

POLICY ON FOSTER CAREGIVER PRE-PLACEMENT AND CONTINUING TRAINING

Trumbull County Children Services is committed to having well-trained, qualified foster homes. The Agency has a strong belief that children who have been victims of abuse and neglect and suffer emotional trauma as a result of being removed from the care of their birth families, deserve to have the best possible care the Agency can provide for them. Therefore, the Agency is committed to having a sufficient roster of foster caregivers who are well-trained and knowledgeable in the care of children who suffer from emotional, behavioral or physical difficulties as a result of the trauma they have experienced. The Agency offers Pre-Service Training and Continuing Training to prospective foster caregivers and to licensed foster caregivers respectively.

PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

Individuals who have an interest in becoming foster caregivers with the Agency are scheduled for an in-home orientation session where they are provided with information about the Agency's Foster Care Program. If the prospective foster caregiver wishes to continue, they begin participation in the pre-service training .

- For the convenience of the prospective foster caregivers, pre-service training is made available at this agency, other local agencies, or virtually, a minimum of three times a year.
- The pre-service classes are held on a variety of days and at different time of day accommodate the foster caregivers' work and childcare schedules.
- A prospective foster caregiver is required to successfully complete twenty-four hours of pre-service training, as well as an additional two classes of agency specific training, and CPR and First Aid certification training. Pre-service training can be completed prior to being assigned for the completion of a home study; it must be completed before a prospective foster caregiver can be recommended to the Department of Job and Family Services for certification as an approved licensed foster home.
- During the certification period, the prospective foster parent undergoes further screening by the Agency including criminal background checks - inclusive of BCII and FBI, and security clearances, psychological testing, drug testing, and submittal of personal references.
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- A prospective foster caregiver must successfully complete all required pre-service training, complete all screening activities, and have an approved home study prior to being recommended to the Department of Job and Family Services for certification as an approved licensed foster home.

Pre-service training offered complies with Section 5103.039 of the Revised Code and will include the following topics:

- a) Rights, roles, responsibilities, and expectations of foster caregivers and adoptive parents as part of the child welfare team
- b) The substance of infant safe sleep as found at infantsafesleep.ohio.gov

- c) Supporting positive child development
- d) The recommending agency's structure, purpose, policies and services regarding foster caregivers and adoptive parents
- e) Laws and regulations, including ODJFS requirements for certifying foster homes and approval of adoptive homes
- f) Caring for children who have experienced trauma, including placement and separation, on children, their families, and foster caregivers
- g) The importance of maintain meaningful connections between the child and primary parents, including regular visitation
- h) Foster caregivers' involvement in permanency planning for children and their families and post adoptive issues for children and families including availability of adoption subsidies
- i) The impact of childhood traumas such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and parental substance abuse on typical human growth and development
- j) Behavior management techniques, including effectively using discipline and de-escalation strategies
- k) Building competence in matters of diversity including an overview of MEPA and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), as it applies to the foster care and adoption process
- l) The substance of section 2152.72 of the Revised Code which deals with the information required to be shared with a foster caregiver when a child who has been adjudicated a delinquent child for the commission of certain violent crimes is placed in a foster home
- m) Effectively using the reasonable and prudent parent standard as described in division (C) of section [5103.162](#) of the Revised Code.
- n) A first aid and a child and adult CPR training program such as those training programs offered by the American red cross, the American heart association, or the equivalent.
- o) Procedures for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect pursuant to section [2151.421](#) of the Revised Code.
- p) Partnering with primary families
- q) The appropriate knowledge and skills to understand and support older youth preparing for independent living so that the foster parent can help provide such services to the youth as needed and appropriate. These independent living skills shall be coordinated with the life skill services required by rule [5101:2-42-19](#) of the Administrative Code. This topic is only required for those prospective caregivers who will be providing care for youth aged fourteen years and older.
- r) Medication administration

FOSTER CAREGIVER CONTINUING EDUCATION

All certified foster caregivers are required to complete thirty hours of continuing training during each certification period. Advance notice of education opportunities will be mailed to all foster caregivers through the Foster and Adoptive Parent Association's Newsletter and/or special flyer mailings, or other medias. Courses which the foster caregivers must complete will be identified in the foster caregivers' written needs assessment and continuing training plan.

