

Social Services Assistant Day 3 - Facilitator Guide



Strengthening Families Through Everyday Coaching

Practical Coaching Skills

Social Services Assistant Classroom Simulation

Day 3:

New Social Services Assistant Training Agenda

9:00 – 10:30	Welcome Strengthening Families Through Everyday Coaching
10:30-10:45	Lunch Break
10:45 – 12:00	Practical Coaching Skills
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch Break
1:00 – 2:30	Social Services Assistant Classroom Simulation
2:30 – 3:00	Lunch Break
3:00 -4:00	Post Test Wrap Up and Review

Before You Train

Facilitator Resources – Day 3

Materials and Handouts

- Name Tents
- Markers, Pens, Highlighters
- Sticky Notes
- Giant Sticky Note Pad
- Printed Participant Manuals
- Blank paper

DCFS Entry Level Competencies

- | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|
| • 101-1 | • 102-8 | • 104-2 |
| • 101-2 | • 103-1 | • 104-7 |
| • 101-8 | • 103-2 | • 105-1 |
| • 102-2 | • 103-4 | |
| • 102-6 | • 104-1 | |

DCFS Forms and Publications

- n/a

DCFS Policy And Internal Procedures

- n/a

Day 3 Sources

- n/a

New Social Services Assistant Training



MidSOUTH
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, HEALTH,
AND HUMAN SERVICES
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK

Day 3

NEW SOCIAL SERVICES ASSISTANT TRAINING – DAY 3



STRENGTHENING FAMILIES THROUGH EVERYDAY COACHING

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES THROUGH EVERYDAY COACHING



WELCOME

Time: 2 minutes

Purpose: To welcome and re-engage participants

Say:

Good morning, and welcome back to your final day of Social Services Assistant training. Over the past two days, we have focused on building effective communication skills with children, families, and caregivers, recognizing that meaningful engagement is the foundation of strong child welfare practice. We shifted our attention to understanding the children we serve by exploring typical developmental milestones and age-appropriate behaviors from infancy through adolescence, examining how trauma can influence a child's behavior and development, and discussing how to respond in ways that are supportive, safe, and trauma-informed.

Social Services Assistants have meaningful opportunities to support children and the adults who care for them throughout their time together. These routine moments create space to establish connection, offer encouragement, recognize strengths, and contribute to positive experiences for everyone involved. Today, we will focus on how each contact provides an opportunity to coach, encourage, and help families navigate challenges with confidence.

Target Outcomes



- Use a strengths-based coaching approach when working with parents and caregivers.
- Recognize everyday opportunities to encourage and reinforce positive parenting.
- Model appropriate interactions while maintaining professional boundaries.
- Coach parents through common family time situations without taking over.
- Document meaningful observations of parent-child interactions.
- Apply these skills during simulated family time scenarios.

TARGET OUTCOMES

Time: 6 minutes

Purpose: To establish clear learning objectives for the final day of Social Services Assistants training

Say:

By the end of Day 3, participants will be able to:

- ***Use a strengths-based coaching approach when working with parents and caregivers.***
- ***Recognize everyday opportunities to encourage and reinforce positive parenting.***
- ***Model appropriate interactions while maintaining professional boundaries.***
- ***Coach parents through common family time situations without taking over.***
- ***Document meaningful observations of parent-child interactions.***
- ***Apply these skills during simulated family time scenarios.***

Facilitator Question:

- Think about the last time someone coached or encouraged you instead of correcting you. How did that affect your confidence, and how might that same approach impact a parent during family time?

Facilitator Answer: *(Responses may vary)*

Say:

Today, you will learn and practice skills during realistic family time scenarios that will help you be better prepared to support families, build parental confidence, and promote healthy parent-child relationships.



More Than Supervision: The Social Services Assistant's Role in Strengthening Families

MORE THAN SUPERVISION: THE SOCIAL SERVICES ASSISTANT'S ROLE IN STRENGTHENING FAMILIES



EVERY INTERACTION IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN A FAMILY

Time: 3 minutes

Purpose: To describe how the Social Services Assistant role contributes to strengthening families, explain why encouragement and relationship-building are essential to successful family time, and to recognize that every interaction presents an opportunity to support positive parenting

Say:

Every interaction is an opportunity to strengthen a family. In your role as a Social Services Assistant, you help families by:

- ***Building trusting relationships.***
- ***Recognizing and reinforcing parent strengths.***
- ***Modeling positive interactions.***
- ***Encouraging growth through everyday moments.***
- ***Supporting safe, healthy parent-child relationships.***

Our goal is not to parent for families. Our goal is to help parents become more confident and successful with their own children.

Paraphrase:

Over the last two days, we've spent time understanding children, families, trauma, child development, and communication. Today, we're shifting our focus. We're going to talk about how Social Services Assistants actively help strengthen families.

Many people assume this job is primarily about transporting children or supervising family time. Those responsibilities are important, but they are only part of the role. The real value of a Social Services Assistant is the opportunity to spend time with children and parents during everyday moments. Moments where trust can be built, confidence can grow, and positive interactions can be encouraged.

Think about your own life for a moment. Most of us have learned something new because someone believed in us, encouraged us, and gave us the confidence to keep trying, not because they constantly pointed out our mistakes. Parents involved with DCFS are often under tremendous stress. They may feel judged, embarrassed, or discouraged. Many already believe they have failed.

As a Social Services Assistant, you have the opportunity to change that experience. That doesn't mean ignoring safety concerns or pretending everything is okay. It means intentionally looking for opportunities to recognize strengths, encourage progress, and help parents build confidence. Throughout today, we'll focus on practical ways to do exactly that.

Read the four questions below.

- What parent strengths did you notice?
- What coaching opportunity did you see?
- How could you encourage that parent?
- How would you document what you observed?

Say:

Keep these questions in mind, as they will serve as the framework for every discussion, activity, and simulation.

Every interaction we have with families has the potential to influence, encourage, and strengthen them. Before we think about how we can coach others, let's take a moment to reflect on our own experiences. As you complete the next activity, consider how those same coaching behaviors can shape the way you support children, parents, and caregivers during your interactions with families.

Who Helped You Grow

*Think About Someone Who
Helped You Grow*

Activity

ACTIVITY: WHO HELPED YOU GROW

Time: 10 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants recognize the impact of strengths-based coaching by reflecting on their own experiences

Activity Instructions:

- Have participants think about someone who helped them become better at something - a teacher, coach, supervisor, parent, family member, or friend.
- What did they do that helped you grow?
- What did they do to make a difference?
- Allow participants two minutes to think individually.
- Then have them discuss at their tables.
- Record responses on a flip chart.
- Expected responses:
 - Encouraged me.
 - Believed in me.
 - Was patient.
 - Gave me feedback respectfully.
 - Showed me instead of taking over.
 - Celebrated progress.
 - Didn't give up on me.

Facilitator Question:

- How did that person's approach affect your willingness to keep learning?

Facilitator Answer: *(Responses may vary)*

Say:

Those same principles help parents learn new skills. Lasting change rarely happens because someone feels embarrassed or criticized. It happens because someone believes change is possible and provides support along the way. That's the mindset we're building today.

If every interaction is an opportunity, the next question becomes: How do we recognize those opportunities? Let's look at where coaching naturally happens during everyday interactions with families.

Key Takeaways

- Social Services Assistants do more than supervise family time.
- Every interaction can strengthen or weaken a family's confidence.
- Parents learn best in supportive relationships.
- Encouragement builds confidence.
- Small coaching moments can lead to meaningful change over time.



Finding Coaching Opportunities

FINDING COACHING OPPORTUNITIES

Looking for Opportunities During Ordinary Moments

- ☐ Greeting a child
- ☐ Reconnecting after separation
- ☐ Playing together
- ☐ Reading a book
- ☐ Sharing a meal or snack

- ☐ Helping with transitions
- ☐ Comforting a child
- ☐ Praising positive behavior
- ☐ Saying goodbye

Coaching doesn't just happen during difficult moments.

LOOKING FOR OPPORTUNITIES DURING ORDINARY MOMENTS

Time: 2 minutes

Purpose: To identify common opportunities to encourage parents, recognize teachable moments during everyday family interactions, and explain why small moments often have the greatest impact on parent-child relationships

Say:

When people hear the word 'coaching,' they often picture stepping in when something has gone wrong. But some of the most powerful coaching happens when nothing is wrong at all. Think about a typical family time.

There are dozens of small interactions between a parent and child such as

- *Greeting one another.*
- *Sharing a hug.*
- *Playing together.*
- *Reading a book.*
- *Sharing a snack.*
- *Helping clean up.*
- *Comforting a child when they become upset.*
- *Preparing for and saying goodbye.*

Each of those moments provides information about the relationship between the parent

and the child. Each one is also an opportunity to encourage a parent or reinforce something positive they're already doing. If we only pay attention when something goes wrong, we'll miss many opportunities to help families grow.

Finding the Opportunities

Imagine you're supervising a one-hour family time. Without thinking about problems, what interactions will probably happen during that hour?

Activity

ACTIVITY: FINDING THE OPPORTUNITIES

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: To prepare participants to notice the everyday behaviors, conversations, and interactions that naturally occur during a family visit

Activity Instructions:

- Have participants imagine they're supervising a one-hour family time visit.
- Without thinking about problems, what interactions will probably happen during that hour?
- As participants respond, write them on the board.

Examples they'll likely give:

- Saying hello
- Playing
- Talking
- Eating
- Coloring
- Going outside
- Comforting
- Redirecting
- Leaving

Facilitator Question:

- Which of these moments could become an opportunity to encourage a parent?

Facilitator Answer *(Responses may vary)*

Say:

The answer should become obvious. Every one of them. Sometimes we think coaching only happens during discipline. But children build relationships during ordinary moments. Parents build confidence during ordinary moments, too. When we notice those moments and encourage parents, we're helping strengthen the relationship between the parent and child, not just managing a visit.

Facilitator Question #1:

- Which of these moments do you think parents are usually most nervous about?

Facilitator Answer: *(Allow for a brief discussion)*

Facilitator Question #2:

- Which moments do you think are easiest for us to overlook?

Facilitator Answer: *(Allow for a brief discussion)*

Facilitator Question #3:

- What is one thing I can do or say that helps this parent leave feeling more confident?

Facilitator Answer: *(Allow for a brief discussion)*

Say:

Recognizing opportunities is only the first step. The next question is: What do we actually say? Sometimes, without realizing it, we slip into directing parents instead of helping them grow.

Let's look at the difference.

Key Takeaways

- Coaching opportunities happen throughout every family interaction.
- Small moments often have the greatest impact.
- Encouragement is most effective when it is immediate and specific.
- Family time is more than observation. It's an opportunity to strengthen relationships.



