

Foster Home Licensing in Child Welfare Services

Course Attendance Preparation

In preparation for the *Foster Home Licensing in Child Welfare Services* training you **must** take the following steps:

1. Because printed workbooks will not be available at the training event, you have two options:

Option A.

Download and **save** this workbook to a computer, and **bring** the computer with the saved workbook file to the training

OR

Option B.



Print and bring this entire participant workbook to the classroom training on day one.

2. **Relevant Policy and Form:**

Participants are required to print and bring the following to the training event.

Participants will review this relevant policy during the training course.

- North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Policy Manual
 - a. Foster Home Licensing III Section .0700 Licensing Regulations and Procedures (23 pages)
<http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/csm-94/chg/FHLMs0700.pdf>
 - b. Foster Home Licensing VII. Section .1100 Standards for Licensing (72 pages)
<http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/csm-94/man/PDF%20docs/FHLMs1100.pdf>
- Foster Home License Application North Carolina Division of Social Services DSS-5016 (15 pages)
<http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/forms/dss/dss-5016-ia.pdf>

***Note:** Make sure you have accessed ncsWLearn.org via Internet Explorer  or Safari . Accessing the workbook with any other web browser will interfere with the formatting and bookmarking of the file. Using the current version Adobe Reader version XI (11) or Adobe Reader DC (Document Cloud) or higher is recommended. To download Adobe Reader, go to: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>

Foster Home Licensing in Child Welfare Services

Staff Development Team
Child Welfare Services Section
North Carolina Division of Social Services
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Participant Workbook

Foster Home Licensing in Child Welfare Services

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Acknowledgments

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Competencies & Learning Objectives

Competency	Learning Objectives
<p>A. Can apply the relevant federal, state and local laws, policies, procedures and best practice standards related to their area of practice, and understands how these support practice towards the goals of permanence, safety, and well-being for children.</p>	<p>A1: Locate and describe foster home licensing policies that guide best practice.</p> <p>A2: Name and explain the three factors described by MEPA that cannot be considered when making placements</p> <p>A3: Explain how national, state and county level foster care data help to shape practice of foster home licensing.</p>
<p>B. Knows the individual and family characteristics and dynamics that contribute to effective foster, kinship, and adoptive parenting.</p>	<p>B1: Identify and describe the 12 skills necessary to be a successful foster parent.</p>
<p>C. Can conduct thorough joint homestudy assessments with foster and/or adoptive family applicants, including engaging the family in the homestudy and self-assessment, gathering pertinent information; drawing accurate conclusions.</p>	<p>C1: Describe the Mutual Home Assessment process.</p> <p>C2: Explain how the foster parent pre-service training (MAPP) relates to the Mutual Home Assessment process.</p> <p>C3: Is familiar with the information needed to complete the Foster Home License application forms.</p>
<p>D. Knows and can use a variety of strategies to recruit foster and/or adoptive applicants</p>	<p>D1. Identify at least three new ideas for recruiting foster parents.</p>

Foster Home Licensing in Child Welfare Services

Agenda: Day One

- I. The Importance of FFHL & Child Welfare Reform in NC
- II. History/ Laws/ MEPA
- III. The Licensing Process
- IV. Recruitment

Agenda: Day Two

- I. Foster Home Licensing Policy Manual Group Activity
- II. The Mutual Home Assessment
 - a. Documentation of Family History Activity
 - b. Shared Parenting, Financial Ability, Recommendations

Agenda: Day Three

- I. Overview Description of the Twelve Skills
- II. Practice Activity: Documentation of the Twelve Skills
- III. Relicensures/Changes/Transfers/Terminations
- IV. Ethical Perspectives in Foster Home Licensing
- V. CPS Investigative Assessments in Foster Homes
- VI. Partnership Development Plan/Professional Development Plan /Retention
- VII. Foster Parent Training Resources
- VIII. Closing

Foster Care Statistics

- Federal data indicates that child welfare reforms are drastically reducing the nation's foster care population, which has **fallen more than 20 %** in the last decade (YOUTH Today, August 2010).
- The number of children in foster care in the U.S. rose steadily through most of the 1990s, and peaked in 1999 at **567,000**. There is much supportive data that indicates that children in foster care are **3-6 times** more likely than children not in foster care to have emotional, behavioral, and developmental problems.
- The 2011 AFCARS (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System) Report showed:
 - As of September 2010, the current number of children in foster care was at **408,425**.
 - The average age of children in foster care was **9.4 years**. **52%** were male; **48%** were female.
 - The largest percentages of children (**48 %**) in foster care were in foster family homes,
 - followed by **26%** in relative family placements
 - The largest percentage of children (**51%**) had reunification with parents or primary caregivers as their placement goal. The second highest goal was adoption (**25%**).
 - There were **107,011** children waiting to be adopted.
 - Of the children in foster care, **41%** were White, **29%** were Black, and **21%** were Hispanic.
 - Of the children adopted from foster care that year, **53%** were adopted by a foster parent and **32%** were adopted by another relative.
- In a study of foster homes, Gibbs (2005) examined administrative data on use of foster homes in Oregon, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. Although she cautions that her findings do not necessarily generalize to other states, she found that in these states **20% of foster parents provided 60% to 72% of all foster care days**. This finding is in line with the conclusion reached by Stukes Chipingu and Bent-Goodley (2004), who also found that on a national level, **33% of licensed homes have no children placed in their homes at any given time**.
- In the three states that Gibbs studied, she found that **between 47% and 62% of foster parents quit fostering within one year of the first placement in their home, and that at least 20% of all foster homes left the system each year**.
- Exit data for SFY 2008-2009 indicates that **38% of foster children leaving care after placements of between one and two years were reunified with their parents or primary caretakers**. This number is significantly down from a decade ago when that number was 51%. 16% exited care with relative placement and 25% were adopted.
- For foster children who had been in care longer than two years, 19% were reunified with parents or primary caretakers and 58% were eventually adopted.

