

Family Systems Theory Overview Session 1	Facilitator Guide Family Systems Theory in the Context of Early Childhood Settings
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The Facilitator Guide provides a delivery framework and key concepts with respect to the session content. Trainers are to deliver the training as a series-based training and follow the curriculum script, ensuring that all information is addressed, except where noted in the trainer guide that material may be shortened or deleted as an option. While trainers may adapt delivery to their participant audiences, trainers may not change the script in terms of omitting key content, adding information (such as examples or clarifications) not supported by research or evidence-based practice and/or not meeting training objectives is not acceptable.

UMID

State curricula uses the ***Minnesota Framework for Universal Multicultural Instructional Design***.

The Framework is a tool that:

- a) Reflects current and emerging theory and practice for supporting all learners and instructors.
- b) Supports instructors in valuing learners' knowledge and experience in addition to the curriculum content and activities.
- c) Supports various early childhood learning experiences and audiences in order to be inclusive in training design and delivery.

The document identifies four foundations for Universal Multicultural Learning Design:

1. What we learn/what we teach.
2. How we learn/how we teach.
3. How we access support services/how we support learning.
4. How we demonstrate what we have learned/How we assess learning.

Each foundation includes key principles, reflective questions, and examples of strategy types that illustrate the principle. The framework is intended for those who develop, deliver, facilitate, and fund professional development in early childhood care and education.

The framework can be accessed via the following link:

<http://www.cehd.umn.edu/CEED/publications/reports/UIDCEEDfinaldraftframework8.pdf>

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. [Maya Angelou](#)





The following are general training-delivery principles. Please review prior to training.

Facilitator as Guide – Meeting the Needs of All Learners

1. Remember that, since trainers deliver the training as designed, they are the front-line personnel converting theory and practice from the training plan into the actual training.
2. Recognize that a universal multicultural design places less emphasis on instructor-directed (expert-novice) models and more emphasis on collaborative models that intentionally ask, reflect, and value participants' real-life knowledge and experiences. The framework recognizes the expertise of *both* trainers *and* participants. These collaborative principles will fit some trainers' natural style well; others who are more used to the role of expert may need support and professional development to go beyond that familiar role, learning how and when to employ it and when to "go with the flow" of the group.
3. Begin sessions by connecting with participants' lives and then adding information and opportunities to reflect on what it means for them.
4. Acknowledge any challenges that may interfere with training participation or emotional engagement. This could range from a crowded room to sudden family issues that arise immediately before the training.
5. Maintain "cultural humility." Content is influenced by theory and research, which in turn is limited by the communities where the research was gathered. Learners should be enabled to add culturally-relevant sources of information to course content.
6. Provide multiple examples of how the content applies in different settings.
7. Think about what participants might already know and do. Identify strategies to assess their prior knowledge/experience or address potential gaps.
8. Consider whether participants can re-state training objectives in their own words, if professional terminology is used. For example, when they read the objective, can they answer questions like: "What does this mean for me?", "What will I be able to know/feel/do with this information?", and "Will I have a plan when I leave?"
9. Think about what you, as a trainer, need to learn in order to provide examples or ask questions that connect to the participants' understanding. For example, child development research on developmental expectations have not always been normed on a wide diversity of children.
10. Check in with participants about what issues they might be dealing with – it helps to offer support and referrals to other services as needed.
11. Consider how you, as a trainer, create a safe space (e.g., emotional support, affirmation, facilitation skills, respect) so that all participants feel supported as they grapple with ideas that may challenge their value systems.

Icons are used to assist trainers in quickly identifying training techniques and materials needed when delivering the training script of the Facilitator Guide.

TRAINER ACTIONS			
 SAY: Suggested wording for what to say in a mini-lecture or when giving instructions for an activity.	 DO: Action on the part of the trainer. Usually it applies to logistics (pass out handout 5; divide the group into 6 small groups; etc.) and at times there are also suggestions for comments to make or follow-up thoughts for debriefing an activity.	 ASK: Open-ended questions or reflection asked of participants.	 Note to trainer embedded in the script addressing activity options, further clarification of content, etc.
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES			
 Mini-lecture by trainer	 Large group activity	 Small group activity	 Pair share
 Role play	 Individual reflection/activity		

AUDIO-VISUAL



Audio recording



Video clip



Power Point



Website link

WRITTEN MATERIALS



Activity needing chart
paper



participant
guide and/or participant
handout



article

website



book or manual



children's book

MISCELLANEOUS



participant assignment



optional activity



break



trainer notes to self

Session 1 Overview

Knowledge and Competency Framework (KCF) Content Area, MN Core Competency Content Area, CDA Content Areas, Parent Aware Training Indicators

The Primary Knowledge and Competency Content Areas, the MN Core Competencies Content Area, the CDA Content Areas, and (as appropriate) Parent Aware Training Indicators are listed here to help participants understand what competencies, content areas and/or indicators are addressed in the training.

KCF Content Area: III Relationships with Families

MN Core Competency: V Families and Communities

CDA Content Area: 6 Strategies to establish productive relationships with families.

Parent Aware training Indicator: **TR3d.** All lead child care providers have completed at least 6 hours of training in working with families from different cultures and socio-economic levels.

Session Learning Objectives

While no training alone can ensure learning objectives, they can be designed to meet certain goals for each learner. If learners are engaged and participate, they should be able to:

- Understand the foundations of family systems theory.
- Understand how family systems affect the way parents and children think and act.

Trainers should always be mindful of these session learning objectives and be sure their delivery and feedback during the training supports participants' mastery. Objectives should align with the specific Primary Core Competencies, CDA Content Areas, and Parent Aware Training Indicators.

Time	Section	Facilitation Techniques
15 minutes	A. Welcome, Introductions, and Class ground rules	• Large-group presentation • Large-group discussion
55 minutes	B. Overview of Family Systems Theory	• Large-group presentation • Large-group discussion activity
5 minutes	Break	
40 minutes	C. Basic Principles of Family Systems Theory	• Large-group presentation • Large-group activity • Large-group reflections
5 minutes	D. Closure	

Preparation

Materials

- Facilitator Guide.
- Laptop computer.
- LED projector.
- PowerPoint® slides.
- Exercises.
- Pens.
- 11" x 17" sheets of white paper.
- Post-it® Super Sticky Note Pads.
- Post-it® Wall Pad with Command™ Strips.
- Markers.

