



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

Division of Social Services

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Foster Home Licensing Track Training

Participant's Workbook Day One

October 2024



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Instructions

This course was designed to guide child welfare professionals through the knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to engage with families in need of child protection services. The workbook is structured to help you engage in the lesson through reflection and analysis throughout each week of training. Have this workbook readily available as you go through each session to create a long-lasting resource you can reference in the future.

If you are using this workbook electronically: Workbook pages have text boxes for you to add notes and reflections. Due to formatting, if you are typing in these boxes, blank lines will be “pushed” forward onto the next page. To correct this when you are done typing in the text box, you may use delete to remove extra lines.

Course Themes

The central themes of the Foster Home Licensing Track Training are divided across several course topics.

- The Practice Model and Family-Centered Practice
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
- Licensing Worker Roles and Responsibilities
- Foster Parent Roles, Responsibilities, and Skills
- Assessing Foster Homes
- Foster Parent Qualifications and Background Checks
- Assessing 12 Skills for Successful Fostering
- Physical and Environmental Safety Requirements
- Issuing a License
- Mutual Home Assessment
- Permanency
- Shared Parenting
- Supporting Foster Parents
- Working with Relatives
- Supporting Placement
- Licensing Visits with Family
- Quality Licensing Visits
- Other Licensing Topics
- Foster Home Recruitment and Retention
- Worker Safety

Training Overview

Training begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 4:00 p.m. If a holiday falls on the Monday of training, the training will begin on Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. This schedule is subject to change if a holiday falls during the training week or other circumstances occur. The time for ending training on Fridays may vary and trainees need to be prepared to stay the entire day.

Attendance is mandatory. If there is an emergency, the trainee must contact the classroom trainer and their supervisor as soon as they realize they will not be able to attend training or if they will be late to training. If a trainee must miss training time in the classroom, it is the trainee's responsibility to develop a plan to make up missed material.

Pre-Work Online e-Learning Modules

There is required pre-work for the Foster Home Licensing Track Training in the form of online e-Learning modules. Completion of the e-Learnings is required prior to attendance at the classroom-based training. The following are the online e-Learning modules:

1. North Carolina Worker Practice Standards
2. Safety Organized Practice
3. Introduction to Foster Home Licensing
4. Understanding and Assessing Safety and Risk
5. Understanding and Screening for Trauma

Transfer of Learning (TOL) Tool

The Foster Home Licensing Track Training Transfer of Learning (ToL) tool is a comprehensive and collaborative activity for workers and supervisors to work together in identifying worker goals, knowledge gain, and priorities for further development throughout the training process. In four distinct steps, the worker and supervisor will highlight their goals and action plan related to participating in training, reflect on lessons and outstanding questions, and create an action plan to support worker growth. The tool should be started prior to beginning the Foster Home Licensing Track Training and revisited on an ongoing basis to assess growth and re-prioritize actions for development.

- Part A: Training Preparation: Prior to completing any eLearning and in-person Track Training sessions, the worker and supervisor should meet to complete Part A: Training Preparation. In this step, the worker and supervisor will discuss their goals for participation in training and develop a plan to meet those goals through pre-work, other opportunities for learning, and support for addressing anticipated barriers.
- Part B: Worker Reflections During Training: The worker will document their thoughts, top takeaways, and outstanding questions regarding each section. This level of reflection serves two purposes. First, the practice of distilling down a full section of training into three takeaways and three remaining questions requires the worker to actively engage with the material, subsequently forming cognitive cues related to the information for future use in case practice. Second, prioritizing

takeaways and questions by section allows workers to continually review information to determine if questions are answered in future sessions and supports the development of an action plan by requiring workers to highlight the questions they find most important.

- Part C: Planning for Post-Training Debrief with Supervisor: The worker considers the takeaways and questions they identified in each section and creates a framework to transfer those takeaways and questions into an action plan.
- Part D: Post-Training Debrief with Supervisor: Provides an opportunity for the supervisor and worker to determine a specific plan of action to answer outstanding questions and to further support worker training.