Foster homes licensed as of January 1, 2023, must complete Resource Readiness training topics as a part of their thirty hours on continuing training during their initial certification period. Training topics that meet this requirement are as follows:

- a) Prevention, recognition, and management of communicable diseases

- b) Community health and social services available to children and their foster families
- c) Education advocacy
- d) Substance abuse
- e) Cultural and diversity issues
 - a. Understanding how one's own culture and diversity impacts parenting
 - b. Impact of cross-cultural placements on triad members and extended family
 - c. Issues of racism and discrimination
- f) Family safety
- g) Trauma and its impact on children and the family, promoting attachment
- h) Caring for children who have been sexually abused
- i) Managing placement transitions
- j) Mental health, self-regulation, and self-care
- k) Legal and ethical issues for caregivers

Additional ongoing training topics that may be a part of a foster caregiver's ITNA and may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Parents and foster caregivers as part of child protection teams;
- B. The dynamics of child abuse and neglect and recognizing and preventing child abuse and neglect;
- C. The effect of child abuse and neglect on child development;
- D. How foster caregivers should work with children and their families regarding placement, separation and attachment issues;
- E. Behavior management techniques;
- F. Foster caregivers working with children's families;
- G. Effects of caregiving on children's families;
- H. Caring for children who have been sexually abused;
- I. Cultural competency;
- J. Substance abuse and dependency;
- K. Symptoms of mental illness and learning disorders;
- L. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid;
- M. Developmentally appropriate activities for children;
- N. No preplacement training received shall be counted towards the completion of continuing training required.

All foster caregivers must complete CPR and First Aid training on an ongoing basis in order to maintain current certification.

When a foster caregiver will likely be caring for a youth until they turn eighteen years of age, in addition to the above noted continuing training requirements, additional training will be provided to ensure that they have appropriate knowledge and skills to understand and address the issues confronting the adolescents preparing for independent living. Ideally, this training will be coordinated by the Agency Independent Living Caseworker so that the program addresses the unique needs of the child in question.

The Agency offers the following options for foster caregivers to obtain their continuing education credits:

Agency sponsored Educational Workshops

At a minimum, the Agency offers 1-2 ongoing training sessions every month. Ongoing trainings are offered on weeknights and Saturdays throughout the year. These trainings are provided at the Agency and are scheduled by the Agency's Training Liaison.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Association Meetings

The Foster and Adoptive Parent Association holds monthly meetings at the Agency. All foster caregivers are encouraged to attend these meetings where issues, policies and trainings are provided on specific areas identified by the Agency and foster caregivers. The following applies:

- a) One hour of continuing education credit will be granted per meeting.
- b) The topic discussed must be child welfare related and must be documented by the Agency.
- c) The presenter's curriculum outline must be reviewed by the Agency before approval can be given to grant educational credit for the session.

Video Presentations

Video presentations can be an approved means of meeting pre-placement or continuing foster caregiver training when:

- A qualified trainer is present during the training session to respond to questions.
- The video presentation is part of a self-directed learning program approved by ODJFS.
- ODJFS has approved the video presentation as part of an agency's training proposal as set forth in rule 5101:2-5-40 of the Administrative Code.

Video presentations that are for entertainment purposes may not be used to meet training requirements. Self-directed video presentations can be approved by this agency's Resource Supervisor. Self-directed video presentations are not approved by ODJFS

Trainings Outside the Classroom

Trainings completed outside the classroom when a trainer is not present, shall be considered by the recommending agency on an individual basis and shall not be used for pre-placement training or to meet more than one-fourth of a foster caregiver's continuing training requirements.

Continuing training completed outside a classroom may include training offered through the following methods:

- A. Video presentation
- B. Books or magazines
- C. Computer programs
- D. Internet sites
- E. Interactive video presentations

Transfer of learning components may include the following:

- A pretest
- A post test
- A discussion following the training.

