

## **Effective Strategies to Support Families through Reunification**

### **Abstract:**

The accountable, time-limited mandate for achieving permanency for children set forth in the 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) drove the demand for a better and coordinated system response to meet the needs of families affected by parental substance use. This workshop presentation will explore the impact of parental substance use on the parent-child relationship and the essential service components needed to address these issues, including ensuring quality visitation and contact, implementation of evidence-based services inclusive of parent education, therapeutic services and access to ongoing family recovery support.

This workshop discussion will explore family readiness as a collaborative practice issue by raising the need for coordinated case plans and effective communication protocols across child welfare, treatment and court systems. Discussion will explore different program designs across sites including the timing and phasing of reunification, family maintenance supervision and case termination.

### **Learning Objectives:**

1. Understand the impact of parental substance use on the parent-child relationship and the essential service components needed to address these issues.
2. Understand family readiness as a collaborative practice issue and why “team” is just as important as any “tool” for assessing readiness.
3. Learn various case management strategies, including implementation of quality visitation and contact, evidence-based services, coordinated case plans and effective communication protocols across child welfare, treatment and court systems.

### **Faculty Bio**

#### **Russ Bermejo, MSW**

*Senior Program Associate, Children and Family Futures*

Mr. Bermejo currently serves as a Senior Program Associate with the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare at Children and Family Futures (CFF). In this capacity, he facilitates technical assistance regarding child welfare and substance abuse related issues for multiple projects. He has managed the Family Drug Court Learning Academy since 2010 and currently serves as a Change Leader Associate for the State-wide Systems Reform Program (SSRP) supporting state leaders with the development and successful implementation of their statewide plan to increase the scale of FDCs and/or infuse FDC practices into larger systems. Mr. Bermejo also served as the Performance Management Liaison providing support to six FDCs awarded by the Children Affected by Methamphetamine (CAM) federal grant program (2010-2014).

Mr. Bermejo has 12 years of experience in public child welfare practice, including nearly 10 years as a Senior Social Worker with Orange County Children and Family Services. Mr. Bermejo's casework primarily focused on family reunification, family maintenance, or permanency planning. Mr. Bermejo has extensive experience in working with children and families involved in the juvenile dependency court system. Prior to joining CFF, Mr. Bermejo served in the Philippines as an Aftercare Fellow for International Justice Mission, where he worked on numerous aftercare projects focused on rescue and protection, reintegration economic self-sufficiency, and community stakeholder training.

Mr. Bermejo earned a BA in Sociology from the University of California, Los Angeles and a Masters in Social Work, from California State University, San Bernardino.