

## References for Unit I: The Context of Practice in Kinship Foster Care

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## **Learning Activities and Resources for Unit I**

The following learning activities are contained in this section:

1. State Policies that Guide Kinship Care
2. The Importance of Permanency for Children in Kinship Foster Care
3. The Training Videotape: Segment One
4. Developing Skills in Constructing Genograms and Eco-maps

## ***Learning Activity #1: State Policies that Guide Kinship Care***

Policies on the use of kinship care as a formal child welfare service vary by state and sometimes by county and agency. It is important to become familiar with all policies that govern kinship care.

- # Identify the state statutes, regulations, rules, and procedures and any county or agency policies that govern kinship foster care including:
  - < types of services available to persons caring for related children and eligibility criteria for accessing these services;
  - < criteria for taking children into state custody when relatives are willing to care for the child or are already caring for the child;
  - < policies regarding whether relatives are the first preference for placement of children when the child welfare system takes custody;
  - < policies that govern financial support to persons caring for related children;
  - < permanency options, policies and procedures for achieving each permanency goal, and services available to support achievement of these goals.
  
- # Discuss both the opportunities and constraints that each of these policies present for:
  - < strengthening or weakening the child's informal kinship system
  - < the achievement of permanency for children in kinship foster care through
    - , diversion and family preservation
    - , reunification
    - , adoption
    - , guardianship

**Learning Activity #2:      *The Importance of Permanency for Children in Kinship Foster Care***

Permanency planning for children living with relatives has been a controversial topic. Sometimes it is helpful for caseworkers to articulate their thoughts about permanency planning for children in kinship care and to discuss these thoughts with their supervisor and/or other child welfare practitioners. This exercise can be useful in identifying personal beliefs that may be barriers to permanency planning and in developing a commitment to permanency planning for children in kinship foster care. Some useful questions for helping caseworkers articulate and discuss their thoughts follow. In a group training session these questions can be written on a separate sheet of newsprint; training participants responses to each question can be listed on the newsprint to facilitate brainstorming and group discussion.

- #      What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of "permanency"?  
What does the term permanency mean to you?
  
- #      Is permanency an important concern when children are living with relatives?
  
- #      What does permanency mean for the child, for the permanent caregiver, for the child welfare system?
  
- #      Is permanency possible when the child welfare system remains involved in a family's life?
  
- #      Is it important for relatives to consider adopting the children in their care?
  
- #      Is it important for relatives to consider assuming legal guardianship of the children in their care?

### ***Learning Activity #3      The Training Videotape: Segment One***

In this segment, *Developing a Broad View of Family*, the caseworker interviews the mother of a child placed in kinship foster care. Use of the genogram and eco-map are demonstrated as tools for engaging the mother in a professional helping relationship and assisting the caseworker in developing a broad view of the child's family.

It is best to view this segment of the videotape after the content of the discussion section of Unit I has been reviewed. Also, persons viewing this segment of the videotape should first read the case scenario that follows this page. A genogram and eco-map constructed from the information collected by the caseworker in the training videotape are displayed in the pages that follow the case scenario.

After viewing this scene, it is useful to consider the ways that constructing genograms and eco-maps may be helpful at different points in the life of a case. For example, when considering critical decisions, constructing an up-to-date genogram and eco-map may help the family and the caseworker assess the resources available within and outside of the family. These resources may be relevant to the critical decision being considered.

It is also useful to consider other members of the family with whom the genogram and eco-map could be used. These tools may be used to facilitate engagement of fathers, children, the kinship caregiver, and other member of the kinship network to elicit their perspective on the family system and ecology, and to involve them in assessment, case planning, and decision making.