Continuing training where a foster caregiver is teaching one or more training classes to other foster caregivers or providing mentoring services to other foster caregivers may be used in combination with training completed outside a classroom to meet no more than one-third of the foster caregiver's continuing training requirements.

Reading Material

- a. A maximum of one (1) hour of continuing education credit per year may be obtained through reading material.
- b. The reading material must be prior approved by the Agency
- c. The foster caregiver must read at least 150 pages of reading material in order to receive one (1) hour of continuing education credit.
- d. The foster parent must write a summary of the reading material in order to receive continuing education credit.

College Course

- a. A maximum of eight (8) hours of continuing education credit per year may be obtained through a college course.
- b. The course must be in the child welfare realm.
- c. The foster caregiver must receive prior approval from the Agency to receive continuing education credit.
- d. The foster caregiver must submit a copy of the course syllabus to the Agency in order to receive the credit

Conducting Training and Mentoring Services

A foster caregiver may complete up to twenty per cent (20%) of his or her continuing training requirement by teaching one or more training classes to other foster caregivers or by providing mentoring services to other foster caregivers. To qualify for teaching or mentoring services a foster caregiver shall:

1. Have at least two (2) years' experience as a certified foster caregiver.
2. Have had at least two child placements in their foster home.
3. Be a currently certified foster home ; or a previous foster caregiver that has been approved by the Agency to provide mentoring services.
4. Not be under a corrective action plan by a recommending agency.
5. Not be under investigation for a violation of state statue or rule by a recommending agency of ODJFS.

Mentoring services means, at a minimum:

1. Assisting foster caregivers with information that will encourage communication between the new foster caregivers and human service agencies.
2. Offering foster caregivers possible solutions to problems that may occur while caring for a child in placement.

3. Assisting and guiding recently certified foster caregivers in day to day activities while caring for a child in placement.
4. Offering to assist foster caregivers in utilizing resources within their community.
5. Encouraging recently certified foster caregivers to attend training sessions in order to maintain their current certification.

* In addition to the above requirements, a recommendation to train or mentor must be made by foster care worker.

Training that is completed outside of the classroom, where a trainer is not present, will be considered for approval by the Agency on an individual basis. It will not be used for more than six (6) hours of preplacement training or to meet more than one-half of a foster caregiver's continuing training requirement. To qualify for credit, these trainings must include a transfer of learning component prior to or following the training.

Such trainings must be consistent with the foster caregiver's written needs assessment and continuing training plan. When the above training tools are utilized on a regular basis, the Agency will notify in writing the Regional Training Center so appropriate plans for these trainings can be made.

Training hours completed outside of the classroom where a person in the role of trainer is not present, will not include a training stipend, nor an Agency training allowance payment.

Trumbull County Children Services shall make stipend payments to foster caregivers under their supervision to compensate their cost of attending training sessions. Stipend payments for completion of ongoing trainings must be made to the foster caregiver within one hundred twenty calendar days of the completion of the training event. Stipend payments for pre-placement training (pre-service) will be made to the foster caregiver with one hundred twenty days of certification. Training hour means sixty consecutive minutes of instruction and may include a break of no longer than five minutes per training hour when a training session is longer than one training hour in duration. Stipend payments may not be held or otherwise deferred pending reimbursement by ODJFS. Stipend payments shall be rendered for fractional hours in quarter hour increments. The stipend rate paid by recommending agencies shall be calculated as follows:

1. For pre-placement training a lump sum payment shall be the equivalent of fifteen dollars per foster caregiver per training hour for all hours completed.
2. For continuing training, fifteen dollars per foster caregiver per training hour successfully completed within a training session that is a minimum of one training hour in duration. This stipend will be paid only for Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS) approved trainings.

All training documentation must include the date, location, course name, length of the training session, caregiver's name and the trainer's name. Without this information, the training session cannot be applied towards the foster parent's required training hours and cannot be reimbursed.

