



FOSTER CARE 101

MO CARE Pre-Service Training

Paraphrase

Throughout our sessions we have added a lot of useful tools to our fostering toolbox. Today we are going to look specifically at what it's like to be a foster parent in Missouri. We will cover a lot of information, and much of it might be unfamiliar. It's ok to feel a little overwhelmed. As with most new experiences, there is a learning curve. You won't leave this session an expert. The information we cover today is meant to be an introduction and a launchboard to topics you will learn more about over time.

TRAINING OUTCOMES

- ❑ Equip foster parents to effectively navigate the child welfare system by educating them on key terms and processes
- ❑ Empower foster parents to best meet the needs of their family and the children in their care through connection to resources
- ❑ Encourage foster parents by cultivating a foster care community where caregivers feel understood and supported

Paraphrase

The goals of this training are to:

- Equip foster parents to effectively navigate the child welfare system by educating them on key terms and processes
- Empower foster parents to best meet the needs of their family and the children in their care through connection to resources
- Encourage foster parents by cultivating a foster care community where caregivers feel understood and supported

CHILDREN'S DIVISION OVERVIEW

MO CARE Pre-Service Training

Paraphrase

The Children's Division is responsible for the administration of child welfare services. The Children's Division, sometimes simply referred to as CD, works in partnership with families, communities, the courts, and other governmental entities toward ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of Missouri children. In different regions of our state, sometimes certain tasks or roles are provided by agencies that are contracted through the Children's Division. For example, contracted agencies might provide case management or resource development, which is another word for licensing.

FREQUENTLY USED TERMS

- ❑ Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)
- ❑ Case Goal/Permanency Plan
 - ❑ Reunification
 - ❑ APPLA
 - ❑ Guardianship
 - ❑ Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)/Adoption
- ❑ Case Plan
- ❑ Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)
- ❑ Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC)
- ❑ Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

Paraphrase

This is a brief introduction to frequently used terms.

The primary goal of **Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA)** is to expedite permanency for children in foster care by setting specific time frames in which the state must act on a child's permanency plan. The permanency plan of every child who has been in out-of-home care for 15 out of the most recent 22 months, must be reviewed. The state must file a termination of parental rights (TPR) petition unless compelling reasons exist for not filing this petition.

Ultimately, the goal of the child welfare system is to provide children with a stable and continuous relationship with nurturing and loving parents, and the **permanency plan** sets the path of how that will be achieved. Permanency planning, including concurrent planning, should begin immediately after removal of the child from the home. Concurrent planning is the process of working towards reunification while at the same time establishing and implementing an alternative, or back-up, permanency plan for a child. Multiple team members might make a **case**

goal recommendation to the court, and the court makes case goal decisions.

Family **reunification** is generally the first choice and should occur as soon as the parents have been able to resolve or reduce the problems, to a minimally acceptable safe level, which necessitated the child's placement in foster care.

In **Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA)** the child welfare agency maintains care and custody of the youth and arranges a living situation in which the youth is expected to remain until adulthood. APPLA is a permanency option only when other options such as reunification, relative placement, adoption, or legal guardianship have been ruled out. The child must be 16 years of age or older to choose this permanency option.

Guardianship is a permanency option for children where reunification or adoption is not feasible. Guardianship requires the caretaker to assume a high level of responsibility and authority over the child. It is most frequently used when relative caregivers wish to provide a permanent home for the child and maintain the child's relationships with extended family members without a termination of parental rights, as is required for an adoption.

Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) is the voluntary or involuntary legal severance of the rights of a parent to the care, custody, and control of a child. Among other reasons, adoption is often considered an appropriate permanent plan when the goal of reunification has been ruled out, there is clear, cogent and convincing evidence that one or more grounds for TPR exist, and the parents have failed to correct those problems or conditions which contributed to the child's placement in foster care, and are not likely to do so in the near future.

A **case plan** describes the outcomes, goals, and tasks concerning a child's care while in placement. These goals include ensuring that the child receives safe and proper care while in state custody and that appropriate services are provided to the parents and foster parents, as well as

determining goals/objectives families must meet in order to create a safe, permanent home for the child. Progress is monitored by the case worker and reported to the court.

Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) is legislation built to enhance prevention services, helping children remain safely in their own homes to avoid the traumatic experience of being separated from their family. Federal funding supports programming to address mental health, substance use disorder treatment, and in-home parenting skills training to help families safely keep their children at home. FFPSA also aims to make sure that children are placed in the least restrictive setting possible.

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) assures the protection of children crossing state lines and ensures they receive the same support and services as if they remained in their own state. Among several other reasons, ICPC applies when children are to be placed in interstate relative or kinship placements. The timeframe for completion of an ICPC varies greatly by type, for example, it can be expedited in certain circumstances. Other factors that impact the time frame for completion are the availability of the sending and receiving agency to complete paperwork and the proposed caretaker's cooperation and timeliness in completing necessary tasks.

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) regulates placement proceedings involving Indian children to promote the stability and security of Indian families and tribes.

