

## About Center For Family Connections

At a fundamental level, Center For Family Connections' (CFFC) mission is to help children feel safe, seen, and valued, and to help them adjust to the challenges of being, or having been, moved from one family to another. Many of the children CFFC serves have spent years in countless foster homes, orphanages, residential centers, or hospitals. CFFC constructs families, reconstructs families, refurbishes and restores families. The experienced clinicians understand the interactions and needs of complex families and provide the skills, tools and talent required to build stronger and healthier family units.

*CFFC believes that the need to honor connections is an essential part of family life.*

CFFC is an educational and clinical resource center that addresses the developmental, structural, and systemic issues related to adoption, foster care, kinship care, divorce and other complex blended families. CFFC serves individuals and families affected by adoption and foster care, as well as the people with whom they are connected, by offering training, education, advocacy, and clinical treatment.

CFFC serves a broad and diverse constituency nationally and internationally as well as in Greater Boston. From its founding, the staff has grown from 2 to 15, enabling CFFC clinicians to help more individuals and families. In the past year, CFFC served about 1,500 people on-site, and about 5,000 parents and professionals in national and international trainings and seminars. About 30% of CFFC's clients were low income; 30% were African American, 10% Latino, 15% Asian, and 45% Caucasian. CFFC's pro bono services to low-income clients are valued at approximately \$100,000 annually. Many of CFFC's clients reside in areas in DSS's Greater Boston and Metro regions.

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Center For Family Connections  
presents

a Family Network Service

for

The Department of Social Services

# Attachment Enhancement



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At CFFC we believe in a preventive approach to attachment problems. We are eager to help the parents to understand their own attachment styles and some strategies and models for successful redirecting of a child's problematic behavior.

Foster and adopted children do not have attachment 'disorders'; they have attachment difficulty because of the very chaotic and complicated lives they have lived prior to adoption. The fantasy of immediate bonding and attachment is quite rare with this population, and sometimes doesn't even happen with a child by birth.

We need to help new parents to understand that not only does it take 'two to tango' but it takes time to deconstruct old patterns and reconstruct a new life for the child and for the family.

## Attachment Enhancement: Program

The therapy for this alteration is much less about the child than it is about the caregiver. We see great success with the appropriate help and the ability of the caregiver to provide the attachment style and strategies on his/her side that will allow the child to reframe his/her bad experience into one that will be different.

In our 'home study' of pre-adoptive parents, we might also assess their attachment style and their ability to be consistent and structured in providing a sense of safety and the correct strategies for a child with these issues. Since a very large number of our public adoptions are of children who have had multiple moves, losses, and neglect or abuse, and since a growing number of our international adoptions have even more probability of the above, it is in our best interest to provide education, training, support, and celebration of these parents who are choosing to take on the challenge of attaching with child who needs a family and a new experience of safety and love.

Our work with attachment also includes Pre-MAPP and Post-MAPP Sessions for interested parents. This program for pre-adoptive parents and children during the permanency planning stage called "Matching By Heart: Attachment Assessment" is a package that assesses the adults attachment styles as well as the child's attachment styles, and seeks the child's advice about their view of what a 'good parent or adult' has been for them in order to find a compatible family type to then match the child for permanent placement. This package is especially important with children over ten years, for their commitment to their own permanency.

## Attachment Enhancement: Outcomes

Expected outcomes of CFFC's Attachment Enhancement Program include:

- Parents and caregivers have a deeper understanding of children's attachment styles, and of the experiences that may have colored those styles.
- Parents and caregivers have a deeper understanding of their own attachment styles and biases.
- Parents and caregivers are educated as to what is 'normal' and what may be indicative of deeper challenges.
- Children are in a safe and secure environment where they have the understanding, the assistance and the time needed to develop healthy attachments in relationships.