While this ToL is specific to the Track Training in North Carolina, workers and supervisors can review the takeaways and questions highlighted by the worker in each section of training on an ongoing basis, revising action steps when prior actions are completed, and celebrating worker growth and success along the way.

Training Evaluations

At the conclusion of each training, learners will complete a training evaluation tool to measure satisfaction with training content and methods. The training evaluation tool is required to complete the training course. Training evaluations will be evaluated and assessed to determine the need for revisions to the training curriculum.

All matters as stated above are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances and with approval.

Learning Objectives

Day 1

The Practice Model & Family-Centered Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to distinguish foster home licensing roles and responsibilities from other child welfare system job roles.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will describe ways in which foster home licensing supports the mission, vision, values, and principles of child welfare practice in NC.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to communicate the rights of children in foster care.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to discuss the essential function of foster home licensing in promoting permanence for children in out of home care.
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to explain the history of institutional racism in child welfare and its impact on disproportionality in child welfare.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to discuss the impact of institutional racism in child welfare on safety, permanence, and well-being outcomes for children and families.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to describe how marginalized children and families have been historically overrepresented in child welfare.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to identify institutional racism in assessment and decision-making processes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to define and recognize underrepresentation and overrepresentation in the child welfare system and identify the underlying causes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to recognize how disproportionality leads to inequitable service provision and disparate outcomes for children and families.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to explain the concepts of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging and the role and importance of each in child welfare.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to explain the concept of bias and how it impacts Foster Home Licensing assessments and decision-making.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will begin to identify their own bias and critique how it may impact their case practice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to explain the importance of cultural humility and inclusion when conducting Foster Home Licensing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to share examples of advocating for fair and culturally appropriate Foster Home Licensing Services for children and families.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to discuss methods of self-reflection and self-awareness to uncover biases that may influence their ability to engage children and families during the Foster Home Licensing process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to understand cultural humility as a life-long process of self-awareness and learning from other cultures.
<p>Licensing Worker Roles and Responsibilities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to distinguish licensing worker roles and responsibilities from other child welfare system job roles.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to describe where their roles and responsibilities fall within the licensing process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to outline federal and state laws that govern foster home licensing practices.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will be able to access state and federal law to inform their licensing practice.

Day One Agenda

Foster Home Licensing Track Training

- I. Welcome and Introductions

The Practice Model and Family Centered Practice

- II. North Carolina Practice Model
- III. Family-Centered Practice in Foster Home Licensing
- IV. Purpose and Overview of Foster Home Licensing

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

- V. Institutional Racism and Disproportionality in Child Welfare
- VI. Cultural Humility, Inclusion, and Identifying and Addressing Bias in Foster Home Licensing
- VII. Identifying and Addressing Bias
- VIII. Licensing Non-Discrimination Policy
- IX. Considerations for Diverse Populations

Licensing Worker Roles and Responsibilities

- X. Review of the Foster Home Licensing Process
- XI. Crucial Conversations and Managing Conflict

Self-Reflection Activity

Welcome & Introductions

Welcome and Introductions

Name

County where you work

Position you hold within the agency





What is your favorite hobby or activity?