Trainer Preparation

Read the article, *Understanding Families: Applying Family Systems Theory to Early Childhood Practice*. *Young Children on the Web* January 2006

<https://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200601/ChristianBTJ.pdf>

Thoroughly review PowerPoint® slides and all relevant handouts and exercises.

- Gather all materials and equipment.
- Using Post-it® Wall Pad with Command™ Strips paper, create pages showing:
 - The title of the session, your name, your contact information, and the beginning and end time of the training.
 - The objectives for this session.
 - The five initial class standards.
- Hang blank sheets of Post-it® Wall Pad with Command™ Strips paper with the heading "Parking Lot" around the room.
- Print and make copies of all handouts and exercises. Laminate or use plastic cover protectors for repeated use.
- Arrange classroom so participants have writing spaces such as tabletops.
- Place pens, markers, and Post-it® Super Sticky Note Pads on each table.

Resources

1. Handouts.
2. Exercises.
3. Positive Parenting website:
http://www.the-positive-parenting-centre.com/positive_parenting_style.html

Handouts

- Basic Genogram Symbols
- Tips for Constructing a Genogram
- Understanding Family Rules (also called Family Norms) (includes reflection questions)
- Reflection Questions: Impact of Family Members' Behavior on Others

Exercises

- Constructing a Genogram.
- Understanding Family Rules/Family Norms.
- Reflection Questions: Impact of Family Members' Behavior on Others.

Trainer Notes

1. Make sure you use the key terms and definitions consistently and avoid clichés.
2. Be prepared to adapt training language to insure all participants fully understand the content covered (principles of Plain Language). Several strategies can be used to address differing levels of understanding among participants:
 - Consider using a Parking Lot to enable participants to post concerns or words that they do not fully understand or about which they would like to get more information.
 - Knowing that not everyone would feel comfortable posting items on the Parking Lot, make sure to watch and listen for visual and verbal cues that participants may need help with content language. Be prepared to stop and offer explanations, definitions, and examples to clarify key points.
 - Use professional language, but be sensitive to the audience's background knowledge and use terms and examples that make sense to the group.

Section A	Welcome, Introductions, and Class Ground Rules
 minutes	Suggested time is 15 minutes
Section overview	• Create a pleasant context in which everyone has a sense that they will be an active listener and participant in this training experience. • Facilitate participants to understand the techniques that will be used in the training.
Facilitation techniques	☐ mini lecture ☒ large group discussion/activity ☐ small group discussion/activity ☐ pair and share ☒ individual activity/reflection ☐ role play ☐ case scenario ☐ PowerPoint ☒ chart paper ☐ DVD, video clip ☐ audio recording ☐ textbook, book, or manual ☐ participant guide/handout ☐ website
Materials	• Post-it® notes. • Post-it® Wall Pad. • Pens. • Markers. • LCD projector and laptop computer.
 Note to trainer	This is a 2-hour training. You may have participants who have different degrees of familiarity with the five protective factors in the Strengthening Families approach. Whether there are participants who have been aware of the protective factors for a very long time or there are those who have just been introduced to them, this training will be a different look at the protective factors—so, in effect, everyone is starting at the same place. Display the cover page of the PowerPoint® slides on the projector.
Session objectives	• Understand the foundations of family systems theory • Understand how family systems affect the way parents and children think and act

 Go over to the chart paper with the five class ground rules and read them out loud.   If participants suggest other ground rules, add them to the list.	(2) Ask questions for clarification; (3) Do not monopolize the discussion with personal issues; (4) Let others finish their points – do not interrupt when others are talking; and (5) Save private conversations for session breaks, not during the training session. Is there anything else you think we should add?  DO: Have the participants list other ground rules if they have any suggestions.  SAY: Now that we know each other a little bit and everyone is aware of our training standards, let's begin our discussion about the Family Systems Theory.
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TRAINER NOTES/REFLECTIONS

Section B	Overview of Family Systems Theory
 minutes	Suggested time is 60 minutes
Section overview	Facilitate participants' understanding of the foundation and basic principles of family systems theory.
Facilitation techniques	☒ mini lecture ☒ large group discussion/activity ☐ small group discussion/activity ☐ pair and share ☒ individual activity/reflection ☐ role play ☐ case scenario ☒ PowerPoint ☒ chart paper ☐ DVD, video clip ☐ audio recording ☐ textbook, book, or manual ☒ participant guide/handout ☐ website
Materials	"Family Systems Theory" PowerPoint® presentation slides. - LCD projector and laptop. - Handouts. - Exercises. - Post-it® Wall Pad with Command™ Strips. - Markers.
 Note to trainer	Can participants re-state objectives in their own words (if professional terminology is used)? (When they read the objective, can they answer the questions like: <i>What does this mean for me? What will I be able to know/feel/do with this information? Will I have a plan when I leave?</i>).
Session objectives	- Understand the foundations of family systems theory - Understand how family systems affect the way parents and children think and act.

SCRIPT



Go over to the chart with the objectives listed.



SAY:

In this session we will talk about some of the basic ideas that are the foundation of family systems theory.

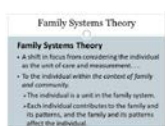


DO:

Review the objectives out loud with the participants. Ask if there are any questions about the objectives.



Go to slide 2



SAY:

A. **“Family Systems Theory” is a shift in focus from considering the individual child only to the child within the context of her/his family and community.** Family systems theory provides another tool in our toolbox for understanding why children and parents act or think the way they do.

Family systems theory suggests that family members are interconnected and consistently influence each other. Children learn ways of behaving, feeling and thinking from the ways their families behave, feel and think.