### ***The Training Videotape Case Scenario: Scene One***

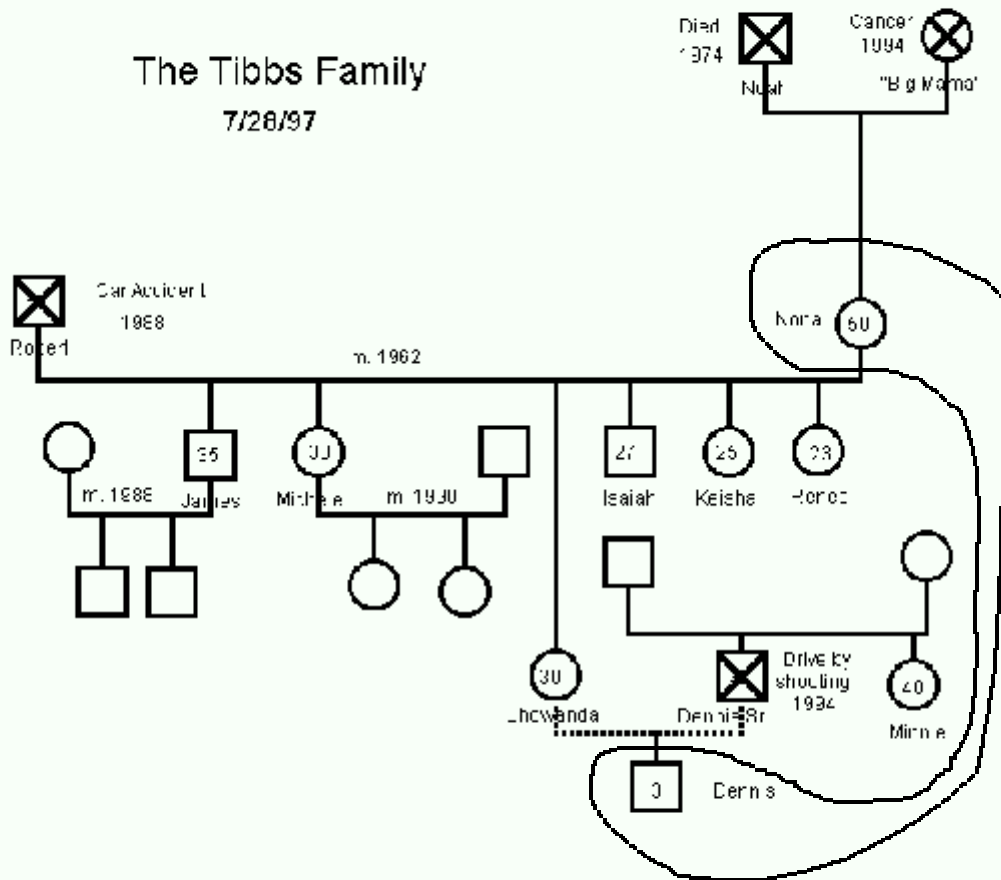
Child:	Dennis, age 3	Biological Mother:	Showanda, age 30
Father:	Dennis Sr., deceased	Maternal Grandmother:	Nona, age 50

Dennis, age 3, was recently removed from the biological mother's home by child protective services and placed with the maternal grandmother. The child had been repeatedly left unsupervised in the mother's home and was found at 2 A.M., wandering the halls of the apartment building in which the family lived. The mother returned to the apartment as a child protective services investigator was leaving the apartment to transport the child to the maternal grandmother's home. The mother was described by the investigator as "distraught and incoherent, stumbling several times, appearing glassy eyed". The child was taken into protective custody and placed with the maternal grandmother.

According to the maternal grandmother, the mother has a history of cocaine use. The biological father was killed in a drive-by shooting shortly after the child was born. The child in state custody is the mother's only child. While the mother has always had custody of the child, she has left the child with the maternal grandmother for weeks at a time. During these periods the maternal grandmother suspects that the mother was heavily using drugs and "partying with friends." Showanda, the biological mother, is third in a sibship of six. While all maternal family members have been involved with Dennis, Showanda's older brother, James (age 35), and older sister, Michele (age 33), have been most instrumental in helping the maternal grandmother care for Dennis. A paternal aunt, Minnie, has been involved with the child since the child's birth.