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Track Training Overview

Training Resources

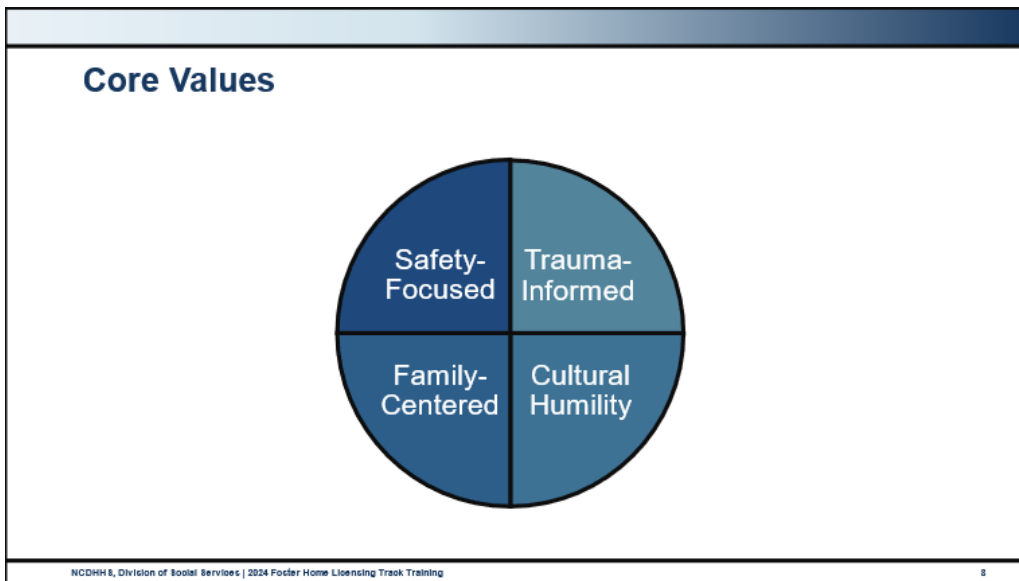
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow lecture• Record notes• Complete activities <p>Participant Workbook </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appear in order of use• Listed in Appendix <p>Handouts </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• North Carolina Child Welfare forms <p>Tools </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• North Carolina Child Welfare Policies & Procedures <p>Policy Manual </p>
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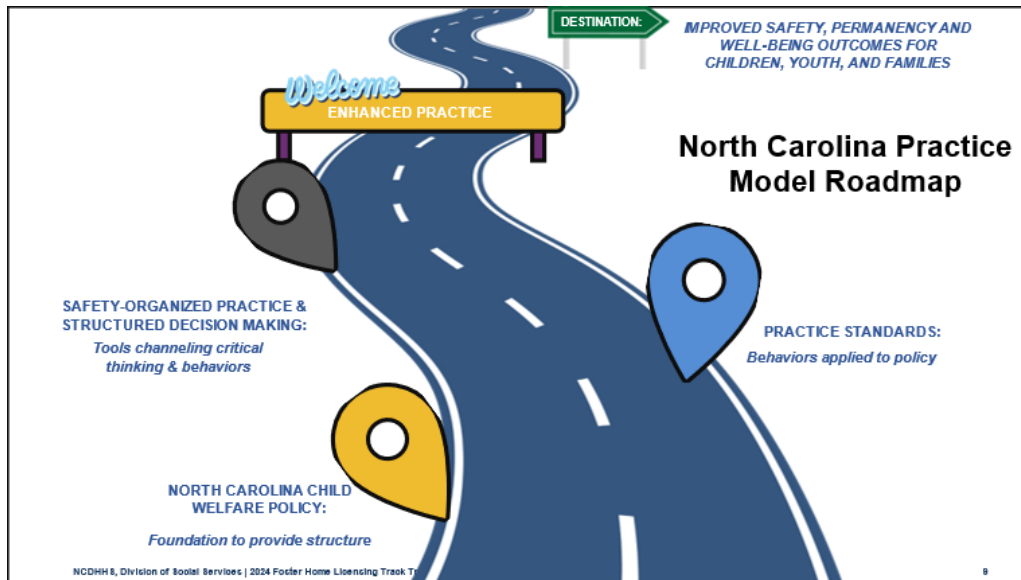
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The Practice Model and Family-Centered Practice