Source: Duncan, D.F., Kum, H.C., Flair, K.A., and Stewart, C.J. (2011). Management Assistance for Child Welfare, Work First, and Food & Nutrition Services in North Carolina. Retrieved 10/13/2011 from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Jordan Institute for Families website. URL: <http://ssw.unc.edu/ma/>

North Carolina

- During the time period when most of the nation was experiencing a decline in the number of children in foster care, North Carolina did not reflect this trend and the number of children in care increased monthly, **peaking at 11, 213 in May and June of 2006**; however, since that time the numbers have generally decreased each month to **8,851 children in custody as of August 2011**.
 - As of July 31, 2015, NC had **6,299 licensed foster homes**. **2,532 are licensed with county DSS's and 3,767 are licensed with private agencies.**
 - **As of August 2015, there were 94 private agencies.**
 - In October 2009, the length of time children spent in foster care in NC was **15.4 months**
 - North Carolina courts moved to terminate parental rights **1,564 times** in 2010-11. Of these TPR decisions, just **77 (5%)** were overturned (remanded or dismissed) by appellate courts (NCAOC, 2012).
 - Of the 1,615 NC children adopted from foster care in 2009-10, **62%** were adopted by their foster parents (USDHHS, 2011a).

Understanding and Complying with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 And the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994, as amended by The Interethnic Adoption Provisions (IEP)

Section One: Title IV-B State Plan Diligent Recruitment

As part of its title IV-B State plan, each State must provide for the **diligent recruitment** of prospective foster/adoptive parents who reflect the race and ethnicity of children currently in the State foster care system for whom homes are needed.

Diligent Recruitment

The State **may**:

- Conduct recruitment activities for the purpose of recruiting parents who reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the children in care who need homes; and
- Develop its own diligent recruitment plan or utilize the services of a private recruitment agency that specializes in understanding a specific community or identifying families for specific groups of children.

The diligent recruitment provision does not require an agency to recruit prospective parents for the purpose of increasing the number of transracial placements.

In conducting diligent recruitment activities, the State:

- **Must** allow prospective parents to participate in general recruitment activities irrespective of RCNO;
- **Must accept** applications from prospective parents who are not from one of the communities on which the agency currently is focusing its efforts and must include them in general recruitment activities;
- **Must accept** applications from prospective parents who express interest in providing care to a child whose race or ethnicity does not match their own.

Components

Components of a diligent recruitment plan may include:

A description of the characteristics of the children for whom homes are needed.

Specific strategies to reach the individuals and communities that reflect the children in care who need homes

- Diverse methods of disseminating general and child specific information
- Strategies for ensuring that all prospective parents have access to the home study process
- Strategies for training staff to work with diverse communities and for dealing with linguistic barriers

Title IV-E State Plan- MEPA

A State, or any other entity in a State that is involved in adoption/foster care placements and receives title IVE funds from the Federal government, **may not**:

- **Deny an individual the opportunity** to foster or adopt on the basis of the child's or the prospective parent's RCNO, or
- **Delay or deny a child's placement** into foster care or adoption on the basis of the child's or the prospective parent's RCNO.

Denial of Opportunity

If an appropriate placement for a child exists, an agency **may not**:

- Refuse to place a child with a prospective parent because the parent's RCNO is different than the child's RCNO
- Fail to place a child with a prospective parent because the parent or the child is a specific RCNO
- Remove a child from a prospective parent because the parent or child is a specific RCNO
- Refuse to conduct a home-study because the parent or child is a specific RCNO

Delay or Denial of Placement

If an agency has determined that an appropriate placement for a child exists, the agency **may not**:

- Allow the child to remain in shelter care or another temporary placement, or require a holding period to find a particular RCNO foster care placement (impermissible delay)
- Remove a child who is doing well in a pre-adoptive placement in order to place the child with a family of a particular RCNO (impermissible denial)
- Switch a child from one foster placement to another in an effort to place the child into a particular RCNO placement (impermissible denial). Even if the agency reverses itself later and places the child with the original pre-adoptive family, the agency would have impermissibly denied and delayed the child's placement (impermissible denial and delay)

Section 2: Individually Assessing a Child's Needs

An agency has the **flexibility** to determine which factors it will consider when individually assessing a child as long as it does so in accordance with the law; HHS does not prescribe those factors.

However, when it becomes apparent that the agency might need to consider RCNO, the agency:

- **Must** individually assess a child to determine whether considering RCNO is in the best interests of the particular child in light of the child's unique circumstances;
- **May not** rely or act upon generalizations about the child's needs, based on the child's membership in a particular RCNO group;
- **May not** routinely consider RCNO during the individualized assessment.

Some factors that may be relevant to an individualized assessment include:

- The child's unique or unusual history related to RCNO (e.g., traumatic experiences);
- Any other factors that the case worker believes are relevant to the individualized assessment process based on the worker's knowledge and understanding of the child.

Some States have a law or policy that establishes an age at which a child or youth may/must consent to adoption. If your State has such a law or policy and an agency is placing a youth who meets that age and either requests or refuses a placement on the basis of RCNO, the agency may honor such a request or refusal without violating MEPA or Title VI. The agency should document its determination of whether the youth's request/refusal is in the youth's best interest.

