

## Timeline Activity Instructions

1. Discuss the purpose and the process for developing a timeline. The timeline can be an excellent tool to help families visualize their patterns and events along a vertical line. The family will identify significant events and key dates and provide a brief description of the event, including who was present. Ask family members to include the most significant events, especially those that are highs and lows. Reflecting on the timeline can help the family see how they have responded to those events. It will help them examine the variety of ways they have been influenced by events that have been both positive and negative in their lives. This tool can help clarify strengths and help validate the skills that were used to respond to some of the most difficult issues in the family's life.
2. Have one of the participants draw a timeline for themselves (or for each member of their family). Have the participant talk about what was learned or validated about the participant's life experience as the participant drew the timeline.
3. Ask members of the group to comment on what patterns, strengths, and skills they identified as they listened to the facilitator discuss the timeline.
4. Ask participants what they learned from this experience.

### **Ideas to Reinforce at the End of this Activity**

- Organizes the sequence of important events in a family's life;
- Chronologically identifies information that may be "blind" or "unknown" as it is analyzed in comparison to other information or as part of a pattern;
- Identifies supports and resources for the family and identifies ways the family has been resilient;
- Focuses a potentially overwhelming situation by asking for high and low points over an indicated period of time;
- Helps workers and partners understand that families' lives are not incident-driven;
- Offers a way for children growing up in foster care to recover their personal history;
- Provides a useful tool for domestic violence cases.

## Timeline

In completing your timeline, enter the significant events that describe the highs and lows during the period of time represented on your timeline. (You may want to choose increments of five years after establishing your base line.) Label the events in a concise way and identify key people associated with each event.

Present Day  
Enter date

Significant Year