COACHING VS. CORRECTING

COACHING VS. CORRECTING

Social Services Assistant Coaching Principles

1. Assume Positive Intent
2. Recognize Strengths Before Addressing Concerns
3. Build Confidence Through Encouragement
4. Coach Through Questions and Reflection
5. Model Positive Interactions
6. Support Growth, Not Perfection
7. Maintain Safety and Professional Boundaries

SOCIAL SERVICES ASSISTANT COACHING PRINCIPLES

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: To introduce the core principles of a strengths-based coaching approach and how Social Services Assistants can use these principles during everyday interactions with children, parents, and caregivers

Facilitator Preparation: Review the Social Services Assistant Coaching Principles prior to facilitating this module. Throughout the day, reinforce these principles during discussions, activities, and simulations.

Participant Manual: Social Services Assistant Coaching Principles

Say:

In your role as Social Services Assistants, it cannot be stressed enough that you have opportunities during everyday interactions with children, parents, and caregivers to strengthen families through encouragement, guidance, and support. By recognizing family strengths, modeling positive interactions, asking reflective questions, and celebrating effective parenting behaviors, you can help build caregivers' confidence and promote family growth. Consistently applying a strengths-based coaching approach transforms routine interactions into meaningful opportunities to support positive outcomes for children and families.

Let's take a closer look at the core coaching principles that guide this approach and explore what each principle looks like in practice.

Paraphrase:

1. Assume Positive Intent

- Begin with the belief that most parents want to have a healthy relationship with their children, even when they struggle to demonstrate effective parenting skills.

2. Recognize Strengths Before Addressing Concerns

- Intentionally look for positive parent-child interactions and acknowledge them before offering guidance or feedback.

3. Build Confidence Through Encouragement

- Parents are more likely to try new skills when they feel respected, supported, and capable.

4. Coach Through Questions and Reflection

- Encourage parents to think through situations by asking thoughtful questions instead of immediately providing answers whenever appropriate.

5. Model Positive Interactions

- Demonstrate calm communication, respect, patience, and healthy interactions that parents can observe and practice.

6. Support Growth, Not Perfection

- Focus on progress over time. Every family interaction is an opportunity to build skills and strengthen relationships.

7. Maintain Safety and Professional Boundaries

- A coaching approach never replaces the responsibility to intervene when safety concerns exist. Protecting children remains the first priority.

Say:

Understanding the coaching principles is only the first step. It is more than a concept, it's something you do through your words, actions, and observations during every interaction with a family. Now that we have discussed the principles, it's time to put them into practice.

Coaching Principles in Practice

Recognizing Everyday Opportunities to Strengthen Families

Activity

ACTIVITY: COACHING PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

Time: 20 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants apply the coaching principles to realistic family time situations by identifying opportunities to encourage, support, and strengthen parents through everyday interactions

Participant Manual: Coaching Principles in Practice: Recognizing Everyday Opportunities to Strengthen Families

Say:

In this activity, you will work through realistic situations to recognize coaching opportunities. Every interaction with a family presents moments where you can either simply observe or intentionally coach. In your role as a Social Services Assistant, challenge yourself to identify those coaching moments and consider how you can use each interaction.

Activity Instructions:

- Instruct participants to turn to the Coaching Principles in Practice page of their Participant Manual.
- Explain that they will have 10 minutes to read each scenario and write their responses.
- After 10 minutes, form small groups of 3–5 participants at their tables.
- Assign one coaching principle and scenario to each group. *(If there are not enough participants to establish 7 groups, assign groups more than one principle).*
- Explain to the group that they will have 5 minutes to discuss their answers to their assigned scenario.

- Instruct them to be prepared to share their responses with the larger group.

Facilitator Instruction:

Coaching Principle 1: Assume Positive Intent

Scenario 1: A father appears distracted as his toddler cries and refuses to sit down for lunch.

Facilitator Answer: (Possible response) *"It looks like you're really trying to help her settle down. Toddlers can have a hard time with transitions. Let's see what helps her feel comfortable."*

Coaching Principle 2: Recognize Strengths Before Addressing Concerns

Scenario 2: A mother remembers to ask her son about school before redirecting him after he interrupts her several times.

Facilitator Answer: (Possible response) *"I noticed you asked him about his day before correcting his behavior. He really seemed excited that you were interested in what he had to say."* Later, if needed: *"What do you think might help him stay focused while you're talking?"*

Coaching Principle 3: Build Confidence Through Encouragement

Scenario 3: A parent attempts to comfort an upset child by kneeling beside them and speaking calmly.

Facilitator Answer: (Possible response) *"You stayed calm and got down to her eye level. She started calming down once you did that. Those are the kinds of moments that help children feel safe."*

Coaching Principle 4: Coach Through Questions and Reflection

Scenario 4: A visit ends with the child becoming upset about leaving.

Facilitator Answer: (Possible response) The Social Services Assistant encourages the parent to reflect rather than immediately provide answers.

- "What do you think went really well during today's visit?"
- "When did you notice your child smiling the most?"
- "What helped your child calm down?"
- "What would you like to try differently next time?"

Coaching Principle 5: Model Positive Interactions

Scenario 5: The child interrupts several times while the Social Services Assistant is speaking with the parent.

Facilitator Answer: (Possible response) *"I hear you have something important to tell me. Let me finish this sentence, and then I'm going to listen to you."* The parent observes respectful communication, patience, and appropriate boundaries that they can later practice with their child.

Coaching Principle 6: Support Growth, Not Perfection

Scenario 6: During a previous visit, the parent struggled to engage the child. Today, the parent spends several minutes playing appropriately with the child.

Facilitator Answer: (Possible response) *"I noticed today you spent much more time following your child's lead during play. Last visit, they lost interest pretty quickly, but today they stayed engaged much longer. That's great progress."*

Coaching Principle 7: Maintain Safety and Professional Boundaries

Scenario 7: During play, the parent becomes frustrated and grabs the child's arm too forcefully.

Facilitator Answer: (Possible response) The Social Services Assistant immediately intervenes to ensure the child's safety while remaining calm and respectful. *"Let's pause for a moment. We need to make sure everyone stays safe."*

Let's talk about another way to help your child follow directions." The Social Services Assistant documents the incident in accordance with policy and continues coaching only when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Say:

Remember, as the case progresses, information may change as new threats arise and you must call the Hotline when:

- ***A new allegation increases the urgency or response priority.***
- ***A new alleged offender is identified who was not previously part of the report.***
- ***A new victim is identified and required separate screening***
- ***A near fatality Occurs.***

If you are unsure whether something required a new Hotline call, you consult with your supervisor immediately.

Activity Discussion:

After allowing several participants to share from their group discussion,

Facilitator Questions:

- How do the responses shared help build the parents' confidence or strengthen the parent-child relationship?
- How might the parent respond to this approach?

Facilitator Answer: *(Responses may vary)*

Say:

Coaching does not require lengthy conversations or formal instruction. The most effective coaching often occurs in brief, intentional moments during family time. A simple observation, thoughtful question, or word of encouragement can build a parent's confidence, reinforce effective parenting practices, and strengthen the parent-child relationship through meaningful, strengths-based interactions.

Remember that a strengths-based coaching approach never replaces your responsibility to protect children. When safety concerns arise, immediate intervention and adherence to DCFS policy must always take priority.

In the scenarios we just discussed, did the Social Services Assistants criticize the parent, or did they encourage, guide, and help the parent reflect? (Allow a brief moment of reflection) Those differences may seem subtle, but they can have a significant impact on a parent's confidence and willingness to learn. Let's explore the difference between coaching and correcting.

Coaching vs. Correcting

Coaching
focuses on
GROWTH.



Correcting
focuses on
MISTAKES.

Ask Yourself: Will what I'm about to say build this parent's confidence or simply point out a mistake?

COACHING VS. CORRECTING

Time: 2 minutes

Purpose: To help participants understand the difference between correcting behavior and coaching for growth, reinforcing that encouragement and relationship-building often create more lasting change than criticism.

Paraphrase:

Correcting focuses on mistakes:

- Points out what is wrong.
- Often creates defensiveness.
- Can reduce confidence.

Coaching focuses on growth:

- Recognizes strengths.
- Encourages small improvements.
- Builds confidence and trust.
- Helps parents discover solutions.

Say:

Let's be clear about something before we go any further. There are absolutely times when safety concerns require us to intervene immediately. If a child is unsafe, we act.

Today's discussion isn't about ignoring unsafe situations. It's about everything that happens in the hundreds of ordinary interactions that aren't emergencies.

Think about learning any new skill. If every mistake you made was immediately pointed out, how motivated would you be to keep trying? Probably not very. But if someone noticed what you were doing well, encouraged you, and helped you improve one step at a time, you'd probably feel much more confident. Parents are no different. Most already know they aren't perfect. What many need is someone who believes they can improve and helps them get there.

Knowing the difference between coaching and correcting is only valuable if you can apply it during family time. As you work through the next activity, pay close attention to the language being used, the intent behind the response, and the impact it may have on the parent's confidence and willingness to learn.

Which Response Builds Growth?

Which response is more likely to help the parent grow?

Response A

Response B

Activity

ACTIVITY: WHICH RESPONSE BUILDS GROWTH?

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: To strengthen participants' ability to identify responses that encourage parents' growth and confidence in communication with their children

Activity Instructions:

Tell participants: I'm going to read two responses. Decide which one is more likely to help the parent grow.

Scenario 1: A child spills a drink.

- Response A: "You need to pay closer attention."
- Response B: "These things happen. What could we do together next time to help prevent spills?"
- Brief Discussion.

Scenario 2: A parent becomes frustrated.

- Response A: "You shouldn't yell."
- Response B: "I could see that was frustrating. What usually helps you stay calm when things get hard?"
- Brief Discussion.

Scenario 3: A child refuses to participate.

- Response A: "Make him listen."

- Response B: “What do you think he’s trying to tell us right now?”
- Brief Discussion.

Activity Debrief

Facilitator Questions:

- “How did the coaching responses make the parent responsible for finding solutions instead of simply being told what to do?”

Facilitator Answers: *(Expected discussion)*

- Invites reflection.
- Shows respect.
- Builds confidence.
- Encourages problem-solving.
- Maintains dignity.

Facilitator Note (Very Important)

Remind participants: Using a coaching approach does not mean lowering expectations or avoiding accountability. Parents are still responsible for meeting case plan goals and ensuring their child’s safety. A coaching approach simply changes how we communicate while continuing to support those expectations.

Say:

We’ve talked about what coaching looks like. But what makes parents willing to listen in the first place?

The answer is confidence.

Let’s look at how we can intentionally build parent confidence during everyday interactions.

Key Takeaways

- Coaching encourages growth instead of shame.
- The way we communicate influences whether parents stay engaged.
- Questions often teach more effectively than lectures.
- Encouragement and accountability can exist together.
- Safety concerns always require immediate action.



**Building Confidence:
Build Belief Before Building Ability**

BUILDING CONFIDENCE: BUILD BELIEF BEFORE BUILDING ABILITY



Build Confidence Before Teaching Skills

BUILD CONFIDENCE BEFORE YOU TEACH SKILLS

Time: 2 minutes

Purpose: To teach Social Services Assistants that confidence is the foundation for learning and that recognizing strengths before offering guidance helps parents remain engaged and receptive to feedback

Paraphrase:

Parents are more open to learning when they feel:

- Heard
- Respected
- Encouraged
- Supported
- Capable

Before offering guidance:

1. Notice a strength.
2. Acknowledge the effort.
3. Offer one small suggestion.
4. Encourage continued progress.

Say:

People are more likely to change when they believe they can succeed. Think about the last time someone gave you feedback at work. Did you immediately become defensive? Or did you feel respected and willing to listen? Usually, the difference isn't what was said. It's how it was said.

