sensory Discrimination (Under-responsive): A child may struggle with determining differences in sizes, shapes, and textures or may have difficulty determining the sources of sounds and the position and movement of their bodies.

We will talk more about what this looks like when we discuss the sensory seeking, avoidant, and discrimination/under-responsive behaviors that fall into tactile, vestibular, and proprioceptive senses.

TACTILE

Sense of touch.

SEEKING BEHAVIORS	DESCRIMINATION BEHAVIORS	DEFENSIVE BEHAVIORS
Seeks out difference in temperatures, vibrations, & sensations	Difficulty knowing where they are being touched	Distressed by clothing (tags/seams)
High pain tolerance (bite or pinch self or others)	Difficulty knowing what they are holding without looking	Avoids certain textures
Seeks oral stimulation (sweet, salty, or bitter; carbonation or frozen food)	Difficulty searching with hands through a bag	Avoids light touch (tickling) but may crave deep touch (bear hug)
Always touching things & always messy/dirty; "impulsive"	Difficulty describing how an object feels (smooth, bumpy, etc.)	Distorted walking (walking on toes)



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PARAPHRASE

Next, we will briefly discuss the differences in sensory seeking behaviors, discrimination (under-responsive) behaviors, and defensive (avoidant) behaviors. As we have learned, every child's capacity for sensory input is different, according to their need and tolerance of the 5 different types of senses: (1) sight, (2), smell, (3) hearing, (4) taste, and (5) touch. However, we also know that there are two additional types of sensory inputs that many children with sensory processing disorder may seek or avoid: vestibular and proprioceptive.

On the next slides, we will look deeper into the various sensory processing behaviors according to tactile, vestibular, and proprioceptive input.

DO

Review and define the tactile sensory input and the examples of sensory seeking, discrimination, and defensive behaviors. Remind families that the handout on pages 27-29 includes an overview of these sensory integration charts.



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VESTIBULAR

Sense of balance, movement, and spatial orientation through head position, centered in the inner ear.

SEEKING BEHAVIORS	DESCRIMINATION BEHAVIORS	DEFENSIVE BEHAVIORS
Engages in risky behaviors	Difficulty in determining body posture	Excessive fear of falling during daily movement activities (biking, climbing)
Runs instead of walks	Unaware of body in space	Avoids hanging upside down
Engages in constant motion (often DX ADHD)	Falls out of their chair	Avoids movement (spinning, swinging, level changes, rocking)
Seeks out spinning, rocking, swinging	Poor perceptions of elevation	Prefers sedentary activities



12

DO

Review and define the vestibular sensory input and the examples of sensory seeking, discrimination, and defensive behaviors. Remind families that the handout on pages 27-29 includes an overview of these sensory integration charts.



PROPRIOCEPTION

Sense of self and movement through receptors in muscles and joints ear.

SEEKING BEHAVIORS	DESCRIMINATION BEHAVIORS	DEFENSIVE BEHAVIORS
Seeks out hard pressure (stomps feet when walking, tight clothing, tucked in tightly, bear hugs)	Difficulty regulating pressure to pick up or hold an object	Avoids pushing, pulling, & carrying activities
High pain tolerance; "rough houses"		Difficulty holding objects
Uses too much pressure to complete an activity (breaks crayons/pencils)	Difficulty regulating body output to perform a physical activity	Oral defensiveness (difficulty chewing, sucking)
Biting/sucking of fingers, clothes, & objects		Prefers sedentary activities



13

DO

Review and define the proprioceptive sensory input and the examples of sensory seeking, discrimination, and defensive behaviors. Remind families that the handout on pages 27-29 includes an overview of these sensory integration charts.



EVOLVING SENSORY NEEDS

Children are not always purely “sensory seeking” or “sensory avoiding”— many show a mix of both

- Sensory responses can change depending on stress, arousal level, and ability to self-regulate
- A child may cope well in familiar settings but struggle in crowded or unfamiliar environments
- Understanding your child's triggers and patterns helps you better support their sensory needs



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PARAPHRASE

It is important to understand that not all kids are clearly sensory seekers or sensory avoiders. Some kids may show a combination of these reactions. That's because their responses can change based on their level of arousal or how well they're able to self-regulate.