Using family systems theory can help you understand that families do things in their unique ways. Family systems theory can help you “get a handle” on what makes a child and their family do what they do in the way they do it.

1. The individual is a unit in the family system.
2. Each individual contributes to the family and the ways they behave in different situations, and the family and the ways it behaves in different situations affect the individual. Family members are interconnected and consistently influence each other.





Go to slide 3

Defining Family

- **Family** – A social group containing at least one parent-child relationship.
 - The family's primary function is to protect, support and care for its members so that the entire family can meet its full potential.(Adapted from the Institute of Parent and Family Centred Care)
- **Parent** – An adult or adolescent who has responsibility of raising a child, including the biological parents, grandparents, other relatives, or non-biological caregivers.

B. What do we mean by “family” in family systems theory?

1. **The term “family”** is used in this context to refer to a social group containing at least one parent-child relationship.
2. **The term “parent”** is used in this context to refer to an adult or adolescent who is responsible for raising a child, including the biological parents, grandparents, other relatives, or non-biological caregivers.



Go to slide 4

Families as Systems

Families are systems of interconnected and interdependent individuals.

- Actions of one family member affect the other members – good or bad.
- To understand a parent or child, it is helpful to understand their family system.
- The focus is on how family members interact with each other.

C. Families are systems where the pairs or groups are connected to each other and depend on each other.

1. Actions of one family member affect the other members – good or bad.
2. To understand a parent or a child, it is helpful to understand their family system.
3. The focus is on how family members interact with each other.

A parent or a child cannot be understood in isolation from the system.

Think about a mobile. When one piece moves, the whole mobile moves. Movement of one part of the mobile affects the whole system. Think about how a child’s development can affect the family. When a child is learning a new skill (e.g., sleeping through the night, toilet training), there is an effect on the family. You can see how a family addresses challenging experiences and successes.

**SAY:**

This is a training about family systems theory, so it may seem obvious that we start with families. To start off the training, **we are going to focus on how we get to know and seek to understand families.**

I'd like you to think about these two questions:

- 1) How do you come to understand families with whom you work?
- 2) How well do you get to know them?

Some may be easier to get to know than others, for lots of different reasons. We are going to start by how we get to know families.

Let's start by discussing what you currently do to get to know families.

**ASK:**

1. What do you do /does your program/center ask you to do?
2. Why do you do these things?
3. What do you learn about the families? (Trainer makes a list, others can copy it down if they like the ideas).



As you can see from the list here, there are lots of things to learn about families! **A family systems approach suggests that you start getting to know families by understanding how families are connected—and more than the child and parents, but including extended family and a couple of generations, too.**

It also suggests that you stay open to learning about the kinds of experiences that families have had—for example, if there have been marriages, or divorces, or deaths; chronic illnesses; and even traumatic or difficult situations such as job loss, poverty, experiences of violence, homelessness, emigrating from a different country, etc...Some of these experiences are easier for a family to share, others are harder. Depends on the family.

Exercise & Handouts:
Understanding family maps



Go to slide 5



**NOTE TO
TRAINER**

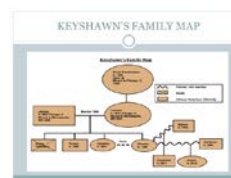
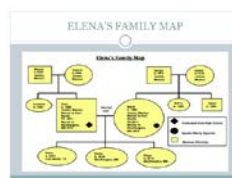
Sometimes it can help to think about getting a picture, or a map, of the family. What is the purpose of a family map, also called a genogram? (PPT) Here are some examples of family maps.

SOME OF THE QUESTIONS ON THE LIST MAY BE QUESTIONS THAT CAN BE USED TO DEVELOP A FAMILY MAP—YOU WILL WANT TO MAKE THAT CONNECTION IN THIS SECTION.

Let's take a look at some family maps and see what they are telling us about these families.



Go to slides 6 & 7



FAMILY MAP EXERCISE



DO:

Show two family maps (Elena's family map and Keyshawn's family map) one at a time.

1. **For the first one** (you can use either one), as a large group, show how the family is connected (the different family relationships) and note the experiences that are part of that family's life (e.g., ethnicity, moves, death, etc...).
2. **For the second one**, have the group point out the family relationships and then the experiences.

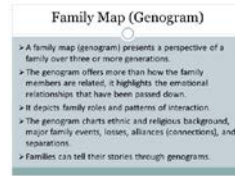
Main takeaway points:

- Families are connected in a variety of ways.
- Their experiences have shaped the way they interact as a family, and are carried through from one generation to the next.
- This is true for you and your family, and for the children you care for and their families.





Go to slide 8



See below—information about family maps, or genograms, and information on how to construct one.

- A. A genogram presents a view of a family over more than one generation (usually at least 3). You can choose the information you might want to see, or provide, in a genogram of your family or another's family.
- B. Sometimes referred to as a family tree, the genogram can provide a picture of many different aspects of a family and its life experiences. Not only can it show how family members are related, or connected, to one another, but it can help family members think about the way a family thinks, feels and behaves and how those ways were passed down from one generation to the next (or, how certain ways of thinking, feeling and behaving that were not passed down or changed by family members).
- C. It depicts family roles and patterns of interaction with each other over three or more generations.
- D. It can also be used to show over time the traditions or experiences a family has had over time with education, health, social services, employment, etc....
- E. A genogram can also be used to show a family's ethnic and religious background, major family events (e.g., marriages, partnerships, divorces, deaths).
- F. By constructing a genogram, families have a way of providing and illustrating family information and "telling their story".

**DO:**

Lead participants in constructing a genogram. Give everyone a sheet of 11" x 17" paper.

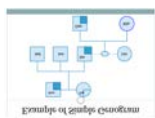
**SAY:**

One of the best ways to understand other families' dynamics is to begin to explore your own by making your own genogram.

Using the sheet of paper you just received, **each of us will construct a simple map of our family using standard genogram symbols. It will look something like this slide.**



Go to slide 9



Go to slides 10

**DO:**

Distribute the two-page handout, **"Basic Genogram Symbols."**

**SAY:**

Look at the dotted line that connects Jim and Leslie. Now look at both pages of the handout **"Basic Genogram Symbols."**

**ASK:**

What does the dotted line mean about Jim and Leslie's relationship?

