



FALEFOS – WORKSHOPS

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WORKSHOPS WITH FOSTER CARERS



PROJECT: VOICE OF THE FOSTER CHILD



SOME GENERAL REMARKS: EXPERIENCES WITH WORKSHOPS FOR FOSTER CARERS

- ❖ Foster carers are a very grateful group for workshops
- ❖ Interested in input and more knowledge
→ in a comprehensive way (!)
- ❖ Need for exchange with other foster carers who face similar experiences and challenges

SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- ❖ Make sure that there is a good childcare/ playroom!
- ❖ Many foster carers work during the week → workshops should preferably take place during the weekend, esp. on Saturdays
- ❖ It is very important to have a nice place, creating a nice and comfortable atmosphere → remember: foster carers are spending their leisure time (!) and many of them have an exhausting every day life

ACCESS TO FOSTER CARERS

- ❖ Foster care services
 - ideally those who have good relationships with foster carers and offer a high quality service
- ❖ Foster parent's associations

REACH AND WIN THE TARGET GROUP

- ❖ Topics which are interesting to foster carers
- ❖ Attitude: foster carers are experts for their life situation, workshop can give helpful suggestions
- ❖ Learning together, from and with the experiences
- ❖ Creating a comfortable atmosphere → the benefit in participating must be higher than the costs for participating

TOPICS

Everything that deals with their situation as a foster carer, but particular the sensitive topics:

- ❖ Visiting contacts
- ❖ Collaboration with the birth family
- ❖ But also biography work with the child, transition (in and out of the foster family)
- ❖ Experiences of the children

OBSTACLES

- ❖ no child care/ playroom
- ❖ uncomfortable place
- ❖ place is difficult to reach/ far away
- ❖ bad food
- ❖ date is in a period which is filled up with other appointments and obligations (e.g. before Christmas)
- ❖ negative atmosphere
- ❖ Workshop moderator patronizes the participants

Example of a workshop

9.30 h	Welcome coffee
10h	Welcome, introduction, everyone introduces himself/ herself (emotion cards)
10.30h	Presentation: The meaning of the birth family – from the children’s point of view
11.30h	Open discussion
12 h	lunch break → lunch is ordered from a local party service, coffee at the end
13 h	Small groups (3-5 pple per group): how do foster parents experience the cooperation Exchange, notes on index cards or flipchart
14.30 h	coffee break
14.50h	Plenary: each group presents what they discussed about The moderator asks questions about what they wrote on index cards, the atmosphere in the group, if everybody agrees with the things written on the index cards (e.g. as a fish bowl)
16h	Plenary discussion: linking the experiences of the foster children with the foster carers experiences: what does that mean for a) Services: how should they support foster parents, birth parents & children reg. cooperation? b) foster parents: what can foster parents do to improve visiting contacts → peer recommendations c) when indicated: next steps
16.45h	End

WHAT FOSTER CARERS SAID ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS

„The workshops raised in me awareness from which world children are coming, which is so different to our every day life! Before I was afraid that they would use the workshop to accuse foster carers because there might be competition between the foster child and the biological children.“ (foster mother)

„For me, the workshop have been a true enrichment, because we were altogether working in a very competent way with many topics, experiences and opinions. Difficulties and problems were named and not, like in other groups which I had experienced before, whitewashed or played down. We had lively discussions and it made me wish for more workshops like that.“ (foster mother)

PROJECT:
LEUCHTTURM-PROJEKT
PFLEGEKINDERDIENST



SOME GENERAL REMARKS: EXPERIENCES WITH WORKSHOPS FOR **PROFESSIONALS**

- ❖ Voluntary participations leads to a higher level of identification
- ❖ Helpful:
 - ❖ topic is linked to actual working situation
 - ❖ Professionals requirements and interests are fulfilled

ACCESS TO PROFESSIONALS

- ❖ Existing networks
- ❖ Larger structures
- ❖ Work on topics that are on the professionals agenda

REACH AND WIN THE TARGET GROUP

- ❖ Interesting topic
- ❖ Appreciative attitude
- ❖ Cooperation
- ❖ Chance to be inventive
- ❖ Launch a new discussion

TOPICS

- ❖ Visiting contacts
- ❖ Genral collaboration with the birth family
- ❖ Siblings
- ❖ Reunification

- ❖ Cooperation within the social services

OBSTACLES

- ❖ Experiences are not taken seriously
- ❖ Daily working routine is not taken into consideration
- ❖ Participation is not voluntarily

WORKSHOP SITUATION

Concret example:

- ❖ How we found our topics
- ❖ Case Workshop
 - ❖ Structure
 - ❖ Methods
 - ❖ Report



WHAT CAN WE TELL ABOUT CONTACT WITH **BIRTH-FAMILY**?

- ❖ Get contact
- ❖ Have contact
- ❖ Keep contact
- ❖ Challenges for moderation/interviewer/host
- ❖ Which kind of activity is useful?
- ❖ Perspective of parents (topics & questions)

GET CONTACT

- ❖ the most difficult group to reach
- ❖ parents experiences with helping system and professionals is more control than support
- ❖ to get contact you need a different mode than being something like a helping professional

MAKE CONTACT

- ❖ be sensitive and meek
- ❖ be honest, open minded and transparent
- ❖ tragic but true: you do not have to put much effort, to surprise parents with gentleness

KEEP CONTACT

- ❖ **parents should decide:**

- ❖ use their communication channels

- ❖ take their ideas of contact

- ❖ accept their rules and their decisions (even if they stop the contact)

- ❖ **contact person should guarantee:**

- ❖ be friendly and charming, be clear, speak in a simple way

- ❖ find their recourses and tell them what you noticed about it

- ❖ tell them how important it is for you to be in contact with them

CHALLENGES FOR MODERATION / INTERVIEWER / HOST

- ❖ take parents as they are and as they come
- ❖ if you are not able to accept them as they are, let colleagues work with them
- ❖ necessary to know about my prejudices: looking different, different behavior and manners, different style of upbringing
- ❖ parents need to be sure of no next defamation/vilification

Success depends on the attitude:

- ❖ accept viability, provide validation & appreciation
- ❖ no-goes: degradation, embarrassment, reproaches, disadvantage, frustration

WHICH KIND OF ACTIVITY IS USEFUL

- ❖ sharing experiences with other parents?
- ❖ more activity – less talk(shop)
- ❖ attractive format (joy & easiness, accessibility, free drinks and food, maybe some special attraction like a lecture for foster carers)
- ❖ what they need is: serious support!

PERSPECTIVE OF PARENTS

- ❖ What kind of support is foster care (for me), if nobody takes care about me and my wishes?
- ❖ Why is it difficult for helping professionals to work with us (and not against us), if our child lives in another family?
- ❖ Who cares about my development and what happens when I comply?
- ❖ Why do the foster carers and we get mixed messages about the length of the support? What is the meaning of „long-term“?
- ❖ Who is my contact person at the social services?
- ❖ Which kind of parent-role is mine, if my child is living in foster care?
- ❖ How can I participate?