The same is true for parents. Many parents involved with DCFS expect us to point out what they're doing wrong. Some have had years of people telling them they aren't good enough. If that's all we do, we're not likely to help them grow.

Instead, start by noticing something they are already doing well. That doesn't mean pretending everything is perfect. It means recognizing strengths first because strengths are what we build on. Once parents feel seen and respected, they're much more likely to accept suggestions and try something new.

As Social Services Assistants, one of the most powerful coaching skills we can develop is the ability to see and name positive parenting behaviors, even in challenging situations. In this next activity, you'll practice identifying those strengths and considering how recognizing them can become the first step in effective coaching.

Key Takeaways:

- Explain why encouragement increases engagement.
- Identify ways to acknowledge parent strengths.
- Practice giving balanced feedback that reinforces strengths while encouraging growth.



Finding Strength

Activity

ACTIVITY: FINDING STRENGTHS

Time: 10 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants identify strengths in parent-child interactions and practice using those strengths as the starting point for coaching that builds confidence, supports positive parenting, and strengthens the parent-child relationship.

Say:

Building confidence doesn't begin with giving advice. It begins with helping parents recognize their own strengths. When we intentionally notice and acknowledge those strengths first, we create a foundation of trust, increase a parent's confidence, and make them more open to learning and growth. Let's practice shifting our focus from what's wrong to what's strong by identifying strengths in everyday family interactions.

Activity Instructions:

Tell participants:

- I'm going to describe a family time situation.
- Your job is not to identify what's wrong.
- Your job is to identify one strength you could build on.

Scenario 1: A father arrives 15 minutes late, kneels, hugs his daughter, asks about school, and listens as she talks.

Facilitator Questions:

- What's one strength you noticed?

Facilitator Answers:

- Warm greeting
- The child felt comfortable
- Showed interest
- Eye contact
- Physical affection

Scenario 2: A mother struggles to redirect her son during play, but she stays calm and keeps trying instead of giving up.

Facilitator Questions:

- What strength could you reinforce?

Facilitator Answer:

- Patient
- Didn't yell
- Continued engaging
- Didn't quit

Scenario 3: A parent forgets part of the activity they planned but laughs with the child and makes up a game together.

Facilitator Questions:

- What positive parenting behavior do you see?

Facilitator Answer:

- Flexibility
- Positive engagement
- Creativity
- Maintaining connection

Activity Debrief**Facilitator Questions:**

- Was it difficult to look for strengths first?
- How might recognizing these strengths help that parent become more confident?

Say:

Building confidence doesn't mean ignoring areas that need improvement. It means starting with what's working so parents have something to build on. Think of it like building a house. We don't start by tearing everything apart. We start with a solid

foundation. Parent strengths are that foundation.

Now that we've talked about recognizing strengths, let's practice turning those observations into conversations. The words we choose matter.

Next, we'll look at how to give feedback that parents can actually hear and use.

Key Takeaways

- Every parent has strengths.
- Strengths are the foundation for growth.
- Encouragement increases willingness to learn.
- Notice effort, not just outcomes.
- Small successes often lead to lasting change.



Supporting Parents Through Constructive Feedback

SUPPORTING PARENTS THROUGH CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Feedback Families Can Hear

Effective feedback is:

- ✓ Specific
- ✓ Timely
- ✓ Respectful
- ✓ Encouraging
- ✓ Focused on growth

Formula to Effective Feedback:

Notice → Affirm → Encourage

FEEDBACK FAMILIES CAN HEAR

Time: 5 minutes

Purpose: To teach participants how to provide meaningful, strengths-based feedback that encourages parents to continue using positive parenting skills

Say:

Effective feedback is:

- *Specific*
- *Timely*
- *Respectful*
- *Encouraging*
- *Focused on growth*

A Simple Formula: Notice → Affirm → Encourage

Example:

"I noticed you got down to her eye level. She really seemed to respond to that. Keep doing that—it helps children feel heard and safe."

The goal isn't to point out mistakes. The goal is to help parents recognize what works and build on it.

Paraphrase:

Think about feedback you've received that actually helped you improve. Chances are, it wasn't vague. It wasn't, 'Good job.' It wasn't, 'You need to do better.' It was specific.

Someone pointed out exactly what you did well and encouraged you to keep doing it. Parents need that same kind of feedback. If we simply say, 'You're doing great,' they may appreciate the encouragement, but they don't know what behavior to repeat. On the other hand, if we say, 'I noticed you gave him a choice instead of raising your voice. He calmed down much faster.' We've helped the parent recognize exactly what worked. That's feedback they can use again tomorrow.

Say:

Now that we've explored what makes feedback easier for families to hear and receive, it's time to put those ideas into practice.

Build the Feedback

Formula to Effective Feedback:
Notice → Affirm → Encourage

Activity

ACTIVITY: COACHING PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants apply the coaching principles to realistic family time situations by identifying opportunities to encourage, support, and strengthen parents through everyday interactions

Say:

As Social Services Assistants, our conversations with families can either build motivation or create resistance. This practice activity focuses on using the Effective Feedback Formula to develop balanced, constructive feedback that centers on helping families succeed.

Facilitator Instructions:

Give each table a parenting scenario:

- **Scenario 1:** A parent comforts a crying toddler by sitting beside them and speaking calmly.
- **Scenario 2:** A father praises his child after the child cleans up toys without being asked again.
- **Scenario 3:** A parent patiently redirects a child who keeps interrupting.
- **Scenario 4:** A mother encourages her daughter after she becomes frustrated with a puzzle.

Activity Instructions:

- Each table writes one coaching statement using the formula: **Notice → Affirm → Encourage.**
 - Example: “I noticed you stayed calm even when he became frustrated. That really helped him settle down. Keep using that calm voice—it seems to help him feel safe.”
- Each group shares one response.

Activity Debrief**Facilitator Question #1:**

- How is this different from simply saying, ‘Good job’?

Facilitator Answer:

- It’s specific.
- It reinforces a behavior.
- The parent knows what to repeat.
- It feels genuine.
- It builds confidence.

Facilitator Question #2:

- Which kind of feedback would make you more likely to repeat the behavior?

Facilitator Answer: *(Responses may vary)***Say:**

One of the greatest gifts you can give a parent is helping them recognize their own success. Many parents don’t realize when they’re doing something well because they’re so focused on what they think they’re doing wrong. By noticing those moments and naming them, you’re helping build the confidence that leads to lasting change.

So far, we’ve talked about the mindset and communication skills that support parents. Next, we’re going to practice applying those skills during real parenting situations. The kinds of everyday moments you’ll encounter during transportation, family time, and other interactions with families.

Key Takeaways

- Effective feedback is specific, not vague.

- Reinforce behaviors you want to see again.
- Encourage progress rather than perfection.
- Parents remember feedback that helps them recognize their own strengths.
- Confidence grows through repeated encouragement.



PRACTICAL COACHING SKILLS

Opportunities to Encourage

- Play
- Routines
- Meals
- Transitions
- Comforting a child
- Setting limits
- Praise and encouragement



Coaching Through Everyday Parenting Moments

COACHING THROUGH EVERYDAY PARENTING MOMENTS

Time: 10 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants recognize that everyday interactions provide natural opportunities to encourage, model, and reinforce positive parenting skills

Paraphrase:

Parents build confidence through everyday interactions. Look for opportunities to encourage during:

- Play
- Routines
- Meals
- Transitions
- Comforting a child
- Setting limits
- Praise and encouragement

Small moments create big opportunities for growth.

Say:

When most people think about parenting, they think about discipline. But parenting is much bigger than discipline. Children learn through thousands of small interactions every day. They learn while

- ***Playing.***
- ***Eating.***

- *Getting ready for bed.*
- *Cleaning up toys.*
- *Saying goodbye.*

Those ordinary moments shape relationships. As Social Services Assistants, those are often the moments you'll observe during family time. Instead of waiting until something goes wrong, ask yourself: What is going well that I can encourage?

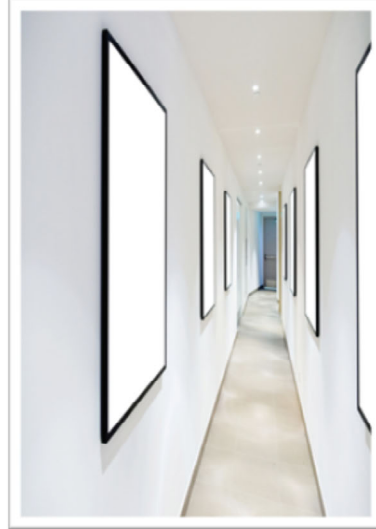
That's where coaching begins.

Key Takeaways:

- Identify common parenting moments that present opportunities for coaching.
- Recognize how everyday routines strengthen the parent-child relationship.
- Explain why ordinary interactions often have the greatest impact on children.

Parenting Moments Gallery Walk

1. What positive parenting behaviors might you observe?
2. What coaching opportunity might exist?
3. What could you say to encourage that parent?



Activity

ACTIVITY: PARENTING MOMENTS GALLERY WALK

Time: 20 Minutes

Purpose: To increase participants' awareness of how small, everyday interactions can be transformed into meaningful coaching moments

Activity Prep:

Place six flip-chart pages around the room with these headings:

- Play
- Meals
- Transitions
- Tantrums
- Bedtime/Routines
- Saying Goodbye

Activity Instructions:

- Divide participants into small groups.
- Each group rotates through every station.

- At each station, they answer:
 1. What positive parenting behaviors might you observe?
 2. What coaching opportunity might exist?
 3. What could you say to encourage that parent?
- After everyone rotates, review responses together.

Facilitator Questions:

- Which parenting moment generated the most coaching opportunities?
- Which ones surprised you?

Facilitator Answer: *(Responses may vary)*

Say:

Sometimes we think family time is successful because nothing went wrong. But success isn't the absence of problems. Success is helping parents recognize and repeat the things they're already doing well. Those ordinary moments are often where lasting change begins.

Now that we've identified where coaching opportunities happen, let's talk about one of the most powerful tools you have - Helping parents connect with their children through play.

Key Takeaways

- Coaching happens during everyday routines.
- Every interaction provides an opportunity to encourage parents.
- Ordinary moments often reveal important parenting strengths.
- Small successes deserve recognition.
- Positive reinforcement helps parents build confidence.