For example, some kids are fine in familiar settings, but might have sensory meltdowns in crowded, unfamiliar places. Or they might seek out more input to help calm themselves down, when they ordinarily don't.

Knowing your child's reactions and triggers can help you find ways to help him. We will talk more about this later, when we explore helpful strategies to identifying and meeting children's sensory needs.





- Children's brains constantly take in sensory information (light, sound, touch, smell, temperature)
- For a child with sensory processing challenges, the brain may struggle to filter this input
- Everyday sensations (bright lights, scratchy clothes, background noise) can feel overwhelming or distracting
- When sensory input feels "too much" or "not enough," it can strongly influence a child's behavior and reactions

WHAT WOULD THIS FEEL LIKE?

Think about how much sensory input your brain receives in a classroom - from the lighting, the noise level, the room temperature, the feel of your clothes against your skin, the texture of your desk and the smell of the person next to you, etc.



15

PARAPHRASE

What would sensory processing disorder feel like?

Imagine you're sitting in a classroom. Think about how much sensory input your brain receives in the room from the lighting, the noise level, the room temperature, the feel of your clothes against your skin, the texture of your desk and the smell of the person next to you.

The brain of a child with SPD might be able to filter some of these sensory inputs; but because of heightened sensitivity to certain sensory inputs or a lack of responsiveness to others, the lights might be too bright, a clothing label feel too scratchy or background noise be too loud for the child's brain to filter out these distractions. As a result, these inputs dictate the child's behavior in the classroom.



DIAGNOSING SPD

Everyone has unique sensory preferences, and reactions can change based on stress, fatigue, and self-regulation

- A child can have sensory challenges even without a Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) diagnosis
- SPD can only be diagnosed through an evaluation by an occupational therapist
- Sensory processing concerns are often identified in the toddler and early childhood years

Even if the child is not diagnosed with SPD, the child might have sensory needs that will impact the child's abilities and behaviors and may lead to:

- difficulty concentrating
- feeling low self-esteem and a low sense of confidence
- difficulty with organization
- lack of self-control
- difficulty self-regulating
- challenges forming attachments and relationships
- problems with feeding



PARAPHRASE

Every individual has personal sensory preferences. Our reaction to a particular stimulus or sensory input might be based on our arousal level or our ability to self-regulate at the time when our brains receive and process that input. A child can have challenges with integrating sensory inputs without meeting the criteria for a SPD diagnosis.

A diagnosis of SPD must be determined by an evaluation conducted by an occupational therapist. Sensory processing disorder often is identified when children are in their toddler years.

Even if the child is not diagnosed with SPD, the child might have sensory needs that will impact the child's abilities and behaviors and may lead to:

- difficulty concentrating
- feeling low self-esteem and a low sense of confidence
- difficulty with organization
- lack of self-control
- difficulty self-regulating
- challenges forming attachments and relationships
- problems with feeding

It is critical to address a child's sensory integration challenges.

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, sits on a light-colored couch. A young child with dark hair in a bun, wearing a colorful patterned shirt and white shorts, sits next to her. The child has their hands near their face. A semi-transparent white box with text is overlaid on the image. The background is a bright, indoor setting with a window and some furniture.

SECTION 2: **MANAGING SENSORY PROCESSING CHALLENGES**



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PARAPHRASE

In this next section, we will discuss ways to respond to a child's sensory needs and managing sensory processing challenges.





MANAGING SENSORY PROCESSING CHALLENGES



PARAPHRASE

In this next video clip, you'll hear suggestions you can use to identify and respond to children's specific sensory needs.

DO

Play the video and take time to reflect on key points with families afterward before moving on.



SENSORY NEEDS OR BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGES

- Children impacted by trauma, separation, or loss often struggle with self-regulation
- Managing emotional, relational, and sensory needs at the same time can easily overwhelm a child
- Foster and kinship parents may find it hard to tell the difference between sensory challenges and behavioral issues
- Noticing what helps end the behavior can give important clues about what the child truly needs



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PARAPHRASE

A child who has experienced trauma, separation or loss already has a difficult time with self-regulation. Trying to handle many different needs at the same time — relational and sensory needs plus needs for dealing with trauma and regulation — can be overwhelming for the child.

