



BUILDING PROTECTIVE FACTORS DURING CASEWORK VISITS

Casework visits are opportunities to engage with caregivers and children in ways that both support the family and build protective factors. Your interactions with the caregiver and child are small interventions that can help the family move toward meeting goals in their case plan. Visits allow you to observe and reinforce what is going right, while also gently providing support, advice and encouragement when caregivers or children are struggling. The following tips can help caseworkers build protective factors among the families they serve.

Parental Resilience

- Project a positive and strengths-based approach to the family.
- Encourage the caregiver to talk about stresses or challenges they are experiencing (either in caring for the child or in life in general). Provide empathetic support and help the caregiver to problem solve around these challenges.
- Validate and support good decisions.
- Ask what the caregiver enjoys doing with the child and emphasize opportunities to build these activities into regular routines.
- Support the family as key decision-makers throughout the case planning process.
- Encourage the caregiver to explore his or her own past experiences of trauma and to address how those experiences might impact them in the present.
- Normalize the fact that parenting is stressful and help the caregiver plan out responses to stressful parenting situations.
- Encourage self-care strategies.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

- Observe parent-child interactions and provide positive coaching around supporting child development, nurturing the child or behavior management strategies.
- Model nurturing behavior in your interactions with the child.
- Model appropriate expectations for the child.
- When the caregiver's expectations are not in line with the child's developmental stage, engage the caregiver in a conversation about how to provide more developmentally appropriate responses.
- Ask the caregiver about his or her parenting challenges and recommend resources that can be used to address those challenges.
- Connect the caregiver to parenting education classes or resources as part of case planning.
- Help the caregiver to value the caregiving role by underlining the positive impact that nurturing care has on a child.
- Provide "just in time" parenting education (i.e., information a caregiver needs when new parenting issues arise). Provide and discuss tip sheets related to issues the child or caregiver is dealing with.
- Help the caregiver identify trusted informants who can provide parenting information.



Social Connections

- Model good relational behavior and use the case management process to help the caregiver strengthen relational skills.
- Help the caregiver reflect on the dynamics in his or her existing relationships and identify supporters who contribute positively.
- Encourage the caregiver to expand or deepen his or her social network.
- Encourage the caregiver to address personal or family issues (e.g., anxiety, depression) that serve as barriers to developing healthy social connections.

Concrete Support in Times of Need

- Help the caregiver to identify concrete needs that are causing stress in the family and connect the caregiver with resources to address those needs.
- Encourage help seeking behavior.
- Work with the family to understand any past experience with service systems and any stigma they attach to certain services.
- Help the family to navigate complex systems by explaining eligibility requirements, helping to fill out forms or making a warm handoff to someone who can help the family access the services they need.
- Help caregivers understand their role as an advocate for themselves and their children.

Social Emotional Competence of Children

- Provide warm and consistent support to the child.
- Look for signs of trauma in the child. When a child exhibits signs of trauma, connect the child and caregiver to mental health resources and help the caregiver to understand and interpret the behavior as stemming from trauma.
- Increase the caregiver's awareness of the importance of early relationships.
- Help the caregiver fully understand the importance of their role in nurturing the child's social-emotional development.
- Provide the caregiver with concrete tips and resources to help build the child's social and emotional competence.
- Encourage family play by bringing play supplies (e.g., a board game, crayons) to the visit.
- Connect the family to resources that support the child's social-emotional development.
- Help the caregiver address the child's attachment issues and/or challenging behaviors.
- Teach and model social skills, such as sharing, taking turns and positive conflict resolution.