PLAY IS MORE THAN FUN

Through play, children learn to:

- Build trust and attachment
- Communicate thoughts and feelings
- Solve problems
- Practice self-control
- Build confidence
- Strengthen relationships

PLAY IS MORE THAN FUN

Time: 5 minutes

Purpose: To help participants understand why play is one of the most valuable opportunities for strengthening the parent-child relationship and reinforcing positive parenting

Paraphrase:

Through play, children learn to:

- Build trust and attachment
- Communicate thoughts and feelings
- Solve problems
- Practice self-control
- Build confidence
- Strengthen relationships

Parents build relationships when they:

- Follow the child's lead
- Show interest
- Encourage creativity

- Praise effort
- Enjoy the moment together

Play is one of the easiest ways to strengthen the parent-child relationship.

Say:

Sometimes adults think play is just something to keep children busy. For children, play is one of the primary ways they learn about the world and build relationships. During family time, don't just watch whether the parent and child are playing. Watch how they're playing.

- ***Is the parent following the child's lead?***
- ***Are they encouraging the child?***
- ***Are they laughing together?***
- ***Is the child seeking the parent's attention?***
- ***Is the parent putting away their phone and engaging?***

Those observations tell us much more than whether they finished a game. They also create wonderful coaching opportunities.

Key Takeaways:

- Explain why play supports healthy child development.
- Identify parenting strengths during play.
- Recognize opportunities to encourage positive parent-child interactions through play.

What Did You Notice?



ACTIVITY: WHAT DID YOU NOTICE

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: To help participants identify existing strengths during family visits, demonstrating how recognizing what is going well creates opportunities for meaningful coaching and increased parental confidence

Paraphrase:

Before we begin this activity, remember that every family visit offers more than an opportunity to observe. It provides an opportunity to recognize and reinforce what parents are already doing well. By intentionally looking for strengths first, you can identify natural moments to provide meaningful coaching, encourage positive parenting behaviors, and help build a parent's confidence in their ability to care for and connect with their child. Read the scenario.

Scenario:

A father and his five-year-old are building with blocks. The child becomes frustrated when the tower falls. The father smiles, says, "Let's try again together," and starts rebuilding with the child.

Facilitator Question:

- What strengths did you observe?

Facilitator Answer:

- Stayed calm
- Encouraged the child
- Problem solved together
- Didn't criticize
- Showed patience
- Stayed engaged

Facilitator Question:

- What could you say to reinforce those strengths?

Facilitator Answers:

- I noticed how you stayed positive when the tower fell. He seemed much more willing to keep trying because of your encouragement.
- You let him take the lead while still supporting him. That really helped build his confidence.

Facilitator Question:

- How might this interaction have been different if the parent had taken over the activity?

Facilitator Answers:

- The child loses confidence.
- Less independence.
- Less opportunity for connection.
- The parent misses a chance to encourage.

Say:

Remember, our goal isn't to judge how parents play. Our goal is to recognize the moments that strengthen the relationship and help parents see the positive impact they're already having. Often, parents don't realize those moments matter until someone points them out.

Play isn't the only routine that builds relationships. Some of the biggest parenting challenges happen during everyday transitions - getting ready to leave, cleaning up, moving from one activity to another, or saying goodbye.

Let's look at how we can help parents navigate those moments successfully.

Key Takeaways

- Play strengthens relationships.
- Play builds attachment and trust.
- Parents don't have to be perfect entertainers to make a difference.

- Positive interactions during play deserve encouragement.
- Play creates natural coaching opportunities.

COACHING THROUGH TRANSITIONS

Common Transitions:

- Arriving for family time
- Moving from one activity to another
- Cleaning up
- Ending play
- Saying goodbye



COACHING THROUGH TRANSITIONS

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants recognize why transitions are challenging for children and identify ways to encourage parents during these everyday moments

Paraphrase:

Transitions can be difficult for children.

- Common transitions include:
- Arriving for family time
- Moving from one activity to another
- Cleaning up
- Ending play
- Saying goodbye

Parents can help children by:

- Giving advance notice
- Staying Calm
- Setting clear expectations

- Offering simple choices when appropriate
- Providing comfort and reassurance

Children often need support, not punishment, during transitions.

Say:

Think about the hardest part of family time. It usually isn't playing. It's leaving, or stopping something fun, or moving from one activity to another. Children often struggle with transitions because they don't want something enjoyable to end, they don't know what comes next, or they simply need more time to adjust. Those moments can quickly become frustrating for both the child and the parent.

As Social Services Assistants, we have an opportunity to encourage parents before frustration turns into conflict. We may notice that a parent naturally gives warnings before cleanup or calmly reminds the child what comes next. Those are strengths worth reinforcing. If a parent is struggling, we can also encourage simple strategies that help children feel more prepared and secure.

Key Takeaways:

- Explain why transitions can be difficult for children.
- Recognize positive parenting strategies during transitions.
- Practice coaching parents through common transition challenges.

What Would You Say?



ACTIVITY: WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: To build participants' ability to identify both the meaning behind a child's behavior and the parenting strengths that support the child's emotional needs

Paraphrase:

Before we begin this activity, remember that a child's behavior is often communicating an underlying need or emotion. As you observe parent-child interactions, look beyond the behavior itself to consider what the child may be expressing and how the parent's response supports those emotional needs. Recognizing these moments helps you identify parenting strengths and creates opportunities to reinforce behaviors that promote healthy parent-child relationships.

Read the scenario.

Scenario:

Family time is ending in five minutes. A six-year-old refuses to stop playing and begins crying.

The parent says, “Come on! We’re leaving! Stop crying!”

Facilitator Question #1:

- What is the child experiencing?

Facilitator Answers:

- Disappointment
- Anxiety
- Sadness
- Difficulty with change

Facilitator Question #2:

- What is one strength you could help the parent build on?

Facilitator Answers:

- Give a five-minute warning.
- Acknowledge the child’s feelings.
- Stay calm.
- Offer a goodbye routine.
- Praise cooperation when it happens.

Facilitator Question #3:

- What coaching statement could you use?

Facilitator Answers:

- I noticed she seemed upset that playtime was ending. Sometimes giving a warning a few minutes before cleanup helps children prepare for the transition.
OR
- You stayed calm even when she was upset. That helped keep the situation from becoming even harder.

Facilitator Questions #4:

- What makes transitions difficult for adults?
- If transitions are hard for us, how might they feel for young children?

Facilitator Answer: *(Responses may vary)*

Say:

Many challenging behaviors happen during transitions, not because children are being defiant, but because transitions are hard. Helping parents understand that difference can change how they respond.

Sometimes a small adjustment, like preparing a child for what’s coming next or acknowledging their feelings, can make a difficult transition much smoother.

Another time families often experience stress is when children become overwhelmed by big emotions.

Let's look at how parents can respond in ways that help children calm down rather than escalate.

Key Takeaways

- Transitions are a normal challenge for many children.
- Preparing children for transitions can reduce frustration.
- Calm, consistent responses help children feel secure.
- Coaching parents during transitions builds confidence.
- Small changes can have a big impact.

RESPONDING TO BIG EMOTIONS



Children need adults who:

- Stay calm
- Acknowledge feelings
- Set safe limits
- Help them regulate emotions
- Reconnect after the difficult moment

RESPONDING TO BIG EMOTIONS

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: Help participants recognize how to support parents during emotionally difficult moments while maintaining safety and strengthening the parent-child relationship

Paraphrase:

Big emotions are opportunities for connection. Children need adults who:

- Stay calm.
- Acknowledge feelings.
- Set safe limits.
- Help them regulate emotions.
- Reconnect after the difficult moment.

Encourage parents to:

- Stay close.
- Use a calm voice.
- Name the child's feelings.
- Offer comfort when appropriate.
- Praise recovery, not just compliance.

Connection helps children feel safe enough to learn.

Paraphrase:

Every family experiences big emotions. Children become frustrated. They cry. They refuse. They become angry. What children need most during those moments is an adult who can stay calm.

Parents often become dysregulated because their child becomes dysregulated. One of the greatest gifts we can give parents is helping them recognize that staying calm doesn't mean allowing inappropriate behavior. It means helping children feel safe enough to calm down, so they can learn.

Key Takeaways:

- Recognize opportunities to coach parents during emotionally challenging situations.
- Model calm, supportive responses.
- Reinforce parenting behaviors that help children regulate emotions.

What Would You Notice?



ACTIVITY: WHAT WOULD YOU NOTICE?

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: To help participants practice acknowledging and reinforcing parents' strengths to build confidence and encourage positive parenting behaviors

Paraphrase:

Before we begin this activity, think about the impact of recognizing what parents are doing well. Acknowledging strengths not only helps parents feel seen and valued but also reinforces positive parenting behaviors and builds their confidence. This activity will give you an opportunity to practice providing encouragement that supports growth and strengthens families. Read the scenario.

Scenario:

- A four-year-old becomes upset after being told it's time to leave the playground.
- He throws himself on the floor, crying.
- His mother immediately kneels beside him and quietly says,
- "I know you're disappointed. We have to leave now, but I'll help you."

Facilitator Question:

- What strengths do you see?

Facilitator Answers:

- Stayed calm
- Acknowledged feelings
- Stayed close
- Didn't shame
- Maintained the limit
- Offered support

Facilitator Questions:

- How could you reinforce those strengths?
- Why is it important to praise how a parent handled a difficult moment rather than only focusing on whether the child stopped crying?

Facilitator Answer: *(Facilitate a brief discussion)*

Say:

Not every parenting moment happens during challenging behavior. Some of the most meaningful relationship-building happens during everyday routines. Let's look at how routines help children feel safe and connected.

Key Takeaways

- Big emotions are normal.
- Children learn emotional regulation from adults.
- Calm adults help calm children.
- Parents deserve encouragement during difficult moments, too.
- Recovery is just as important as behavior.

REPAIRING AND RECONNECTING



REPAIRING AND RECONNECTING

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants recognize that mistakes happen in every family and that repairing relationships after conflict is one of the strongest ways parents build trust and resilience

Paraphrase:

Every parent has difficult moments. What matters most is what happens next.

Parents can repair relationships by:

- Acknowledging what happened.
- Offering comfort and reassurance.
- Apologizing when appropriate.
- Reconnecting through conversation or play.
- Trying again.

Children don't need perfect parents. They need parents who reconnect after difficult moments.

Say:

Let's talk about something that often gets overlooked. Parents make mistakes. We all do.

- ***We lose our patience.***
- ***We become frustrated.***
- ***We say things we wish we'd said differently.***

That doesn't automatically damage a relationship.

What strengthens relationships is what happens after the difficult moment. Children learn an incredible lesson when they see an adult take responsibility, reconnect, and repair the relationship.

As Social Services Assistants, one of the greatest opportunities we have is to encourage parents after those moments, rather than assume the visit was a failure. Sometimes the most important coaching happens after the conflict has ended.

Key Takeaways:

- Explain why repair is important in healthy parent-child relationships.
- Identify opportunities to encourage parents after difficult interactions.
- Practice coaching parents through reconnection rather than perfection.

Turning a Tough Moment into a Teaching Moment

- A seven-year-old refuses to clean up before family time ends.
- His father becomes frustrated and raises his voice.
- The child begins crying.
- After taking a moment to calm himself, the father kneels beside his son and says:
- I'm sorry I yelled. I was frustrated. Let's clean up together so we can finish our family time on a good note.

