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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: A Guide for Foster and Adoptive Parents



*Reflecting on the past
to promote a brighter future*

Sources:

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Mindy Foster, Program Manager, Cherokee County Juvenile Court

Deidre Hollands, Executive Director, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

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FOSTER CARE CASE MANAGERS

- Provide services that support the child, primary parents, and the foster parents. (i.e., ensure the child is in school, ensure the child's mental and emotional health needs are met, attend court and panel reviews)
- Make referrals to necessary service providers to meet the needs of the family identified in the case plan.
- Maintain communication with service providers to ensure the needs of the birth family are being met.
- Maintain regular ongoing communication with the foster family through visits to the foster home at least every other month and face-to-face contact with foster parents every month. Communication will be open, honest, and candid.
- Schedule visits with birth family, child, and siblings.
- Provide financial reimbursement for the foster family that will adequately meet the needs of the child in care.
- Apply for Medicaid for the child in foster care.
- Monitor service delivery at regularly scheduled intervals.
- Develop quality assurance standards for services rendered.
- Assist birth family with completion of their case plan.
- Coordinate and monitor services that support the birth family, foster parents, and child (i.e., school, CASA, GAL, service providers, mental health providers, court, panel reviews, etc)

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (RD) CASE MANAGERS

- Conduct quarterly visits in the resource family's home.
- Conduct annual re-evaluations for resource families.
- Recruit for new resource parents.
- Schedule and teach IMPACT classes five times per year.
- Schedule and conduct monthly IMPACT orientation.
- Complete home studies for foster and adoptive families.
- Carry a caseload of foster and adoptive resource homes and ensure that the homes meet policy guidelines.
- Initiate and facilitate Foster Home conversions for purposes of adoption.
- Schedule and coordinate supplemental training for resource parents and disseminate information for other local trainings to resource parents.
- Coordinate and plan the annual Foster Parent Appreciation Banquet.
- Participate in adoption presentations and staffings.
- Develop and monitor Corrective Action Plans for resource parents as needed.
- Evaluate concerns in resource homes that are not of a Child Protective Services-nature.
- Attend EMBRACE meetings and provide assistance to the Foster Parent Liaison.

PRIMARY/BIRTH PARENTS

- Use services offered to achieve the goals of the case plan.
- Participate in assessing the services and support the family needs to achieve reunification.
- Maintain visitation schedule and have regular contact with their child.
- Notify DFCS of any important changes (i.e., address, employment, health status) in their lives.
- Contribute financially to the child's care according to their ability to pay.
- Make decisions, legally theirs to make, about the child's life.
- Work in partnership with DFCS, the Court, and the child's placement to ensure that the child's needs are met and to facilitate reunification in a timely manner.

RESOURCE PARENTS

- Share the common goal of permanency planning as set forth in the Juvenile Court- Reunification, Long-Term foster care, Adoption, or Emancipation.
- Provide a nurturing and stimulating environment that meets the child's basic and individualized needs.
- Provide transportation for children placed in their home to visits, as well as all medical, dental, and psychological/counseling appointments.
- Support and encourage visitation with the birth family.
- When appropriate, assist in helping the primary family meet the needs of the child. Communicate with primary family about the challenges and progress of the child in care.
- Partner and advocate with others on the Foster Care Team for services to meet the child's needs. Communicate with the Foster Care Case Manager about the child's developmental and emotional needs.
- Manage the frustration that can result from the dynamics of meeting the individual child's needs, while working with those who are meeting the needs of many children and families. Communicate with the Foster Parent Liaison when needs arise, such as frustrations and/or concerns regarding a child placed in the home. Communicate clearly and honestly with DFCS and others on the team about strengths and needs, including what is needed for a successful placement.
- Abides by DFCS policy guidelines, including the discipline policy.
- Notify DFCS regarding plans for out-of-town trips/vacations or when alternative placement arrangements are needed for the child.
- Submit invoices on the child's monthly expenses (per diem, clothing, incidentals, etc).
- Document on each child the details of the child's experiences in placement. For example, write down the following at the time of placement and when the child leaves your home, as well as at regular intervals in between:
 - clothes and personal belongings
 - personal hygiene
 - physical condition
 - behaviors
 - social interaction
 - speech
 - eating patterns
 - sleep patterns
 - medical conditions
 - medication
 - response to visits (i.e., physical condition and behaviors)
 - discipline (i.e., reason, type, duration, and frequency)
- When a child leaves the home, make sure he/she leaves with what they came with—all of their personal belongings, clothing, toys, etc.
- Complete 10 hours of continuing education training per year per person.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESOURCE PARENTS IN CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS

- The Citizen Review Panel is a judicial function of the Juvenile Court. The judicial function is fulfilled through oversight and investigation and it is imperative that accurate information is provided.
- All information, whether it is in regards to school, emotional, behavioral or any part of the child's life, is important to the panel. The Panel members want to know the children's strengths, weaknesses, likes, dislikes, personality quirks, and all the little things about the kids. The Foster Parents are the keys to this information and a vital part of the Panel process.
- By law, the child(ren), should be seen by the Citizen Review Panel within 4 months of entering into Foster Care and then every 6 months there after. There may be certain times when issues arise and the case may need to be seen on an interim level (sooner than 6 months). This would occur when there were problems with the children, parents, placement issues, or other important issues. In this situation, the case may be seen in 3 months and then put back on the regular rotation.
- At any point and time, any person may ask to speak to the Panel alone, for whatever reason.
- Once the Panel begins, the panel is broken into three parts; the DFCS update, the placement update and the progress by the parent.
- The Panel process starts with the DFCS update and all parties are present at this time. This is relatively simple and general information; update on grades, immunizations, counseling, medications, IEP, tutoring, etc.
- The second part of the panel process is the placement update; either Group Home or Foster Home update. This is where the placement can describe how the kids are functioning in the placement; how they get along in the home, with other kids, adjustment, how are they after visits, are they bonding (too much/too little), bed wetting, night mares. The placement has the wonderful and difficult job of getting to be with these children everyday and providing the panel with an accurate snap shot of what the children are going through. It is imperative that the Panel receives a truthful report of the children's progress in the placement; their strengths and weaknesses (the good and the bad). It may be necessary, at times, to do this with the children out of the room, to preserve their self esteem.
- The second phase of the placement update is more generalized. Is the placement getting what they need from DFCS? Are there more services that could be put in place to help preserve the placement? Is the child at risk of being moved? Are there issues with the placement? Are there any issues the panel needs to be aware of? This is the time for the placement to address **any** concerns they may have.
- Due to the Foster Parents' schedules, and kids missing school, the Panel makes every effort to get the Foster Parents and children out first. Once the placement and children are excused we move on to the progress of the parent and the status of their case plan.

SERVICE PROVIDERS/WRAPAROUND

- Value resource parents as team members, soliciting and using their input regarding services to the child and family.
- Maintain ongoing communication and support with all members of the Foster Care Team.
- Offer easy access to their personnel and services.
- Provide services in their area of expertise that support the child, primary parents, and resource parents according to DFCS standards, in order to reach the case plan goals. (Some formal providers may have these listed in their contract for the agreed upon fee within the designated time frames.)
- Offer emergency or after-hour contact alternatives, such as crisis hotlines, a buddy system, or scheduled evenings to be reached.
- Provide regular progress reports (regular being defined by the contract or the team) containing objective family or child outcome information that the team uses in ongoing decision-making.
- Demonstrate or deliver effective services with an appropriate level of safeguards to ensure funds are being spent in accordance with their intent.
- Share in the accountability for ensuring positive outcomes for the child, primary family, and/or resource family.

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES (CASA)

- Trained volunteer that is appointed by the Court to represent the child in deprivation hearings. The Juvenile Court judge requests the assignment of a CASA volunteer. The Program Director at CASA matches a volunteer to the case and informs the court of the match. A court order is issued by the Judge which specifies the name and duties of the CASA volunteer for that particular case.
- Obtain information about the child's situation and needs
- Make recommendations to the Court concerning the best interest of the child.
- Review child's record at DFCS office.
- Coordinate and meet with the child, biological parents and relatives, foster parents, neighbors, teachers, doctors, therapists, etc.
- Gather information to make recommendations regarding reasonable efforts by DFCS, physical and legal custody, plans for permanency, and services needed to meet case plan goals.
- Provide reports and recommendations to the Court.
- May meet with GAL to share information and discuss recommendations.
- In the event that there is disagreement on the recommendations, both sets of recommendations are presented to the Court.
- Required to attend all court hearings and reviews and to present a report.
- Meet with the child throughout the entirety of the case to ensure that mandated services are being provided and make the Court aware of any changes.
- The court order assigning a CASA volunteer to a case expires when the court closes the case unless otherwise decided by the Court and/or program director.

GUARDIANS AD LITEM (GAL)

- Appointed by Juvenile Court to represent the best interests of a child who is a party to deprivation proceeding or in cases where the interests of the child and the birth parents conflict.
- Act as an officer of the court.
- Act as an advocate for the best interests of the child.
- Are not bound by the child's expressed preferences.
- Assist the Court and the parties in reaching a decision regarding child-related issues.
- Typically consider and independently investigate a wide range of factors concerning children in deprivation cases (separate and apart from DFCS investigations)
- Assume the role of an independent legal representative of the child's perspectives and interests and make child-related recommendations directly to the Court.
- Are permitted to subpoena and examine witnesses, as well as present evidence and argument to the Court.
- When appropriate, may counsel with the child regarding the legal process and advise the child of recommendations for court action.
- May work in conjunction with a CASA.