**DO:**

Review the symbols on the **"Basic Genogram Symbols"** handout.

**DO:**

Distribute the handout, **"Tips for Constructing a Genogram."** Read a few of the rules on the handout, "Tips for Constructing Genograms."

**SAY:**

Let's look at a few of the major rules for constructing a genogram.

1. Indicate a male with a square and a female with a circle.
2. Include first names.
3. Indicate a romantic partnership with a line connecting the partners.
4. Use one slash through the horizontal line connecting partners to signify a separation.
5. Indicate a family member who is no longer living by drawing a small "x" in the corner of the circle or square.
6. Draw a circle around the family members who comprise the household.
7. Expand horizontally to depict siblings and cousins; expand vertically to chart the generations through time.

**SAY:**

Now take your sheet of paper and a marker and make a simple genogram of your family. Show two to three generations on your genogram and the kind of relationships between people. We'll take 15 minutes to create our simple genograms.

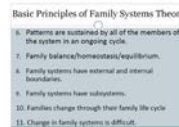
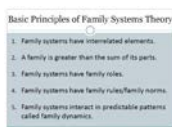
  Allow a maximum of 15 minutes to construct a simple genogram, including your own.  Be prepared to describe your genogram if no one volunteers.	 DO: Give a time check after 7 minutes and call time after 15 minutes.  ASK: Are there two volunteers who would be willing to briefly share a description of their genogram; that is, to identify the members of their family and the relationships? A genogram can be useful to understand your family and to help others understand your family.  DO: Thank the volunteers.
 Announce a 10 minute break.	 Session break.

Section C	Basic Principles of Family Systems Theory
 minutes	Suggested time is 45 minutes
Section overview	Explain the 11 basic principles of family systems theory.
Facilitation techniques	☐ mini lecture ☐ large group discussion/activity ☐ small group discussion/activity ☐ pair and share ☐ individual activity/reflection ☐ role play ☐ case scenario ☐ PowerPoint ☐ chart paper ☐ DVD, video clip ☐ audio recording ☐ textbook, book, or manual ☐ participant guide/handout ☐ website
Materials	“Family Systems Theory” PowerPoint® presentation slides. - LCD projector and laptop. - Handouts. - Exercises. - Post-it® Wall Pad with Command™ Strips. - Markers.
 Note to trainer	Remember that family rules are often embedded within a cultural context. As you interact with class participants, think about what they are bringing to the training. How can your instruction meet them where they are and invite their expertise into a shared experience?
Session objectives	- Understand the foundations of family systems theory. - Understand different types of parenting styles and their impact on children. - Understand the positive parenting approach. - Understand the foundations of strengths-based, family-centered practice. - Understand aspects of trauma, traumatic experiences, and trauma-informed care.

SCRIPT



Turn to slides 11 & 12.



Introduction to the Basic Principles of Family Systems Theory



SAY:

In this section, we will talk about the ideas that are the foundation of family systems theory. The ideas can be summarized into 11 principles:

1. Family systems have interrelated elements.
2. A family is greater than the sum of its parts.
3. Family systems have family roles.
4. Family systems have family rules/family norms.
5. Family systems interact in predictable patterns called family dynamics.
6. Patterns are sustained by all of the members of the system in an ongoing cycle.
7. Family balance/homeostasis/equilibrium.
8. Family systems have external and internal boundaries.
9. Family systems have subsystems.
10. Families change through their family life cycle.
11. Change in family systems is difficult.

I will briefly explain each principle individually and talk about how they can be used when caring for children and families as you do.

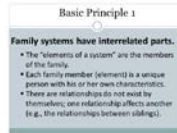
They can help you understand how different families work and what they value.

They can also help you understand your group, or family, as it were, of children.

Caring for children in groups is like caring for a family, with its different subsystems, roles, etc...(the child who is a peacemaker, the child who is the follower, etc...).



→ Turn to slide 13.



SAY:

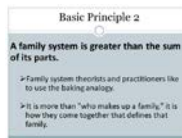
The first principle is “Family systems have interrelated elements.” That means:

1. The “elements of a system” are the members of the family.
2. Each family member is a unique person with his or her own characteristics.
3. Family relationships do not exist by themselves; one relationship affects another (e.g., the relationships between siblings).
4. Within family systems theory, the focus is on how family members relate to one another.

Remember the family maps—those show that family relationships affect other family relationships.



→ Turn to slide 14.



SAY:

The second principle is “A family is greater than the sum of its parts.”

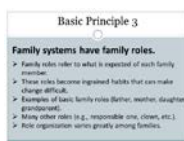
1. A common analogy often used by family systems theorists and practitioners is found in baking.
2. The cake that comes out of the oven is more than the eggs, flour, oil, baking soda, and vanilla that make up the parts or elements of the cake.
3. It is how these elements combined to form something larger than the ingredients that makes the cake.

The same is true with families. It is more than "who makes up a family;" it is how they come together that defines that family. The family maps also showed this.

You may also see this with the children for whom you care—there are certain ways a particular group of children and caregivers “work” and they are different depending upon who is in there, what they “bring” to the group, and then how the group comes together as a group.



Turn to slide 15.



SAY:

Principle 3 is “Family systems have family roles.”

1. Family roles refer to what is expected of each family member.
2. Family roles become ingrained habits that can make change difficult.
3. The most basic types of roles are “father,” “mother,” “aunt,” “daughter,” “son,” “grandmother,” etc. What is expected from people in each of these roles?
4. But there are also roles beyond this most basic level. For example, one person may be the “clown” of the family. Another person may be the “responsible one.” One person may be the “emotional one.” Another role might be “Crazy Uncle Joe” who everyone knows is going to act odd in his own unique way. There are a lot of different roles in families.
5. Role organization varies greatly among families.

Ideally, roles within a family are clear and flexible. You may see this with your family, or with the group of children for whom you care—young children bring the roles they are learning in their family into their child care groups—the helper, the peacemaker, the funny one.



