

Silberman School of Social Work



Child Welfare Practice II

Silberman School of Social Work

Session 3:

All About Foster Homes

Out of Home Services

Children should be placed in the least restrictive settings

Placed with relatives in their home
Kinship Care or Relative Care

Placed with licensed foster parents in their home
“Stranger” Foster Homes

Children who are placed with foster parents and freed for adoption should be adopted by foster parents if possible

What is Family Foster Care?

Foster care is a temporary living situation for children and youth whose parents cannot take care of them and whose need for care has come to the attention of child welfare agency. While in foster care, children and youth may live with relatives, foster families or in group facilities

Why Are Children and Youth in Foster Care?

Children and youth enter foster care because they or their families are in crisis. Oftentimes, these children and young people — who range in age from newborns to teens — have experienced unsafe conditions, abuse, neglect or have parents who are unable to care for them. As a result, these children are separated from their parents' care.

What Is a Foster Parent? What Do Foster Parents Do?

Foster parents are adults who temporarily step in to raise children and youth who have been abused or neglected or whose biological parents are unable to care for them.

Foster parents try to give each child in their care as much normalcy as possible while also preparing them to be reunited with family or adopted.

Foster parents, also called resource parents, are state licensed and trained. They are sometimes — but not always — related to the children in their care.

How to Become a Foster Parent?

Children and youth who are placed in foster homes are subject to standards set by state laws and regulations. Foster homes must comply with a home study, and prospective foster parents must be able to meet the child's health and safety needs.

Foster parents must also be in compliance with criteria concerning physical condition, character, motivation, and willingness to cooperate with the agency or district in providing services and carrying out the permanency plan.

Regulations

Foster homes are *certified* (the term used for non-relative homes) or *approved* (the term used for relatives) according to the same standards.

A home study and evaluation of the members of the foster family household or the relative's family household must determine compliance with the following criteria for certification or approval:

Age: Foster parents must be over the age of 21.

Health: Each member of the prospective foster family household must be in good physical and mental health and free from communicable diseases. A written, physician's report on the health of a family, including a complete physical examination of the applicant, must be filed with the agency initially and biennially thereafter. Additional medical reports must be furnished upon the request of either the agency worker or the foster parent.

Regulations

Employment Employment of a foster parent outside the home must be permitted when there are suitable plans for the care and supervision of the child, including after school and during the summer. Such plans must be made part of the foster family record and must receive prior agency approval, unless only one of the two foster parents is working outside the home.

Marital Status The marital status of an applicant may be a factor in determining whether a certification or approval will be granted only if it affects the ability to provide adequate care to foster children. Changes in marital status must be reported to the authorized agency; existing certificates or letters of approval may be revoked, and new certificates or letters of approval issued consistent with the best interests of the child. Single people, unmarried couples, and LGBTQ+ people are permitted to be considered as foster parents.

Regulations

Ability and Motivation The agency must explore each applicant's ability to be a foster parent and must discuss the following topics:

The reasons the applicant seeks to become a foster parent

The applicant's understanding of the foster parent role, including the responsibilities of foster parents in relation to the child, the agency, and the family.

The applicant's concerns and questions about foster care services.

The applicant's psychological readiness to assume responsibility for a child and his/her ability to provide for a child's physical and emotional needs.

The agency's role and authority to supervise the placement.

The attitudes that each person who would be sharing living accommodations with the child in foster care has about foster care and his/her concept of a foster child's role in the family.

Regulations

The awareness of the impact that foster care responsibilities have upon family life, relationships, and current lifestyle.

The principles related to the development and discipline of children; and the need of each child for guidance, a supportive relationship, appropriate stimulation, and the opportunity to identify with a parent or surrogate whose history reflects a value system that is constructive.

A person's self-assessment of their capacity to provide a child with a stable and meaningful relationship

Steps in the Process of Becoming a Foster Parent

Foster Parent Initial Orientation

Paperwork lots of forms – proof of income, medical forms, references, narrative

Criminal Background Check – fingerprints

State Central Registry Clearance

Evaluation of forms for completeness and to move forward

MAPP (Model Approaches to Partnership in Parenting) Training usually 12 sessions

Home Study Process

Completion of Certification Process & Matching

Foster Parent Training Requirements

Agencies must provide training to help foster parents meet the needs of children and youth in their care, assist with techniques in managing behavior to prevent abuse and neglect, and provide an understanding of the agency's expectations.

New foster parents require preparation and training to be effective in their role.

Foster parents who have been accepted for a home study, or relatives who are in the process of a home study, must be introduced to the following:

The problems that lead to family breakdown and the need to place a child in foster care.

The problems and reactions of children/youth upon separation, and the function and responsibility of the foster family in relation to the child, the parents, and the agency.

The agency policy and practice to have defined goals to achieve permanency for each child entering the foster care system.

Foster Parent Training Requirements

The authority of the local department social services, and Family Court in supervising the agency's practice.

The nature of the relationship of agency staff to foster parents and children, including definitions of the function and responsibility of the caseworkers assigned to the children and their families.

The payments to foster parents for care and expenses; the definition of foster family care; and certification or approval of the home.

The rights and responsibilities of a foster parent as defined by a letter of understanding that must be executed at the time of certification or approval.

Financial Considerations for Foster Parents

Room and Board Rate:

Regular Rate/TFBH Rate

Medicaid

Clothing Allowance

Transportation

Child Care

School Expenses

Maximum State Aid Rates for Foster Boarding Home Payments and Adoption Subsidies 2022-23 (July 1, 2022, Through March 31, 2023)

Metro: \$1,028.00, *ages 0 - 5 years*; 1,212.00, *ages 6-11 years*; 1,230.00, *ages 12 +*

Upstate: \$894.00, *ages 0 - 5 years*; 1,065.00, *ages 6-12 years*; 1,077.00, *ages 12+*

Monthly Amount Per Diem

Special Children \$1,930.00
Exceptional Children \$2,925.00

How Does a Group Home Compare to a Foster Home?

Some children and youth in foster care live in a group home — sometimes called congregate care — instead of living with families. In this arrangement, staff members work in shifts to care for a group of children living together in a shelter, residential treatment center or similar shared setting.

While quality residential settings are key features of any child welfare system, historically too many children were placed in group care, sparking reform efforts at the state, local and federal levels.

A federal law — the Family First Prevention Services Act, passed in 2018 — aimed to restructure how child welfare funds are spent. This law has increased support for foster care prevention and keeping children and youth living in families while reducing funding for clinically unnecessary group placements.

Read: <https://www.aecf.org/blog/what-is-foster-care>

Next Session:

All About Adoption

Read:

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/adoption/>

<https://www.nyc.gov/site/acs/child-welfare/become-foster-adoptive-parent.page>