If the State does not have such a law or policy, or if a child does not meet a State's age to consent:

- The child's request may not determine the placement, and the agency should be very cautious in considering such a preference; and
- The agency needs to look to all of the relevant circumstances as part of the individualized review to determine whether consideration of RCNO is appropriate.

MEPA and Title VI do not require agencies to seek or use outside professionals to conduct individualized assessments; however, securing a professional consultation from an independent psychologist, psychiatrist or social worker may provide further insight into whether the agency should consider RCNO when making a child's placement decision.

In most cases, a child's best interests can be served without consideration of RCNO. Consequently, it would be rare that an individualized assessment would reveal that the agency needs to consider RCNO.

If an individualized assessment reveals that it is necessary to consider RCNO in order to advance the best interests of a particular child, the agency may do so, but only to the extent necessary to advance the best interests of the child.

In applying this standard, consideration of RCNO should not predominate, unless the individualized assessment reveals that such consideration of RCNO is necessary to advance the child's best interests. The agency also would examine any other factors it deems relevant (e.g., age, membership in a sibling group, health, education, cognitive, or psychological needs, etc.). The agency has the **flexibility** to determine how to weigh the factors.

Individualized Assessment, RCNO and Distinguishing Between Placements

Unless the individualized assessment reveals the need to do so, the agency:

- **May not** use RCNO to distinguish between two or more acceptable placements;
- **May** identify differences between and among families who are equally well-suited to provide care to a child that do not involve consideration of RCNO.

Section 3: Culture and Cultural Competence

MEPA and Title VI do not address the consideration of culture in placement decisions, and HHS does not define it. An agency may not use 'culture' to replace or serve as a proxy for routinely considering RCNO, which is prohibited. Some acceptable, non-discriminatory cultural issues to discuss with a family during a home study may include: holidays, ability to communicate, religion or food.

Culture and RCNO-Competence

An agency may not assess a family's or parent's ability to parent a child of a particular RCNO through the use of a cultural competence test.

An agency should be cautious when assessing or considering a child's or family's "culture" on a home study form or elsewhere.

Assessing RCNO-Competence

An agency may not assess, or ask prospective parents to assess, whether they are competent to parent a child whose RCNO differs from that of the parents. Throughout a family's interaction with the agency, an agency may not ask or consider:

- Why a family wants to parent across RCNO lines;
- What a family knows about RCNOs different from its own;
- Whether a family's activities reflect a knowledge of or appreciation for the RCNO of the child the family wishes to parent.

An agency:

- **May not** require prospective parents to take different or extra steps in order to parent a child who is in foster care on the basis of the parents' or the child's RCNO;
- **May not** single out parents who want to parent across RCNO-lines or require them to learn about a different RCNO;
- **May** provide information to parents that will help them care for their child, including information about hair care or other personal care issues.

Assessing Prospective Parents

An agency may not create or allow a different child welfare process to which parents who wish to foster or adopt a child of a different RCNO are subject, e.g.:

- A longer or more invasive home study process, e.g., examining issues for those who want to parent across RCNO lines that the agency does not examine for same-RCNO placements;
- Requests that are specific to families who plan to parent across RCNO lines, e.g., requiring parents to develop a trans-RCNO parenting plan;
- Requests that a prospective parent learn about a different RCNO in advance of parenting such a child, e.g., requiring a family to purchase or review specific material or interact with individuals of a particular RCNO.

Biological Parent Requests

For both voluntary and involuntary removals:

- An agency **may not** consider or honor the request of parents or legal guardians to place their child with foster or adoptive parents of a specific RCNO.
- This applies to birth parents who are considering placing an infant for adoption.

Prospective Parent Requests

Prospective parents may make requests about any characteristics they want in a child, including RCNO.

Agencies are not required to place a child of a particular RCNO with a parent who has indicated that the parent does not want to parent a child of that RCNO.

Agencies must be as flexible with prospective parents' requests related to RCNO of a child for whom they will provide a home as it is with parents' requests related to other characteristics of a child. If an agency presents children whose child characteristics do not match the parent's requests, the agency must be similarly flexible with presenting children whose RCNO does not match the parent's request.

Section 4: Preparing Prospective Parents

An agency may offer training to prospective parents about parenting a child of a different RCNO if:

- It is offered to **all** parents, regardless of whether the parents plan to foster/adopt a child of a different RCNO; and
- Participation in the training is not a precondition only for parents who want to pursue a trans-RCNO placement.

An agency may offer trans-RCNO parenting information to prospective parents **who request it** but the agency must ensure that:

- Information is consistent with MEPA and Title VI;
- Information is provided regardless of the prospective parent's or the child's RCNO;
- A prospective parent is not pressured to receive such information, even the parent expresses interest in parenting across RCNO lines; and
- It is not used as an assessment or home study tool.

An agency may offer trans-RCNO parenting information to prospective parents **at its own discretion** so long as:

- The information is made available in the context of preparing a parent, and not assessing a parent's capacity to parent a child of a different RCNO;
- Consideration of the information or participation in related services is not a precondition for parents who are of a certain RCNO or who want to pursue a trans-RCNO foster or adoptive placement.

In such instances, an agency may prepare a prospective parent to foster or adopt a child of a different by:

- Asking parents to describe their questions or concerns;
- Connecting parents with helpful resources; and
- Offering post-placement services or support for parents who would like such services (e.g., support or social groups).