Turn to slides 16 & 17.

Basic Principle 4

Family systems have family rules/norms.

- Families maintain stability by developing rules about how to live together.
- Some rules are explicit/spoken and some are often unspoken.
- Families vary in the kind of rules they have, whether they can be discussed, how easily they can be changed, and how they are enforced.

Basic Principle 4 (continued)

- Family rules can be about anything.
 - When people are angry at each other, do they express this or keep it to themselves?
 - When people are affectionate, do they express this or keep it to themselves?
- Families tend to develop patterns about these rules.
- Family members may see these things as "just the way it is," but different families do these things differently.



SAY:

Principle 4 is that, "Family systems have family rules/family norms."

1. Families maintain stability by developing rules about how to live together.
2. Family rules are rules about how the family operates.
3. Some rules are explicit/spoken and some are often unspoken.
4. Families vary in the kind of rules they have, whether they can be discussed, how easily they can be changed, and how they are enforced.
5. Family rules can be about anything. For example:
 - a. When people are angry at each other, do they express this or keep it to themselves?
 - b. How affectionate or emotional are family members expected or allowed to be with each other?
 - c. How do decisions get made in the family? Who has input and who is expected to "just go along"? How is the final decision made?
 - d. How are conflicts resolved?
 - e. Are there limits on "how much" or in what ways kids can argue with their parents?

f. How much are family members “allowed” to talk to people outside the family about family problems?

6. Families tend to develop patterns about these sorts of things (and other similar types of things). These patterns become “unspoken rules.”

7. Family members may see these things as “just the way it is,” but different families do these things differently from one another.



Turn to slide 18.



DO: Distribute the exercise “**Understanding Family Rules**” and explain the directions.



Turn to slide 19.



SAY:

Let’s do an exercise about “**Understanding Family Rules, also called Family Norms.**” The directions are to circle the choice that best describes the norms of your family as you were growing up. PLEASE NOTE: There are no right or wrong answers. This is just a way to describe your family’s norms.

I’ll read the statements and you should circle the answer that best describes your family rule. (Read each statement and allow a few minutes for participants to respond).



DO:

After all participants have completed the form, read each statement and ask one participant to respond to each reflection question.



(Ask for one different volunteer to respond to each question).



ASK:

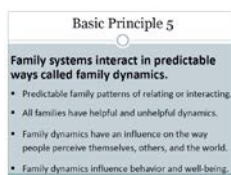
1. In what ways have your family rules/family norms positively affected you?
2. In what ways have your family rules/family norms influenced how you relate to others?
3. What factors contributed to your family rules/family norms (e.g., family history, stressors)?

You may also want to think about the group of children for whom you care.

- What are the “family rules” or ways of acting?
- How do you think those “rules, or norms” affect the children, or affect you as their caregiver?
- What do you think contributes to those rules?



→ Turn to slide 20.



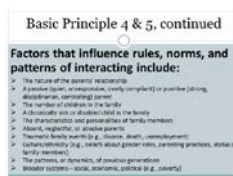
SAY: The **fifth basic principle** is that **“Family systems interact in predictable patterns”**.

1. Families develop unique patterns of relating, or interactions, among family members.
2. All families have helpful and unhelpful patterns of interacting.

3. The ways families interact with each other often have a strong influence on the way people perceive themselves, others, and the world.
4. They also influence relationships, behaviors, and well-being.
5. Understanding a family's patterns of interacting can help you understand why parents and child act the way they do. You can also think about the patterns of interacting in the group of children for whom you care. That can help you understand why children act the way they do.



→ Turn to slide 21.



6. Factors that influence family rules/family norms and family's patterns of interacting are:
 - The nature of the parents' relationship.
 - A passive (quiet, or unresponsive, or overly compliant) or punitive (strong disciplinarian, controlling) parent.
 - The number of children in the family.
 - The characteristics and personalities of family members.
 - Absent, neglectful, or abusive parents.
 - A chronically sick or disabled child in the family.
 - Traumatic family events such as divorce, death, unemployment, or incarceration.
 - Family values, culture and ethnicity, including beliefs about gender roles, parenting practices, power, or status of family members.
 - The patterns, or dynamics, of previous generations (parents' and grandparents' families).
 - Broader systems (social, economic, political), including poverty.

**ASK:**

What factors may influence the norms and patterns in the group of children for whom you care?



Turn to slides 22, 23, 24

Basic Principle 6	Basic Principle 6 (continued)	Basic Principle 6 Example
Behavior patterns are sustained by all members of the family system in an ongoing cycle. • This cycle that can be difficult for individuals in a family to see. • The cycle that must be interrupted for families to grow and heal.	➤ Patterns are sustained by all of the members of the system in an ongoing cycle because they engage in the same behaviors again and again. ➤ This cycle can be difficult for individuals in a family to see. ➤ The cycle must be interrupted for families to grow and heal.	➤ A mother may feel that her toddler is not responding to her authority. ➤ The child's lack of responding to her mother's requests for better behavior is only half of the picture. ➤ Consideration should be given to whether the mother's expectations are developmentally appropriate for the toddler. ➤ Individual and family stresses that may affect both the behavior of the toddler and the mother should be examined. ➤ The causes and effects are not always clear. They can come together in different ways.



SAY: The **sixth basic principle** is that **“Within family systems theory, behavior is seen as shared by the family members and comes from the patterns of behaving that have developed”**. The patterns of behaving keep family members acting in the ways they do, and with the roles they have.

1. Family members are strongly and emotionally connected and affect each other's thoughts, feelings, and actions.
 - As a result, each person's actions affect other members.
 - While this emotional dependence can facilitate cooperation, protection, and cohesion, it can also cause anxiety.
 - If one family member is stressed, then others may experience associated anxiety.
2. Patterns are sustained by all of the members of the system in an ongoing cycle because they engage in the same behaviors again and again.
3. This cycle that can be difficult for individuals in a family (or in a child care setting) to see.

