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**COUNSELING  
SERVICES**

The purpose of the shelter home is primarily to care for a child until the Agency can implement a plan for a child. A shelter home also serves as an evaluation tool. Shelter home parents will observe how a child responds to various kinds of interactions within the home.

The shelter home parents and staff should not question a child about his background or about his past relationships. Efforts should focus on appropriately dealing with the child while he is in the program. This involves talking with the child about his likes and dislikes to assist the child's worker in planning for the child's ongoing placement.

**Shelter Home  
Parent's Role**

In addition to providing twenty-four hour a day supervision, understanding, guidance, and in general being adult models, the parents also have a role in helping a child cope with external or environmental day to day problems which inevitably arise and to help a child effectively handle such problems.

It is important that the shelter home parents become an active participant in all phases of a child's daily life; recreation, education, religion and work. Such involvement should not be an idle, inert, "directive" nature. The philosophy being "we do things together", and not "you do as I say". No child can be expected to "open up" and talk to a "stranger". Without the presence of a warm, intimate, parent-child relationship, the parent's guidance role is severely limited.

If a child offers to share privileged or confidential information with a parent, the parent should advise the child, in terms he can understand, that he will listen, but that he will also share information with the child's worker. Information should never be coerced or accepted under the false pretense that it is only between the shelter home parent and the child. Simple honesty not only builds respect for parents, but at the same time an honest and straightforward relationship between parents and a child can be a tremendous aid in helping a child to grow. An honest and truthful relationship is a healthy one; a phenomenon that many children have never encountered.

The child's worker is responsible for the overall treatment plans of the child. Any information that the shelter home parents can provide concerning the child will help the child's worker formulate better plans. Shelter home parents are with the child twenty-four hours a day; the child's worker is not. Therefore, the shelter home parent has a responsibility to take part in the child's treatment planning by sharing their feelings, observations, and ideas with the child's worker.

Advice, reprimands, etc., should not be based on emotional reactions or "personal" responses. Shelter home parents must keep in mind that many of the children they are working with have very limited abilities to handle interpersonal relationships. Reacting in an emotional way to these children has no positive value toward enhancing their abilities to cope with interpersonal relationships.

Helpful rules of conduct may include:

1. The program orientation is to be positive; the child should be treated accordingly.
2. Be objective, not subjective.
3. Be actively involved and interested.
4. Treat a child as a worthy person by relating to him as such.
5. Be non-punitive in attitude as well as in action.
6. Never show overt disagreement with each other or the shelter home worker in the presence of a child.
7. Never make promises that cannot be kept or that might be contradictory to treatment plans.
8. Be positive; be an example.
9. Never loan and/or borrow money from a child.

### **Diagnostic/ Evaluative Services**

The shelter home placement for some children can serve as a very important information resource. It is not expected that the shelter home will be providing a professional diagnostic/evaluative statement. What will be provided is a statement of observations by the

shelter home parent such as: eating habits, sleeping habits, personnel hygiene habits, moods.

The shelter home parents should be able to share with the shelter home worker and the child's worker their feelings about the child which should be very beneficial in making subsequent plans.

### **RELATIONSHIPS WITH FORMER FOSTER CHILDREN**

Because of the short duration of the shelter home placement, it is not anticipated there will be many children who will return to visit the shelter home. Should a child who was formerly in placement visit, the shelter home parent and shelter home worker should not commit themselves to any plans which might be in conflict with the child's worker's responsibilities.

### **USE OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

When community services are being utilized, the shelter home parents and staff need to establish a close liaison with those services. For example, if a child is attending a public school, the public school system should have a good understanding of the shelter home and should have phone numbers immediately available for both the staff and the shelter home parents. The school must understand that when they have difficulty with a child they are to call before the difficulty develops into a critical situation.

This same kind of involvement is necessary when shelter home children are involved as in a community-based recreational or employment programs.