

DSCYF
PRIDE Pre-Service Training Summary

Curriculum

PRIDE training is a prerequisite to becoming an approved foster home. Foster parents must successfully complete 27 hours of training as well as other assessments interwoven with the training. After demonstrating that they meet the required competencies, they then may become foster parents.

A variety of training methods are employed to help participants obtain the awareness, knowledge and understanding needed to make a decision to foster teens, following is an overview of the nine sessions, each of which is three hours in length:

Session One – Connecting with PRIDE

Session One gives foster parents the unique opportunity to learn about the world of foster care and adoption through the stories of children receiving child welfare services. The video *Making a Difference!* portrays how families come to the attention of child welfare agencies and how the team of child welfare professionals work together on behalf of the child. Foster parents will see how different foster families and adoptive families work as part of that team to provide for the challenging needs of children in their care. The video stirs feelings of sadness and inspiration and raises questions that will continue to be addressed throughout the training program. Session One also welcomes foster parents to Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE. It explains how this training program fits in with the process of assessing and selecting foster families and adoptive families. Foster parents will discover how families are approved for this important work. Session One spells out the knowledge and skills (known as “competencies”) that successful foster families and adoptive families need. Session One introduces several regular features of Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE. These include PRIDE Connections (linking classroom learning with life experiences); *Making a Difference!* (stories illustrating the rewards of fostering and adopting); *Key Points* (a summary of important information discussed in each session); *Foster parents Need to Know!* (lessons to study at home); *A Birth Parent’s Perspective* (stories and letters from parents to promote understanding the families of children in care); and *Promoting Safety, Permanence, and Well-Being* (helpful parenting resources and tips for ongoing use that supplement the training program).

Session Two – Teamwork toward Permanence

One of the most challenging tasks for foster families and adoptive families involves developing an understanding of birth family issues—knowing how to talk with children about their families and being able to support their family relationships. This session lays the foundation for this understanding by first exploring the ways in which families support a child’s identity, cultural heritage, and self-esteem. In a video called *Family Forever*, actual foster parents and birth parents talk about their experiences working together on behalf of child. Foster parents will have the opportunity to view and discuss some short video vignettes that demonstrate the skills of “shared parenting.” This session also conveys why we value permanence in the lives of children and how we seek to provide it. Foster parents will learn why teamwork is the best way to promote permanence for children and families. Through participation in this Session foster parents will discover the important role of foster parents and adoptive parents as members of a professional team.

Session Three – Meeting Developmental Needs: Attachment

A unique activity called a “guided imagery” invites foster parents to think through the feelings and experiences of a baby’s entry into the world. In this way, Session Three reviews some of the “basics” of child growth and development. Foster parents will be asked to consider how important it is for children to form deep and lasting attachments. Session Three then explores how abuse, neglect, and trauma impact a child’s attachments, development, and behavior. In a video clip, a foster parent named “Kevin” discusses the impact of his life experiences on his ability to form positive attachments. Foster parent then work with some additional case vignettes to explore ways in which foster parents and adoptive parents, working with other team members, go about building positive attachments with children so their developmental needs may be met.

Session Four – Meeting Development Needs: Loss

When children are separated from the only family they have known, an overwhelming sense of loss may slow growth and development. This session covers the types of losses children have before they enter foster care. It

explores how placement can deepen the child’s sense of loss. Session Four reviews the stages of loss, and their impact on the child, with an emphasis on how loss affects the child’s behavior. Foster parents will have the opportunity to look in greater depth at the losses that Kevin (from the video vignette in the previous session) experienced throughout his life. Loss is presented as something everyone must face. Foster parents will have a chance to consider their own response to loss. Based on this, foster parents will discuss how they might respond to losses that come with fostering and adopting, as well as how foster parents can help children cope with their losses.

Session Five – Strengthening Family Relationships

This session focuses on how families instill identity, cultural heritage, and self-esteem in children. Foster parents will have the opportunity to learn ways to help a child develop positive cultural identity at different developmental stages. The importance of family connections and continuity is also addressed. Session Five reviews the child welfare goal of returning children in foster care to their birth families whenever possible. As this concept is discussed foster parents will consider how the team can support this goal, known as “reunification.” One way to strengthen family relationships is by scheduling visits between children in foster care and their birth parents. Session Five gives very practical information about how to plan for visits, how to get children ready for them, and how to handle their reactions when the visit ends. Several video vignettes illustrate specific skills related to planning for and handling visits.

Session Six – Meeting Development Needs: Discipline

Session Six explores the challenge of discipline. It includes a definition of discipline, a set of goals, and a discussion about how discipline is different from punishment. Foster parents will review the agency’s policy on discipline and discuss why physical punishment is not permitted. Session Six covers the knowledge, skills, and personal qualities adults need to instill discipline. Foster parents will explore the meaning of a child’s behavior and the factors that influence behavior. The session offers an outline of ways foster parents and adoptive parents can best meet the goal of providing discipline that works. By reviewing several video vignettes foster parents will learn specific discipline skills and their use with different types of children and situations. Foster parents will also discuss strategies for managing the behavior of children who have experienced abuse, neglect, and trauma. Finally, the session focuses on the steps to take to manage crisis situations and de-escalate problem behaviors.

Session Seven – Continuing Family Relationships

In this session, a “Job Description for Permanency Planning Team Members” outlines the specific tasks needed in order to help children achieve their permanent goal. Goals for reaching permanence are detailed, starting with efforts to support families, and to place children back in their birth families or in the home of a relative. This session promotes understanding of permanency timeframes, and the importance of the “child’s clock” in making permanency decisions. Foster parents will learn about concurrent planning as a strategy for achieving permanence in a more timely fashion. Session Seven presents other ways to provide lifelong connections for children who cannot grow up in their families. These include adoption, planned long-term foster care, and independent living. The session ends with a discussion of cultural issues in permanency planning, the impact of transracial placements on children, and ways to support children’s developing identity when they are in transracial placements.

Session Eight – Planning for Change

How would a foster parent family be different after having a child placed in foster parents home? Session Eight takes a practical view of what to expect during the first hours, days, and weeks of a child’s placement in a home. Foster parents will learn what to ask the worker and how to talk to the child. Foster parents will also have the opportunity to explore how placement will impact foster parents family, and particularly foster parent own children. This session explores both the immediate and the long-term impact of placement. Video vignettes explore specific skills in dealing with the impact of fostering and adopting on different family members. Fostering and adopting carry some risks for families, and these will be discussed. Specifically foster parents will explore ways to create a safe and healing home environment for children who have experienced sexual abuse, and strategies for handling the behaviors of these children. The session ends with a look at how foster families and adoptive families find support from other team members.

Session Nine – Taking PRIDE: Making an Informed Decision

In this closing session, foster parents will hear from a panel of experienced members of the foster care team. Birth parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, workers, and other members of the child welfare team present their views and answer questions. Foster parents will have a chance to reflect on foster parents own growth in the knowledge

and skills required for foster parenting or adoptive parenting. Foster parents will be on their way toward a final decision about making a commitment to becoming a foster parent or adoptive parent.