

Building Hope During Reunification

Using the Science of Hope and Easing the Transition



The Science of Hope

WHAT IS HOPE?

The belief that your future can be better than today, and that YOU have the power to make it so.

HOPE REQUIRES 3 THINGS:



GOALS

Set goals that are clear, highly desirable & important enough to motivate you to action.



PATHWAYS

Create a step-by-step roadmap to your goal with multiple pathways/options. Without pathways, a goal is just a wish!



WILLPOWER

Gather mental energy from within yourself & your community to keep moving toward your goals.

REMEMBER:

Celebrate achievements, and be willing to re-goal if your pathways or willpower are exhausted.



Welcome & Orientation

- ▶ A snapshot of the Science of Hope.
- ▶ Why a H.O.P.E. Reunification Toolkit?
- ▶ What is it?
- ▶ Who should use it?
- ▶ How can it be used?



Story of Hope

A Mother's Love Knows No Bounds



Reunification is a process, not a one-time event.

Reunification is a hopeful moment but also overwhelming.

Families need clarity, organization and confidence.

The goal for parents: make reunification feel doable, not daunting.



The Basics

- ▶ Created for parents to use as their case is nearing reunification.
- ▶ Provides a framework and method for the parents to:
 - ▶ 1. Determine what information and documents they need to obtain before reunification and trial return home;
 - ▶ 2. Keep track of what they have obtained and what they still need to track down.
- ▶ Not all sections of the toolkit will be relevant to each case.
- ▶ Sections include health information, education information, documents and child information.

Turning Hope into practice.

Guidelines for Helpers

HOPE T.I.P.S. Sheet

H.O.P.E. Checklist

H.O.P.E Worksheets





▶ GUIDELINES FOR HELPERS

- ▶ Helpers can include: lived experts; parent attorneys; DCYF staff; parent advocates; OPD social workers; PCAP; VGALs; family members; etc.
- ▶ Helpers can assist parents in identifying where to obtain or request documents or information.
- ▶ See *Message to Those Working with Parents*, *A Message for Parents*, and *T.I.P.S. sheet*.

▶ Depending the helper(s):

- ▶ Help start the process by providing, completing or helping parent obtain any info you/your agency has.
- ▶ Provide parent with the most complete version to work from.
- ▶ Divide “completion” of Toolkit into phases. Break tasks down into “easy to complete sections”.
- ▶ Tracking the tasks, making the calls, getting the information, and checking them off on the list all work toward building self-esteem, and giving them hope.





▶ H.O.P.E. T.I.P.S. SHEET

- ▶ **T**aking **I**t all in **P**erfect **S**tride
- ▶ Purpose of the H.O.P.E. Quick Checklist and Worksheets.
 - ▶ Collect documents and information on children.
 - ▶ Begin when reunification first discussed. (No later than TRH).
 - ▶ Provides organization and structure.
 - ▶ Increases communication.
 - ▶ Builds self-esteem.
 - ▶ Reduces stress.





▶ H.O.P.E. CHECKLIST

- ▶ Collect documents and information included on Quick Checklist.
 - ▶ Not everything applies to every dependency case.
 - ▶ Information collected can be written on the corresponding worksheets. Additional worksheets can be provided if necessary to accommodate changes.
 - ▶ “Where do I find this information?” HELPERS, step in and help out.



Building Hope During Reunification and Easing the Transition

Reunification is a process, not a one-time event.
It is a process of bringing a child or children back into a family environment
that may have changed significantly since the child left.

DOCUMENTS

- Order for Trial Return Home
- Transition Plan/Safety Plan (from DCYF)
- Social Security Card
- Birth Certificate
- Medical (Insurance) Card
- Immunization Records
- IEP/504 Plans with School*
- Behavioral Health Assessment/Diagnosis*

*Parents are encouraged to request this information from service providers. The parents will benefit by building relationships and getting first-hand feedback and current information about the child's needs. This also lets the provider know about reunification.