4. The cycle must be interrupted for families to grow and/or heal. For example:

- A mother may feel that her toddler is not responding to her authority.
- In fact, the child's lack of responding to her mother's requests for better behavior is only half of the picture.
- Consideration should be given to whether the mother's expectations are developmentally appropriate for toddler.
- Individual and family stressors that may affect both the behavior of the toddler and the mother should be examined.
- The causes and effects are not always clear, or straightforward. They can come together in different ways.



SAY:

Let's look a little more closely at how one family member's behavior or circumstances impact the behavior or actions of other members. For example, a preschooler who has difficulty controlling her behavior can "destabilize," or make it difficult, for the whole group. A caregiver might find herself planning activities differently, or spending much more time focused on that child than with other children. The whole group has had to adapt to this child's challenging behavior.

How might the children be affected by the child who has difficulty controlling her behavior?

An ill family member can affect the family dynamics. How might you see an ill family member affecting family alliances or patterns of interaction among family members?



Turn to slide 25.

Reflection Questions:
Impact of Family Members'
Behavior on Others



DO:

Direct participants to the handout **“Impact of Family Members’ Behavior on Others.”** Allow for group reflection and discussion as time permits.



Turn to slide 26.



SAY:

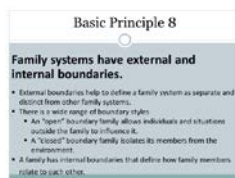
The **seventh basic principle** about family systems theory is about **family homeostasis, which means “balance” or “equilibrium.”**

1. Every family is faced with the challenge of allowing for growth and change while maintaining the integrity of the family system.
2. Families are constantly adapting, changing, or responding to daily events as well as more long-term developmental challenges and changes.
3. According to family systems theory, families strive for a sense of balance/equilibrium/homeostasis. The concept of homeostasis or equilibrium explains how families strive for a sense of balance between the challenges they confront and what they can bring to coping with the challenges. When such balance is not found, the rules or dynamics of the family may need to be adjusted to restore this balance.
4. **Homeostasis or equilibrium also refers to the tendency of family systems to keep doing things as they’ve always been done.**

This helps explain why it can be hard to change the way people relate to each other, or solve their problems. And why it can be hard to change the way a group of children is interacting together.



Turn to slide 27.



SAY:

Principle 8 is that **“Family systems have external and internal boundaries”**.

1. A family has an invisible external boundary that helps to define it as separate and distinct from other family systems. External boundaries influence the movement of people and information into and out of the system. External boundaries also regulate the flow of information into the family system.
2. There is a wide range of boundary styles, from “open” to “closed.”
3. A family with “open” boundaries allows individuals and situations outside the family to influence it. In open boundary systems, members and others are allowed to freely come and go without much restriction. Early education and care providers working with these families may find themselves being welcomed into the family and information about the family is forthcoming without limitations.
4. A closed boundary systems isolates its members from the environment and seems isolated and self-contained. In more closed families, the rules strictly regulate what information may be discussed and with whom. As a child care provider, a family’s boundaries may affect how easy or difficult it is for you to get to know them and build a relationship, and have them share personal information with you. It may also affect how easy or difficult it may be for you to share information about their child with them (e.g., challenging behavior, concerns about developmental delay).
5. A family has internal boundaries that define how family members relate to each other.

No family system is completely closed or completely open. There is no ideal type and different styles work for different families.

Although it may seem like you are not always getting the response you want, knowing that all families have different boundaries can help you figure out how best to individualize your efforts with each family.



Turn to slides 28 & 29.

Basic Principle 9	Basic Principle 9 (continued)
Family systems have subsystems or alliances. - Every family system contains a number of small groups usually made up of 2-3 people and based on gender, sex, interests, etc. - Typical subsystems include: (a) the adult couple (b) siblings (c) a parent and child with similar interests - Each subsystem/alliance has its own rules, boundaries, and unique characteristics.	- Families develop alliances to help accomplish the tasks and goals of the family. - When the tasks align with what other family alliances are working to accomplish, families run smoothly. - Conversely, when tasks are not aligned, families face challenges.



SAY:

Principle 9 states that “**Family systems have subsystems**”.

1. Every family system contains a number of small groups, usually made up of two to three people and based on gender, sex, interests, etc. Typical subsystems are (a) the adult couple, (b) siblings, and (c) a parent and child with similar interests, such as a mother-daughter or father-son.
2. These relationships are called subsystems or alliances. (They are special connections between people with similar interests or characteristics).
3. Each subsystem or alliance has its own rules, boundaries, and unique characteristics.
4. Families develop groupings, or alliances, to help accomplish the tasks and goals of the family. When the members or tasks associated with each group become blurred with those of other groups, families may have difficulties. For example, when a child becomes involved in the issues of the marital group, difficulties often emerge that may require outside help.
5. When the members or tasks of the group are in line with what other family groups are working to accomplish, families work smoothly. When the tasks are not aligned, families may have difficulties. For example, when a child asks the father for permission and he denies

it, and the child then asks permission from the mother and the mother grants permission without consulting the father, there can be challenges.

You may notice this in the families of the children you care for. You may also notice this with the children you care for. Can you think of a time where the alliances between children have resulted in smooth working, or a conflict?



→ Turn to slide 30.

Basic Principle 10

Family systems change through their life cycle.

- Stages of a family's life cycle can be labeled as: (a) unattached adults, (b) newly-partnered adults*, (c) childbearing adults, (d) pre-school age kids, (e) school-age kids, ... (i) retired adults.
- Changes are caused by both normative (predictable life cycle changes) and non-normative (family stresses/crises) factors.



SAY: Principle 10 acknowledges that **“Family systems change through their family life cycle”**.

1. Families go through stages of a life course/life cycle just as individuals do.
2. Stages of a family's life cycle can be labeled as: (a) unattached adult, (b) newly-partnered adults (although this stage can be skipped by adults who choose to be single parents), (c) childbearing adults, (d) pre-school age children, (e) school-age children, (f) teenage children, (g) launching children, (h) middle-aged adults, and (i) retired adults.