An agency **may**:

- Tell parents whether the children in care do/do not have the characteristics that the parents are seeking (e.g., age of available children; RCNO of available children; special needs of available children);
- Ask prospective parents whether they will consider providing a home for a child(ren) whose characteristics reflect the children for whom homes are needed;
- Discuss with parents the challenges that may arise when parenting a child whose characteristics differ from the characteristics that the parents originally sought.

An agency **may not**:

- Discourage parents from pursuing a trans-RCNO placement; or
- Require parents to participate in any training related to RCNO unless such training is required of all parents.

Concerns about Prospective Parents

MEPA and Title VI **do not** require an agency to make a placement where a prospective parent's comments or beliefs make clear that placing children of a specific RCNO with the prospective parent is not in the best interests of those children.

Where a family expresses prejudice about people of a certain RCNO, but still wishes to foster or adopt children of that RCNO:

- An agency should delve further into the issues.
- If the agency believes that the parent should not parent any children of a certain RCNO, the agency should document the reasons for that belief or for its resulting placement decision.
- A decision that is necessary to achieve the child's best interest, including a decision to not place a child of a certain RCNO with a family, does not violate MEPA or Title VI.

Section 5: Family and Community Ties

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) assesses whether a State is making concerted efforts to maintain a child's important connections, which may include ties to his or her community, neighborhood and school. ACF recognizes that in many cases it is a good idea to help a child preserve those ties, especially when the child is expected to be reunified with his or her parents or a family member in the same neighborhood.

Making concerted efforts to maintain a child's important connections does not violate MEPA or Title VI.

Photo Listings

An agency:

- **May** identify or document the RCNO of a child who is featured on an adoption website, such as Adopt US Kids;
- **May** design and administer adoption listing websites that allow prospective adoptive parents to search for child profiles based on a child's RCNO;
- **Must** treat RCNO in the same manner it treats other characteristics, including age, gender, membership in a sibling group e.g. if an agency identifies a child's RCNO group, e.g., child's on its website, it must identify other characteristics, or if an agency allows prospective parents to search for children by RCNO, it must allow prospective parents to search by other characteristics as well.

Compliance Tips: Document, Document, Document!

ACF and OCR will examine the facts of each case where a MEPA/Title VI violation may have occurred. Because each case is determined based on the specific facts and circumstance of each allegation, ACF and OCR cannot provide a list of documents that will insulate a State agency against the finding of a MEPA/Title VI violation.

If the agency decides to consider RCNO when making a placement decision, the agency may want to consider creating a record of documents that relate to:

- Who was involved in making the decision to consider RCNO, including any supervisors involved in making the decision;
- The agency's process for deciding to consider RCNO (e.g., whether the agency conducted the individualized assessment or sought the input of an outside professional);
- Whether the agency advised outside professionals that Federal law prohibits the routine consideration of RCNO;
- Whether the outside professional interviewed the child and/or reviewed the case file;
- The results of the individualized assessment and the rationale for the conclusion or recommendation;
- How the decision to consider RCNO was narrowly tailored to advance the child's best interests;
- Any documents that reflect the details of the selection or placement committee (e.g., who was present; which families were presented; discussion about families; why a family was/was not selected for a particular child).

When the agency declines to place a child with prospective parents and the reason relates to RCNO, (e.g., the parents have made comments that cause concern), describe in the case file, in as much detail as possible, the RCNO-related reasons that makes the prospective parents an unsuitable placement option.

Compliance Tips & Agency Actions

Agency staff should work together to ensure compliance with MEPA and Title VI. For example, the agency may want to consider:

- Developing a peer-review process in circumstances in which a worker thinks it is necessary to consider RCNO as part of the placement process;
- Developing a supervisory chain-of-command process for managers to review and advise on the issue.

Compliance Tips- Training Public Agency Staff

Other actions the State may take to facilitate compliance:

- Train agency staff and contractors on MEPA and Title VI;
- Consider providing MEPA and Title VI training to all new employees, and offer or require that staff take refresher courses on the law and policy; and
- Ensure that all of the entities with which the State contracts know how to apply MEPA and Title VI to their daily practice.

Resources and Technical Assistance

Contact your ACF or OCR Regional Office with any questions about how to implement MEPA and Title VI.

Ask your ACF and OCR Regional Offices to review proposed training material or curricula before using it to ensure it complies with MEPA and Title VI.

Keep current about information that ACF and OCR release about MEPA and Title VI on their websites.

Remember that ACF and OCR want to partner with your State to ensure that your child welfare system

- Is fair to the children and families who are involved with the child welfare system and (*cont.*)
- Is free from discrimination based on RCNO. We are here to help you prevent violations and help you correct them should they occur.

Training and Technical Assistance are available through the *National Resource Center for Adoption*
E-mail: nrc@nrcadoption.org
Phone: 248-443-7080

Legal, Regulatory and Policy Authority

Section 422(b)(7) of the Social Security Act (Title IV-B)

Section 471(a)(18) of the Social Security Act (Title IV-E)

Section 1808(c) of The Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996, 42 U.S.C. § 1996b (Amendments to 1994 MEPA)

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d *et seq.*

45 C.F.R. § 1355.38

Child Welfare Policy Manual

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/j2ee/programs/cb/laws_policies/laws/cwpm/index.jsp

ACYF-CB-PI-95-23 (10/22/95)

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/pi/pi9523.htm

Enforcement of Title VI and MEPA: Examples of Violations

OCR has found violations in cases where an agency:

- Manipulated a data system to broaden the search for children with respect to all characteristics but race, when children meeting parents' requested characteristics were not available;
- Adopted and implemented a policy that required workers to ask more questions or more detailed questions to families that were interested in transracial adoption as part of the home study process;
- Matched a child to prospective parents based on complexion;
- Honored the request of a young child to be placed with a parent based on RCNO, even though the State law age to consent was significantly older than the age of the child;
- Required prospective adoptive parents to move to a neighborhood that the worker believed better reflected the child's RCNO;
- Required prospective adoptive parents to attend a house of worship that had a different RCNO composition than the house of worship the family attended in order to adopt a child;
- Required prospective adoptive parents to subscribe to periodicals that workers believed reflected the child's RCNO;
- Generally subjected parents who were interested in transracial adoption to higher degrees of scrutiny.