The initial permanency goal is reunification with the biological mother. The maternal grandmother is the current caregiver and is described as taking very good care of the child. She reports that her own mother helped raise her children for a period of time when she experienced problems with depression after the sudden death of her husband in an automobile accident.

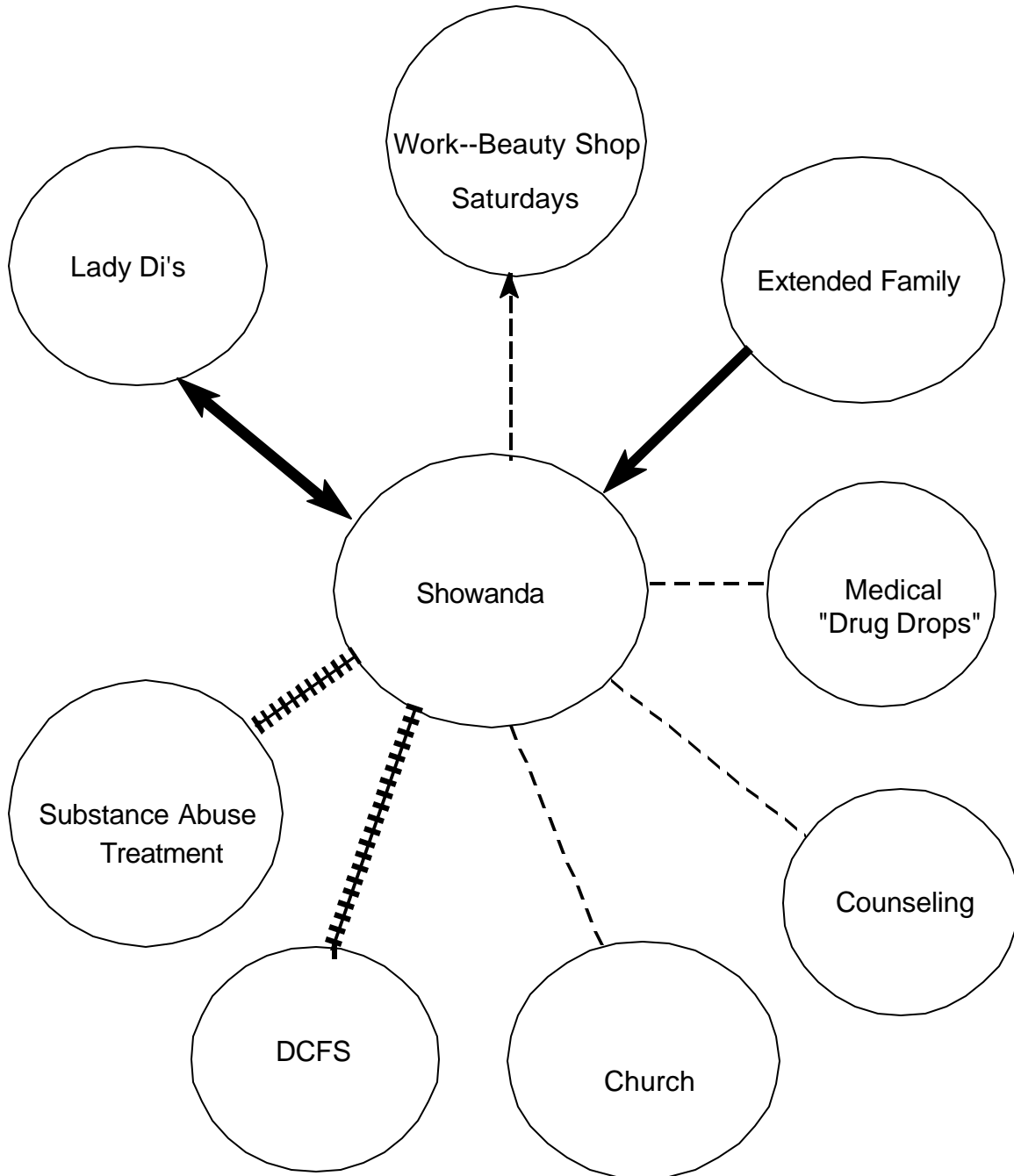
## The Tibbs Family 7/28/97



Genogram of the Tibbs Family portrayed in the training tape that accompanies the *Achieving Permanence for Children in Kinship Foster Care* training manual. The genogram is incomplete, reflecting the information that the caseworker was able to collect during initial interviews with the biological mother, the maternal grandmother, and other family members. Additional information can be completed as necessary in later contacts with the family.

The three year old child, Dennis, currently lives with his maternal grandmother. This household is noted by the dotted curved boundary drawn around Dennis and his maternal grandmother.

Showanda Tibbs' Eco-Map 6/28/97



#### **Learning Activity #4      *Developing Skills in Constructing Genograms and Eco-maps***

The following activities can be conducted as individual or small group activities in group training. They may also be used as *homework assignments, in supervision, or as a self-directed learning activity.*

- #      Develop your own genogram and eco-map.
  
- #      Analyze your genogram to identify patterns of caregiving for older and younger generations.
  
- #      Analyze your eco-map to identify support systems available to you and the quality of relationships you have with the systems that are part of your ecology.
  
- #      Construct a genogram and an eco-map for a case on your caseload. It is likely that you will not know all the dates, names, or even all family members. This exercise will help you identify important information that is missing. It also demonstrates the usefulness of constructing genograms and eco-maps with clients to collect information that is relevant for permanency planning.
  
- #      In case staffings, present genograms and eco-maps that have been completed with the families you serve. Identify various patterns of caregiving, resources and support systems, and relationships between systems in the family's ecology. These observations may be useful in understanding the family system's strengths, resources, and needs. They may also be helpful in developing a plan for engaging the family in the permanency planning and decision making process.

