

# ROBERT G. LEWIS

## **P**rogram Consultation and Training on Resource Families

As a consultant/trainer, I work on several levels that will be useful to you in enhancing your “resource family” program(s). As a strategic thinker I help to re-examine programs in a framework of permanence as well as family support and retention.. I work in consultation with middle managers and supervisors to develop themselves and their workers in these same areas. And I work with all staff as a consultant/trainer to improve their skills.. First and finally I work with individual families and youth both to assess their particular challenges and opportunities and to model the work that staff can be trained to do.

Beginning with your families, the best recruitment and retention strategy is support for families. Effective supports include responsiveness, engagement and training. As the executive director of an adoption agency for older children, I worked on these areas for many years. Since then, a wide variety of consulting, training and public speaking has enhanced and developed my understanding and skills. Both parents and youth are very interested in information on the links among behavior, loss and adolescent development. The connections within and among families are crucial as well. I work on recruitment as well, but recommend work on support first. What enhancement to your program’s family support services might be most useful for your families?

I work with management staff at every level to review their programs. We look at staff deployment, training, and support along with the program’s accessibility from the outside and the inside. Since every agency and often every program develops its own culture and pattern of practice, it is helpful to look at each program with a specific goal, such as permanence enhancement, shared parenting, family support, etc. in mind. What will it take for your program?

Managers complain that “My staff don’t know how to talk with teens.” This is an area where I work intensively with staff on engagement skills, adolescents development issues, family support and communication, as well as family groupwork. By doing specific case consultation and direct work with families and young people, I identify the most pressing needs for staff development and model effective engagement and the use of the concepts underscored in training.. What are your staff’s most pressing needs?

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