CHILDREN'S DIVISION WEBSITE

- ❑ Child Welfare Manual
- ❑ Foster Connections Newsletter
- ❑ "I am a Foster Parent" Page
- ❑ E-forms
- ❑ Foster Parent Bill of Rights
- ❑ Foster Parent Handbook

Facilitator's Note

It would be a good opportunity to demonstrate navigating around the DSS website during the next few slides. In the interest of time, you might want to bookmark some pages in advance.

Paraphrase

There are a lot of resources available online on the Missouri Department of Social Services Website. You can find the entire Child Welfare Manual. You can also subscribe to the Foster Parent Connections Newsletter and view past issues. Among other useful and timely information, the newsletter keeps Missouri foster parents up to date on policy updates and training opportunities. There are also several helpful tools available to foster parents at the "I am a Foster Parent" page within the website, including quick links for popular e-forms, mandatory and elective training, the Foster Parent Bill of Rights, and the Foster Parent Handbook. New resources are added all the time.

FREQUENTLY USED E-FORMS

- ❑ Court Caregiver Report
- ❑ Medical Log (CD-265)
- ❑ Foster Parent Travel Log
- ❑ Respite Provider Forms
- ❑ Mileage Reimbursement

Paraphrase

You will want to become familiar with how to locate e-forms on the Missouri Department of Social Services website. You will find many commonly used forms directly linked on the “I am a Foster Parent” page. There is also a link to access the entire e-forms catalog.

FOSTER CARE BILL OF RIGHTS

- ❑ Best interest of the child is top priority
- ❑ Keep children with people they know
- ❑ Siblings placed together
- ❑ Plan development
- ❑ Children 12 years and older may attend hearings

Paraphrase

The Foster Care Bill of Rights is a Missouri statute that serves as a guide for all Children's Division decisions. Among the commitments in the bill of rights, the Children's Division will strive to keep children with people they know and trust, with a primary goal of keeping families together whenever possible. They will keep siblings together in the same home whenever possible. If it is not possible, there will be regular visits scheduled between siblings. The Children's Division will work with each youth and their family to develop goals and a plan. Both a case plan and a permanency plan will be developed. This will help ensure each child is safe, their needs are met, and they keep the things and people that are important to them in their lives. The statute also provides that any youth aged 12+ has the option to attend their court hearing as long as it is in their best interest.

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT HOTLINE

- ❑ Overview of the hotline process
- ❑ Mandated reporter
- ❑ When to hotline
- ❑ What if I'm hotlined?

Paraphrase

When a call is placed to the Missouri Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline, workers initially determine if the child is in imminent danger. If the allegations do not pose an immediate threat to safety it can trigger the opening of an investigation, family assessment, or juvenile assessment. Not all calls to the hotline are determined to be abuse/neglect. However, the Children's Division can often provide services and assistance that can help families prevent abuse or help the family in crisis.

Anyone can report suspected child abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Members of certain occupational groups, such as teachers, social workers, and physicians are mandated by law to make reports to the hotline and are considered mandated reporters. As a foster parent, you are also a mandated reporter. Err on the side of over-reporting. If you have the thought, "Maybe I should call..." – DO!

It is not uncommon for foster parents to be hotlined. It is generally in your best interest to cooperate with the investigation. It is an opportunity to tell your side of the story and provide additional facts or information that

will aid the investigation. Your licensing worker can help you understand the timelines of the process and the impact on your license. You might also want to speak to an advocate from the Family Resource Center that serves your area. They can help inform you about the process, suggest any other steps you can take, and connect you with supports that address the emotional aspect of being hotlined.

FOSTER PARENT ID CARDS

- ❑ Obtaining an ID card
- ❑ Getting a replacement ID card if lost or stolen
- ❑ What are ID cards used for?

Paraphrase

Your resource development team will provide you a form to fill out and return to obtain a Foster Parent ID Card. They will also be your point of contact in the event of a lost or stolen card. Foster parent identification cards can be used for various purposes, including discounts at participating local businesses.



TEAM MEMBERS

MO CARE Pre-Service Training

Paraphrase

Foster parents are colleagues in the child-welfare team and are to be treated as such. Likewise, foster parents should treat the children in their care, the child's birth family, and members of the child welfare team in a manner consistent with their ethical responsibilities as professional team members.

You will be informed of and able to participate in all team meetings concerning your licensure status or for children placed in your home.

TEAM ROLES

- ❑ CASA Volunteer
- ❑ Case Worker
- ❑ Case Worker Supervisor
- ❑ Foster Parent
- ❑ Guardian Ad Litem/Attorney for the child(ren)
- ❑ Family Visit Supervisor/Parent Aid/Designee
- ❑ Juvenile Officer
- ❑ Parent and Parent's attorney
- ❑ Therapist(s)

Paraphrase

It's important to point out that not all of the members listed will be a part of every case team. As an example, some circuits do not have a CASA program.