Source: Adapted from: US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children and Families, and the Office of Civil Rights. March 6, 2009 (PowerPoint). Understanding and Complying with Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994, as Amended by The Interethnic Adoption Provisions. Retrieved from the website for the Children's Bureau, An Office of the Administration of Children and Families. <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/mepa-powerpoint>. *Used With Permission.*

NOTE: A video presentation training of this information is available on the National Resource Center for Adoption website. The video presentation can be found at: <http://www.nrcadoption.org/webcasts-2/mepa/>. The training provides information and guidance about MEPA-IEP including how it applies in a variety of case scenarios.

Because compliance with MEPA-IEP serves the best interest of children in care and is a requirement, the Division is asking county departments of social services to ensure that all child welfare staff is versed in how to help meet this requirement by reviewing this training.

To obtain the full Adobe version of the power point slide used to make this document, visit:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/mepa.pdf

Improving Recruitment Outcomes: 11 Things A Practitioner Can Do

1 Be informed about local, State and national recruitment initiatives and calendar. This information will help you schedule your work so you can be prepared to respond quickly and effectively to the possibility of an influx of inquiries.

2 Regardless of what your job is, volunteer to participate in your agency's community recruitment projects. From the agency director to the person who answers the telephone, recruitment is everybody's job. Successful agencies encourage all staff and resource parents to be mindful of the need for families wherever they go and help out with recruitment.

3 Be customer-friendly in your approach. Foster and adoptive parents are the most important resource we have to give the children we serve. How you treat them will determine whether they stay in the process and, ultimately, become part of your team. Try to put yourself in their shoes at every stage of the process. How would you like to be treated?

4 Know the characteristics and needs of the children in your area who need foster and adoptive parents. Speak of the children who need care and the role of the foster and adoptive parent optimistically and honestly. As prospective parents go through the process, continue to provide them with reliable information to make informed decisions about fostering and adopting, including full disclosure regarding the children, their needs and service needs of birth families. Respect the parents. Give them the opportunity to explore areas where they may have doubts. Trust their ability to make good decisions for themselves. This can be done at all stages of the process.

5 Be knowledgeable about all of the steps of the recruitment to placement process. Prospective parents will have lots of questions. Be prepared to answer them whether you are answering the phone, providing training or doing a home visit. Promise to get back with answers to questions you can't respond to on the spot.

6 Work to rule people in, not out of the process. It is important that the practitioner realize that the most ordinary, and sometimes unusual, people have grown into amazing resource parents with training and support. Most of the time parents present themselves to the Agency for an altruistic purpose. They have passion and emotion about this. Our challenge is to learn how to maintain that passion and turn it into informed commitment.

7 Try to utilize seasoned foster and adoptive parents to help support new parents through the process. Many agencies are partnering with their resource parents and/or parent groups to help in recruiting. Parents handle initial inquiries, participate in home visits, are part of the training team and provide support to new parents during the process. Agencies that do this are modeling the team process from day one.

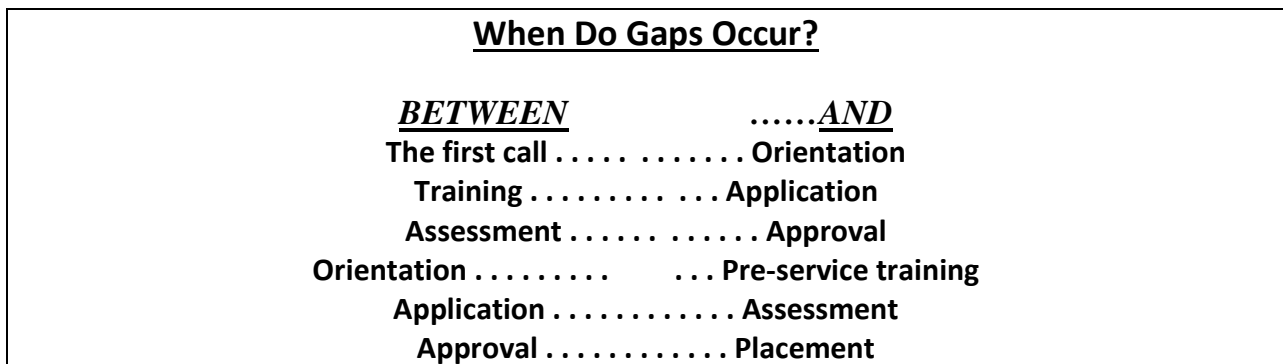
8 Collaborate with other community workers and organizations. Networking with community groups and partnering on recruitment efforts can be satisfying, supportive and productive for the practitioner. Faith based and community based organizations that endorse your efforts can bring new families to your door. These organizations can also provide space and resources to make your orientation and training meetings more accessible to parents and you are likely to get better attendance as a result.

9 Be a team player. Everybody who has a hand in recruiting and preparing families to foster and adopt can be made to feel that they are part of a team in a very important endeavor. This is a complex process that involves handoffs from recruiter to trainer, to family assessment worker, to placement worker, etc. All involved should have the same value system and a sense of urgency about completing the work as soon as possible.

