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The 3–5–7 Model: preparing children for permanency

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Abstract

This article introduces a practice model for the preparation of children for permanency. It is based on three components: (1) the completion of three tasks—clarification of life events, integration of all family memberships, and actualization in belonging to a new family; (2) the answering of five conceptual questions relevant to each child living in placement, Who am I? What happened to me? Where am I going? How will I get there?, and When will I know I belong?; and (3) the use of critical skill elements in the preparation work: engaging the child, listening to the child's words, speaking the truth, validating the child's life story, creating a safe space, going back in time, and recognizing pain as part of the process. By incorporating this model, workers and families conducting the preparation work, assist the child in grieving losses, formulating self-identity, establishing trust and security through attachments, and building relationships and openness to join families on a permanent basis.

Keywords: special needs adoption; permanency for children; preparing children for permanency; attachment; separation and loss; perceptual safety; Fahlberg; Jewett

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