Core Conditions of Trusting Relationships

GENUINENESS       RESPECT          EMPATHY       COMEPTENCE

**Genuineness** is being yourself, which requires personal comfort in your professional role. You reflect this condition with congruence in what you say and do. Try to avoid defensiveness, but exhibit openness to what family members feel and want to express. Genuineness helps reduce the emotional distance between you and family members. This condition makes you human. Be aware of your feelings and manage them to allow yourself to interact naturally.

**Respect** is expression of the value of each person, separate from an evaluation of their behavior. Respect has two aspects: 1) your attitude or ideals about people and 2) your ability to communicate that attitude in observable ways. When communicating respect, you convey regard and acceptance. Respectful values and beliefs include: all people are worthy; each person is unique; people have the right to self determination and decision making; and people can change. Respect does not condone or approve all thoughts and behaviors, but expresses clear expectations.

**Empathy** is attempting to understand another person’s experience: what it’s like to be in their shoes. Empathy is expressed by communicating that understanding, accompanied by compassion for their experience. You develop a sense of what the situation means for the other person: what they are thinking and feeling. Effective empathic communication reflects your understanding without judging or interpreting. Empathy helps bring you closer.

**Competence** is demonstration of your skills and technical knowledge. With competence you can guide families through a bewildering and intimidating experience. You can explain how the system you represent works and what processes you will use. You bring specialized knowledge about child welfare, family functioning, human behavior and child development. You exhibit ease and comfort in communicating honestly and empathically. Competence instills confidence in your ability to help families solve problems. Competence earns respect and credibility.