Your Role in Working with Foster and Kinship Caregivers and Adoptive Parents

Caseworker Readiness Shadowing Activity

This activity requires the caseworker to access a copy of his or her job description and the unit’s policies and procedures regarding working with foster and kinship caregivers and adoptive parents.

Caseworkers whose job it is to work with foster and kinship caregivers and/or adoptive parents have a number of different tasks which characterize their work. Their specific roles and responsibilities should be outlined in the caseworker’s position description.

- Recruitment, screening and selection of families
- Conducting family assessments / home studies
- Applying a family-centered, neighborhood-based approach to working with substitute caregivers
- Preparing families for placements
- Providing on-going support to substitute caregivers
- Selecting and matching children with prospective adoptive families
- Preparing prospective adoptive families for children with special needs
- Providing post-placement services and support
- Providing post-legalization services
- Providing the necessary training for resource families
- Including the caregiver as part of the treatment team for the child in areas such as visitation, case plan reviews, therapeutic interventions, court involvement, working with the child’s family of origin, etc.

Special Learning Opportunities

Explore the Caregivers’ Corner in the "For Trainees" column of the OCWTP website at: Caregivers’ Corner You will find a great deal of information about caregiver resources and training requirements. There are many training opportunities for caregivers and adoptive parents both locally and regionally. You will see that the OCWTP provides Pre-Service training required for prospective caregivers as well as ongoing Fundamental workshops in core topics. The required OCWTP in-service training to licensed foster caregivers is commensurate with the level of fostering they provide. For example, families who care for infants only, 24 hours of training is required within the 2-year certification period, family foster care requires 40 hours, specialized foster care requires 60.
Meet with your supervisor to see if you may attend one or more caregiver workshops. Ask for the training calendar for caregivers in your agency. This will provide valuable insight into caregiver issues and the challenges they face. As part of the treatment team, your role is to understand and support their needs.

Shadowing Activity and Guide:

In your New Worker Orientation, you were introduced to "shadowing", accompanying other staff members as they go about their work in order to get a first-hand view of child welfare experiences. To review this process, go to: Orientation: Shadowing

Now that you are focused on working with caregivers and adoptive parents, meet with your supervisor to schedule a shadowing experience with a veteran agency worker. Plan to meet afterwards as well to debrief.

1. Begin by making sure you and your supervisor have discussed the roles and responsibilities in working with foster and kinship caregivers and adoptive parents, including how to:

   • Recruit foster and adoptive families
   • Ensure training requirements are met
   • Complete forms related to foster care, kinship placements, and adoptions
   • Match children with resource families
   • Prepare children for placement
   • Complete social, educational and health histories
   • Arrange respite care
   • File court documents
   • Prepare case records
   • Complete case plans
   • Work with birth families
   • Arrange child specific services

2. Develop a list of questions you would like to have answered and caregiver and adoptive parent activities you would like to observe in your shadowing experience. For example, you may want to observe foster, kinship, and adoptive family assessments (home studies), caregiver training (Pre-service or Fundamental training), an adoptive parent support group, etc.

3. In addition to discussing the roles and responsibilities of working with caregivers and adoptive parents as listed above, ask your colleague the following questions. Record and discuss these with your supervisor or coach.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the greatest challenges about working with caregivers and adoptive parents?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you find the most rewarding?</td>
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<td>How long did it take for you to feel confident in your job?</td>
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<td>What recommendations do you have for additional training?</td>
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