**Learning Activity #4      *Developing Skills in Constructing Genograms and Eco-maps* (continued--page 2 of 2)**

#      Develop a genogram and an eco-map for a friend, another training participant, a co-worker. Allow others to interview you to construct your genogram and eco-map. In the process of constructing genograms and eco-maps you may become aware of various reactions that you have to asking or being asked questions. You may have strong responses to probing into areas considered personal. You may experience a difference of opinion from others about what is okay and what is not okay to share with others. Jot down some of your observations and reactions to interviewing and being interviewed. Some process questions for genogram and eco-map exercises follow:

!      Interviewer:

- c      What was that like for you?
- c      How did you feel about *asking* questions?
- c      What questions were easy/difficult?
- c      Did you find yourself comparing/contrasting your genogram/eco-map with the other persons?
- c      What was your response to separations, divorces, adoptions, deaths, births, patterns of naming, moves, the nature of various resources and system involvements or lack thereof, etc?
- c      What was your reaction to missing or uncertain information?

!      Interviewee:

- c      What was it like for you to be interviewed/questioned?
- c      How did you feel about sharing personal information?
- c      What was most comfortable? Most uncomfortable?

## Handouts and Overheads for Unit I

- ! Goals for Unit I
- ! Figure I-A: Types of Kinship Care
- ! Figure I-B: Federal Policies and Kinship Care
- ! Figure I-C: Title IV
- ! Figure I-D: *Miller v. Youakim*, 1979
- ! Figure I-E: P. L. 95-608
- ! Figure I-F: The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (P. L. 96-272)
- ! Figure I-G: The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (P. L. 105-89)
- ! Figure I-H: Casework Practice and Kinship Adoption
- ! Figure I-I: Decision Making in Child Welfare
- ! Figure I-J: Roles and Responsibilities of Child Welfare Caseworkers that Flow from Federal Statutes
- ! Figure I-K: Characteristics of Informal and Formal Systems of Care
- ! Figure I-L: Common Symbols for Constructing a Genogram
- ! Figure I-M: Example of an Eco-map

