

**DRAFT**  
**April 22, 2008**  
**Model for Care For Children from the Yearning for Zion**  
**Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints Sect**

As with all children in care, the goal is to provide the highest level of care and consideration to the children from the Yearning for Zion (YFZ) Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints (FLDS) compound. Every effort must be made to understand, respect, and incorporate their religious beliefs and social practices as much as possible, as the children are gradually introduced into mainstream culture.

According to news reports (AP, CNN), child psychiatrist and state witness Bruce Perry, M.D. states that if the children are allowed to remain in state custody, "there have to be exceptional elements in place for these children and their families."

In addition, although gradual integration is a consideration, it is important to be mindful that some of the children may eventually be reunited with their parents. It is critical that these children not be exposed into mainstream culture too quickly or in ways that would hinder their success should they reunite with family.

The following guidelines are suggested:

**Basic Placement and Care Recommendations:**

- Prepare child care staff, using the attached guidelines
  - Staff should be prepared for possible prejudicial comments and attitudes, and not take them personally. Staff should address these issues slowly and gently with the children
- Place children in large groups, especially with siblings and multiple sibling groups.
- It is suggested that initially FLDS children should be housed together and segregated from other children at the facility; maintain this separation for several weeks, and gradually introduce interaction between groups.
- Prepare specific, age appropriate lessons on diversity and tolerance, and promote these lessons through informal interactions and coaching by staff.
- Maintain a clear and consistent daily routine.
- Include meaningful chores in their daily routine.

- Older children will help care for younger children, but gradually begin helping them develop age appropriate behaviors regarding their role in caregiving.
- Follow dietary needs as recommended in the attached guidelines
  - Younger children especially may be interested in snacks, sweets, candy, etc; introduce these slowly and with more limitations than usual.
- Allow for practice of religious beliefs, including prayer time and singing of hymns
  - Many have hymn books, and may appreciate having a piano to use.
  - Allow for appropriate privacy, but also be aware that respectful adults may observe and interact, and this can be an opportunity to bond with them.
  - Further consultation is needed as to whether mainstream LDS clergy can and should be made available to them, and recommendations will follow.
- Ask about their preferences and practices, and follow appropriately as often as possible.
  - Be aware of their culture of communal living and acting as a group; this can be an asset at times, but they will also need gradual guidance in independence, decision making, and making choices. These opportunities should be part of their daily routine and should not be artificial or contrived.
- Organized recreational activities should be part of the daily schedule, and can, over time, be a good way to begin integration with general population.
- No television, movies, internet and radio especially at first; introduce gradually, if at all, and primarily use educational programming; avoid cartoons, fantasies, adult dramas, etc.
- When discipline is needed, be aware of the potentially harsh practices children may have experienced and their belief that obedience is important from a religious perspective as it relates to their favor with God and their eternity.
- Use gentleness, praise, and positive-based behavior practices.
- Help children adjust to our expectations even if different from what they are accustomed to.
- When they seem frustrated or confused.
  - Help them articulate their thoughts and feelings.
  - Validate their feelings.

- Coach them in appropriate expression and wording of their thoughts and feelings.
- Help them identify and use appropriate coping methods (e.g. separating themselves from the group, talking to a trusted adult).
- Do not contribute to any false hope about returning to home/parents, but be empathetic and re-focus on how they can get through this difficult time.

**Education Recommendations:**

- Use home school model for on-site education for several weeks.
- Plan for slow and gradual integration with mainstream school and population, only after being assured of readiness.
- Minimal outside sources of media including fictitious and fantasy characters, and modify curriculum appropriately.
- Thoroughly assess each child's achievement level and intellectual potential and offer individualized resource curriculum as needed.
- Be prepared for wide gaps in knowledge and academic skill especially in the area of social studies and history.

**Therapy Recommendations:**

- Initially, focus on adjustment to placement/separation from home/family.
- Focus short term on possible traumatic reactions to separation and placement; crisis intervention, psychological first aid, brief solution-focused practices to help children make sense of the situation and cope.
- Female therapists may work best for young and adolescent females.
- Young males may respond well to female or male therapists – this needs further assessment.
- Adolescent males may respond best to male therapists, but this needs further assessment.
- Play therapy for younger children that focuses on drawing, playing and storytelling so that children can express their feelings.
- Group therapy may be useful, especially at first and when focused on coping with adjustment to separation and placement, but individual therapy will also be important.

- Make a clear distinction between the role of the therapist and others who are investigating; be willing for trust and rapport to develop slowly, and focus on support and coping rather than exploring personal issues that they might interpret as investigation.
- Offer validation for the positive aspects of the culture, parents' and children's love for each other and their faith as strength in difficult times.
- If/when any individual discloses of neglect or abuse are made, address the traumatic reactions individually and in nonjudgmental ways, with focus on coping, resolving, and developing an appropriate sense of self.
- Help them with self-esteem, guilty feelings, shame, confusion about mainstream culture, and learning basic decision making skills.
- Help them think through any confusion that results from the confrontation between what they have been taught about the outside world and what they are experiencing first hand. Help them develop ability to draw their own conclusions (this will be a long term process).