CASA Volunteer: A community volunteer trained and supervised by a local Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program and appointed by court order to serve the best interest of a child under that circuit court's jurisdiction. As an officer of the court, the CASA may serve as a Guardian ad Litem or Friend of the Court, depending upon the program model adopted by the judicial circuit.

Case Worker: The worker assigned to provide direct services to parents and children. Note that case worker, case manager, and Children's Service Worker are often used interchangeably.

Case Worker Supervisor: Oversees and supports the case worker.

Guardian Ad Litem/Attorney for the child: An individual appointed by the

court to protect the best interest of a child in a specific legal action.

Family Visit Supervisor/Parent Aid/Designee: Agency staff or a person authorized by the court to supervise family visits. In addition to staff, this might be a company hired for the purpose of providing transportation to and from visits and/or supervision of family visits. The family visit supervisor might also be a designated family member or family friend, or, it could be the foster parent.

Foster Parent: Note that foster parent, resource provider, and placement provider are terms often used interchangeably.

Juvenile Officer: The Juvenile Office staff assigned to a case involving a juvenile in the legal custody of CD. This individual represents the Juvenile Office in most court hearings.

Parent and Parent's attorney

Therapists: Therapists for the children and the parents could be included in team communications and decision-making.

TEAM MEETINGS

- ❑ 72 Hour Meeting (preliminary plan and concurrent plan established)

- ❑ Typical flow of Family Support Team Meetings (FST)
 - ❑ 30-day (permanency plan and concurrent plan established)
 - ❑ 60-day (review of case progress)
 - ❑ 90-day (review of case progress)
 - ❑ 6-month (review of the case plan; possible change of plan)
 - ❑ 12-month (review of the case plan; possible change of plan)
 - ❑ 18-month (review of the case plan; possible change of plan)

- ❑ Placement Stability Meeting

Paraphrase

When a child is placed with you, a Family Support Team is formed to help safely reunite the family, if possible. The Family Support Team will usually meet for the first time within 3 days of the child coming into care to help develop a treatment plan for the parents and a visitation plan. The Family Support Team will continue to meet regularly throughout the time the child is in care, typically with meetings planned around court timeframes. The point of these meetings is to review plans and discuss progress, additional concerns, or changes that need to be made.

Placement Stability Family Support Team Meetings should be held prior to taking any action relating to a change in placement of a child in the custody of the Children's Division. These meetings should be held any time that a child's placement stability is threatened; whether a request has been made to move the child from the foster home or the placement provider is in need of additional services.

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY ON A TEAM

- ❑ Be a good communicator through thoughtful and professional communication
- ❑ Remember that the team has a shared goal- the best interest of the child
- ❑ Respect others and their role
- ❑ Seek to understand different perspectives and points of view
- ❑ Be trustworthy, honest, and keep confidentiality
- ❑ Be consistent and reliable on following through with tasks and responsibilities

Paraphrase

Be a good communicator through thoughtful and professional communication. When you become emotionally invested in a child or family, it might be challenging to remain professional when decisions are made that you don't agree with. A good rule of thumb is to not reach out or respond when you are upset. To be the most effective advocate for the children in your care, you will want to communicate factly, rather than emotionally.

Remember that the team has a shared goal- the best interest of the child.

Respect others and their role. You can be respectful even when you disagree with someone.

Seek to understand different perspectives and points of view. It may be helpful to step back and recognize that team members all have different roles on the team, various areas of expertise, and different backgrounds, including their personal life experiences, which shape the lens from which they view the case. Also, there may be extenuating circumstances,

that are not known to you, that influence a certain point of view.

Be trustworthy, honest, and keep confidentiality. All information provided to you about your foster child's case is confidential, unless necessary for the child's health care, schooling, or welfare team.

Be consistent and reliable on following through with tasks and responsibilities.

COURT

- ❑ Hearing Types
- ❑ Etiquette
- ❑ Expectations
- ❑ Caregiver Court Information Form

Paraphrase

The court removes children from their homes, approves the permanency plans and visitation schedules, and decides if a child can safely return home or if termination of parental rights will be granted.

Hearing Types:

Protective Custody hearing is held within 72 hours of a child being taken into care to decide if removing them was appropriate and if the child should stay in the temporary custody of the Children's Division.

Adjudication Hearing is held within 30 to 60 days of a child entering care and is an evidentiary hearing on whether the allegations leading to the child's removal are true.

Dispositional Hearing must be held within 90 days of a child's removal from home to determine the child's permanency plan. This hearing may be held immediately after the adjudication hearing.

Dispositional Review Hearing should be held within 90 days of the

Dispositional Hearing and may be held as often as needed to determine the appropriate permanency plan for the child. These hearings will stop only when the Permanency Hearing has been held.

Permanency Hearing must be held within 12 months of the child entering care. This hearing determines the permanency plan for the child and if the Children's Division has made reasonable efforts to finalize this permanency plan. This hearing must be held annually.