Activity

TURNING A TOUGH MOMENT INTO A TEACHING MOMENT

Time: 15 Minutes

Purpose: To build participants' ability to transform difficult moments into meaningful teaching opportunities that strengthen parenting skills

Paraphrase:

Before we begin this activity, remember that challenging moments can be among the most valuable opportunities for growth. Rather than viewing these situations as problems to solve, they can be used to guide, encourage, and support parents as they develop new skills. This activity will help you practice recognizing teachable moments and using them to strengthen parenting skills while maintaining a supportive, strengths-based approach.

Scenario:

A seven-year-old refuses to clean up before family time ends. His father becomes frustrated and raises his voice. The child begins crying. After taking a moment to calm himself, the father kneels beside his son and says, "I'm sorry I yelled. I was frustrated. Let's clean up together so we can finish our visit on a good note."

Facilitator Questions:

1. What did the father do well after the conflict?
2. How might that apology affect the child?
3. What coaching statement could you use to reinforce the father's efforts?

Facilitator Answer:

- "I really appreciated that you took a moment to calm yourself and came back to reconnect with him. That helps children learn that relationships can recover after difficult moments."

Facilitator Questions:

- Why do you think apologizing to a child is sometimes difficult for adults?
- What message does repair send to a child?

Facilitator Answers:

- Relationships can recover.
- Mistakes don't define us.
- Accountability is healthy.
- Trust grows through consistency.

Say:

We've talked about play, transitions, big emotions, and repair. Now let's put all of those ideas together and practice recognizing coaching opportunities in a complete family interaction before we head into this afternoon's simulation.

Key Takeaways

- Every family experiences conflict.
- Repair is a parenting strength, not a weakness.
- Children learn from how adults recover after mistakes.
- Encourage progress, not perfection.
- Strong relationships are built through connection after conflict.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Recognizing Coaching Opportunities



During Family Time,
What do you notice?

- Child behaviors
- Parent strengths
- Opportunities to encourage
- Moments to model
- Safety concerns

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: To help participants apply the coaching concepts learned throughout the morning by identifying strengths, recognizing coaching opportunities, and practicing supportive responses in a realistic family interaction

Facilitator Question #1:

- What do I notice?

Facilitator Answers:

- Child behaviors
- Parent strengths
- Opportunities to encourage
- Moments to model
- Safety concerns

Facilitator Question #2:

- What could I say that builds confidence while supporting positive parenting?

Facilitator Answer: *(Responses may vary)*
Observe. Encourage. Coach. Strengthen.

Say:

This morning, we've talked about a different way of looking at family time. Instead of focusing only on what went wrong, we've learned to intentionally look for strengths, everyday coaching opportunities, and ways to build parent confidence. This isn't about ignoring concerns. It's about making sure we don't miss opportunities to strengthen families while we're addressing those concerns.

In just a little while, you'll have the opportunity to practice these skills during the simulation. Before we do that, let's work through one complete family interaction together.

Key Takeaways:

- Identify parent strengths during family interactions.
- Recognize opportunities to provide encouragement and coaching.
- Practice using strengths-based communication in preparation for the afternoon simulation.

Family Time Observation Challenge

1. What parent strengths did you observe?
2. Where did you identify coaching opportunities?
3. What strengths-based coaching statement could you use?
4. What information would you document?

Activity

FAMILY TIME OBSERVATION CHALLENGE

Time: 20-25 minutes

Purpose: To build participants' confidence in identifying meaningful observations that can be used to encourage parents and strengthen family relationships

Participant Manual: Family Observation Challenge Scenario

Activity Instructions:

- Allow 3-5 minutes for participants to silently read the Family Time Challenge Scenario
- After 3-5 minutes, have each table represent a group
- Each group will answer the four questions below
- Allow 10 minutes for small group discussion

Scenario: Family Time Observation Challenge Scenario

Today, you are supervising a one-hour family time visit between Kelli, Marcus, and their two children, six-year-old Liam and two-year-old Maya. When Kelli and Marcus arrive; Liam immediately runs toward them. Kelli bends down, opens her arms, and says, "There's my boy! I've been waiting to see you." Liam hugs her tightly. Marcus walks over to Maya, who initially stays close to her resource parent. Rather than immediately picking her up, Marcus kneels and holds out his hand. Marcus says, "Hi, baby girl. Daddy's right here when you're ready."

Kelli looks over and says, "She just needed a minute. You did well giving her some time." The family moves to the play area, where there are dolls, toy cars, coloring supplies, puzzles, books, and pretend kitchen items. Liam asks Marcus to race toy cars with him while Maya brings Kelli a toy plate and spoon. Kelli pretends to taste Maya's food and says, "Mmm! Did you make this for Mommy?" Maya laughs and brings her another plate. Across the room, Liam becomes excited when his car wins a race. Marcus says, "You got me again! You've gotten really good at this."

After several minutes, Kelli encourages everyone to play together and suggests that the family pretend they are running a restaurant. Liam wants to be the cook, Maya carries toy food to everyone, and Kelli and Marcus pretend to be customers. When Maya repeatedly takes food from Liam's pretend kitchen, Liam becomes frustrated. Liam says, "Stop it, Maya! You're messing everything up!" Marcus responds quickly, "Liam, she's little. Just let her have it." Liam crosses his arms and says, "You always take her side." Kelli responds to Marcus, "He was playing with it first. You don't have to get onto him."

Marcus becomes defensive and says, "I wasn't getting onto him. I'm trying to keep them from fighting." The parents briefly focus on each other rather than on the children. Liam becomes quiet, while Maya continues playing. Kelli notices Liam's expression and shifts her attention back to him. Kelli says, "Liam, I can see you were frustrated because you were using that food. Can we find something Maya can use, too?" Marcus pauses and adds, "Yeah, buddy. I should've listened first. Show me what you were making." Liam begins explaining his game. Marcus listens, and Kelli helps Maya choose other pretend food.

Later, Maya begins coloring. She accidentally draws on the table instead of the paper. Kelli quickly says, "Maya! No! You know better than that." Maya drops the crayon and begins to cry. Marcus says quietly, "Ash, she's only two. I don't think she meant to." Kelli responds, "I know, but she has to learn not to color on things." Instead of arguing, Marcus says, "You're right. We do need to teach her. Maybe we can show her where the crayons go." Kelli pauses, takes a breath, and kneels beside Maya. Kelli says, "Crayons go on the paper. Here, Mommy will help you." Maya picks up the crayon and begins coloring on the paper. Kelli praises her by saying, "That's it. You're coloring on your paper." Marcus smiles and says to Kelli, "That worked."

Near the end of the visit, you remind Kelli and Marcus that there are five minutes remaining. Marcus tells Liam, "We have about five more minutes, so let's choose one last thing to do." Kelli tells Maya, "We're going to clean up, read one book, and then it will be time to go." Liam immediately says, "I don't want you to leave." Marcus responds, "I don't want to leave either." Kelli adds, "It's hard to say goodbye when we've had a good time. We're going to enjoy these last few minutes together." The family cleans up and chooses a short book. Kelli holds Maya while Marcus reads. Liam sits beside Marcus and helps turn the pages.

When it is time to leave, Liam begins to cry and holds on to Marcus. Marcus looks

uncomfortable and says, “Come on, buddy. Don't cry. You're okay.” Kelli responds, “It's okay for him to be sad.” She kneels beside Liam and says, “You wish we could stay longer, don't you?” Liam nods. Marcus kneels beside them and says, “Me too. But we'll see you again. We love you.” Together, Kelli and Marcus hug Liam. Kelli kisses Maya goodbye, and both parents tell the children when they will see them again.

Small Group Activity

- After 10 minutes, allow 10-15 minutes for a large group discussion.

Facilitator Question:

- What parent strengths did you observe?

Facilitator Answers: (Possible Responses)

- Both parents demonstrated affection and responded to the children's individual needs during arrival.
- Marcus allowed Maya time to reconnect with him rather than forcing the interaction.
- Kelli noticed and verbally reinforced Marcus's positive parenting.
- Both parents actively engaged in developmentally appropriate play with the children.
- The parents demonstrated the ability to recover after disagreeing about how to respond to Liam.
- Marcus supported Ashley's parenting with Maya without undermining her.
- Kelli adjusted her response after recognizing that Maya needed teaching and redirection.
- Both parents participated in preparing the children for the end of the visit.
- Kelli and Marcus acknowledged Liam's emotions and reassured him about future contact.

Facilitator Question:

- Where did you identify coaching opportunities?

Facilitator Answer: (Possible Responses)

- Strengthen Kelli and Marcus's ability to parent as a team, particularly when they disagree.
- Encourage parents to support one another while respectfully sharing different approaches.

Facilitator Question:

- “What could you say to each other in that moment that supports your partner while still sharing another idea?”

Facilitator Answer: (Possible Responses)

- Recognize the developmental differences between a six-year-old and a two-year-old when responding to behavior.
- Use teaching and redirection rather than focusing only on stopping unwanted behavior.

- Acknowledge the child's emotions before attempting to redirect or change the behavior.
- Avoid correcting or contradicting one another in front of the children.
- Help parents keep the focus on the children's needs when disagreements occur.

Facilitator Question:

- What strengths-based coaching statement could you use?

Facilitator Answer: *(Possible Responses)*

- *"I noticed you gave Maya time to come to you instead of rushing her. That allowed her to reconnect with you at her own pace."*
- *"Kelli, when you told Marcus he did a good job giving Maya time, you reinforced something positive he was doing as her father."*
- *"You had different ideas about how to respond to Liam, but both of you were able to refocus on him and help him communicate what he needed."*
- *"Marcus, you supported Kelli's expectation with Maya while helping her think about another way to teach the behavior."*
- *"Both of you helped the children prepare for the end of the visit instead of waiting until the last moment to tell them it was time to leave."*

Facilitator Question:

- What information would you document?

Facilitator Answer: *(Possible responses)*

- Observable parent-child interactions
- Specific parental responses and behaviors
- Children's responses to each parent
- Examples of parents supporting one another
- Examples of parental disagreement and how it was addressed
- Coaching provided by the worker
- Parents' responses to coaching
- Family and parenting strengths demonstrated during the visit
- Safety concerns, if present
- How the family managed transitions and separation

Facilitator Question:

- What did Kelli do well?
- What coaching opportunity would have the greatest impact if addressed?
- Did Kelli have to be a perfect parent to have a successful visit? Why or why not?
- How did focusing on strengths change your perception of the visit?

Facilitator Answer: *(Responses may vary)*

Say:

This scenario is much like what you'll see in the field. Most family time visits aren't all

good or all bad. You'll observe strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth all in a single interaction.

Your role is not to score the parent or expect perfection. Your role is to recognize strengths, encourage progress, coach through everyday moments, and document what you observe objectively.

This afternoon, you'll have the opportunity to put these ideas into practice. You'll observe real family interactions, identify coaching opportunities, practice strengths-based communication, and document what you see. Don't worry about being perfect. Focus on observing, encouraging, and helping families leave stronger than when they arrived.

Key Takeaways

- Every family interaction contains strengths and opportunities for growth.
- Coaching begins with observation.
- Encouragement builds confidence.
- Small moments often have the greatest impact.
- Family time is an opportunity to strengthen relationships—not simply observe them.

New Staff Training
Role Play Instructions

**SOCIAL SERVICES ASSISTANT
CLASSROOM SIMULATION**

SOCIAL SERVICES ASSISTANT CLASSROOM SIMULATION



YOUR ROLE IN TODAY'S SIMULATION

- ARRIVAL & RECONNECTION
- SIMULATED FAMILY INTERACTION
- TRANSITION
- GOODBYE & DEBRIEF

YOUR ROLE IN TODAY'S SIMULATION

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: To explain the four scenes of the simulation that will provide participants with the opportunity to actively apply their knowledge and skills as they progress through each stage of a realistic family time.

Say:

Today, you will meet Ashley Jones and her daughter, Leslie. You will practice building rapport, recognizing Ashley's strengths, identifying coaching opportunities, and practicing strength-based communication.

Paraphrase:

- **SCENE 1: ARRIVAL & RECONNECTION:** In Scene One, the mother (Ashley) arrives for her family time with her daughter (Leslie). During this scene, the assistant observes the greeting, attachment, initial parent-child engagement, and the mother's confidence as the family time begins.
- **SCENE 2: FAMILY INTERACTION:** In Scene Two, the mother and daughter build a tower with blocks until it unexpectedly falls. The mother reacts, and the assistant observes the interaction, determining whether the moment presents a coaching opportunity and, if so, identifies the most appropriate time to provide strengths-based coaching without interrupting the parent-child interaction.
- **SCENE 3: TRANSITION:** In Scene Three, the assistant provides the mother with a five-minute warning that the family time is ending. The mother becomes engaged in the activity and

forgets to prepare her daughter for the transition. When she suddenly announces it is time to leave, the daughter becomes upset and begins to cry, causing the mother to grow frustrated. The assistant must determine whether to proactively coach the mother before the situation escalates or to wait until afterward to provide strengths-based feedback and support.

- **SCENE 4: GOODBYE & DEBRIEF:** In Scene Four, the family time comes to a close as the mother and daughter say goodbye. The assistant observes how the mother manages the separation while providing timely support and encouragement to help her navigate the transition. The focus is on reinforcing the mother's strengths and promoting a positive, supportive ending to the family time.

FacilitatorNote: Reminders

- Remember, the experience is about them getting up there and accomplishing their goal that is identified with the coach and is stated before each scene; and practice the skills listed on the observation form.
- Time has been identified for each scene in the documents that follow. Try to stick to these. Remember that this experience is about them getting on stage and the audience identifying the skills they see.
- As a facilitator, you can move a scene forward during and after it has ended. If, after the scene, critical information is not obtained, you should move the scene forward, simply stating 'I am going to set the scene' or 'To move the case forward, **X** has happened, or **X** information was obtained in this scene.
- Note that during a scene, we are guiding them towards their goals, not towards what is on the observation form.
- You set the tone with positive energy and clarity.
- If the audience is asking questions about "what if" scenarios, you must give them a clear answer. You may want to ask them to 'Tell me more about what you are thinking,' to get the full story.
- When a participant asks a question from the audience, direct the question back to the team, if possible. This encourages team discussion and interaction and helps team members discover their own answers together.
- Make sure to include the audience when engaging with those on stage.
- Avoid closed-ended questions.
- Try to use the SOP language and SDM® assessment skills we have learned in the practice

model thus far to engage with participants in the audience and on stage. Solution-Focused Questions and Appreciative Inquiry Questions are provided in the participant manual as resources and examples for participants to draw on in their interviews.

- Do not immediately provide answers when participants do not promptly respond to your questions. Instead, give space for participant reflection, then try rewording, rephrasing, or restating the questions. This will encourage space for critical thinking and processing.
- Use active listening to indicate you hear what participants are saying and to encourage continued participation.
- Tie all practice into the importance of quality documentation.
- A good way to encourage change or offer suggestions
 - Let's think about a couple of things...
 - I'm going to push back a little bit...
 - I want to put a pin in a couple of things...
 - I'd like to offer another perspective...

FAMILY TIME SIMULATION

Meet the Jones Family



FAMILY TIME SIMULATION: MEET THE FAMILY

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: To introduce participants to the simulation family and provide the background needed to observe, assess, and coach throughout the simulation experience.

Paraphrase:

Here is some background information on the family:

Ashley Jones

- Ashley Jones (Age 27) is Leslie's mother. She loves her daughter deeply, attends every scheduled family time, and is committed to reunification. During family time, Ashley is affectionate and actively engages with Leslie through play and conversation, demonstrating a genuine desire to strengthen their relationship.
- Like many parents, Ashley also has areas where she needs support. She becomes frustrated easily, often lacks confidence in her parenting abilities, and frequently worries that she is failing as a mother. When situations become stressful, she may react emotionally before taking time to think through her response.
- As you observe the simulation, look for both Ashley's strengths and the opportunities to build her confidence through timely, strengths-based coaching.

Leslie Jones

- Leslie Jones (Age 5) is Ashley's daughter. She is very attached to her mother, curious about the world around her, and enjoys imaginative play. She is affectionate and seeks connection with her mother throughout their family time, creating many opportunities for positive parent-child interactions.

- Like many young children, Leslie also experiences challenges. She has difficulty with transitions, expresses big emotions when routines change, becomes easily frustrated, and often cries when family time comes to an end.
- As you observe the simulation, pay close attention to Leslie's behaviors and emotional cues. Consider what her actions may be communicating and how the mother's response can either support or strengthen their relationship.

Say:

Now that you have been introduced to Ashley and Leslie, you are ready to observe their first interaction.



FAMILY TIME SCENE 1: ARRIVAL & RECONNECTION

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: To provide participants with an opportunity to observe an initial family time interaction.

Characters: Social Services Assistant (participant), Actors: Ashley Jones (Mother) and Leslie Jones (Daughter)

Type of Interview: In-person

Location: Living Room/Playroom

Scene Description:

Ashley enters the room for her scheduled family time. Leslie notices her mother but hesitates for a few seconds before approaching. Ashley kneels to Leslie's level, smiles warmly, and opens her arms. Leslie slowly moves closer. Ashley asks Leslie about school, and Leslie responds quietly. Ashley then says, "I brought your favorite dinosaur today," prompting Leslie to smile as the family time begins.

During this scene, observe the greeting, signs of attachment, the mother's confidence, and the quality of the initial parent-child engagement. Look for opportunities to

recognize strengths and provide specific encouragement that reinforces positive parenting behaviors and supports the relationship.

Before the Scene: Facilitator Instructions

Role-Play Participant:

- Select one participant to participate in the simulation.
- Ask the participant to step outside the room to prepare.
- Instruct the participant to identify a goal for the scene.
- Prior to the simulation scene, ask the role-play participant to share their goal with the group.

Audience Participants:

- Review the Observation Form to identify the specific skills and behaviors that should be demonstrated during the simulation. *Note that the observations should be “strength-based” rather than “what went wrong”.*
- Skills Being Observed:
 - Greeting
 - Attachment
 - Parent Confidence
 - Initial Engagement

Say:

Before we begin, our simulation participant will step outside for a few minutes to prepare for the scene. As you develop your plan, identify one goal you want to accomplish during this interaction. Direct the participant to step outside, and when they return, have them share their goal before beginning the simulation.

After the role-play participant leaves the room.

Say:

While our role-play participant is preparing, we will sharpen our observation skills by thinking about what positive interactions we might notice during this family time.

Facilitator Questions:

- “What behaviors might show that the child feels connected to the parent?”
- “How might a parent encourage or strengthen that connection?”
- “What specific parenting behavior could be recognized to build the parent's confidence?”
- “How might these interactions strengthen the parent-child relationship over time?”

Facilitator Note

- Remind participants that their role during each of the simulations is to observe without interrupting.

- Encourage them to:
- Identify parenting strengths.
- Notice moments that strengthen the parent-child relationship.
- Look for opportunities that build the parent's confidence.
- Prepare one specific piece of strengths-based feedback for Ashley that recognizes an observable positive parenting behavior.

Begin simulation.



Observation Form

Scene 1 Arrival & Reconnection

OBSERVATION SLIDE SCENE 1

Time: 5 minutes

Purpose: To assess participant skill application during the family time.

After the scene: Facilitator Instructions

- Audience Participants
- Ask participants to complete their Observation Forms.
- Allow 1–2 minutes of quiet reflection.
- Instruct participants to submit their digital forms.
- Ask everyone to put away their phones or devices before beginning the discussion.

Say:

Before we debrief, please take a minute to complete your Observation Form by scanning the QR code on the slide. Rate what you observed during the Family Time – Arrival & Reconnection based on the skills listed. You will have about one to two minutes. Once you've submitted your digital form, place your phone or device down so we know you're ready to begin our group discussion.

Once all forms are completed, begin the discussion.

Role-Play Participant Debrief:

Facilitator Questions:

- “What was the goal you identified?”
- “Do you feel you accomplished your goal?”
- “Why or why not?”
- “If no, what could you have done to meet the goal?”

Facilitator Answer: *(Responses may vary)*

Say:

Thank you for your willingness to participate. Let's give our role-play participant a round of applause.

Audience Participant Debrief: Paraphrase

Now let's learn from what we observed together.

Facilitator Questions:

- “What strengths did you observe?”
- “Where did you see Ashley demonstrate confidence?”
- “What behaviors from the Observation Form were demonstrated effectively?”

Facilitator Answer: *(Responses may vary)*

Paraphrase

- Provide a brief professional assessment of the participant's performance, connecting feedback directly to the goals they identified.

Kudos

- Recognize specific observable strengths.

Say:

Great job, everyone! Arrival and reconnection set the tone for family time and provide important opportunities to recognize the strengths of parents and children. By noticing attachment cues, positive engagement, and the parent's efforts to connect, workers can use specific strengths-based encouragement to build parental confidence and support a stronger parent-child relationship.

We're going to transition to our next scene.



SOCIAL SERVICES ASSISTANT SIMULATION

SCENE 2: Family Time Interaction

FAMILY TIME SCENE 2: FAMILY TIME INTERACTION

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: To provide participants with an opportunity to observe family interactions during play.

Characters: Social Services Assistant (participant), Actors: Ashley Jones (Mother) and Leslie Jones (Daughter)

Type of Interview: In-person

Location: Living Room/Playroom

Scene Description:

Ashley and Leslie are building a block tower together, with Ashley following Leslie's lead. They are engaging positively (i.e., taking turns, helping stack the tower, handing blocks, etc.) in the activity. Everything is going well until the tower suddenly falls. Leslie becomes frustrated, yells, and throws one of the blocks. Ashley immediately responds by yelling, "Leslie, stop it." Leslie becomes quiet and crosses her arms.

