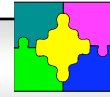


# Family Solutions



**Family Solutions**<sup>1</sup> is an approach to assessment, case planning, and ongoing casework that targets specific everyday events in the life of a family that 1) have caused the family difficulty and 2) represent a situation in which at least one family member cannot reliably maintain behavior that the family needs to accomplish its goals. The model (Christensen et al, 1999) combines the best of *problem focused relapse prevention approaches* that evolved from work with addiction, violence, and helplessness (Marlatt & Gordon, 1985; Pithers, 1990), with *solution-focused models* that evolved from family systems casework and therapy (Berg, 1994; deShazer, 1988). By integrating the two approaches, partnerships between family, caseworker, and service providers can be developed that *account for basic needs and restore the family's pride in their own competence*.

The approach was developed through consultation with workers and supervisors who were attempting to remedy problems contributing to reoccurrence of abuse and neglect. However, it is applicable to a wide range of family problems such as mental health or work related issues.

## **Family Solutions has three basic goals:**

### **1. Develop a partnership with the family:**

- *Assumes that the family wants to be successful*
- *Normalizes the stresses and challenges that have made solving the problem difficult.*
- *Isolates and externalizes the problem pattern*

### **2. Focus on pragmatic everyday family life tasks.**

- *Morning and evening routine*
- *Arranging for care of young family members*
- *Getting children up and off to school*
- *Arranging for supervision of older family members*
- *Caring for ill family members*
- *Keeping clean and healthy*
- *Controlling anger with family members or others*
- *Staying motivated to perform daily care tasks*
- *Controlling substance use the interferes with family life*

### **3. Promote specific prevention skills tied to the family's tasks.**

- *Identify high risk situations that lead to difficulties*
- *Identify early warning signals in the pattern*
- *Develop a plan to avoid the high risk situations*
- *Develop a plan to interrupt the pattern early if not avoided*
- *Have a backup or "escape" plan if all else fails*

**Family Solutions** has been shown to serve as a common conceptual framework for integrating disparate segments of a response network. Because the model provides for specific outcome skills necessary for relapse prevention, all providers in a service system can work toward common goals. Because the model utilizes a partnership approach based on what is successful, **Family Solutions** provides a method for tapping a family's competence without diminishing the absolute need to meet certain criteria. Developing partnerships that lead to identifiable solutions in everyday family life is the best way to prevent future relapse.

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<sup>1</sup> **Family Solutions** (also known as *Solution-Based Casework*) was developed in cooperation with protection workers and supervisors in the Cabinet for Families and Children, Commonwealth of Kentucky. See Christensen, D., Todahl, J., & Barrett, B. (1999). *Solution-Based Casework: An Introduction to Clinical and Case Management Skills in Casework Practice*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.