FOSTER PARENT LIAISON

- Is a contract worker with EMBRACE and not employed by DFCS.
- Establishes relationship with each foster parent. Initiates contact and follow-up, especially within the first 24 hours of a child being placed with a family, and as needed within the first 10 days until the court hearing.
- Takes responsibility for facilitating and enhancing communication between foster parents and their case managers.
- Coordinates foster parent mentors and natural helpers identified by foster parents.
- Establishes links with the community to identify existing resources and develop new resources for foster parents.
- Works closely with the local Foster and Adoptive Parent Association to facilitate relevant and effective foster parent relationships and representation within the community.
- Works closely with DFCS supervisors to handle complaints at the lowest level possible.
- Collaborates with county Family Connection and other community entities and groups to engage them appropriately in supporting foster families.
- Collaborates with the county Foster and Adoptive Parent Association and with DFCS staff to:
 - a) Integrate foster parent support activities with case manager foster care activities. For example, post-IMPACT follow-up, coordinating and customizing foster parent training;
 - b) Assist in handling administrative needs such as accounting and reimbursement issues;
 - c) Provide outreach information regarding agency policies and procedures;
 - d) Ensure that foster parents are heard and responded to in a timely manner; and
 - e) Facilitate positive and productive working relationships.
- Completes regular written reports of performance and identifies policy areas related to foster parent retention that may need attention.

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES (CPS)

DIVERSION:

- Make contact with children and families to assess the need for intervention and offer services to families with issues that do not rise to the level of a full investigation.
- Staff cases with supervisor for guidance and decision-making.

INVESTIGATIONS:

- Conduct investigation regarding allegations of child abuse and neglect. This includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.
- Must meet indicated response times for seeing and interviewing all victim children. These response times can be immediate, within 24 hours, or within 5 days.
- Determine the degree of risk to the children and what level of intervention may be necessary to ensure the safety of the children.
- Strive to complete investigations within 45 days of receipt of the complaint.
- Coordinate “joint” investigations between DFCS and Law Enforcement as needed.
- Initiate the removal of children, often in conjunction with Law Enforcement and the Juvenile Court, when risk and safety cannot be managed in the birth home.
- Attend all Probable Cause and Adjudicatory hearings after the removal of children.
- Utilize relatives as placement resources, when possible, under a Safety Plan, if out of home placement is necessary, as opposed to placing children immediately into Foster Care.
- Must be familiar with resources within the community to refer families to when in need.
- Utilize and implement the coordination between service providers and families to provide a variety of services both in and outside of the home. This can include assessments, counseling, parent aide services, and preventive services, as well as substance abuse assessments and treatment.
- Staff cases for transfer to the Family Preservation unit or Foster Care unit.
- Maintain thorough, current documentation.
- Staff cases regularly with supervisor for input and guidance.

FAMILY PRESERVATION:

- Implement Case Plans developed from the identified risk and safety factors during the investigative stage.
- Assist families in seeking services to complete their Case Plans, such as counseling, parent aide services, various assessments and treatment programs.
- Monitor families’ progress of their Case Plan
- Attend all Review hearings at Juvenile court on their active cases.
- File for any necessary, subsequent court hearings due to newly identified risk and safety issues or for non-compliance in completing Case Plans and ensuring safety of children.
- Coordinate and attend Family Team Meetings to develop an involved support system for the family to assist them in being successful in the completion of their Case Plan and reduce recidivism.
- Supervise placement of children in Cherokee County who are Safety Planned here from other counties to ensure their safety.
- Staff cases with Investigations prior to transfer to Family Preservation.
- Conduct joint visits with investigators to ensure a smooth transition from one program area to the next.

COMPREHENSIVE CHILD AND FAMILY ASSESSMENT (CCFA) **PROVIDERS**

- Conduct a thorough assessment of the family and make recommendations to DFCS regarding permanency for the family.
- Interview parents, extended family and collateral contacts to obtain a comprehensive family history in order to help identify services and resources to assist the family.
- Observe family interactions to assess family dynamics as part of the assessment process.
- Interview foster parents to gather pertinent information about the child as it relates to the child's level of functioning and the provision of services to meet the child's needs.
- Ensure that child receives a health check (all ages) and psychological evaluation (age 4 and over) to assess medical and mental health status and determine appropriate interventions if necessary.
- Conduct an educational assessment of school-aged child to provide detailed information about child's educational needs and ensure that necessary supports are provided to give the child the best chance for academic and social success.
- Participate in a Family Team Meeting with DFCS and birth family to discuss the family's situation and develop strategies to meet the family's needs and achieve permanency for the child in a timely manner.
- Complete the Comprehensive Child and Family Assessment (CCFA) 30 days from the date of the referral after the child enters foster care.