Permanency Review Hearing may be held as often as is necessary, at least every 6 months following the Permanency Hearing. The purpose of this hearing is to determine if the permanency plan in place is the most appropriate option for the child and whether the Children's Division has made reasonable efforts to finalize the plan.

Business casual is the appropriate attire for court hearings, and is defined as a style of clothing that is less formal than traditional business wear, but is still intended to give a professional impression.

Foster, relative, and kinship providers have the right to receive notice of court hearings held with respect to children in their care. In addition, you have a right to be heard in any such proceeding. You have the right to submit a **Caregiver Court Information Form** prior to court. It will become a part of the official court record, and everyone that is party to the case will be given a copy.



FOSTER PLACEMENTS

MO CARE Pre-Service Training

Paraphrase

You've invested a lot of time and effort into the licensing process, and now that you are near the finish line, the prospect of bringing a child into your home can be both exciting and somewhat intimidating. Many people at this stage want to know, "How long will it be before I get a placement?" Unfortunately, there is no uniform answer to this question. Much of it depends on the number of children brought into care in your area and your placement preferences. It is generally the case, but not always, that the more narrow your placement criteria is, the longer it might be before you are connected with an appropriate placement. In the meantime, there is plenty you can do to prepare.

PLACEMENT TYPES & LEVELS OF CARE

- ❑ Traditional
- ❑ Emergency
- ❑ Medical
- ❑ Elevated Needs Level A
- ❑ Elevated Needs Level B
- ❑ Treatment Foster Care (TFC)

Paraphrase

Foster care placement shall be the least restrictive placement setting to meet the specific needs of the child. Sometimes, a child may require a higher level of care, for instance due to behaviors or medical conditions. Here is an introduction to some of the most common placement types.

Traditional: This is the broadest category. Most children new to care will enter care as traditional placements. As teams learn more about the child's needs, the level of care needed can be changed, if needed.

Emergency: Short term placement, less than 60 days. Likely to be placed after traditional business hours, when a child is brought into care in a crisis situation or placement has been a challenge to secure for some other reason. Emergency placements can, and often do, become longer-term placements.

Medical: A child with medically diagnosed extraordinary medical condition and/or physical or mental disabilities.

Elevated Needs Level A: Child with elevated needs that requires greater structure and supervision, and are less able to assume responsibility for their daily care. They have documented moderate or serious emotional and/or behavioral needs.

Elevated Needs Level B: A child appropriate for Level B foster care has serious emotional and/or behavior problems that require the 24-hour availability of a highly skilled resource parent. Elevated Needs Level B and Career Foster Placement are terms often used interchangeably.

Treatment Foster Care (TFC): Therapeutic services for foster children between the ages 6 or older with significant medical, developmental, emotional, or behavioral needs. TFC offers specific treatment services to the child based on their individual needs to help offer additional support.

PREPARING FOR PLACEMENT

- ❑ Locate services and proactively reach out about enrollment processes
 - ❑ Childcare
 - ❑ School district services (birth-12th grade)
 - ❑ Pediatrician
 - ❑ Possible others- therapists, medical clinics, hair care services

- ❑ Think through logistics of your target age group- list items that are necessary for immediate placement vs items you can arrange for after placement
 - ❑ Necessities- beds & bedding, car seat
 - ❑ Things you can easily pick up- clothes, shoes, snacks, diapers, baby wipes, baby bottles, stroller, hygiene products, school supplies, toys

- ❑ **Important Note: Prepare a plan to locate resources instead of trying to have everything on hand!**

Paraphrase

In preparation for your first placement it's a good idea to locate services and proactively reach out about enrollment processes and timelines.

Prepare a plan to locate resources instead of trying to have everything on hand. It's stressful and unrealistic to have every single thing you might need on hand. Instead, focus on securing the things you will need immediately, based on your target ages. Many foster parents find it helpful to maintain a running list of items they might need, depending on age level, and where they can obtain them. For example, size and season appropriate clothes can often be found by visiting the clothes closet at your nearest Family Resource Center.

FINDING PLACEMENT

- Preferred procedure for your county
- Regularly check in with your Licensing Worker
- Provide respite for other foster families
- Network with other foster families

Facilitator's Note

If you aren't already familiar, you will need to research the preferred placement procedures for your area.

Paraphrase

Each county or circuit in the state has their preferred placement procedures. It's possible that you will be offered placement from outside the county that you reside, so it's important to have a level of familiarity with the procedures in your geographic area.

Some other ways to learn of placement openings are by having regular check-ins with your licensing worker, provide respite for other foster families, and network with other foster families.

PLACEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- ❑ Legal limits on the number and ages of children allowed in the home
- ❑ Family composition
- ❑ Lifestyle
- ❑ Logistics of your home (such as number of bedrooms) and vehicle size
- ❑ Work schedule
- ❑ Ability to enroll in child care (i.e. too young to enroll/newborns, extraordinary medical needs, no available child care options, non-traditional work shifts, etc)
- ❑ Cultural competency
- ❑ **Important Note: As your life seasons and circumstances change and you grow more confident in your parenting abilities, you can always make adjustments!**

Being honest and thoughtful about your circumstances and your capacity to serve a child in foster care will help guide appropriate placement decisions and prevent unnecessary placement disruptions. Some considerations will be regulatory in nature, related to licensing criteria. Others provide greater insight into resources available in your home and community.