**Goals for Unit I:      The Context of Practice in Kinship  
Foster Care: Formal and Informal  
System Constraints and Opportunities**

This unit is intended to assist child welfare caseworkers in gaining:

1. understanding of traditional/informal kinship care and formal kinship care;
2. understanding of federal policies related to kinship care;
3. understanding of the role of the child welfare caseworker in relationship to these child welfare policies;
4. commitment to ensuring safety, permanency, and well-being for children in kinship foster care;
5. skills in using the resources of the formal child welfare system to strengthen and build upon the strengths and resources of the child's informal kinship network;
6. a broad view of family; and
7. skills in the use of genograms and eco-maps as relevant tools for information gathering, engagement, assessment, and planning.

## Figure I-A: Types of Kinship Care

### Traditional/Informal Kinship Care

- ! Temporary
- ! Informal Adoption

### Formal Kinship Care:

- ! Kinship Care as a Diversion from the Child Welfare System
- ! Kinship Care as a Family-Based In-Home Service---  
Family Preservation
- ! Kinship Foster Care
  - c Licensed and Subsidized at the Foster Care Rate
  - c Unlicensed and not Fully Subsidized
- ! Guardianship
  - c Subsidized
  - c Not Subsidized
- ! Kinship Adoption
  - c Subsidized
  - c Not Subsidized

## Figure I-B: Federal Policies and Kinship Care

The primary federal policies related to kinship care are found in:

Title IV-A and IV-E of the Social Security Act and their related regulations

The U. S. Supreme Court decision, *Miller v. Youakim* (1979)

The Indian Child Welfare Act (P. L. 95-608)

The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (P. L. 96-272)

The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (P. L. 105-89)

Although constitutional law, federal statutes, federal regulations and federal supreme court decisions should affect states similarly, these federal policies related to placement of children with their relatives may be interpreted differently by state as well as county and city child welfare agencies.

## **Figure I-C: Title IV**

Title IV of the Social Security Act authorized grandparents, siblings, step-siblings, aunts and uncles to receive AFDC grants for the care of dependent children. The 1962 amendments authorized federal reimbursement for children in licensed foster homes, group homes and child care institutions. Title IV and its regulations do not prohibit relatives from becoming licensed foster parents and receiving federally funded foster care boarding rates to care for a child placed in their home by the child welfare system.

## **Figure I-D: *Miller v. Youakim*, 1979**

The *Miller v. Youakim* (1979) Supreme Court decision ruled that relatives are entitled to the same federal foster care benefits received by non-relative foster parents if the placement is eligible for federal reimbursement under the AFDC-Foster Care Program (now Title IV-E). Eligibility for federal reimbursement requires that:

- ! the child was eligible for AFDC prior to placement;
- ! the child was removed from home as a result of a judicial determination or a voluntary agreement between the family and the public child welfare agency;
- ! placement is the responsibility of a state or county agency; and
- ! the relative's home meets the state standards for foster care.

## **Figure I-E: P. L. 95-608**

The Indian Child Welfare Act also may have influenced the development of formal kinship foster care. This law "called for preservation of the ethnic heritage of Native American children in foster care through a variety of protections, among them extended family placements" (Kusserow, 1992a, p.2).

## **Figure I-F: The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (P. L. 96-272)**

**PURPOSE:** Prevent unnecessary removal of children from their families (family preservation) and ensure that children return home or are living in some other form of "permanent home" in the shortest time period (permanency planning).

### **REQUIREMENTS:**

- ! written case plans for every child in the child welfare system
- ! case reviews at least every six months for every child in placement
- ! that "reasonable efforts" be made to maintain children with their families by providing services to them in their own homes prior to removing them to out of home care
- ! when children must be removed from their parents they should be placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting available located in close proximity to the parent's home, consistent with the best interests and special needs of the child
- ! that "reasonable efforts" be made to remove the harms to the child and return the child to the biological family whenever possible in the shortest time period.

