

Adolescents

Background Notes

Placing adolescents in foster care and maintaining them in a stable home can be a challenge. Just when they are developmentally separating, a new family comes into the picture and the teen is expected to be part of a family. Because teens are naturally trying to separate they are sometimes more resistant to input from adults. The child welfare worker with a good understanding of adolescence can make a positive difference in a teen's life. According to studies of young people discharged to themselves in different states: 12-30 percent struggled with homelessness; 40-63 percent did not complete high school; 25-55 percent were unemployed; those employed had average earnings below the poverty level, and only 38 percent of those employed were still working after one year. In addition 30-62 percent had trouble accessing health care due to inadequate finances or lack of insurance; 32-40 percent were forced to rely on some form of public assistance; 50 percent experienced extreme financial hardship; 31-42 percent were arrested; 18-26 percent were incarcerated; and 40-60 percent of the young women were pregnant within 12-18 months of leaving foster care. With these statistics in mind it is imperative that we use the time we have with the adolescents in care to prepare them for life after age 18 and that we work hard to keep them in one placement maximize the time we have.

Tasks / Assignments:

- Read Adolescents: "What Are They Thinking", from the appendix, about the teen brain. What techniques might be successful with your new knowledge about the teen brain?
- Learn who the caseworker is who takes most of the teen cases. Ask them what is fun, challenging and unique about their experience with teens.
- Ask the certifier/s in your office, which foster home works well with teens. Schedule an appointment to visit their home at a transition time, such as after school/homework, when you can observe.
- Ask the teen foster parent what caseworkers do that is most helpful to them with the teens in their home.

Discoveries:

