

Social Services Assistant Day 3 – Participant Manual



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

Social Services Assistant Coaching Principles

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.



Coaching Principles in Practice: Recognizing Everyday Opportunities to Strengthen Families

Coaching Principle 1: Assume Positive Intent

Scenario 1: A father appears distracted because his toddler is crying and refusing to sit down for lunch.

How might you respond:

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.

How might you respond:

Coaching Principle 3: Build Confidence Through Encouragement

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

How might you respond:

Coaching Principle 4: Coach Through Questions and Reflection

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

How might you respond:

Coaching Principle 5: Model Positive Interactions

Scenario 5: The child interrupts several times while the SSA is speaking with the parent.

How might you respond:

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.

How might you respond:

Coaching Principle 7: Maintain Safety and Professional Boundaries

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

How might you respond:



Family Time Observation Challenge Activity

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."* After a few moments, Maya reaches for him. Marcus smiles and picks her up. 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:

Discuss the following questions.



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?

Documentation Exercise: Family Time Contact

Name: _____

Date: _____

Scene being Document:

- ___ Arrival & Reconnection
- ___ Family Interaction – Play
- ___ Transition
- ___ Goodbye & Debriefing



Write Your Family Time Contact: Use your observations from one of the simulations to write a clear, objective family time contact as you would document it in the case record. Use additional pages, if necessary.

[illegible]

[illegible]

Before submitting, check your documentation: Is it objective? Does it describe observable behavior? Does it identify strengths? Did you avoid assumptions and opinions? Is the language professional and respectful?