If the child cannot return safely home in a reasonable time period, adoption is the next preference, because it provides the child with a legal status as a "permanent" member of the family. States are required to provide adoption subsidies to encourage adoptions and the federal government shares the cost of these subsidies.

## **Figure I-G: The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (P.L. 105-89)**

- ! Emphasizes that safety of the child should be of paramount concern when planning for children.
- ! Requires that the child's safety be included in case planning and reviews.
- ! States that reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify the family are not required on behalf of parents who have murdered or committed a felony assault against another child or pose a serious risk to the child's health or safety.
- ! Requires annual permanency hearings, notice of reviews and hearings, and the opportunity for foster parents and relatives to be heard.
- ! Provides incentives to states to increase the number of adoptions that are completed and mandates state documentation of the steps taken to find permanent homes and finalize permanency for children.
- ! Mandates states to initiate termination of parental rights procedures and to expedite the adoption process if:
  - < the court has determined the child to be an abandoned infant;
  - < aggravated circumstances exist that make the parent a serious safety concern;
  - < the child has been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, unless the child has been placed with a relative by the State.

## Figure I-H: Casework Practice and Kinship Adoption

Results of the *Achieving Permanency for Children in Kinship Foster Care* project suggest several differences in caseworker practice in "successful" and "unsuccessful" kinship adoptions:

- c "Failed" kinship adoptions are characterized by
  - c little involvement of the members of the child's kinship system in planning and decision-making
  - c "marketing" adoption as a permanency goal for the child vs. facilitating informed decision-making
  - c short-term view of child-rearing
- c Apparently "Successful" Adoptions
  - c involvement of many members of the child's kinship system, including both maternal and paternal relatives, in decision-making and planning
  - c creative re-definition of family roles
  - c facilitating informed decision-making
  - c a long-term view of child-rearing

## Figure I-I: Decision Making in Child Welfare

- ! “Only after the family fails in its function should the child's interests become a matter for state intrusion.”
- ! “...intrusion by the state into the privacy of a family should be minimal...”
- ! “...when a child's best interests conflict with fairness for the interested adults, the child's best interests shall be paramount.”
- ! When state intervention is required and custody becomes a legal matter:
  - < Placement decisions should safeguard the child's need for continuity of relationships.
  - < Placement decisions should reflect the child's, not the adult's sense of time.
  - < Placement decisions must take into account the law's incapacity to supervise interpersonal relationships and the limits of our knowledge to make long-range predictions.
  - < The “best interest of the child” is often best defined by determining which available alternative is “least detrimental” to the child, recognizing that any “move” is likely to have some harmful effects.

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Sources: Solnit, A. J., Nordhaus, B. F., & Lord, R. (1992). *When home is no haven: Child placement issues*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press. Goldstein, J. Freud, A. & Solnit, A. J. (1979). *Before the best interests of the child*. New York: Free Press.

## **Figure I-J: Roles and Responsibilities of Child Welfare Caseworkers that Flow from Federal Statutes**

### **! ENSURE CHILDREN ARE SAFE**

- ÷ Assess risk of harm
- ÷ Identify potentially dangerous or dangerous situations.
- ÷ Create supportive social networks/"nets of safety" around children and families
- ÷ Help families develop protection plans for children