10 Be sensitive to the prospective foster and adoptive parents’ sense of time. The longer it takes to move from step to step, the less likely the family will stay in the process. However, if a parent is treated well and helped to feel part of the team early on, he/she is more likely to stay the course. It is important to be honest about the reasons for delays when they occur and to help the parent use this time in productive ways, e.g., involve them with other resource parents.

11 Understand your role in and the importance of tracking and evaluation to improve recruitment outcomes. Organizations that are customer-oriented are beginning to look at the quality of their interactions with resource families at every stage in the process. They need cooperation from people on the “front line” to get good data and feedback.

Some agencies are starting to track how long each step of the process takes and are looking specifically at the time prospective parents have to wait between steps. These agencies seek to understand the reasons why people drop out (Casey Foundation, 2001). According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, families are often lost in the transition between steps and multiple handoffs from one staff person and/or stage of the process to another, as illustrated on the next page. This Practitioner’s Guide pays special attention to transitions and gives you some tactics you can use to support and keep families motivated during waiting periods.



Source: McKenzie, JK and McKenzie, JL (2012). Practitioners Guide: Getting More Parents for Children from Your Recruitment Efforts. AdoptUSKids is operated by the Adoption Exchange Association and is made possible by grant number 90CQ0002 from the Children’s Bureau. <http://www.adoptuskids.org/assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/practitioners-guide-getting-more-parents-from-your-recruitment-efforts.pdf>.

Twelve Skills for Successful Fostering and Adopting

The goal of the pre-service training (MAPP-GPS or other approved training) and the mutual home assessment with prospective foster/adoptive parents is to prepare individuals and families to make informed decisions about becoming foster or adoptive families. The decision is made with the child welfare agency and is based on the capability and willingness to take on the “role” and develop the skills needed for successful fostering and/or adopting. Foster and adoptive families who make informed decisions and grow in their new roles work best with the agency, birth families and others. These partnerships help children and youth have stability and permanence with a family. The twelve skills for successful fostering/adopting form the basis for all discussions during pre-service training sessions and mutual home assessment discussions. The twelve skills are defined below. Prospective foster/adoptive parents’ strengths and needs associated with each of the twelve skills are documented on the Foster Home License Application (NC Division of Social Services, DSS-5016).

Successful foster and adoptive parents must be able to:

1. Know their own family.

Assess their individual and family strengths and needs; build on their strengths and meet their ongoing professional needs as a foster or adoptive parent/family.

Skill 1: Assessing individual and family strengths and needs and building on strengths and meeting needs.

Pre-service training and the mutual home assessment discussions help parents learn what skills they will need to develop to become a successful foster or adoptive family. Learning how to identify and describe their individual and family strengths and needs to others, including the agency staff person working with them is critical. By the end of the Pre-service training and the mutual home assessment process, successful foster/adoptive parents are able to develop a plan (through collaboration with the agency staff member) to meet their ongoing professional needs as a foster or adoptive parent. This process prepares foster/adoptive families to help match their strengths with the needs of families who require services.

2. Communicate Effectively.

Use and develop communication skills needed to provide foster care or adoption services.

Skill 2: Using and developing effective communication.

Foster and adoptive parents must be able to communicate well. They must be able to interact positively with their family members, neighbors and others in the community. As a foster or adoptive parent, they will be talking with the children in their care about their past families, behaviors and life experiences. They will be expected to maintain open communication with birth parents, children, agency staff and others. They will be expected to communicate with persons in the community to meet the child’s educational, medical, mental health and social needs. As a foster or adoptive parent, they will be asked to express feelings and share information with others who may have different outlooks because of their own histories, ages, cultures, values and abilities. Foster and adoptive parents must possess or be willing to develop active-listening skills and be able to describe feelings and behaviors in simple, clear language.

3. Know the Children.

Identify the strengths and needs of children and youth who have been abused, neglected, abandoned and emotionally maltreated.

Skill 3: Identifying the strengths and needs of the children placed in the home.

Children who have been abused or neglected come to foster and adoptive families with many strengths. It is important that foster and adoptive parents recognize and support children's strengths. Children who have been abused or neglected also have numerous needs. These needs are complicated even further when children are removed from their birth families. Foster and adoptive parents must be able to recognize those needs.

To learn about strengths and needs, foster and adoptive parents must know how to gather information. They gather information from child welfare workers, former foster parents and the birth family. This information will include observing the child's development and comparing the child's abilities with stages of normal development.

4. Build Strengths and Meet Needs.

Build on strengths and meet needs of children and youth who are placed with them.

Skill 4: Building on children's strengths and meeting the needs of children placed in the home.

Foster and adoptive parents must have the necessary skills to identify children's strengths and needs. They must be able to talk with children about those strengths and needs in words that children understand. Foster and adoptive parents must be able to help children use their strengths to meet their needs. Some needs can be met within the foster or adoptive family. However, often the foster or adoptive parents have to bring in sources from the outside to help them meet the child's needs. Parents must be able to describe children's strengths and needs in clear simple language that describes behaviors. Instead of calling an active child "hyperactive," effective parents say "Jason is unable to sit still and participate in an activity for five minutes." Parents and professionals agree that focusing on strengths reduces the use of labels such as "fire setter" or "attention deficit disorder." Labels such as these often follow children for years and may prevent children from forming healthy relationships.

5. Work in Partnership.

Work in partnership with children and youth, birth families, other foster and adoptive families, the agency and the community to develop and carry out plans for the child's continued growth and development.