Some providers may require a certified copy of the Order for Trial Return Home (or a letter from DCYF) to change the Contact Person.

HEALTH INFORMATION

- Pediatrician/Doctor(s)
- Dentist
- Eye Doctor
- Ear Doctor
- Mental Health Counselor
- Therapist
- Prescriptions (names/dosage/purpose)
- Pharmacy
- Current and recurring (repeated) appointments
- Change Contact Information (remove placement from list)**
- Specialists (OT, PT, Speech, Feeding, etc.)

WHEN TRIAL RETURN HOME STARTS: When contacting service providers, tell them YOU are now the contact person, ask what documents are required to make the change in their records, sign all necessary releases and remove the names of placement. Find out process of transferring to another provider (if necessary).

EDUCATION INFORMATION

- Best Interests Meeting (scheduled by DCYF)
- School (upcoming conference dates and school events)
- Teacher(s)
- Para-Educator(s)
- Principal
- Specialist(s)/Speech, OT, etc.
- School Counselor
- WISE Provider/case aides/case manager
- Childcare Providers (before/after school)
- Transportation
- Change Contact Information**benefits (Updated)
- Food Assistance (self and child(ren))
- Cash Assistance
- Medical Insurance
- Social Security (if applicable)
- Housing Assistance

CURRENT DAILY ROUTINE (DO YOU KNOW?)

- Child's daily schedule/routine
- Bedtime routine
- Bath/shower routine/schedule
- Sack lunch or school lunch
- Homework schedule
- Extracurricular activities

Toolkit





▶ H.O.P.E. WORKSHEETS

- ▶ Worksheets correspond with areas on the Quick Checklist.

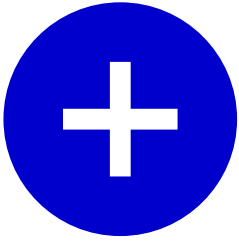
- ▶ Each of the following areas from the Quick Checklist has a corresponding worksheet:

- ▶ Documents (Birth certificate, social security card, insurance card, benefit cards, court orders, etc.)
- ▶ Child's information (daily routines, favorites, personal items, foods, extracurricular activities)
- ▶ Health Information (doctor info, prescriptions, counselor, therapist, appointment schedule)

- ▶ Also included are worksheets for:

- ▶ Parents' Information.
- ▶ Family Reunification Plan - Parenting and Safety.
- ▶ Recovery Supports.





Supplemental Documents for H.O.P.E. Toolkit

- ▶ Supplemental documents and tip sheets can be included and vary on topics based on the age of the child. Some topics include:
 - ▶ HOPE-Driven Parenting
 - ▶ Self-Care
 - ▶ Budgeting
 - ▶ Parenting Tips
 - ▶ Daily Schedule template
 - ▶ Scheduling, Chores and Goals
 - ▶ Feelings
 - ▶ Mealtime Conversations



USING THE H.O.P.E. TOOLKIT AS A VGAL



HIGHLIGHTS

- The H.O.P.E. Framework and VGAL Support for parent
- Using the toolkit at beginning of case
- Using the toolkit for transitions between placements
- Using the toolkit when reunification is impending





THE H.O.P.E. FRAMEWORK AND VGAL SUPPORT OF PARENTS

What is hope? "Hope is the belief that your future can be brighter and better than your past and that you actually have a role to play in making it better." H.O.P.E. Rising How the Science of Hope Can Change Your Life, Casey Gwinn, J.D. & Chan Hellman, Ph.D.

THE VGAL'S USE OF THE H.O.P.E. TOOLKIT

1. The goal of all dependencies is reunification.
2. Pathways have a series of steps. The H.O.P.E. toolkit's individual elements set forth the steps on the pathway towards reunification.
3. VGALs can support the parents in achieving the goal of reunification through their use of the toolkit, thus providing willpower or motivation to work towards the goal.