- Legal limits on the number and ages of children allowed in the home
- Family composition
- Lifestyle
- Logistics of your home (such as number of bedrooms) and vehicle size
- Work schedule
- Ability to enroll in child care (i.e. too young to enroll/newborns, extraordinary medical needs, no available child care options, non-traditional work shifts, etc)
- Cultural competency

The great news is that you don't have to have your entire fostering journey figured out today. As your life seasons and circumstances change and you grow more confident in your parenting abilities, you can always make adjustments!

QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING PLACEMENT

- ❑ What is this child's basic information- name, birth date, gender, race?
- ❑ Why is this child being placed?
- ❑ Why and when was this child brought into care?
- ❑ Has this child been placed before? Can we contact the previous provider?
- ❑ Is it possible to do a pre-placement visit?
- ❑ What is the family situation- parents, siblings, extended family? Where are they?
- ❑ What community are they from? Where did this child attend school/preschool?
- ❑ Does this child have any special medical or dietary needs?
- ❑ Does this child have any known behaviors?
- ❑ Are there any precautions which should be taken regarding the safety of the child?

Paraphrase

When you receive a placement call, it's ok, and even encouraged, for you to ask questions. When you better understand the needs of the child and family, you can make a more informed decision about your capacity to meet their needs. You will need to keep in mind, however, that sometimes the caller might not have all the information. This is especially true when children are just entering care.

I HAVE PLACEMENT, NOW WHAT?

- ❑ Short Term "To Do" List
 - ❑ Obtain placement letter and Medicaid authorization
 - ❑ Introduce yourself to the team and exchange contact information
 - ❑ Initial health exam within 24 hours
 - ❑ Full screening within 30 days
 - ❑ Enroll in school, if appropriate, ideally within a week
 - ❑ Enroll in WIC Program, if under 5 years old
 - ❑ Discuss clothing voucher with Case Manager
- ❑ Long Term "To Do" List
 - ❑ Regular wellness doctor exams
 - ❑ Dentist visits
 - ❑ Eye exam
 - ❑ Situational possibilities: First Steps evaluation, psychological evaluation
 - ❑ Maintain a memory box and/or Life Book

Paraphrase

There will be some things that will need to be done immediately, and others that will occur over time.

Short Term "To Do" List

- Obtain placement letter and Medicaid authorization
- Introduce yourself to the team and exchange contact information
- Initial health exam within 24 hours
- Full screening within 30 days
- Enroll in school, if appropriate, ideally within a week
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Long Term "To Do" List

- Regular wellness doctor exams
- Dentist visits
- Eye exam
- Situational possibilities: First Steps or psychological evaluation

- Maintain a memory box and/or Life Book

FAMILY VISITS

- ❑ Frequency
- ❑ Community vs. in-home
- ❑ Tips to prepare children
- ❑ After the visit

Paraphrase

Continued contact between the child and family is essential to maintaining and strengthening family bonds. It is recommended that visits occur weekly, or as frequently as possible, with a minimum of one time per month. Visits may vary in length, frequency, location, and they may or may not be supervised, depending on court order. Visits should take place in the least-restrictive environment possible while still assuring safety.

To help the child prepare for visits, remain positive about the birth parents. Parental visits or contact can sometimes be stressful for the child. If your child displays different behavior after a visit, phone call, reading mail, or if they report something that concerns you, please share this information with the child's case manager. Be a safe space for the child to share, but never steer the conversation or interrogate the child about visits.

APPROVAL NEEDED

- Non routine medical care
- Medications
- Significant changes to hair length or style
- Body piercings & tattoos
- Getting driver's license
- Some travel
- Alternate caregiver over 24 hours

Paraphrase

Here are some examples of common situations that would require you to obtain approval from the child's case manager. In many cases, the case manager will need to seek the input of the child's family.

- Non routine medical care
- Medications
- Body piercings & tattoo
- Some travel (Out of State)
- Alternate caregiver over 24 hours

NOTIFICATION REQUIRED

- ❑ Immediately for emergency situations
 - ❑ Serious illness or injury requiring medical treatment
 - ❑ Unauthorized absence from the home
 - ❑ Other situations- utilize sound judgment
 - ❑ **Important Note: Always take action first- such as seeking emergency medical care- your top priority is to secure the child's safety!**
- ❑ Within 2 hours for missing foster placement
 - ❑ Also notify local law enforcement agency and National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
- ❑ Within 2 weeks for pertinent conditions, problems, or family changes
- ❑ Within 60 days (of case worker's inquiry) for desire to adopt

Paraphrase

When there is an emergency situation involving a child in care, you **always** secure the child's safety **first!** Some examples of things that would be considered an emergency situation are serious illness or injury requiring medical treatment or unauthorized absence from the home. In other situations the expectation is that you will utilize sound judgment. You will want to contact the child's case manager at the first available opportunity.

