

## When & How to Seek Therapy

Before initiating therapy children/youth should be in a stable living situation (placement). Developing stability takes time and involves developing and maintaining predictable, structured and consistent daily routines. Stability provides a degree of safety for the child or youth.

When therapy is being considered, it is important for parents, caregivers or the social worker to clearly identify the stated purpose for the referral. Children and youth need to be prepared for therapy.

Remember Therapy is not the be all and end all. It can be part of a comprehensive treatment plan. The most significant therapeutic intervention is a stable, consistent and attuned placement.

### Preparing children/youth for therapy includes:

- Telling them that a referral is being made
- Giving them clear explanation about why you think therapy would be helpful.
- A clear statement about the goals of therapy and how everyone will know they have been successfully accomplished.

### When thinking about starting therapy, consider the following areas:

- What parts of their daily routine go well?
- What is a challenge or struggle in their daily routine?
- How do they manage transitions?
- Are there any concerns re eating, sleeping or playing patterns?
- How do they get along/interact with friends?
- How do they get along/interact with adults?
- How do they self soothe?
- How do they accept the comfort/soothing you offer?
- How are they doing in school?

### Choosing a therapist – Questions to ask

- What is their training and experience?
- What is their approach to therapy?
- Who will attend and what happens in a session?
- How long will therapy take?
- Have they worked with this type of problem, age group before?
- Have they had success previously with this type of problem?
- What kind of contact will they have with the caregiver, social worker etc.?
- Will they provide regular updates?
- Are they open to your observations about the child/youth?

Different therapists will use different methods and or techniques. Never be afraid to ask about what they are doing in therapy. The therapist should be able to answer all of your questions, and explain why they are doing what they are doing.

When considering therapy you can improve the chances of success by

- Being informed
- Identifying what the child/youth needs
- Recognizing what does and doesn't work

### **Effective Therapy...**

- Builds hope and confidence
- is safe
- Proceeds at a pace that meets the need of the child/youth
- Provides information and practical suggestions to caregivers and other service providers
- Does not intensify identified problem areas (make things worse)
- Has clear measurable and achievable goals
- Is purposeful