Parents who are fostering or adopting may be uncertain if a child's behavior is a sign of a sensory integration issue or a behavioral challenge.

One of the easiest ways to detect whether the child is exhibiting a sensory integration challenge versus a behavioral challenge is to note what brings an end to the behavior.



DETERMINING THE NEED: SENSORY OR BEHAVIORAL

SENSORY

- Behavior is driven by the child's nervous system and sensory input
- Child often needs external regulation from the caregiver
Examples: dimming lights, reducing noise, offering deep pressure or movement
- Behavior may stop when the environment changes or the child receives calming sensory input
- Child may seek input in unsafe or ineffective ways
Examples: head banging, crashing to the floor, constant movement

BEHAVIORAL

- Behavior is often aimed at getting something (attention, item, activity, control)
- Behavior may stop when the child receives what they want
- Behavior may increase when the caregiver is watching and decrease when attention is removed
- Support focuses on teaching skills, structure, and appropriate ways to communicate needs

Reminder: ALL behaviors are the child's way of communicating needs



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PARAPHRASE

SENSORY NEEDS:

A child experiencing a sensory integration challenge might need the parent who is fostering or adopting to provide external regulation by changing the environment (for example, by lowering the lights or turning off loud music) or by offering an intervention such as wrapping the child in a weighted blanket that feels like a hug.

A child with a sensory integration challenge might try to meet their own sensory needs in a poorly adapted or dysfunctional way, such as by repeatedly hitting their head against a wall or throwing their body onto the ground to receive the sensory input needed.

BEHAVIORAL NEEDS:

If the child is exhibiting a behavioral challenge instead of a sensory integration challenge, the behavior often ends when the child is given a reward, item, activity that the child wanted.

The child might use challenging behavior to attract the attention of the parent who is fostering or adopting. If the child displays the behavior while the caregiver is giving the child attention but not when the caregiver looks away, this might indicate a behavioral challenge instead of a sensory integration challenge.

All behaviors are the child's way of communicating needs.



BECOMING A SENSORY DETECTIVE

Identify challenging behaviors

Describe the details

Evaluate physical needs

Notice the environment

Identify patterns

It is important to understand how a child's early experiences have influenced their sensory integration.

You will also want to be a "sensory detective" so you can create sensory experiences that meet a child's unique needs.



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PARAPHRASE

As a parent who is fostering or adopting, it is important to understand how a child's early experiences have influenced their sensory integration. You will also want to be a "sensory detective" so you can create sensory experiences that meet a child's unique needs.

A child's sensory needs can change moment-to-moment, day-to-day and year-to-year.



BECOMING A SENSORY DETECTIVE

Identify challenging behaviors

Describe the details

Evaluate physical needs

Notice the environment

Identify patterns

- Document common behavioral challenges.
 - Write down 5 of the child's most common challenging behaviors
 - Over the next week, journal about the behaviors.
 - Consider sharing information with professionals.



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PARAPHRASE

Write down five of the child's most common behavioral challenges.

Over the next week, journal information about the behaviors. This journal can help you identify ways sensory processing difficulties may be causing or impacting these different behaviors.

You can also share information from the journal with medical providers, counselors or other professionals who may be helping you to determine the child's sensory needs. The information you document could help to determine if a referral for a sensory processing disorder evaluation would be beneficial.



BECOMING A SENSORY DETECTIVE

Identify challenging behaviors

Describe the details

Evaluate physical needs

Notice the environment

Identify patterns

- Identify specific details about the times when the child experiences more challenges.
 - Type of task or situation
 - What activities were taking place
 - What time of day
 - Other events that happened right before the behavior challenge



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PARAPHRASE

Identify specific details about the times when the child is experiencing more challenges. Track information such as:

- the type of task or situation
- what activities were taking place when the behavior occurred including the noise level and amount of other stimulation
- what time of day the child seems to struggle the most
- a description of other events that happened right before the behavior challenge