If you discover that your foster child has run away or is missing, you will need to notify the child's case manager immediately. Within two hours of discovering that the child is missing, you should also file a missing child complaint with the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction and inform the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Some other notification timelines to be mindful of include notifying the case manager within 2 weeks for pertinent conditions, problems, or family changes. Also notify the case manager within 60 days (of case worker's inquiry) to express a desire to adopt your foster child.

PLACEMENT DISRUPTION

- ❑ Develop a proactive strategy to avoid disruption by regularly and openly discussing concerns with the team so it doesn't become a crisis situation
- ❑ Advocate for supports to stabilize placement
- ❑ Seek assistance of a trusted mentor and/or advocate
- ❑ Request additional formal behavioral or medical training or utilize informal training, such as podcasts, webinars and books
- ❑ If unable to develop a plan to meet the child's needs, and disruption must occur, provide a written two week notice (except emergency situations)

Paraphrase

Be proactive! Be proactive! Be proactive! It's worth repeating; one of the best ways to avoid disruption is by regularly and openly discussing concerns with the team so it doesn't become a crisis situation.

Advocate for supports to stabilize placement

Seek assistance of a trusted mentor and/or advocate

Request additional formal behavioral or medical training or utilize informal training, such as podcasts, webinars and books

If you are unable to develop a plan to meet the child's needs and you request removal of a child from your home, you must give two weeks written notice to the child's case manager. Before a child is removed from your care you are also given two weeks notice and a written statement of the reasons. The two week notice applies except in emergency situations.



FOSTER PARENT SUPPORT

MO CARE Pre-Service Training

Paraphrase

Foster parents in Missouri have access to a wide variety of resources designed to support their family and the children in their care.

MAINTENANCE PAYMENTS

- ❑ Amounts
- ❑ Payment method- paper check or direct deposit (form CD-122)
- ❑ Payment dates and frequency
- ❑ Who to contact if you have payment issues- missing payment, over or under payment

Paraphrase

The maintenance reimbursement is a monthly payment to offset the cost of room and board, incidentals, and clothing for the child. If a child is not in your home for the entire month, payments are prorated for the number of nights the child spent in your home. You can find the current reimbursement rates in the Child Welfare Manual.

Direct deposit is the quickest and most secure way to receive maintenance payments. To apply for direct deposit, complete and submit the form CD122 which can be found by visiting the e-forms catalog on the Children's Division website.

Payments are made the following month, generally on the 10th business day of the month. State holidays do not count as business days, and will delay payments.

If at any time you receive the incorrect amount of money, it is important you notify your local Children's Division office immediately, so they can correct the payment.

OTHER FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

- ❑ Show Me Healthy Kids Managed Care Health Plan
- ❑ Clothing Allowance
- ❑ Infant Allowance
- ❑ Mileage Reimbursement
- ❑ Childcare through authorized provider
- ❑ Free lunches for school-aged children
- ❑ WIC for children under 5 years old

Paraphrase

All of Missouri's foster children are eligible for medical coverage through Missouri Medicaid (MO HealthNet). Most children will get their coverage through **Show Me Healthy Kids**, a special managed care plan for youth in state custody.

Children will receive a yearly **clothing allowance**. The child's case manager can inform you how much money is available for the child and the agency's procedure for clothing allowance. Sometimes a store-specific voucher is available, and other times you will purchase the clothing and then get reimbursed. All items purchased with clothing allowance stay with the child.

Infant allowance is paid for children from birth up to their third birthday to help defray the additional costs for providing for the specific needs of infants such as formula, diapers, special food, extra clothing, and supplies.

You may be able to receive **mileage reimbursement** for transportation

costs when traveling with the child, for the child, or for attending training.

Childcare is available through an authorized provider. Sometimes childcare is difficult to find. If a relative or friend is helping you by providing childcare, they can become a registered provider and be compensated. The process to become a registered provider is easier than the daycare licensing process.

All school-aged children in foster care are eligible for **free school lunches** through the School Lunch Program. Contact your child's school for an application. On the application form, list them as a "Household of One." The monthly income box should reflect the child's maintenance rate.

Most foster children under the age of 5 automatically qualify for **WIC** services. You can receive free baby formula, cereal, eggs, milk, peanut butter, juice and other nutritional foods to meet a child's individual needs.

LICENSING WORKER

- ❑ Quarterly in-home visits
- ❑ Approve and counsel on appropriate placements
- ❑ Track license renewal progress (renewal every 2 years)
- ❑ Write home study/updates
- ❑ Support in times of crisis
- ❑ Provide referrals for community resources

Paraphrase

Licensing workers coordinate the licensing, approval, and maintenance of all foster homes. This coordination includes recruitment, training, and support. It also includes providing guidance and discipline to foster providers and assuring the home continues to meet licensing standards.

