

DSCYF
Foster/Adoption Pre-service Training Summary

Foster/adoption training is a prerequisite only for DFS foster parents. Families who only want to adopt must contact one of the Delaware licensed adoption agencies. When the child's goal is changed to TPR/adoption and if the current DFS foster parent is interested in continuing as the permanent resource for the child, the family will need to complete the 12 hours of training and the Contractor will complete an adoptive home study. When all of the requirements have been completed, DFS will present this information and the home study to the Permanency Planning Committee for approval.

The goals of the foster/adoption training are:

- To streamline the adoption process for DFS foster families
- To minimize delays in identifying and approving DFS foster families to adopt foster children placed in their foster homes
- To minimize the number of moves for a foster child

The curriculum used for this training is called, **Making the Commitment to Adoption** and was developed by Spaulding for Children, National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption. It will assist potential adoptive families to make decisions about whether adoption is truly right for them and whether they can adopt the children who wait to be adopted. While most people considering adoption think of the joy and happiness that a child can bring to them, all parents will learn further about issues which all adoptive parents and all adoptive children face.

This training will assist those considering adoption to look at those differences and unique challenges that adoptive families of children with special needs face and to explore ways of anticipating and managing these challenges. Particular attention will be given to the impact of separation, loss and grief, and the importance of attachment in the adoption experience. Those involved in the training will explore once again how children enter the child welfare system; the impact of abuse, neglect, abandonment; and life in the system on children's behavior, and who these children are who need adoptive families.

Those involved in the training will be asked to further explore their own strengths and needs as they consider whether they want to adopt and just what type of child they feel they can parent. They will look at their current family and the supports they have at this time and supports they may need to develop. Further, they will look back at their families of origin so they can identify any recurring themes within their families which might assist them in parenting some children. They will look at what resources are available to them in their network of family and friends, their community, through the Department and other service systems, and decide if they have, or need to develop resources to meet the unique needs of the children they may adopt. Finally, taking all these factors into consideration, they will need to decide if they can make a lifetime commitment to a child who is or children who are waiting to be adopted.

Session One - Exploring Expectations

The objectives of the session are to orient participants to the training process, to enhance their understanding of what adoption means, what the adoption process is, and key players in it, while encouraging them to explore their roles in the process. Participants' hopes and fears about the adoption process are recognized and empowerment strategies are identified to assist them in the process. Participants explore their fantasies about children they might adopt to become aware of their possible influence on their decisions about adoption.

Session two - Meeting the Needs of Waiting Children

The objective of this training session is to assist prospective adoptive parents in focusing on the needs of children awaiting adoption. Participants will explore the issues of separation, loss, grief and attachment, as well as the unique issues related to parenting a child who has been sexually abused.

Session Three - Exploring Adoption Issues

This session helps prospective adoptive families to begin to identify supports within their family and introduce them to common issues that all adoptive families face. It also assists participants in developing strategies for dealing with these issues; to explore predictable crises periods in adoption; and to further explore their own strengths, needs and challenges as they consider adoption.

Session Four - Making the Commitment

This final session assists prospective adoptive parents in considering resources they may need, what they need to know, what they need to do, and what they need to explore about themselves as they consider adopting a particular child or children.