BECOMING A SENSORY DETECTIVE

Identify challenging behaviors

Describe the details

Evaluate physical needs

Notice the environment

Identify patterns

- Keep a record of the child's physical needs and activities throughout the week.
 - Amount and type of food the child eats that week
 - How much water or other beverages the child is drinking
 - The amount of sleep the child is getting



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PARAPHRASE

Over the course of the week, keep a record of the child's physical needs and activities. Track information such as:

- amount and type of food the child eats that week
- how much water or other beverages is the child drinking
- the amount of sleep the child is getting



BECOMING A SENSORY DETECTIVE

Identify challenging behaviors

Describe the details

Evaluate physical needs

Notice the environment

Identify patterns

■ Identify and track environmental factors that cause a negative reaction.

- Crowds or particular noises
- Smells
- Types of touch
- Types of clothing



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PARAPHRASE

Identify elements in the environment that cause a negative reaction from the child. Track information about things going on around or near the child such as:

- crowds or particular noises
- smells
- types of touch
- types of clothing



BECOMING A SENSORY DETECTIVE

Identify challenging behaviors

Describe the details

Evaluate physical needs

Notice the environment

Identify patterns

- After documenting this information for one week, identify patterns.
 - Did behaviors frequent certain times of day or impact the child's sleep?
 - Were there any connections to types of food or behaviors that occurred when the child was hungry?



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PARAPHRASE

After journaling this information for one week, identify any patterns that appear.

For example, you can look to see if behaviors might be frequent during a certain time of day or are impacted by the child getting less or more sleep. You could look to see if there are any connections related to the type of foods the child is eating or if behaviors are more frequent when the child appears hungrier. There are many possibilities to consider.

Recognizing patterns and using strategies to meet the child's sensory needs can drastically reduce the number of difficulties a child experiences.



I have Sensory Processing Disorder



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PARAPHRASE

The graphic on the slide indicates common experiences and behaviors for children who may have sensory processing disorder. By now, many of you may be thinking about some of the behaviors or triggers you see in your own homes. You may have even seen some of the examples on the slide.

Remember that children cannot fully process or communicate these experiences to us verbally. This is why it is important to meet children with curiosity, to track and document behaviors, and work toward identifying triggers or patterns specific to your child's experiences.





SECTION 3: **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**



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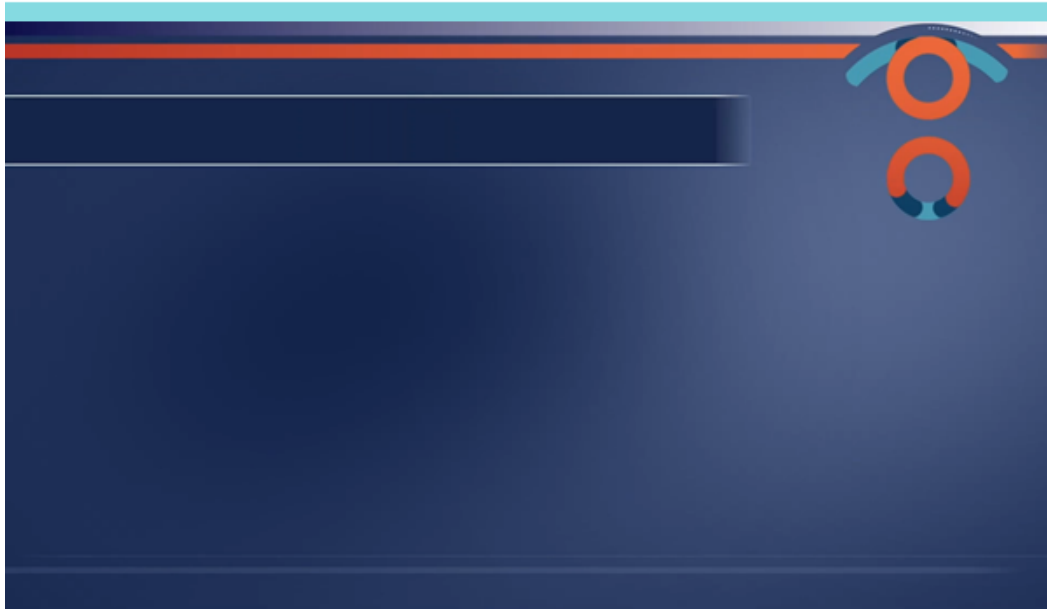
PARAPHRASE

In this section, we will explore strategies helpful in supporting children's sensory needs.





STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS



PARAPHRASE

In this last video clip, you will see specific strategies that can be used both at home and school to support a child's sensory needs.

DO

Play the video and take time to reflect on key points with families afterward before moving on. Remind families that they have the key points for the video segments they watched throughout this training included in their handout packets.



IDENTIFYING AND IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES

Sensory challenges don't simply disappear, but *children can learn to manage them with support*

- Once sensory needs are identified, use intentional strategies to provide regulating experiences
- The next steps focus on meeting basic needs, building routines, and supporting regulation



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PARAPHRASE

After you have been able to identify some of the child's sensory challenges, find strategies that will help give the child regulating sensory experiences.

DEVELOP A PLAN

A child will not "grow out of" sensory processing challenges. However, with support, the child can learn to tolerate and to develop strategies for responding more appropriately to these challenges. On the next few slides, we will include some helpful tips to get you started.



1. CHECK IN ON BASIC NEEDS

- Regularly check if the child is Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired (HALT)

Support the whole body with:

- Restful sleep
 - Frequent food and water
 - Purposeful movement
 - Meaningful connection
- When basic needs are met, children are better able to handle sensory input



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PARAPHRASE

1. CHECK IN ON THEIR BASIC NEEDS THROUGHOUT THE DAY

It is important for a parent who is fostering or adopting to perform a basic needs check with the child many times throughout each day. You can use the acronym HALT for the check-in.

If the child's brain and whole body are nourished with everything that the child needs — sufficient restful sleep, adequate and frequent water and food (stabilized blood sugar level), purposeful movement and meaningful interaction — then the child will be more likely to respond appropriately to sensory inputs.



2. DEVELOP A SENSORY DIET

- Create a sensory diet with the help of an occupational therapist
- A sensory diet is an individualized, planned set of activities to support regulation

Helps children:

- Notice their own arousal levels
- Identify triggers
- Learn strategies to calm or alert their bodies
- These skills support long-term growth and development



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PARAPHRASE

2. DEVELOP A SENSORY DIET

Develop a sensory diet with the help of an occupational therapist. A sensory diet is an individualized, scheduled and strategic activity plan to address the child's sensory needs.

The goal of this intervention is to increase the child's ability to self-identify arousal levels and to recognize the sensory inputs that trigger them. A sensory diet will provide strategies to help the child self-regulate.

The therapy and skills learned will affect how the child's sensory processing challenges change as the child grows and matures.



3. RESPOND TO THE CHILD'S SENSORY PREFERENCES

- Identify what feels calming or organizing for the child
- Adapt the environment and routines to support those needs

Examples:

- Weighted lap pads or blankets
 - Swinging or heavy movement before transitions
 - Clothing without seams or tags
- Many of these supports may be part of the child's sensory diet



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PARAPHRASE

3. RESPOND TO THE CHILD'S SENSORY PREFERENCES

Identify the child's sensory preferences and adapt to them.

For example, if the child prefers strong bear hugs, runs up to you and gives you a big, strong hug, then you need to accept those types of hugs from the child.

Other examples of proactive strategies include:

- having the child wear a weighted lap pad while traveling in a car
- letting the child swing on a playset in your yard before leaving home
- buying socks and other clothes for the child that don't have seams or tags

If the child is seeing an occupational therapist, these types of activities might be part of the child's sensory diet. An occupational therapist would develop strategies that are specific to the child.



4. PROVIDE CO-REGULATION

- Co-regulation means using your calm presence to help the child regulate

- Examples: gentle rocking, sitting close, calm voice, slow breathing

Your regulation matters:

- Children borrow calm from adults
- If the caregiver is dysregulated, it is harder for the child to settle



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PARAPHRASE

4. PROVIDE CO-REGULATION

Co-regulation is important in providing sensory interventions for a child. Co-regulation involves using your physical and emotional presence to help the child become calm and to attain balance (for example, rocking back and forth while holding a baby to calm the infant).

