



Permanency &
Adoption
Competency
Training

Building a Community- Based Family Support Program





Review

Sessions 1-7





Session 8

- to provide Pathways to Permanence 2 participants with the tools needed to begin an ongoing parent support network in their community.
- to provide information and contact information about existing supports and networks in the community
- to develop a plan so that the knowledge and the relationships built during the Pathways to Permanence 2 training can continue to grow





The Learning Truly Begins When We Become Parents

- where do adoptive families turn to for the kind of support, advice, guidance and information that is so readily available to biological parents?
- just like biological parents, adoptive parents need to find other adoptive parents
- this is best accomplished by joining or starting an adoptive parents support group
- **research and common sense tells us that other parents on the adoption journey are the best sources for support, guidance, advice and information**





What Is A Support Group?

- truly about support and advocacy
- people are drawn together through shared experiences
- parents need to be heard, understood and helped with challenges that they face every day
- people often come to a group feeling frustrated, burnt out and at a loss of where to find a community that understands





What Keeps Us From Asking For Help

- so often when seeking professional help, adoptive parents have been misunderstood, rejected and/or blamed
- many grew up in times where people didn't reach out for help
- "it takes a village" is so true especially when you are raising a child who has come to your family with complex special needs





Relief and Empowerment

- relief and empowerment will come when you find the good, positive supports
- they no longer feel alone when they have the good, safe support of others who truly understand what they are experiencing
- other adoptive families can share what has worked for them





Why Support Groups

- research has shown us that parents benefit from support of other adoptive, foster, customary and kinship parents/caregivers
- members often share experiences and advice can be helpful talking to others who are in the same situation as you
- it may be helpful to turn to others outside your immediate circle





Benefits Of Support Groups

- the biggest advantage of a support group is realizing that you are not alone
- members of a support group usually share their personal experiences and offer each other moral support and emotional comfort
- members will also share their triumphs as well and be validated for the healing work they are doing





Parent Testimonials

First hand results of support groups.





"I have learned some very helpful strategies from other parents in the group. These tips and suggestions are not found on the internet, in books or from "normal" parents."

Adoptive parent of a 12 year old





"Because people at the adoption support group don't look at us like our clothes are inside out...they just get it."

Adoptive parent of a 4 year old





"To feel validated in our concerns and advocacy for our child's need of accommodations and understanding of her FASD disability. To be able to share our grief and not feel judged. To be able to talk about a typical day and be understood...connected, believed and heard."

Adoptive parent of a 4 year old





"To connect with other parents who "get it"...the joys, the struggles the accomplishments. A safe place to share concerns, learn from others and offer support. I don't attend often as family life is busy, but I know the group is always there without any judgement."

Adoptive parent of a 6 year old and a 8 year old siblings





" Knowing that there is a collective of knowledge and experience, particularly knowledge specific to our region-the stakeholders, the players, the resources, the possibilities, the limitations-is reassuring and comforting and time saving. Especially because post adoption support from the CAS is pretty limited, support groups are critical. No one else understands like adoptive parents do, not even CAS workers. Meeting with other adopted children normalizes adoption for our kids."

Adoptive parent of a 10 year old





"The support group is a place where we can go and celebrate our gains. They may seem small to others in our circle, but, to this group, they realize how huge they are. Even in our challenging days, we are able to laugh and remember that the healing work we are doing is helping. We feel re-energized and validated."

Adoptive parent of a 6 year old, 4 year old and 3 year old siblings





"Parenting our children is vastly different from parenting birth children. If you have not experienced it, you will not understand. It is extremely important for our health as parents to be able to vent, share ideas, shed tears, laugh, remove the isolation, network, all without judgement. We become better parents with this support."

Adoptive parent of a 15 year old.





Starting a Parent Support Group





Managing Group Meetings

- choose topics
- facilitator leads
- participants have a voice





Keep Members Coming Regularly

- keep communication open
- honour participants
- give members "ownership"
- assist the needs of the group
- ask for feedback from the group





Simcoe County Adoption Connections

- we meet monthly-CAS provides us with a free room
- workers often refer families that are new to adoption, families that are struggling or are in need of peer support
- ACO refers families to us as well as therapists, service providers and others
- when a child(ren) are placed on adoption probation, the family receives our brochure advising them of the group





Youth Group

- the youth group was created from the adult support group
- many parents were struggling with challenging behaviours
- youth were struggling with their developmental needs and often struggle with low self esteem, mental health issues and isolation
- in October 2013, the youth group was launched in partnership with the Adoption Council of Ontario and Simcoe County CAS





The goal of PACT and our Pathways initiative is giving parents:
SUPPORT,
TOOLS
& most important of all
HOPE!





Let's Make a Plan





Contact Information

- Contact PACT Parent Liaison for support
- Sylvia Gibbons
- sylvia.gibbons@adoptontario.ca
- 1-877-236-7820
- 647-943-0999 ext. 2995





References

- Adoptive Parent Support Group Facilitators' Toolkit Part One (Adoption Council of Canada)
- Adoptive Parent Support Group Facilitators' Toolkit Part Two (Adoption Council of Canada)
- Developing A Parent-To-Parent Support Network (North American Council On Adoptable Children)
- Parenting Children Who Have Experienced Trauma and Loss (Kinship Centre)
- Simcoe County Adoption Connections