Skill 5: Developing partnerships with children placed in the home, parents, or the guardians of the children placed in the home, the supervising agency and the community to develop and carry out plans for permanency.

Foster and adoptive parents must work with children and youth, birth families, other foster and adoptive families, the agency and community resources. Foster parents must share information and parenting with birth parents and help birth parents develop their abilities to parent more effectively. Both foster and adoptive parents need to know their roles and responsibilities, as well as how to work effectively with the court, agency staff and community as part of a team.

6. Be Loss and Attachment Experts.

Help children and youth develop skills to manage loss and attachment.

Skill 6: Helping children placed in the home develop skills to manage loss and skills to form attachments.

Children and youth who are removed from their birth families generally experience significant losses. They need help to go through the grieving process. Successful foster and adoptive parents know the stages of grief are able to recognize grieving behaviors and can use specific techniques to help children manage their grieving behaviors. In order to do that, foster and adoptive parents must have come to terms with losses in their own lives so that they can be “loss experts”, using their experiences to help children manage their losses.

Foster and adoptive parents must be able to anticipate how future losses will affect their own families. When children return to live with birth families or go into independent living, families must be able to cope personally with the loss. Foster and adoptive parents must also anticipate developmental grieving which is the grief a child feels whenever he or she is reminded of earlier losses he or she experienced.

Children and youth in care also need help in attaching to and trusting others. Foster and adoptive parents need to know specific ways to help children and youth become attached to them so that they can attach to others later in life.

7. Manage Behaviors.

Help children and youth manage behaviors.

Skill 7: Helping children placed in the home manage their behaviors.

Children who have been physically abused and sexually abused have experienced tremendous physical and emotional pain. They may channel that pain into behaviors that may be challenging for foster and adoptive parents. Foster and adoptive parents must recognize the feelings and reasons behind the behaviors and be able to help children learn positive ways of getting their needs met.

Children who have been physically abused and sexually abused, and neglected may expect that their foster or adoptive parents will use physical force with them. This puts them at risk for even more emotional and physical hurt. Foster and adoptive parents must break that cycle by committing to and using discipline methods that help children feel good about themselves. It is important to use alternatives to corporal punishment so that discipline strategies help children feel lovable, capable, worthwhile and responsible.

8. Build Connections.

Help children and youth maintain and develop relationships that keep them connected to their pasts.

Skill 8: Helping children placed in the home maintain and develop relationships that will keep them connected to their pasts.

Most of us have long-standing relationships with friends and family which are very important to us. Children and youth also have relationships with people who have been important to them in their lives. Therefore, foster and adoptive parents must help children and youth maintain these relationships through conversations, letters, phone calls, visits and photographs, and lifebooks.

Foster and adoptive parents are expected to help children understand how they came into the child welfare system and what that means in terms of other important attachments in their pasts.

9. Build Self-Esteem.

Help children and youth build on a positive self-concept and a positive family, cultural and racial identity.

Skill 9: Helping children placed in the home build on positive self-concept and positive family, cultural, and racial identity.

Children who have been physically or sexually abused or neglected often blame themselves for their families' problems. Sometimes it is hard for children in care to feel good about who they are; their self-esteem is low. Rejections from birth families and perhaps other foster and adoptive families contribute to a poor self-image and confusion about who they are. Foster and Adoptive parents must be able to help children and youth understand and feel good about who they are, their birth families and their cultural, racial and religious identities. One way for foster and adoptive parents to help children and youth feel good about themselves is to support and encourage children's activities and accomplishments. Another way is for foster and adoptive parents to recognize and support a child's ethnic, cultural and family heritage.

10. Ensure Health and Safety.

Provide a healthy and safe environment for children and youth and keep them free from harm.

Skill 10: Providing a safe and healthy environment for children placed in the home which keeps them free from harm.

Foster and adoptive parents must be careful to provide a healthy and safe environment for children and youth. Foster and adoptive parents should be aware of the state and local health and safety rules. These rules are designed to protect children and youth from such things as firearm accidents, fires and unsanitary conditions. Foster and Adoptive parents need information from their agency about health and safety rules, including the dangers of secondhand smoke. In addition, prospective parents must understand the importance of close supervision of children and agree to avoid subjecting children to corporal punishment.

11. Assess Impact on Own Family.

Assess how fostering or adopting a child or children will affect their own family.

Skill 11: Assessing the ways in which providing family foster care or therapeutic foster care affects the family.

Adding a new family member affects every member of a family. It affects how time, finances, space and responsibilities are shared. Foster and adoptive families must show they are able to assess how a new family member will affect family relationships, lifestyle, support systems and resources. They will also have to show how they will solve potential areas of stress and how family members can support each other under stress. Children and youth who have been removed from their birth families bring with them stresses from abuse and losses. They also bring their birth families and child welfare workers into the lives of their new family.

12. Make an Informed Decision.

Make an informed decision to become a foster or adoptive parent.

Skill 12: Making an informed decision regarding providing family foster care or therapeutic foster care.

Throughout the process of the pre-service training sessions and the mutual home assessment discussions, prospective foster/adoptive parents are self-assessing their strengths and needs associated with the first 11 skills. Once they complete the Profile, the 30 hours of pre-service training, the strengths and needs assessments associated with each of the training sessions, at least two mutual home assessment consultations, and a Partnership Development Plan, they will have enough information to be able to make an informed decision about their readiness to become a foster or adoptive family.