North Carolina Practice Model



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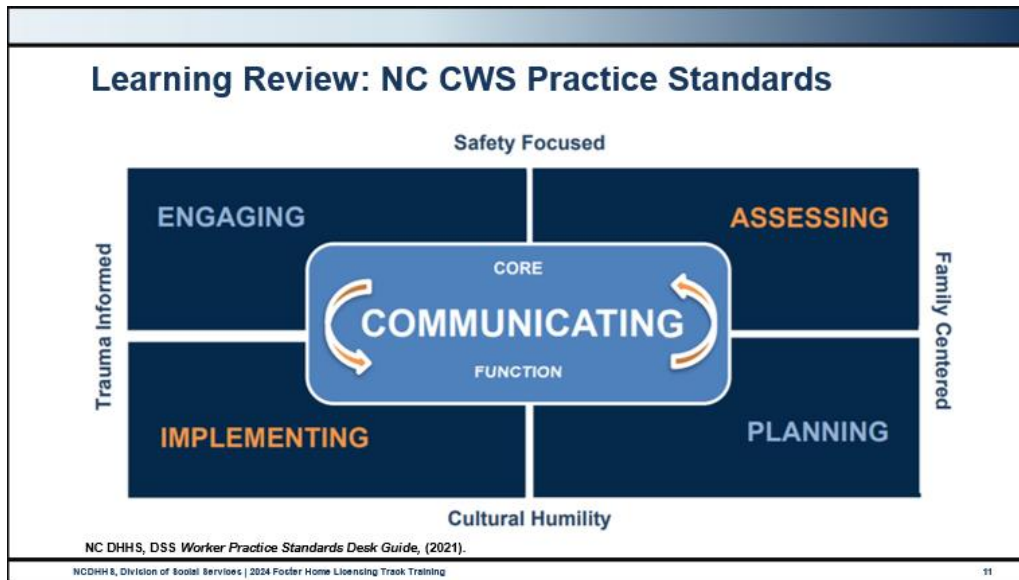
Reflections

- Where do you excel?
- Where are the areas you can grow?

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What areas do you excel in?

Where are the areas you can grow?



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Debrief

How did that exercise go for your group?

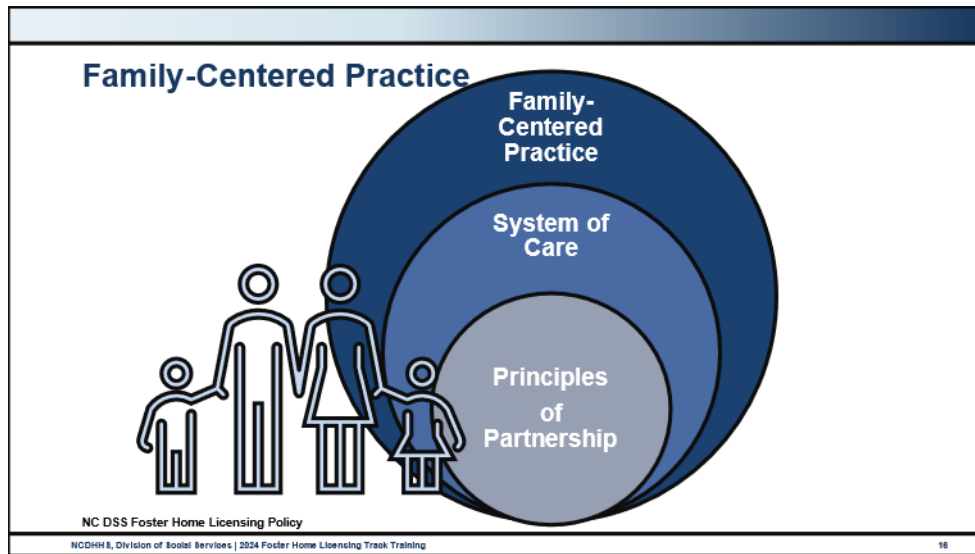
What surprised you about the practice standards your group was assigned?

How do the Core Activities and Key Behaviors connect to the work you do with children and families?