Your licensing worker will conduct quarterly in-home visits which should include a walk through of the home to assure the home continues to meet licensing standards. Quarterly visits are conversational, allowing for the sharing of concerns as well as accomplishments and development of a mutual relationship of trust. The visits are to be used as a prompt to have meaningful conversations about pertinent issues and assure compliance with licensing requirements.

Other responsibilities of the licensing work include:

- Approve and counsel on appropriate placements
- Track license renewal progress (renewal every 2 years)
- Write home study/updates

- Support in times of crisis
- Provide referrals for community resources

TRAINING

- ❑ 30 hours of approved training required for re-licensure (2 year period)
- ❑ Mandatory and optional
- ❑ Training requirements for above level care placements and adoption
- ❑ Training hours reported to Licensing Worker
- ❑ Children's Division website
- ❑ Training calendars through Family Resource Centers

Paraphrase

You will need 30 hours of approved training before relicensing, which is every 2 years. The 30 hours will include some required training. You can also choose from several popular elective trainings or receive approval for outside training, which can include, among other things, reading parenting-related books or listening to podcasts.

If you are interested in above level care placements or adoption, specific training will be required. These training hours can count towards the hours needed for relicensing.

You will want to report all training hours to your licensing worker

Some places you can locate training offerings are the Children's Division website and training calendars through the Family Resource Centers.

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS

- ❑ Provide support, services, and resources to foster, adoptive, relative, and guardianship children and their families
 - ❑ Public Information
 - ❑ Training
 - ❑ Peer Support Groups
 - ❑ Social and Community Activities
 - ❑ Financial or Material Supports
 - ❑ Respite Care
 - ❑ Advocacy, Navigation, and Support
 - ❑ In-home Therapeutic Services

- ❑ Locating your Family Resource Center

Paraphrase

Fostering or adopting children is rewarding, but also challenging. Family Resource Centers (FRCs) are support systems that provide resources, training, peer support, respite, and other services families need to navigate raising children through foster care, adoption, and guardianship. These centers are regional. Family Resource Centers provide 8 core support services for foster, adoptive, and relative care families

- Public Information
- Training
- Peer Support Groups
- Social and Community Activities
- Financial or Material Supports
- Respite Care
- Advocacy, Navigation, and Support
- In-home Therapeutic Services

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

- ❑ Local foster parent support organizations
- ❑ Clothing closets
- ❑ Seasonal donation drives (ie. Back to School, Christmas)
- ❑ Local discounts
- ❑ Facebook communities- national, state-wide, local, hyper-local, special interest groups, faith-based groups
- ❑ Childcare Aware website

Paraphrase

- Local foster parent support organizations
- Clothing closets
- Seasonal donation drives (ie. Back to School, Christmas)
- Local discounts
- Facebook communities- national, state-wide, local, hyper-local (which might be a community or neighborhood), special interest groups, faith-based groups
- Childcare Aware website: Connects families to child care

NAVIGATING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

- ❑ Consent
- ❑ Enrollment & Best Interest Determination
- ❑ School District Educational Liaison for children in foster care
- ❑ MPACT
- ❑ Advocate through Family Resource Centers

Paraphrase

As a foster parent, you may consent to public school registration, initial evaluation and placement for special education and related services, making and changing class schedules, absence from school, and participation in extracurricular activities and school meal programs. You will want to confer with the case manager for guidance on which school district the child should be enrolled based on a Best Interest Determination.

By law, every school district is required to appoint a School District Educational Liaison for children in foster care.

If you need any help advocating for services within your school district or have questions about what services are available for your child, M-PACT, Missouri Parents Act, is an organization that can assist you. Your Family Resource Centers can also assist with educational advocacy.

FOSTER PARENT AMBASSADORS

- ❑ Ambassadors Program
 - ❑ Recruitment
 - ❑ Support foster families through mentoring and self-advocacy
 - ❑ Representation of foster parents in work groups

- ❑ How to get a mentor

Paraphrase

Foster Parent Ambassadors are experienced foster parents who volunteer their time to assist with foster recruitment events, support foster families through mentoring and self-advocacy, and represent the foster parent perspective in state-wide child welfare stakeholder work groups.

It is highly recommended that every newly licensed foster parent sign up for a Foster Parent Ambassador mentor. Your training facilitator or your licensing worker can provide you with the sign up form.

RESPITE

- ❑ Respite vs Babysitting
- ❑ Units
- ❑ Timeframes
- ❑ Choosing a Respite Provider
- ❑ Forms

Paraphrase

Respite care is the temporary, substitute care of foster children placed in your home. Respite is not for regular child supervision situations when a parent would normally use ordinary child care, like a babysitter for an afternoon or evening out or for attending foster parent training or seminars. Respite care may be planned in advance or used in emergency situations. Respite care should be used to maintain stable placements but should not be used to exclude foster children from ordinary and traditional family activities.