Continuing training hours obtained by a foster caregiver by teaching one or more training classes to other foster caregivers are eligible for stipend and training allowance reimbursement in the amount of hours as specified in the foster caregiver's written needs assessment and continuing training plan. Any continuing training hours obtained by a foster caregiver by teaching one or more training classes to other foster caregivers in excess of the specified amount in the written needs assessment and continuing training plan shall not be reimbursable.

Trumbull County Children Services prefers that all licensed foster caregivers complete at least 50% of their ongoing trainings in the classroom setting, where a trainer is present in person to facilitate the training. However, live synchronous distance learning, where the trainer or facilitator is available in real time to deliver the training, may be used to meet all of preplacement and continuing training requirements.

WRITTEN NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING PLAN

Every foster caregiver who has successfully completed pre-service training and completed all the requirements to become a licensed foster parent through ODJFS, shall work in cooperation with their Resource Caseworker to develop and implement a written Needs Assessment and a continuing Training Plan, within the first thirty days of a foster caregiver's certification period.

When developing the Needs Assessment and Training Plan, the foster caregiver and their worker will identify areas of strength, as well as areas for further skill development for each foster caregiver. Each training area will be assessed on the relevance and/or need for each foster caregiver. For example - if the foster caregiver only cares for infants who have never been exposed to sexual abuse, their need for training in the area of sexual abuse would be low.

Each Needs Assessment and Training Plan shall satisfy all of the following requirements:

1. Will be in effect for the two-year period the foster caregiver's license is in effect and include training for the caregiver that relates to providing independent living services.
2. Training areas will be selected based on the type of home the foster caregiver is certified to provide
3. The foster caregiver will successfully complete specified courses and any other courses the Agency considers appropriate. Specify the number of hours of continuing training, if any, the foster caregiver may complete by teaching one or more training classes to other foster caregivers or by providing mentoring services to other foster caregivers as referenced in this policy
4. Include criteria the Agency will use to determine if the foster caregiver has successfully completed the required courses
5. The Agency will ensure that the courses that the caregiver's are being required to complete are made available to them at reasonable times and locations.
6. The Agency shall maintain a record for each foster caregiver showing the date, location, course name and length of each pre-placement and continuing training course each foster caregiver attended, along with the name of the trainer.
7. Specify whether the Agency will waive any of the hours of continuing training when the foster caregiver meets the conditions needed for the Agency to issue a Waiver. If a Waiver is approved, the Resource Worker must state in the Needs Assessment and in the Continuing Training Plan the number of hours, not to exceed eight that the Agency will waive.

The Agency may waive up to eight hours of continuing training if the following applies:

1. The foster caregiver has provided foster care for at least two years.
2. The foster caregiver has provided foster care for at least ninety days of the twelve months preceding the date the Agency issues the Waiver.
3. The foster caregiver has not violated any requirements required for certification during the twelve months preceding the date the Agency issues the Waiver.

4. The foster caregiver has complied in full with the Needs Assessment and Continuing Training Plan developed for the foster caregiver.

For each continuing training waiver approved, the following documentation shall be maintained in the foster caregiver's record:

1. The date of the Waiver.
2. The number of hours of training waived.
3. A statement that each of the requirements for receiving a Waiver have been met (see above five requirements)
4. The name and signature of the authorized Agency Representative who approved the Waiver.

Additional time will be given if the foster caregiver has served in active duty outside the state with a branch of the armed forces of the United States for more than thirty days in the preceding two-year period or if the foster caregiver has served in active duty as a member of the Ohio organized militia, as defined in section 5923.01 of Ohio Revised Code, for more than thirty days in the preceding two-year period and that active duty relates to either an emergency in or outside of Ohio or military duty in or outside the state. The additional time shall be one month for each month the foster caregiver was on active duty. Any required training that is not met at the end of the foster caregiver's certification period will be waived by the Agency. The foster caregiver is not expected to make up the waived training during the next certification period, and the training required in the next certification period will be the same as any other foster caregiver. The Agency will document any extension of time or waiver in the foster parent's record.

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