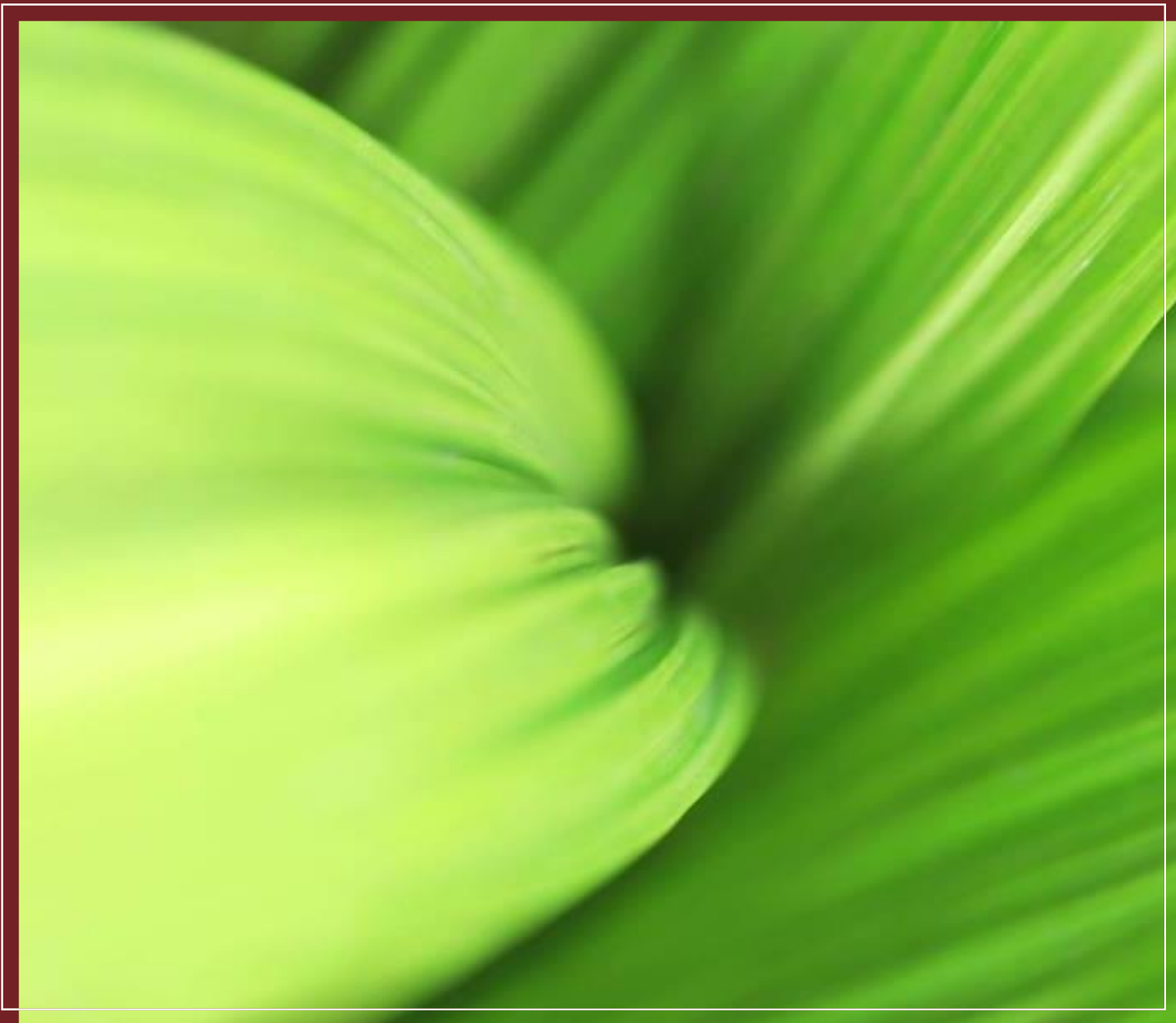
"Your level of agency/motivation may depend very often on having cheerleaders and social support to pursue your goals and pathways...willpower is increased or rejuvenated by having support in their lives as they pursue their goals."