Stressors in family systems are caused by both normative (predictable life cycle changes) and non-normative (crisis) factors.



→ Turn to slide 31.

Basic Principle 11

Change in family systems is difficult, even change for the better.

- It means losing familiar ways of acting, thinking or feeling.
- Achieving family goals requires adaptation.
- Setbacks may be caused by fear of change.
- Focus on redeeming qualities or strengths, and consider why family members may be “resisting” change.



SAY:

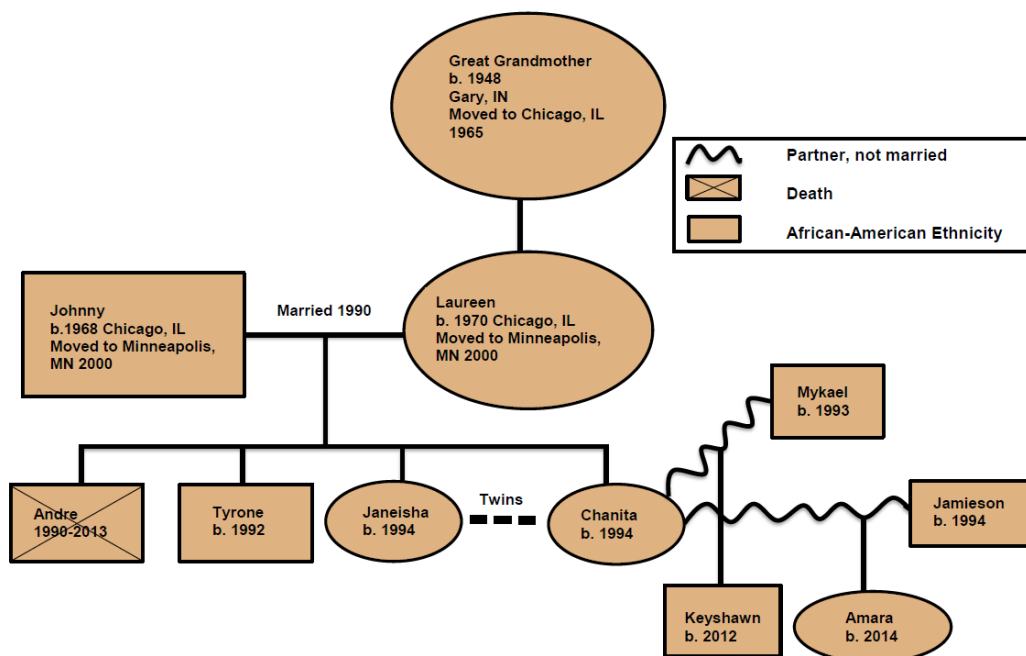
Principle 11 - the last principle of family systems theory is that **“Change in family systems – even change for the better – is difficult”**.

	1. It means losing way (s) of acting, thinking or feeling that are familiar and that can be frightening. 2. So even though family members want to achieve their goals, the path to achievement requires adaptation. 3. Fear of change is often reflected through poorly sticking with the plan to change. It is important to keep focused on a child or family member's positive qualities, or strengths, and to consider why a family member or members may "resist" involvement in the process/program. Change can be hard for anyone, and for some, harder than others. Family systems can help us understand why change can be hard.
 Conclude session.	 SAY: This brings us to the end of this module of the Family Systems Training. We have covered a lot of ground today and I hope you have a more thorough understanding of family systems and how they can shape families and children's thoughts, behaviors, relationships, and actions.

