

Psychoeducational Programme to improve the quality of visits during non-kinship foster care *Visits: a context for family development*

Bernedo, I. M., and González-Pasarín, L.

Developmental and Educational Psychology Department

University of Málaga (Spain)

Presenting author e-mail: bernedo@uma.es

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Background and objective: *Visits: a context for family development* (Bernedo et al., 2020) is the first psychoeducational programme aimed to improve the quality of contact visits between foster children and their birth families through the promotion of parental, educational and emotional competencies of biological and foster families. It is the consolidation of different projects and publications of the Foster Care and Adoption Research Group of the University of Malaga, which had highlighted the lack of such programmes and the need to develop a systematic and structured approach that could help to ensure that all those involved in visits were adequately prepared, thereby increasing the likelihood of a quality encounter between children and their birth family.

Method: The programme included two training modules, one for birth families, one for foster families. Each module consists of seven sessions, six of which are individual; the final session is a group encounter for all participants and is designed to consolidate what has been learned and to provide an opportunity for feedback to be shared. Both families have been trained in specific communication and educational skills, among other relevant aspects for the quality of the visits. In addition, work was carried out on the collaborative relationship between birth and foster families. Specifically, birth families were trained to transmit appropriate messages to children and received coaching in regard of the types of gifts, snacks and age-appropriate topics of conversation during visits. On their side, foster families were trained to identify more accurately the child's emotional state before and after the visits.

Results and conclusions: The results on its short-term effectiveness demonstrate that it is a useful resource for the promotion of positive parenting complementing the resources available to child welfare professionals to support the foster care process and, in particular, the contacts that can take place between foster children and their birth family. Furthermore, it is paving the way to become a high-quality, evidence-based family support programme.

Recommendations:

- The intervention with birth and foster families is relevant.
- Improve the quality of visits during foster care.
- The programme is a resource for child welfare professionals.
- The families improve their affective relationships with the child and the collaboration between them.