-HOPE Rising How the Science of Hope Can Change Your Life

INFUSING HOPE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CASE THROUGH THE TOOLKIT

Let's face it, the VGAL is not always the first person the parents want to meet with at the beginning of the case. Either they don't know what a VGAL is or they do know and don't like what they've heard. How can we build trust and hope at the same time?





FIRST MEETING
WITH PARENTS:
BRING THE
H.O.P.E TOOLKIT

FIRST VISIT WITH PARENTS

- Explain your role in the case as it relates to the ultimate goal of reunification. “The court appointed me to represent your child’s best interests in this case. We know that reunifying you with your child is in the child’s best interest.”
- I am hoping that you will be reunified with your child. This toolkit gives me a way to help keep track of the information about your child during the case. When it is time for return home, I will turn the information I have gathered over to your caseworker, who can provide the information to you.
- Please share what you know about your child with me, since you are the expert on them. (You can use the worksheets to take down the information they share with you.)
- Share the toolkit or quick checklist document (without overwhelming them) so they can start to envision the day that the information is put in their hands. Encourage the parents to think about that day and what it might look like.

USING THE TOOLKIT IN PLACEMENT TRANSITIONS



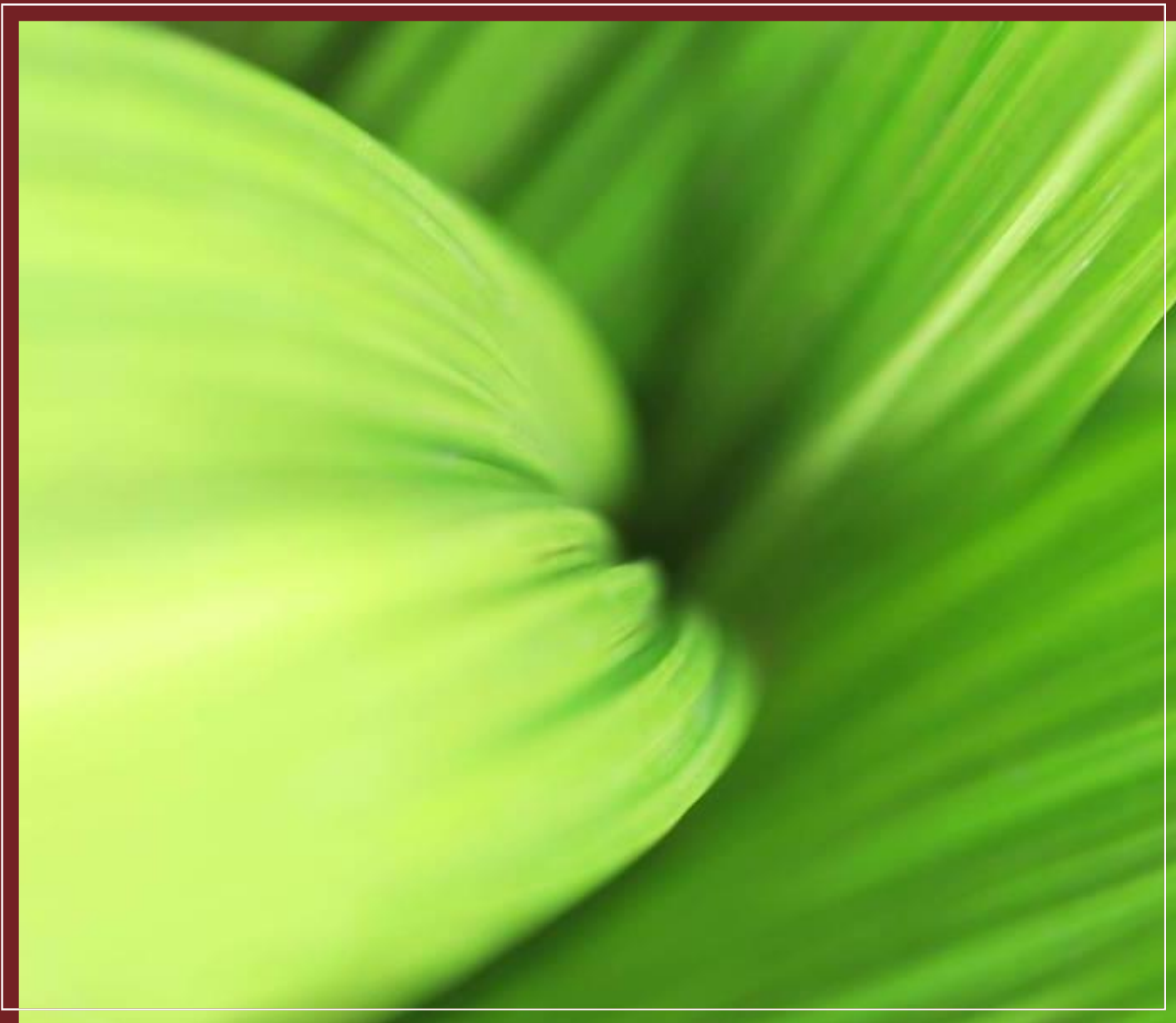
HELPING TO EASE THE TRAUMA OF CHANGE OF PLACEMENT USING THE H.O.P.E. TOOLKIT

Placement changes are hard on children. Thoughtful transitions are possible and the H.O.P.E. Toolkit can be used to minimize trauma and smooth out the edges.



PLACEMENT CHANGES AND THE TOOLKIT

- Meet with the caregiver to fill out the toolkit worksheets. Gather as much information from the caretaker as you can, especially the pages on Child's Information.
- Fill in any worksheet information you have gathered. Use the checklist to record what information you have collected.
- Share the information with the caseworker, who can provide the information to the next placement.
- This has the advantage of not relying solely on the original placement to provide all this information to the caseworker. Often the placement has grief in connection with the placement change and may not be in a head space to fully inform the caseworker or new placement about the child.