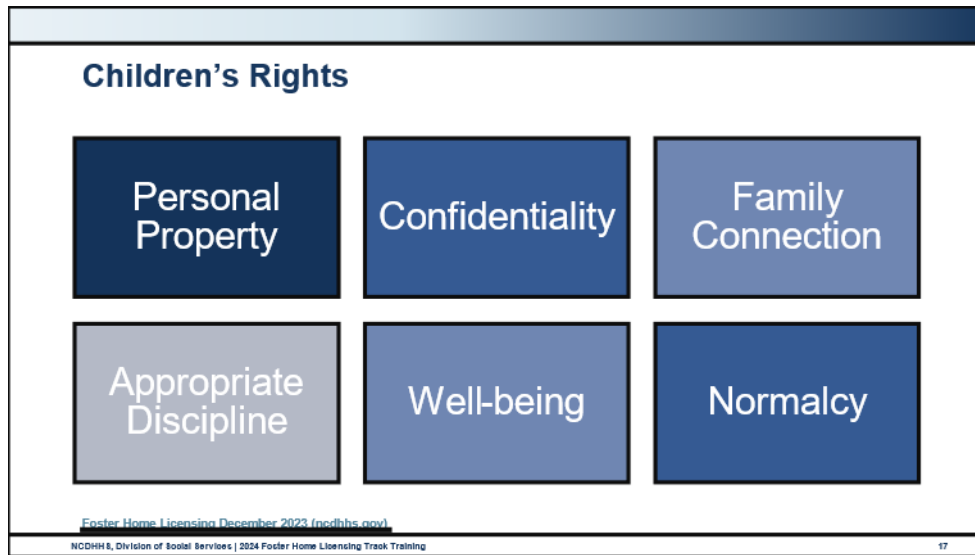
Questions and Reflections

Use this space to record questions and reflections about what you have learned.

Family-Centered Practice in Foster Home Licensing



How would you apply your assigned principle of the System of Care framework to your everyday work?



What are some of the most frequently asked questions you receive when working with potential or current foster parents?

How have these questions connected to the 24 rights listed in the handout?

Handout: 24 Rights of Children in Care

**SECTION .1100 – STANDARDS FOR LICENSING
10A NCAC 70E .1101 CLIENT RIGHTS**

(a) Foster parents shall ensure that each foster child:

(1) has clothing to wear that is appropriate to the weather;

(2) is allowed to have personal property;

(3) is encouraged to express opinions on issues concerning care;

(4) is provided care in a manner that recognizes the child's cultural values and traditions;

(5) is provided the opportunity for spiritual development and is not denied the right to practice his or her religious beliefs;

(6) is not identified as a foster child in any way;

(7) is not forced to acknowledge dependency on or gratitude to the foster parents;

(8) is encouraged to contact and have telephone conversations with family members unless

contraindicated in the child's visitation and contact plan;

(9) is provided training and discipline that is appropriate for the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and past experience;

(10) is not subjected to cruel or abusive punishment, as established in G.S. 7B 101(1) and (15);

(11) is not subjected to corporal punishment;

(12) is not deprived of a meal or contacts with family for punishment or placed in isolation time-out except when isolation time-out means the removal of a child to an unlocked room or area from which the child is not physically prevented from leaving. The foster parent may use isolation timeout as a behavioral control measure when the foster parent provides it within hearing distance of a foster parent. The length of the isolation time-out shall be appropriate for the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and past experiences;

(13) is not subjected to verbal abuse, threats, or humiliating remarks about himself or herself or his or her family;

(14) is provided a daily routine in the home that promotes a positive mental health environment and provides an opportunity for normal activities with time for rest and play;

(15) is provided training in nutrition and personal hygiene. Each child shall be provided food with nutritional content for normal growth and health. Diets prescribed by a licensed medical provider shall be provided;

(16) is provided medical care in accordance with the treatment prescribed for the child;

(17) of mandatory school age, as established in G.S. 115C-378(a), maintains regular school attendance unless the child has been excused by the authorities;