When using co-regulation, be sure that you are able to model the calm behavior that you want the child to exhibit. If you are not calm and regulated yourself (if you are upset, angry or agitated, etc.), then your own lack of balance will have a negative impact on your attempt to use co-regulation to balance the child.

FACILITATOR NOTE: Remind families that the Q&A Sensory Integration Handout on pages 35-42 includes highlights of this information in addition to other tips and strategies.



SUPPORT AT SCHOOL

Sensory processing challenges can significantly affect a child's success in the classroom.

Supporting Children with Sensory Needs at School

- Share information about the child's sensory needs with teachers and school administrators
- Be prepared to explain the child's challenges and advocate for simple classroom supports
- Ask whether the school has access to an occupational therapist for additional strategies

Classroom Strategies to Discuss

- Flexible seating (inflated cushion, pillow, alternative chair)
- Reduce sensory triggers (buzzing lights, loud or flickering fluorescent lighting)
- Planned sensory breaks (walking, jumping, movement activities, sour candy)
- Fidgets or safe chewable items
- Alternatives to loud spaces (assemblies, cafeteria)
- Clear visual schedules with advance notice for transitions



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PARAPHRASE

Children who have sensory processing challenges can experience difficulties in school. If you are aware that the child has sensory processing challenges, share that information with the child's teacher and school administrators.

Because not all educators are familiar with sensory processing disorder or sensory challenges, you may need to give them basic information about the child's challenges, along with ideas about how to make changes in the classroom that will help the child to feel safe and secure.

Some strategies to discuss with your child's teachers and school staff could include some of the following:

- Provide an inflated seat cushion or add a pillow to the child's chair at school.
- Eliminate or reduce potential trigger noises such as buzzing and flickering, fluorescent lights.
- Allow the child time for sensory breaks such as walking in circles, jumping on a mini-trampoline or sucking on sour candy.
- Allow the child to bring to school an item to use for fidgeting or a chewable item that can help to calm the child.
- Allow the child to avoid loud assemblies and loud cafeteria rooms.
- Have a clear, visual schedule posted that includes plenty of preparation time for transitions.

Depending on the individual needs of the child, any of these strategies could be beneficial. You could also check to see if the school system has an occupational therapist who could help to provide strategies that will work for the child.



REMEMBER TO USE A TEAM APPROACH



Building a Supportive Sensory Network

- Supporting a child with sensory challenges is a team effort
- Involves family members, school staff, and community supports
- Proactively share information about the child's sensory needs
- Educating others helps prevent misinterpretation of behaviors

Why This Matters

- Reduces overreactions and unrealistic expectations
- Increases the child's sense of safety, belonging, and acceptance
- Creates more consistent support across home, school, and community



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PARAPHRASE

Successfully supporting a child with sensory processing issues involves immediate and extended family members, school personnel and community members.

Inform these individuals about the child's sensory processing issues and proactively educate them about the best ways to support the child. This will help decrease the possibility of individuals incorrectly interpreting or overreacting to the child's behaviors. It will also increase the child's sense of belonging and acceptance at home, school and in the community.



MAKE SURE TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, TOO!

Caregiver Self-Care Matters

- Supporting a child with sensory needs can be time-consuming and emotionally demanding
- Stress and fatigue can make it harder to respond calmly and consistently
- All family members should have intentional self-care plans and coping strategies
- Caring for yourself helps you better support the child's regulation and healing



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PARAPHRASE

Take care of yourself too!

Caregivers may find the process of identifying and then accommodating the child's needs time-consuming or stressful. All family members should have plans and strategies for self-care so that they can cope with the child's behaviors and adapt to meet the child's needs.





FACILITATOR'S NOTE

The closing quote above and the paraphrase section below will be done only once per day, after the last theme presented for the day. If you are moving on to another theme invite them to take a break, stretch, or breathe, before moving on to the next theme.

If closing for the day:

Thank everyone for attending and for their thoughtful participation and attention. Remind the participants that although this training may seem long, it is critical for them to gather the knowledge, attitude, and skills that are needed as they embark on this journey because they ultimately will play a huge role in the lives of children and families.