### **! ENSURE THAT CHILDREN ARE IN A PERMANENT HOME IN THE SHORTEST TIME PERIOD**

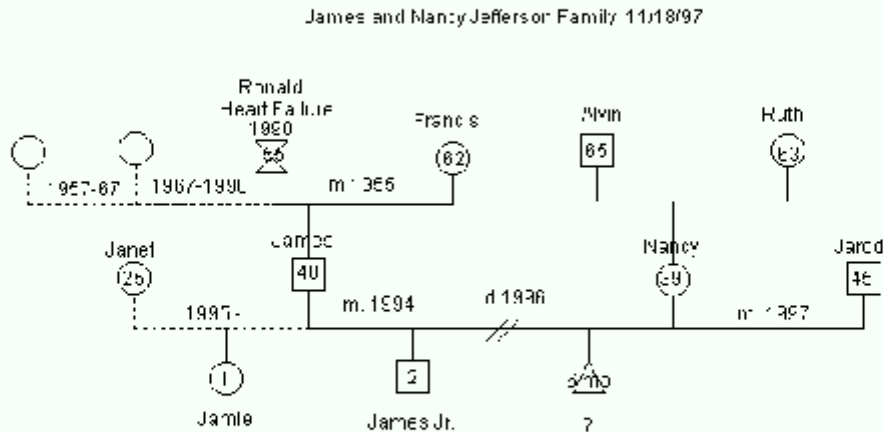
- ÷ Living with at least one caring adult who has made a commitment to rear the child to the age of majority
- ÷ Preferably with a "permanent" legal status
  - ÷ Reunification with biological parents
  - ÷ Adoption
  - ÷ Guardianship

**Figure I-K: CHARACTERISTICS OF INFORMAL AND FORMAL SYSTEMS OF CARE**

<b>INFORMAL SYSTEMS</b>	<b>FORMAL SYSTEMS</b>
Mutuality	Provision of help to one in need
Flexibility	Standardization-specific level of service to all
Self-regulation; homeostasis	Regulation/control
Family privacy	Intrusion into family life
Relevance to individual family, community, culture	Largely influenced by mainstream societal values
Relatively free from stigma	Stigmatizing
"Family" or person in need of help defined by family and person	Service recipients defined by eligibility criteria/public policy
Limited by family resources and priorities	Limited by societal resources and priorities

NOTE: The challenge for child welfare caseworkers is to bring the resources of the formal child welfare system to strengthen and support, not replace, the informal helping system, including the extended family/kinship networks of children coming into contact with the child welfare system.

## Figure I-L: Common Symbols for Constructing a Genogram



Males are indicated by a square; females by a circle. If you do not know the sex of a family member, indicate this by a triangle.

A married couple is indicated by a solid line connecting a square and a circle, with an "m" (for married) and the year of the marriage above the solid line. Separation or divorce is indicated by a double slash through the solid line, with "s" and the date of the separation or "d" and the date of the divorce over the double slash. An intimate relationship between adults that is not a marriage is indicated by a dotted line. In the Jefferson family genogram, the relationship between James and Janet is depicted by a dotted line. Also, the affairs that Ronald had while married to Francis are depicted by dotted lines.

In the Jefferson family, James and Nancy married in 1994. James began an affair with Janet in 1995. The relationship between James and Janet continues but they are not married. James and Nancy divorced in 1996 and Nancy married Jarod in 1997.