Foster parents receive 12 units of respite per year. A unit of respite care is between 12-24 hours. You may also use a half-unit of respite care. Use of respite is not to exceed 12 units per child during a 12-month period. The 12-month period will begin on the date the child was placed in your home and will reset on the anniversary date of the child's placement. Unused units for the previous 12-month period are not rolled over to the new 12-month period.

You can use the reasonable and prudent parenting standards in selecting

a respite provider, but keep in mind that unlicensed providers are not eligible for payment.

Respite reimbursement forms are available in the e-forms catalog on the Children's Division website, and will need to be submitted to the child's case manager.

SELF CARE

- ❑ Build a community of supportive people who understand what you're going through
- ❑ Ask for help
- ❑ Take care of your mental and physical health
- ❑ Don't abandon the activities and interests that replenish you
- ❑ Take regular breaks- make appointments for "me" time

Paraphrase

By nature, foster parents are caregivers. So it comes as no surprise that many foster parents put their own needs last. But, caring for children who have endured trauma is taxing in many aspects. Preventative self care strategies will help you avoid burn-out and compassion fatigue. Here are a few recommendations:

- Build a community of supportive people who understand what you're going through
- Don't be shy about asking for or accepting help. If there are tasks you can hire out to free up some of your time, do it. Many people are looking to find ways to support foster families, like providing a meal, watching the other children in your home when you have court or other appointments, mowing your lawn, or assisting with small household tasks.
- Take care of your mental and physical health

- Don't abandon the activities and interests that replenish you
- Take regular breaks- make appointments for "me" time



Facilitator's Note

By a wide margin, training participants cite the expert panel as the most memorable, enjoyable, and impactful part of their entire pre-service training experience. So, thoughtful planning and facilitation of this activity can go a long way to reinforce important training concepts.

Try to budget around 45 minutes to an hour for this activity.

A recommended panel size is approximately 3-5 panelists. Suggestions for panel participants: foster parents of various tenures (for example: licensed under 5 years, licensed over 5 years), Foster Parent Ambassadors, foster parents experienced with different levels of care (medical, level A, level B, TFC), CASA volunteers, family court attorney, former foster youth, case worker, Family Resource Center representative, older biological child within a foster family.

Opening: Have panelists briefly introduce themselves by providing their name and relationship to foster care (ideally, no more than 3-5 minutes each, to allow plenty of time for discussion).

Panel Discussion: Encourage training participants to ask questions of the panelists. Be prepared with a list of questions you can ask the panelists to

keep the conversation going, if needed.

Closing: Give the panelists an opportunity to answer:

- What is the best piece of advice you could give newly licensed foster parents?

Here are some sample questions you could ask to facilitate discussion, if needed:

- Describe your most rewarding experience with foster care.
- What motivated you to get involved with foster care?
- What are the most significant ways foster care has impacted your life?
- In what ways have relationships with friends or family been changed by your involvement with foster care?
- What new relationships have you gained by being involved with foster care?
- What does your support network look like?
- How do you handle emotionally challenging situations involving foster children and their families?
- What self care strategies are most helpful to you to avoid compassion fatigue?
- How do you handle the stress and emotional toll that comes with being involved with foster care?
- What role does self-care play in your work with foster care, and how do you practice it?
- What are your favorite strategies to build relationships and partnership with the families of the children in your care?
- How do you approach building a positive relationship with parents?
- How do you handle emotionally challenging situations involving foster children and their families?
- How do you approach working with parents who are resistant to your involvement in their family?
- How do you approach building trust with a child who has been through trauma?
- How do you maintain confidentiality in sensitive situations?
- How do you ensure that the cultural needs of a child are respected and met?
- What qualities make you effective in your position within the child welfare system?
- Can you provide an example of a time when you successfully advocated for a child's best interests?

- Describe an experience collaborating with other team members to support a foster child's well-being.
- Describe an experience you have working with diverse populations, including LGBTQ+ youth and children from different cultural backgrounds.
- Have you ever worked with children with special needs or disabilities? If so, how did you ensure they received appropriate support and accommodations?
- What strategies do you use to help foster children maintain connections with their siblings, extended family members, or other important individuals in their lives?
- In your opinion, what are the most significant challenges facing the foster care system today?
- What is the biggest challenge in fostering?
- What strategies do you use to keep yourself updated with the latest regulations and best practices in foster care?
- Can you describe a situation where you had to make a difficult decision in the best interest of a child?

WRAP UP

- ❑ Final questions
- ❑ Facilitator's contact info

Facilitator's Note

Open the floor to questions one last time. Remind your trainees of your contact information should they have any ongoing needs.



REMEMBER YOUR WHY

MO CARE Pre-Service Training

Paraphrase

Your why is the reason you chose to be a foster parent. It's your *purpose* for doing what you do. There might be times along your journey that you feel defeated, that the system is irretrievably broken, or that you are putting in a lot of effort with little to show for it. Revisit your why. Let it be a guidepost for decisions and a reminder that you can do hard things because you *are* making a difference.