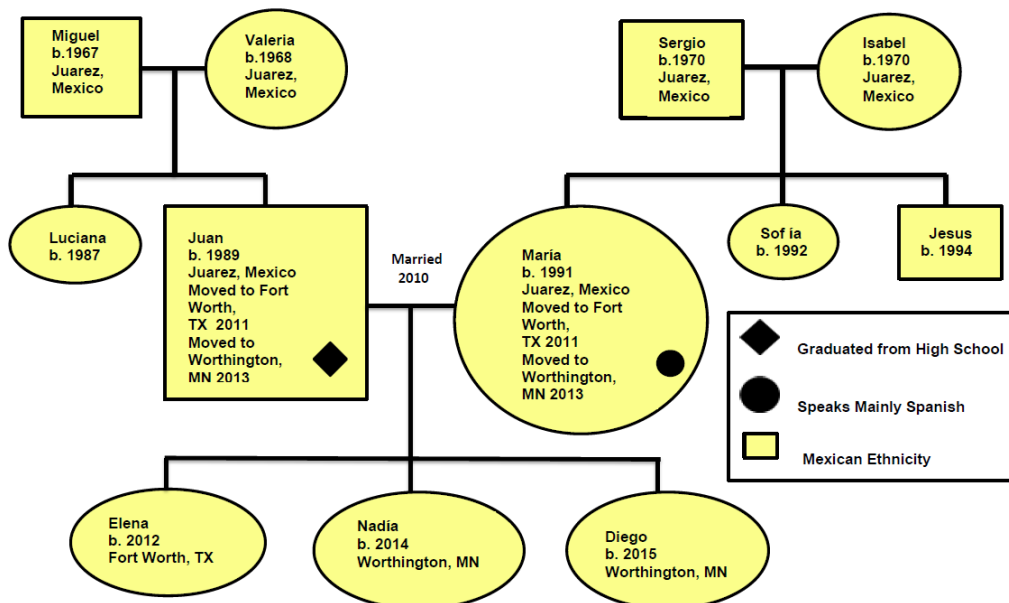


TRAINER NOTES/REFLECTIONS

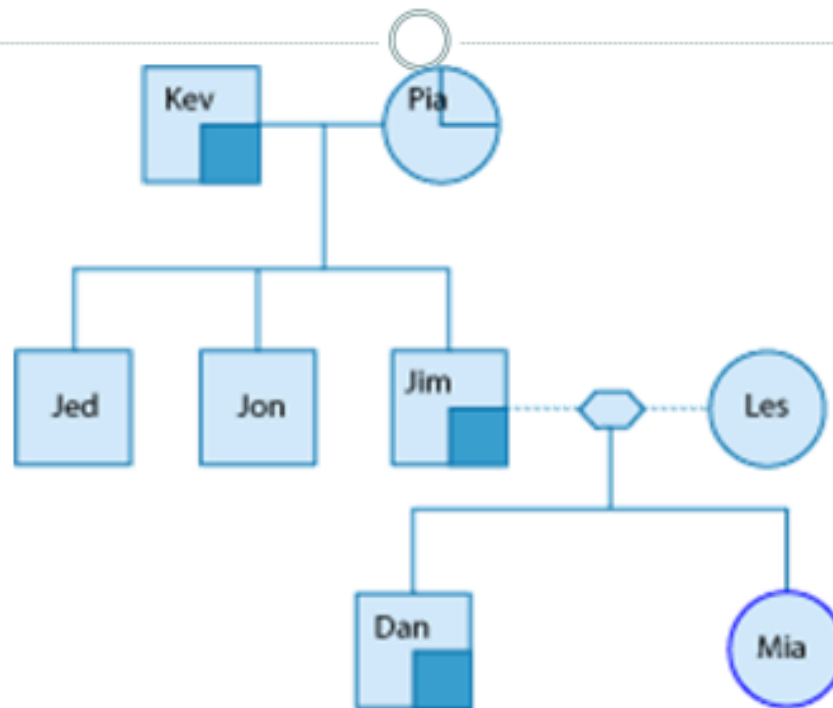
Keyshawn's Family Map



Elena's Family Map



Example of Simple Genogram



Basic Genogram Symbols



Female



Male



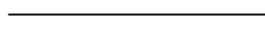
Deceased Female



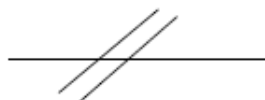
Deceased Male



Positive Relationship between Two People



Close, Positive Relationship between Two People



Divorced

Tips for Constructing a Genogram

Tips for constructing a genogram:

1. Indicate a male with a square and a female with a circle.
2. Include first names.
3. Indicate a family member who is no longer living by drawing an "X" in the circle or square
4. Draw a line between two people who are connected in some way.
 - a. Use one straight line to indicate a positive relationship
 - b. Use 2 straight lines to indicate a close, positive relationship
 - c. Use a diagonal slash through the horizontal to indicate a divorce
 - d. Use a dotted line to indicate a distant relationship
 - e. Use a zig-zag line to indicate a hostile relationship
5. Enter children according to age, starting with the oldest on the left.
6. Draw a circle around the family members who comprise the household.
7. Expand horizontally to depict siblings and cousins; expand vertically to chart the generations through time.
8. Be creative in depicting other information. Create a key at the bottom of the page so the information can be understood

Sample Questions for Creating Genograms:

1. Who is in your family? How is each person related?
2. What is your relationship like with each member?
3. How often do you see each member?
4. Who lives in your household?
5. Which family members know about your current situation and your goals?
6. How have they responded?
7. Has anyone in the family ever had similar problems?
8. When did the problem begin? Who noticed it first? Who is the most concerned?
9. What solutions were attempted in those situations? By whom?
10. Who have you found the most helpful/supportive?
11. In what ways have they been helpful?
12. Is there anyone outside the family who has been particularly supportive?
13. Is there someone you would want involved in this process?
14. Are there any family members who are extremely close?

15. How do family members support each other?

16. Are there any family members with histories of mental illness? Substance use?

Who in the family is working? In what types of jobs? How long have they been at each job? Do they like their jobs?

18. Do any family members routinely use medication? What kind and what for? Who prescribed it?

19. Do you think any members drink too much or have a drug problem? Has anyone else ever thought so? What drugs are used? When? How often? What has the family attempted to do about it?

Shapiro, C., Myers, A., & Toner, C. (n.d.). Strength-based, family-focused practice. A clinical guide from family justice. Retrieved from <http://www.familiesoutside.org.uk/content/uploads/2011/02/family-justice-clinical-guide.pdf>

Understanding Family Rules (also called Family Norms)

Directions: Circle the choice that best describes the norms of your family as you were growing up.

NOTE: There are no right or wrong answers. This is just a way to describe your family's norms.

1. How often did your family eat dinner together as a family?

Always Most of the time Occasionally Never

2. How often did the members of your family hug each other to display affection?

Very often Rather Frequently On special occasions Never

3. How often did the members of your family express verbal affection for each other?

Very often Rather Frequently On special occasions Never

4. What were the rules for expressing disagreement in your family?

Okay to express disagreement, even if it hurt feelings	Okay to express disagreement, but be considerate of others	Okay to express disagreement indirectly	Not okay to express disagreement
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5. What were the rules for expressing anger in your family?

Yelling was okay	Showing anger was okay	Talking was okay	Not okay to express anger
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6. The traditional gender roles in our society often involve men working at a career and women taking care of children and the house. With that understanding, how traditional would you describe the gender roles of your family?

Very	Mostly	A little	Not traditional at all
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7. What was the attitude of your parents toward your education?

Extremely Supportive	Moderately supportive	A little supportive	Uninvolved
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Adapted from the "Quick Family Culture Scale" Hatcher, J. W., Parks, M. W., & Suesser, K. (2004). Using family culture to illustrate the basics of intercultural interaction: An exercise to teach the problems and potential of cross-cultural interaction. Retrieved from <http://www.uwosh.edu/hst/?p=499>

Reflection Questions

1. In what ways have your family rules/family norms positively affected you?

2. In what ways have your family rules/family norms influence how you relate to others?

3. What factors have contributed to your family rules/family norms (e.g., family history, stressors)?

Reflection Questions: Impact of Family Members' Behavior on Others

Reflection Questions

1. How might members of a family be affected by another member's incarceration?

2. What challenges may various family members face related to a member's incarceration? (e.g., wife, siblings, parents).

3. How might members of a family be affected by another member's alcoholism?

4. What challenges may various family members face related to a member's alcoholism? (e.g., wife, siblings, parents).