

Therapeutic Foster Care – The Circle Program

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Program: Therapeutic Foster Care – Circle - is a partnership program between a foster care agency and Berry Street Take Two, an intensive therapeutic service for clients of child protection. Circle is an early intervention therapeutic foster care program designed to promote placement stability and to strengthen the relationship between the child and foster carer.

Aim: Circle aims to reduce the deleterious impact on attachment security of multiple placement changes, and for children to have a healing experience through therapeutic caregiving that promotes their sense of safety and security, redresses the destabilising effects of maltreatment and promotes development and emotional wellbeing. Circle endeavours to build a “therapeutic web” around the child via the care team which can include the parents/family, foster carer, placement agency, child protection and Take Two. The care team aims to maintain a child-centred perspective to ensure the child's needs are prioritised and being met and planned for.

Role/Intervention: The role of the Take Two therapeutic specialist is to undertake a biopsychosocial assessment including the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT) and ASQ/ASQ-SE that informs the therapeutic care plan. Intervention is targeted at the caregiver and focused on promoting attachment security through trauma informed, culturally and developmentally sensitive, therapeutic caregiving practices matched to the individual infants assessed needs. Current program data and infant case vignettes will highlight the clinical work of the therapeutic specialist using attachment and trauma informed treatment modalities in promoting an optimal caregiving environment for the infant.

Outcomes: The Circle program demonstrates increased placement stability with reduction in disrupted attachment resultant from placement changes and improved child outcomes – relational health, child development and emotional health. Current limitations of the program and future directions of a Therapeutic Foster Care program will be discussed.