During this scene, observe how the assistant responds to the difficult moment. Did the

assistant intervene, and if so, how? Consider whether the assistant remained calm, supported Ashley without taking over the interaction, and recognized an opportunity for Ashley to repair and reconnect with Leslie. After the interaction, observe how the assistant coaches Ashley using strengths-based feedback while helping her consider another way to respond to Leslie's frustration.

Before the Scene: Facilitator Instructions

Role-Play Participant:

- Select one participant to participate in the simulation.
- Ask the participant to step outside the room to prepare.
- Instruct the participant to identify a goal for the scene.
- Prior to the simulation scene, ask the role-play participant to share their goal with the group.

Audience Participants:

- Review the Observation Form to identify the specific skills and behaviors that should be demonstrated during the simulation. *Note that the observations should be “strength-based” rather than “what went wrong”.*

Skills Being Observed:

- Ability to remain calm
- Ability to support the parent
- Ability to avoid taking over
- Ability to recognize a repair opportunity

Say:

Before we begin, our simulation participant will step outside for a few minutes to prepare for the scene. As you develop your plan, identify one goal you want to accomplish during this interaction. Direct the participant to step outside, and when they return, have them share their goal before beginning the simulation.

After the role-play participant leaves the room.

Say:

While our role-play participant is preparing, we will sharpen our observation skills by thinking about what positive interactions we might notice during this family time.

Facilitator Questions:

- “What would an assistant need to see and or hear before deciding intervention during family time is necessary?”
- “What coaching question could you ask to help a parent think through a different response?”

- “How could an assistant use a redirecting moment to build a parent's confidence?”

Begin simulation.



Observation Form

Scene 2 Family Time Interaction

OBSERVATION SLIDE SCENE 2

Time: 5 minutes

Purpose: To assess participant skill application during the family time

After the scene: Facilitator Instructions

Audience Participants

- Ask participants to complete their Observation Forms.
- Allow 1–2 minutes of quiet reflection.
- Instruct participants to submit their digital forms.
- Ask everyone to put away their phones or devices before beginning the discussion.

Say:

Before we debrief, please take a minute to complete your Observation Form by scanning the QR code on the slide. Rate what you observed during the Family Time: Family Interaction – Play based on the skills listed. You will have about one to two minutes. Once you've submitted your digital form, place your phone or device down so we know you're ready to begin our group discussion.

Once all forms are completed, begin the discussion.

Role-Play Participant Debrief:**Facilitator Questions:**

- “What was the goal you identified?”
- “Do you feel you accomplished your goal?”
- “Why or why not?”
- “If no, what could you have done to meet the goal?”

Facilitator Answer: *(Responses may vary)*

Say:

Thank you for your willingness to participate. Let's give our role-play participant a round of applause.

Audience Participant Debrief: Paraphrase

- Now let's learn from what we observed together.

Facilitator Questions:

- “What strengths did you observe?”
- “Where did you see Ashley demonstrate confidence?”
- “What behaviors from the Observation Form were demonstrated effectively?”

Facilitator Answer: *(Responses may vary)*

Paraphrase:

- Provide a brief professional assessment of the participant's performance, connecting feedback directly to the goals they identified.

Kudos

- Recognize specific observable strengths.

Say:

Great job, everyone! Remember, the goal is not for you, as the Assistant, to demonstrate that you can manage behavior. The goal is to help the parent build the confidence and skills to manage the situation themselves.

We're going to transition to our next scene.



FAMILY TIME SCENE 3: TRANSITION

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: To help participants practice recognizing and responding to the emotional challenges that can occur as family time ends, while supporting the parent in preparing the child for the transition.

Characters: Social Services Assistant (participant), Actors: Ashley Jones (Mother) and Leslie Jones (Daughter)

Type of Interview: In-person

Location: Living Room/Playroom

Scene Description:

Ashley receives a five-minute warning that family time will be ending. Ashley becomes distracted and forgets to prepare Leslie for the transition.

When the assistant reminds her, Ashley suddenly tells Leslie, "It's time to go." Leslie begins to cry and falls to the floor, and Ashley becomes visibly frustrated.

During this scene, observe whether the assistant recognizes the coaching opportunity and responds at the appropriate time. Pay attention to whether the assistant models calm behavior, supports Ashley without taking over, encourages her to remain calm and maintain appropriate boundaries, and helps her respond to Leslie's emotions while moving the transition forward.

Before the Scene: Facilitator Instructions

Role-Play Participant:

- Select one participant to participate in the simulation.
- Ask the participant to step outside the room to prepare.
- Instruct the participant to identify a goal for the scene.
- Prior to the simulation scene, ask the role-play participant to share their goal with the group.

Audience Participants:

- Review the Observation Form for the specific skills and behaviors to be demonstrated during the simulation. *Note that the observations should be "strength-based" rather than "what went wrong".*
- Skills Being Observed:
- Appropriateness for the timing of coaching (Determine when to step in and when to allow Ashley an opportunity to respond independently).
- Ability to support parent regulation (Help Ashley pause and manage her frustration before responding).
- Ability to maintain boundaries (Encourage Ashley to acknowledge Leslie's feelings while continuing with the transition).

Say:

Before we begin, our simulation participant will step outside for a few minutes to prepare for the scene. As you develop your plan, identify one goal you want to accomplish during this interaction.

Direct the participant to step outside, and when they return, have them share their goal before beginning the simulation.

After the role-play participant leaves the room.

Say:

While our role-play participant is preparing, we will sharpen our observation skills by thinking about what positive interactions we might notice during this family time.

Facilitator Questions:

- "How might you assist a parent in acknowledging a child's emotions while still maintaining the boundary that family time is ending?"

- “When do you think is the most effective time to coach?”
- “What tone, body language, and response might you see and or hear that would demonstrate calmness?”

Begin simulation.



Observation Form

Scene 3 Transition

OBSERVATION SLIDE SCENE 3

Time: 5 minutes

Purpose: To assess participant skill application during the family time.

After the scene: Facilitator Instructions

Audience Participants

- Ask participants to complete their Observation Forms.
- Allow 1–2 minutes of quiet reflection.
- Instruct participants to submit their digital forms.
- Ask everyone to put away their phones or devices before beginning the discussion.

Say:

Before we debrief, please take a minute to complete your Observation Form by scanning the QR code on the slide. Rate what you observed during the Family Time Transition based on the skills listed. You will have about one to two minutes. Once you've submitted your digital form, place your phone or device down so we know you're ready to begin our group discussion.

Once all forms are completed, begin the discussion.

Role-Play Participant Debrief:**Facilitator Questions:**

- “What was the goal you identified?”
- “Do you feel you accomplished your goal?”
- “Why or why not?”
- “If no, what could you have done to meet the goal?”

Facilitator Answer: *(Responses may vary)*

Say:

Thank you for your willingness to participate. Let's give our role-play participant a round of applause.

Audience Participant Debrief: Paraphrase

- Now let's learn from what we observed together.

Facilitator Questions:

- “What did you observe that suggested Ashley had become frustrated?”
- “What behaviors did you notice that could be praised?”
- “What would you do differently if you were supporting this family in the field?”

Facilitator Answer: *(Responses may vary)*

Paraphrase:

- Provide a brief professional assessment of the participant's performance, connecting feedback directly to the goals they identified.

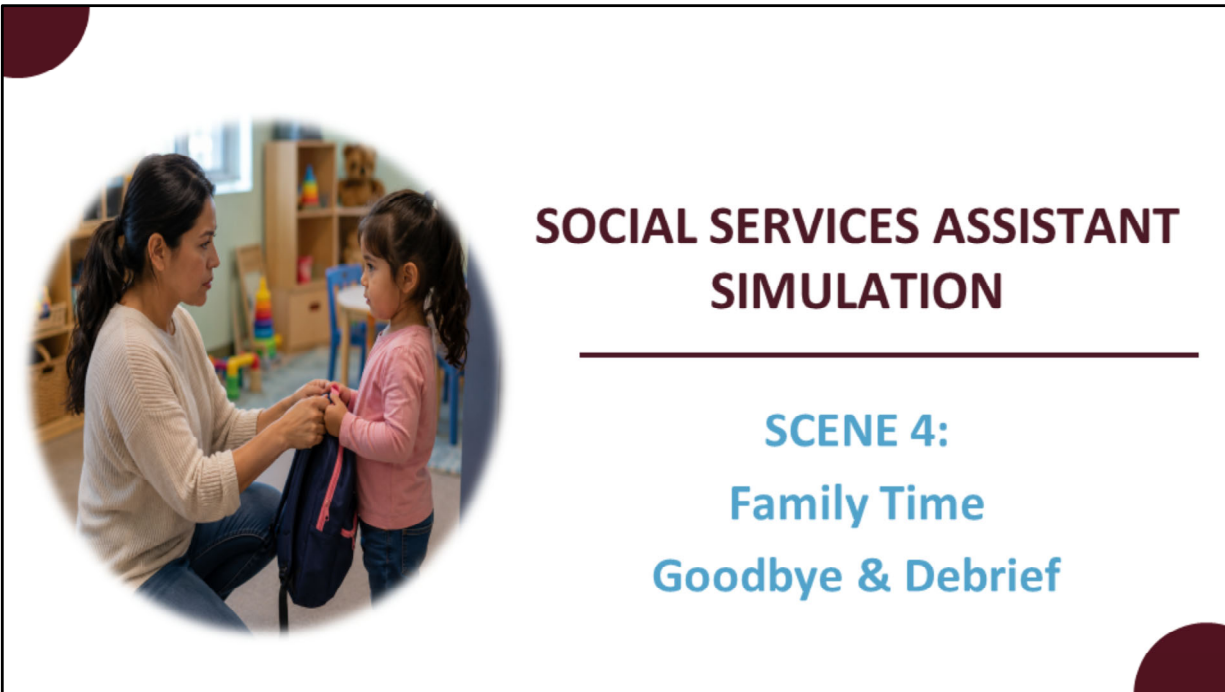
Kudos

- Recognize specific observable strengths.

Say:

Great job, everyone! Transitions can be among the most challenging moments during family time and often offer valuable opportunities for coaching. Effective support helps parents remain calm, respond to their child's emotions, maintain appropriate boundaries, and end family time in ways that reinforce connection and build confidence for future family time.

We're going to transition to our next scene.



SOCIAL SERVICES ASSISTANT SIMULATION

SCENE 4: Family Time Goodbye & Debrief

FAMILY TIME SCENE 4: GOODBYE & DEBRIEF

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: To help participants observe how the worker supports the parent and child through the goodbye, reinforces connection, responds to emotions, and uses strengths-based coaching to promote a positive ending to family time.

Characters: Social Services Assistant (participant), Actors: Ashley Jones (Mother) and Leslie Jones (Daughter)

Type of Interview: In-person

Location: Living Room/Playroom

Scene Description:

As family time ends, Ashley hugs Leslie and says, “I hate leaving too.” Leslie begins to cry, and Ashley becomes emotional and starts crying as well.

The Assistant supports Ashley and Leslie through the goodbye while allowing Ashley to remain in the parenting role.

During this scene, the goal is to remain calm, maintain professional boundaries,

support a healthy separation, and conduct a brief strengths-based coaching conversation with Ashley after the goodbye.