Source: Adapted from *Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting-Group Preparation and Selection, Meeting 1, handout 2.* (Originally published by the Child Welfare Institute in 1999) and *Deciding Together: A Program to Prepare Families for Fostering/Adoption, Parent Book 1, "Understanding Foster Care and Adoption Today."* (Originally published by the Child Welfare Institute in 1995. (Both sources now available from the Children's Alliance of Kansas: www.childdally.org, 2009).

Documentation Format for the 12 Skills

- ❖ Make a general conclusion of strengths and/or needs
- ❖ Provide 2-3 behaviorally-specific, clear, positive examples to support that conclusion utilizing:
 - direct quotes made during family consultations
 - your observations
 - participation and comments made at MAPP sessions
 - strength/needs sheets
 - meeting notes
- ❖ Describe how the strength or need relate back to the skill and how the strength or need will help/ not help one be a successful foster parent.
- ❖ Describe the plans or tasks that have already taken place to meet a need that was identified during the mutual assessment.
- ❖ Describe the plans in place to meet the identified need.

Remember:

- ❖ Avoid affective/cognitive language such as “knows,” “feels,” “understands,” and “appreciates.”
- ❖ For couples, be sure to list examples for each individual. Both need to be assessed on each skill.
- ❖ Families can demonstrate the 12 skills in ways that don’t involve children, such as their job, volunteer work, projects, and hobbies.

Partnership Development Plan

Developed with _____ and

Date:

Need:

Why is it a Need?

Which of the 12 skills is impacted by this need?

Action Plan to Meet Need:

Next Steps if Need is or is not met:

Foster Parent Training & Assessment Resources

The following resources have been compiled over a period of several years by suggestions from trainers and participants of Foster Home Licensing in Child Welfare and are not necessarily endorsed by the NC Division of Social Services.

- American Foster Care Resources, Inc.
<http://www.afcr.com/>
- Love and Logic Institute
<http://www.loveandlogic.com>
- *Fostering Perspectives*
<http://fosteringperspectives.org>
- Tapestry Books
<http://www.tapestrybooks.com/>
- Foster Parent College
<http://www.fosterparentcollege.com/>
- Boys & Girls Town USA
<http://www.girlsandboystown.org/pros/training/education/>
- Independent Living Resources, Inc.
<http://www.ilrinc.com/>
- Area Health Education Centers (AHEC)
<http://www.ahec.edu/>
- National Foster Parent Association
<http://www.nfpainc.org/>
- Association for Treatment and Training in the Attachment of Children
<http://www.attach.org>
- Annie Casey Foundation
<http://www.casey.org>
- NACAC (North American Council on Adoptable Children)
<http://www.nacac.org/>
- Connect: Supporting Children Exposed to Domestic Violence- In-Service Training for Resource Families:
<http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/connect-supporting-children-exposed-to-domestic-violence/>
- Foster Care and Adoptive Community
<http://www.fosterparents.com>
- Action for Child Protection
<http://action4cp.org/>
- Child Welfare League of America
<http://www.cwla.org/>
- Child Welfare
<http://www.childwelfare.com/>
- Parenting Someone Else's Child – The Foster Parents' 'How-To' Manual by Ann E. Stressman Purchase information:
<http://www.amazon.com/Parenting-Someone-Elses-Child-Parents/dp/1929229259>
- NCDCCD (Provider Training)
http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/providers/pv_s_n2_rcc.asp
- Multiple Transitions: A Foster Child's Perspective CWLA
<http://intranet.bgtm.org/training/Lists/Announcements/DispForm.aspx?ID=7>

- Video: Blossoms In the Dust – How treatment stopped using the word illegitimate
<http://www.tcm.com/mediaroom/video/74487/Blossoms-In-The-Dust-Original-Trailer-.html>
- Ways A Foster Care Agency Can Maintain Foster Homes
<http://adoption.about.com/od/fostering/a/waystokeephomes.htm>
- North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute
<http://www.ncchild.org/>
- Behaviors and Health Resources
<http://www.bhr.org/>
- Child Trauma Academy On-line Courses
<http://www.childtraumacademy.com/>
- Foster Club On-Line Training
<https://www.fosterclub.com/booster/article/foster-parent-online-training>
- Attachment Disorder Information
<http://www.evergreenpsychotherapycenter.com/attachment-therapy/attachment-explained/>
- ADD Information
<http://addresources.org/category/adhd-parent-child/>
- History of Foster Care
<http://nfpaonline.org/page-1105741>
- Child Welfare Information Gateway
<http://www.childwelfare.gov/index.cfm>
- Video produced by Buncombe County Department of Social Services in 2008 (with Jimmy Wayne): “Foster Hope, Foster Love, Foster Families” (this video is referenced in Dear County Director Letter dated Feb. 16, 2009)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKKYbF4pXlg>

Books:

Happiest Baby on the Block;
Happiest Toddler on the Block;
Love and Logic (see resource #3);
Three Little Words; Castaway Kid

Movies:

<i>Blind Side</i>	<i>Stuart Little</i>
<i>Antoine Fisher</i>	<i>For Colored Girls</i>
<i>Losing Isaiah</i>	<i>Meet the Robinsons</i>
<i>Despicable Me</i>	<i>Room for One More</i>

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- Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting-Group Preparation and Selection, Meeting 1, handout 2.* (Originally published by the Child Welfare Institute in 1999) and *Deciding Together: A Program to Prepare Families for Fostering/Adoption, Parent Book 1, "Understanding Foster Care and Adoption Today."* (Originally published by the Child Welfare Institute in 1995. Both sources now available from the Children's Alliance of Kansas: www.childally.org, 2009).