

# **Role in Reunification Training Material**

For Foster Parents, Caseworkers, and Agency Staff Region 4 (4Kids4Families), Texas CBC

This instructional booklet equips stakeholders with practical tools and frameworks to support safe and timely family reunification. It introduces essential principles, timelines, and trauma-informed strategies that align with state and regional goals under Texas Community-Based Care (CBC). The goal is to foster collaboration across families, caregivers, and professionals for the best outcomes for children.

# 1. Understanding the Reunification Process

The reunification process in Texas follows structured steps, beginning with court hearings such as the Adversary Hearing (within 14 days of removal), Status Hearing (by day 60), and two Permanency Hearings (typically at 6 and 10 months). Final hearings must occur within 12 months unless an extension is granted.

Foster parents and caseworkers play critical roles by supporting court-ordered service plans, helping children maintain connections to birth families, and advocating for child safety and well-being. Every action from visit supervision to therapy coordination should align with the goal of permanency through safe reunification when possible.

## **2. Engaging Birth Families During Visitation and Planning**

Supportive visitation practices include consistent scheduling, providing neutral and welcoming spaces, and ensuring that children feel safe and supported during and after visits. Professionals should foster empathy by coaching birth parents in parenting techniques, helping them prepare for visits, and reinforcing their strengths.

Joint meetings and shared care logs can help bridge communication. Foster families should be encouraged to take a nonjudgmental stance and participate in Family Team Meetings to reinforce unified goals.

### **3. Trauma-Informed Care for Reunification**

Transitions can be deeply emotional for children. Applying trauma-informed care means recognizing behavioral cues as signals of underlying stress or fear. Caregivers should maintain structure and routine while preparing the child for change. Tools like social stories, visual schedules, and calming techniques can help children feel more in control.

Therapeutic support should remain in place before, during, and after reunification to reduce emotional disruptions. Staff should validate children's mixed feelings and equip parents with similar strategies.

## 4. Legal and Procedural Timelines in Texas

Texas Family Code mandates a timeline for child welfare cases:

- Day 014: Emergency removal and Adversary Hearing
- By Day 60: Status Hearing and service plan approval
- Months 56: First Permanency Hearing
- Month 10: Second Permanency Hearing
- Month 12: Final Hearing (can extend to 18 months)

Agencies must submit accurate updates to DFPS and courts. Foster parents should be informed participants and provide behavioral observations that impact case decisions.

## **5. Communication Strategies for Collaboration**

Consistent, honest, and respectful communication builds trust and enhances outcomes. Best practices include:

- Using communication notebooks between caregivers and birth parents
- Setting shared goals in family planning meetings
- Avoiding blame-focused language
- Hosting pre- and post-visit briefings

Agency staff should facilitate joint conversations to manage expectations and build cooperative relationships that place the child at the center.

## **Conclusion**

Reunification is a complex but achievable goal when caregivers and professionals are united in mission. This guide should be used alongside regional policies and DFPS directives to foster a trauma-informed, child-centered reunification culture.

The journey home requires patience, structure, and unwavering belief in the resilience of families. Let this resource strengthen your ability to navigate that path with clarity and compassion.