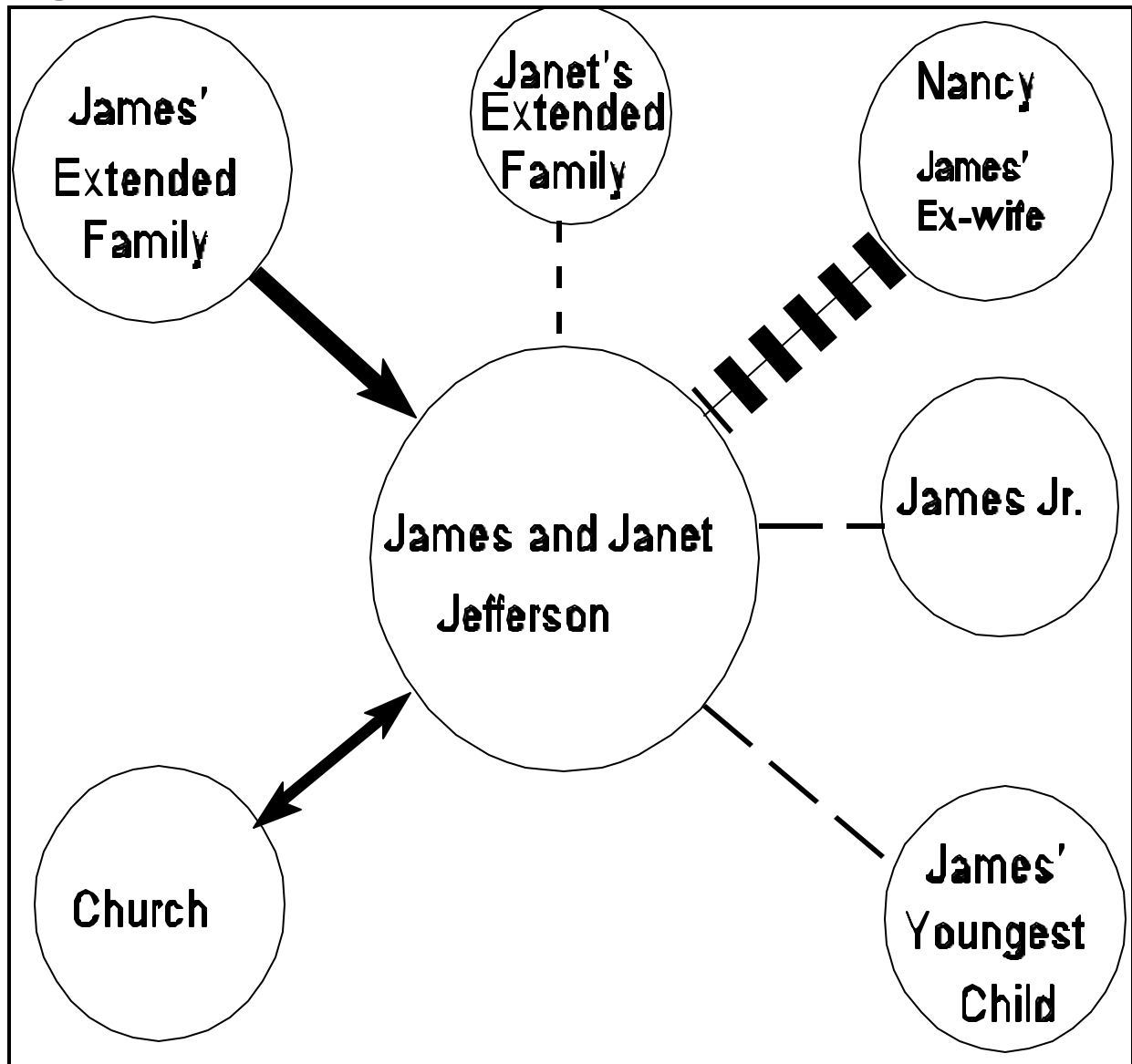
Children are indicated by circles, squares, and triangles, attached to the line that connects the child's birth parents. Siblings born to the same couple are attached to the same line that connects the parents. The Jefferson family genogram indicates that the relationship between James and Janet produced one female child, Jamie, who is now one year old. The relationship between James and Nancy produced two children James Jr., age two, and a six month old child, name and sex unknown to the person constructing this genogram.

James has custody of James Jr. and this is indicated by the fact that James Jr. is located on the side of the double slash closest to James' name. James Jr. and Jamie live with James and Janet. The six month old child (to the right of the double slash) lives with Nancy and Jarod.

A deceased member of the family is indicated by an "X" through the circle, square, or triangle, with the year of death indicated beside the figure. The Jefferson family genogram indicates that James' father, Ronald, died in 1980 from heart failure.

*Source: McGoldrick, M. & Closson, R. (1985). Genograms in Family Assessment. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.*

**Figure I-M: Example of an Eco-Map**



- c The circles represent various systems in the family's ecology.
- c The lines between these circles represent assessments of the quality of the relationships between these systems. A solid line represents a strong relationship. A dotted line represents a tenuous relationship.
- c Stressful relationships are depicted by hash marks drawn through the line.
- c Arrows are used to indicate the flow of energy, one way or reciprocal.