

Understanding Substance Use & Supporting Families in Child Welfare

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Purpose: Substance use disorder education patterns

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Purpose of Today

1. Understand SUD impact
2. Parenting & relationships
3. Child experience
4. Support strategies
5. Boundaries



What is Substance Use Disorder?



- Chronic, treatable condition
- Impacts thinking & behavior
- Often linked with trauma & mental health

Brain Impact

- Dopamine system hijacked
- Impacts impulse control, judgment
- Behavior ≠ lack of love



Why Do People Use?



- Trauma
- Mental health
- Coping
- Environment
- Genetics



Impact on Parenting

- Inconsistency
- Missed appointments
- Emotional unpredictability
- Shame cycles



Child Experience

- Confusion
- Grief
- Guilt
- Anxiety
- Loyalty conflicts



Caregiver Balance

- Compassion + Boundaries
- Both are necessary



Practical Support



- Consistency
- Clear expectations
- Neutral communication
- Focus on child



Understanding Addiction Behaviors

- Survival-driven behavior
- Prioritization of substance over obligations
- Cycles of shame and avoidance
- Not intentional harm—but impaired functioning



Q&A Scenario 1



Q: Parent misses visits repeatedly

A: Focus on child stability + do not personalize



Q&A Scenario 2

Q: Child blames themselves

A: Normalize feelings +
reassure not their fault



Q&A Scenario 3

Q: Parent relapses

A: Relapse ≠ failure, maintain boundaries



Key Takeaways

- Behavior has context
- Kids need stability
- Support + boundaries
- You are not responsible for recovery



Questions & Discussion