- Using the toolkit also ensures that the caseworker has a starting point for the thoughtful transition. They can review the checklist quickly to see what information is missing and track it down.



FINALLY! USING
THE H.O.P.E
TOOLKIT WHEN
REUNIFICATION IS
ON THE HORIZON

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USING THE H.O.P.E. TOOLKIT WHEN REUNIFICATION IS ON THE HORIZON

While it is a great feeling for a parent to be so close to return home, it is also an overwhelming event. This is the very thing the toolkit was designed to help with. While it is ultimately the parent's responsibility to ensure that they have all documents and information for return home, other helpers can assist and most importantly, the toolkit tells them what they need so they don't need to guess or deal with things as they arise.



RETURN HOME AND THE H.O.P.E. TOOLKIT

- Depending on how long the case has gone on, you may have lots of information collected.
- Update your information, delete old information, and provide the updated info to the caseworker.
- When you meet with the parent, ask them what areas they are finding challenges in.
- Once again, using the toolkit also ensures that the caseworker has a starting point for return home requirements. They can review the checklist quickly to see what information is missing and track it down.
- If you have been sharing the toolkit with the parents all along, some of the tasks may be familiar to them and thus not so daunting when presented suddenly. Given that some trial return homes come together rather quickly and may require a parent to pull documents and information together with very little notice or time, the VGAL's slow introduction to the parent of the toolkit may ease the challenge and give the parent some feeling of control.

- “When we feel trapped in the pain of today, hope reminds us we need not be there forever.
- When we feel stuck in looking back, hope calls us to look forward.
- When we feel bound in the darkness of despair, hope reminds us that there is a way to the light.
- When a dream does not come true, hope lights the fire to dream again.”

FINAL TIPS & TAKEAWAYS

1. The sooner you can introduce the toolkit, the better, but don't overwhelm the parent right out of the box. Use your judgment as to what they are ready for.
2. Keep your information up-to-date so it is ready for any change of placement, etc.
3. Affirm and reaffirm to the parent that the goal of reunification is possible and celebrate even small steps in that direction.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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