Before the Scene: Facilitator Instructions

Role-Play Participant:

- Select one participant to participate in the simulation.
- Ask the participant to step outside the room to prepare.
- Instruct the participant to identify a goal for the scene.
- Prior to the simulation scene, ask the role-play participant to share their goal with the group.

Audience Participants:

- Review the Observation Form for the specific skills and behaviors to be demonstrated during the simulation. *Note that the observations should be “strength-based” rather than “what went wrong”.*
- Skills Being Observed:
- Recognize emotional cues (Notice changes in both Ashley's and Leslie's emotions during the goodbye).
- Maintain professional boundaries (Demonstrate empathy and support without becoming personally or emotionally involved in the family's experience).
- Coaching through questions (Encourage Ashley to identify strategies rather than simply telling her what to do).

Say:

Before we begin, our simulation participant will step outside for a few minutes to prepare for the scene. As you develop your plan, identify one goal you want to accomplish during this interaction.

Direct the participant to step outside, and when they return, have them share their goal before beginning the simulation.

After the role-play participant leaves the room.

Say:

While our role-play participant is preparing, we will sharpen our observation skills by thinking about what positive interactions we might notice during this family time.

Facilitator Questions:

- “How might a parent's emotions influence the child's ability to separate?”
- “How can an assistant maintain professional boundaries while still demonstrating empathy?”
- “What information from a current family time might be important to note when planning

support for the family's next family time?"

Begin simulation.



Observation Form

Scene 4 Goodbye & Debrief

OBSERVATION SLIDE SCENE 4

Time: 5 minutes

Purpose: To assess participant skill application during the family time.

After the scene: Facilitator Instructions

Audience Participants

- Ask participants to complete their Observation Forms.
- Allow 1–2 minutes of quiet reflection.
- Instruct participants to submit their digital forms.
- Ask everyone to put away their phones or devices before beginning the discussion.

Say:

Before we debrief, please take a minute to complete your Observation Form by scanning the QR code on the slide. Rate what you observed during the Family Time: Goodbye based on the skills listed. You will have about one to two minutes. Once you've submitted your digital form, place your phone or device down so we know you're ready to begin our group discussion.

Once all forms are completed, begin the discussion.

Role-Play Participant Debrief:

Facilitator Questions:

- “What was the goal you identified?”
- “Do you feel you accomplished your goal?”
- “Why or why not?”
- “If no, what could you have done to meet the goal?”

Say:

Thank you for your willingness to participate. Let's give our role-play participant a round of applause.

Audience Participant Debrief: Paraphrase

- Now let's learn from what we observed together.

Facilitator Questions:

- “What strengths did you observe?”
- “Where did you see Ashley demonstrate confidence?”
- “What behaviors from the Observation Form were demonstrated effectively?”

Facilitator Questions: *(Responses may vary)*

Paraphrase

- Provide a brief professional assessment of the participant's performance, connecting feedback directly to the goal they identified.

Kudos

- Recognize specific observable strengths.

Say:

Great job, everyone! Goodbyes can reveal important information about attachment, emotional regulation, and how parents and children manage separation. Your role is to help the family navigate this emotional moment by offering reassurance, reinforcing positive interactions, and supporting the parent and child as they move through the separation successfully.



Final Simulation Debrief:

Instead of “What went wrong”, let’s focus on “What went right!”

1. What strengths did Ashley demonstrate?
2. What coaching opportunities did you identify?
3. When did you choose NOT to intervene? Why?
4. What documentation was most important?
5. What did Leslie teach us about transitions?

FINAL SIMULATION DEBRIEF

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: To bring the simulation experience together by helping participants reflect on viewing their practice from the lens of “What went well” instead of “What went wrong” and identify lessons they can carry forward when working with families in real-world situations.

Say:

As we wrap up the simulation, let us take a few minutes to consider the family time experience as a whole instead of individual scenes. As we discuss the questions on the screen; I want you to explain the reasoning behind your observation and decisions rather than simply identifying what occurred.

Facilitator Question:

- “What strengths did Ashley demonstrate?”
- “What coaching opportunities did you identify?”
- “When did you choose not to intervene? Why?”
- “What documentation was most important?”
- “What did Leslie teach us about transitions?”

Say:

As we think back across the entire visit, consider how your decisions changed from one scene to the next. What were you noticing that helped you decide when to simply observe, when Ashley needed support, and when you might need to step in? Sometimes, one of the most

important decisions we make is to allow a moment to unfold before responding. Think about what you were able to learn because you watched first, rather than immediately stepping in.

Facilitator Questions:

- “If you could go through this simulation again, what is one decision you would make differently?”
- What is one practice from today that you want to carry with you into your next family time experience?”

Paraphrase:

Great job, everyone! Now that you have observed the family from arrival through goodbye, what do we do with all the information we have gathered?

If you’re thinking document, document, document, you are correct. The next step is to consider how you accurately document what you saw, heard, and did during the family time.



DOCUMENTATION: HOW YOU WRITE MATTERS

DOCUMENTATION: HOW YOU WRITE MATTERS

Documentation should answer:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What happened during the family time?• How did the parent and child interact?• Were there any safety concerns? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What strengths did you observe?• What did you do during the family time?• What needs to happen next? |
|--|--|

DOCUMENTATION

Time: 10 Minutes

Purpose: To help prepare participants to write effective documentation for their contacts and family time.

Paraphrase:

If you recall from your Week Two of Foundations training, documentation is more than recording that family time occurred. It creates a clear record of the parent-child interaction, progress, strengths, concerns, and support provided during the family time.

A well-written contact should allow someone who was not present to understand what occurred, how the parent and child interacted, whether any safety concerns were observed, what strengths were demonstrated, what actions or coaching the worker provided, and what may need to happen next.

Documentation should be objective and based on what you saw, what you heard, and what you did, and not opinions, assumptions, or interpretations presented as fact.

Now you have observed each stage of the family time and gathered important information about the family's interactions. Next, you will put those observation skills into practice by documenting the family time.

Write one family time contact from one of the simulation scenes you just observed.

Remember to be:

- Objective/Factually Based
- Document strengths
- Document what you observe
- Make no assumptions
- Use professional language

Documentation Exercise

DOCUMENTATION EXERCISE

Time: 25 minutes

Purpose: To strengthen participants' ability to translate family time observations into clear, objective documentation that accurately captures interactions, strengths, concerns, and needed follow-up.

Participant Manual: Documentation Exercise: Family Time Contact

Say:

Let us talk about what good documentation looks like. Good documentation is clear, objective, and based on what was directly observed, heard, and done during family time. It captures both family strengths and areas of concern by describing specific behaviors and interactions rather than making assumptions about a parent's or child's intentions, feelings, or motivations.

Documentation should provide enough detail for the reader to understand what occurred while remaining factual and relevant. Professional, respectful, and neutral language should be used throughout to create an accurate record that reflects the family's experience without judgment or personal opinion.

Activity Instructions:

- Allow 15 minutes for participants to independently write a Family Time Contact based on one of the scenes they observed from the simulations.
- After 15 minutes, invite 2-3 participants to share all or part of their documentation.
- Allow about 10 minutes for share-outs and brief discussion, highlighting examples of objective observations, strengths-based language, and clear documentation.
- The activity should last approximately 25 minutes.

Paraphrase:

For our final activity for the day, you will now use those observations from one of the simulation scenes you just observed to write a family time contact. The scenes were:

- Arrival & Reconnection
- Family Interaction – Play
- Transition
- Goodbye & Debrief

Focus on what you saw, what you heard, and what the worker did. Include relevant strengths, interactions, concerns, coaching provided, and follow up needs. Keep your documentation objective, professional, and free of assumptions.

Begin activity.

Activity Debrief:

Facilitator Questions:

- “What was most challenging about turning your observations into objective documentation?”
- “What will you do differently when documenting family time in the field?”

Say:

This activity allowed you to practice capturing a family time in a way that is factual, clear, and meaningful. Effective documentation reflects observable interactions, highlights strengths and concerns, records the support or coaching provided, and identifies relevant next steps. The goal is to create a record that accurately tells the story of the family time without relying on assumptions or personal judgment.

Today’s simulation gave you the opportunity to observe family time from arrival and reconnection through play, challenging moments, transitions, and goodbye. The documentation exercise brought those observations together by asking you to create a clear, objective record of what you saw, heard, and did while recognizing family strengths and avoiding assumptions. As you return to the field, carry these skills with you: observe carefully, coach intentionally, recognize strengths, and document objectively.

Paraphrase:

Before we wrap up today, let us take a moment to reflect on what we covered. Today’s

learning included:

- Use strength-based coaching strategies to support parents and caregivers in building confidence and parenting skills.
- Identify everyday interactions that provide opportunities to recognize and reinforce effective parenting practices.
- Demonstrate appropriate parent-child interactions while maintaining clear professional roles and boundaries.
- Provide guidance during common family time situations while supporting parents in taking the lead.
- Observe and objectively document significant parent-child behaviors, responses, and interactions.
- Demonstrate effective observation, coaching, and documentation skills during simulated family time experiences.

These outcomes highlight the Social Services Assistant's important role in creating meaningful family time experiences that strengthen parenting skills, support healthy parent-child relationships, and provide valuable insight into family progress through purposeful observation, coaching, and documentation.



Target Outcomes Evaluation

TARGET OUTCOMES EVALUATION

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: To assess the learning outcomes for this specialty training.

Say:

Before you leave, please complete the Target Outcome evaluation. Your feedback helps us continue to improve this training. You can access it by selecting the evaluation link on the training landing page or by scanning the QR code displayed on the screen. Your feedback is valuable and helps us continually improve the training experience for future participants.

Facilitator Note: Direct participants to the QR code on the slide. Participants will need to use their phones to scan the code to complete the Day2 target outcomes evaluation in Qualtrics.



Social Services Assistant Post-Test

END-OF-THE-WEEK EVALUATION

Time: 5 Minutes

Purpose: To assess the learning outcomes for this specialty training.

Paraphrase:

Congratulations on completing your Social Services Assistant classroom training!

Throughout this week, we have focused on strengthening communication and engagement with children, families, and caregivers, while deepening our understanding of the children we serve. We explored child development from infancy through adolescence, considered how trauma may affect behavior and development, and practiced responding in supportive, safe, and trauma-informed ways. We also applied these skills to family time by learning how strengths-based coaching can support parents, build confidence, and strengthen parent-child relationships.

Your participation, thoughtful discussions, and willingness to engage in activities have helped prepare you for the important work ahead. The knowledge and skills you've developed this week will serve as the foundation for your continued growth as you move into practice.

Thank you for your engagement throughout the week and your commitment to serving Arkansas's children and families. We appreciate the time and effort you have invested in your learning and wish you continued success as you begin applying these skills in the field.

Say:

Before you leave, please complete the end-of-week evaluation. You can access it by selecting the evaluation link on the training landing page or by scanning the QR code displayed on the screen. Your feedback is valuable and helps us continually improve the training experience for future participants.