**RAFS Counseling Groups**

Our group therapy/ psycho-education model allows clients to obtain information, understanding, and intervention regarding a given topic while also exploring their own histories, thoughts and belief systems, as well as, analyzing their past maladaptive behaviors. We have found that this paves the way for parents to take responsibility for past mistakes, make plans towards change, and internalize the skills and interventions presented. Groups run for 16 weeks and have a flexible curriculum that is modified according to the individual needs of the group.

**“Un-Hush”, Sexual Abuse Awareness Group**: This is a group for parents that have had a child that has been sexually abused. This group is only offered to non-offending parents and/or caregivers. Learning objectives of this group include: acknowledge their own experiences as valuable resources; recognize that listening to a child describe his/her sexual abuse may be shocking and upsetting for the parent; maintain composure when faced with shocking information and terms; recognize that children of different cultures may use different words to describe their victimization; understand how to discuss sexual abuse issues with children; know the facts and statistics related to child sexual abuse; know why it is important to talk with children about sexual abuse; acknowledge that a child from a different culture may be carrying additional guilt due to his/her cultural values about sexuality; understand the impact of sexual abuse on a child’s trust; recognize that sexual abuse is not forgotten by the child; understand coping mechanisms used by sexual abuse survivors and the effects of coping mechanisms; understand the possible long-term effects of sexual abuse; recognize the importance of communicating honestly with the child; recognize the need for family rules; endorse the need of regularly scheduled family meetings; list common family rules used with a sexually abused child; understand information that needs to be shared with the child when he/she discloses sexual abuse; and more.

It has been our experience that many parents that have children that have been sexually abused also have their own sexual abuse history. This group is a forum for parents to also have a corrective experience and understand how their trauma histories have impacted their lives.

**“Parenting T.I.P.”, Trauma-Informed Parenting Group (Tier I):** With an adapted curriculum from The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (used to train ITFC foster parents), RAFS provides psycho-education/ group therapy to parents. We consider this our Tier I group as it provides parents the most crucial information regarding the impact of trauma on their child’s development. In this group, we explore the parent’s perception of trauma, reframe the parent’s understanding of how past actions have impacted the child, review behavioral expectations of children with trauma histories, and help parents develop a parenting plan to help the child through the traumatic event. This program works on the model that each parent has a unique relationship to their child/ren and that each of their circumstances is different. Parents work on the “My Child” workbook throughout the 16 weeks, which ties psycho-education material and group discussions with their unique child, thereby enhancing the meaningfulness of the group for the parent. This group is provided in English and in Spanish.

“**Off-Road Parenting” Parenting Group (Tier II):** This group explores ways parents can improve children's behavior by teaching cooperation, tracking their actions, using positive reinforcement, writing contracts and enforcing limits such as house rules, time outs, or extra chores. The group discusses an overview of each topic and parents develop roadmaps to follow (which they return with feedback from the group from week to week). Group role plays to identify whether they resolve the problem immediately (harmony) or watch the child continue to misbehave (misery) in order to learn additional techniques to handle defiance. Counselors provide ideas and materials and explain why the methods work. By offering a variety of scenarios and solutions, the group provides alternatives for dealing with difficulties common to children from toddler to teen years.

**“The Graduate” Parenting Group (Tier III):** Upon successful completion of Tier I and Tier II parenting, parents will have the opportunity to continue to develop an understanding of their role and identity as parents, to identity the individual needs of their children, and to meet those needs. This is a good parenting group for parents that have already taken parenting classes elsewhere and need to make the connections between the information they have learned and their own child/situation.

**“Hit The Road Anger”, Anger Management Group:** This group is designed to help parents gain self-awareness of the impact of anger issues in their homes, families and communities. This is a strength-based program to help clients identify the root of their anger and uncover coping techniques that have been effective in the past for the client. The group explores new techniques for problem solving, conflict resolution, healthy assertiveness, and increased self-esteem. This group uses a CBT model; assigns homework and reading (which can be completed with one-on-one help of a counselor for clients that are struggling in their understanding of the material); and role-playing.

“**Enough!”, Victim of Domestic Violence Group:** Our VOC groups is a group focusing on psycho-education, building self-awareness, assertiveness training, conflict resolution and ultimately increasing self-esteem! This is an intense curriculum of group therapy offered in English and in Spanish!