(18) is encouraged to participate in neighborhood and group activities, to have friends visit the home, and to visit in the homes of friends;

(19) assumes responsibility for himself or herself and for household duties that are appropriate for the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and past experiences. Household tasks shall not interfere with school, sleep, or study periods;

(20) is not permitted to do any task that violates child labor laws, as established in G.S. 95-25.5 and Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), incorporated by reference including subsequent amendments and editions, or not appropriate for the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and past experiences;

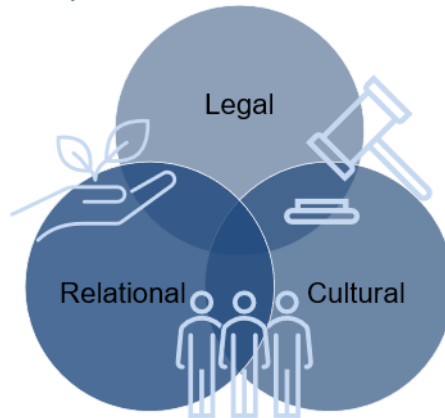
(21) is provided supervision that is appropriate for the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and experience;

(22) if less than eight years of age or weighs less than 80 pounds, is properly secured in a child passenger restraint system in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions;

(23) is protected from disclosure of confidential information about the child or the child's family. Such confidential information shall not be shared unless lawfully authorized; and

(24) is encouraged to participate in extracurricular, recreational, enrichment, cultural, and social activities in accordance with G.S. 131D-10.2A.

Legal, Relational, and Cultural Permanence



[What is Permanence? - The Annie E. Casey Foundation \(aecf.org\)](https://www.aecf.org/)

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Questions and Reflections

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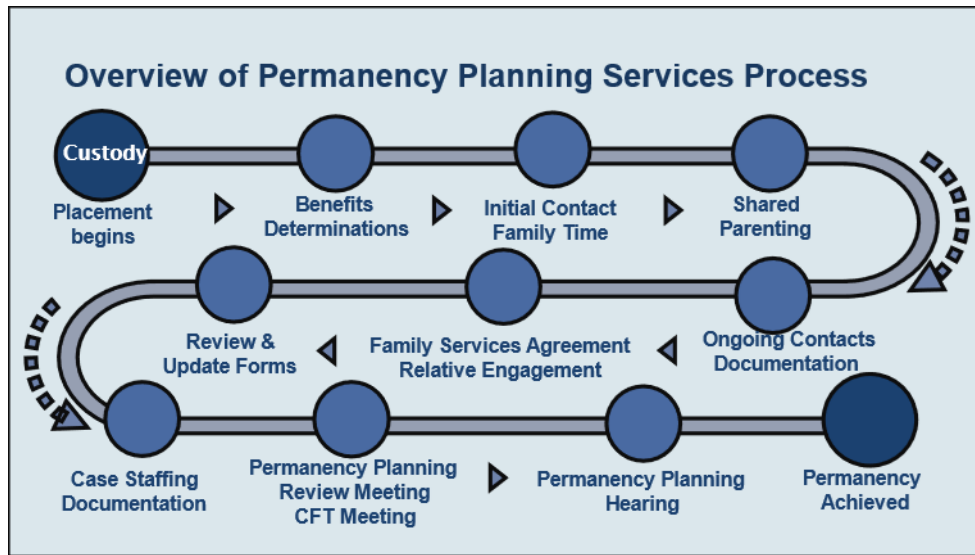
Purpose and Overview of Foster Home Licensing

Goals of Foster Home Licensing

- Assure that children in out-of-home care have safe, nurturing homes
- Support an ongoing relationship between the foster parent and licensing worker
- Partner to understand the strengths and supports needed
- Work cooperatively to maximize service delivery and resources

NC DSS Foster Home Licensing Policy
NCDHHS, Division of Social Services | 2024 Foster Home Licensing Track Training 21

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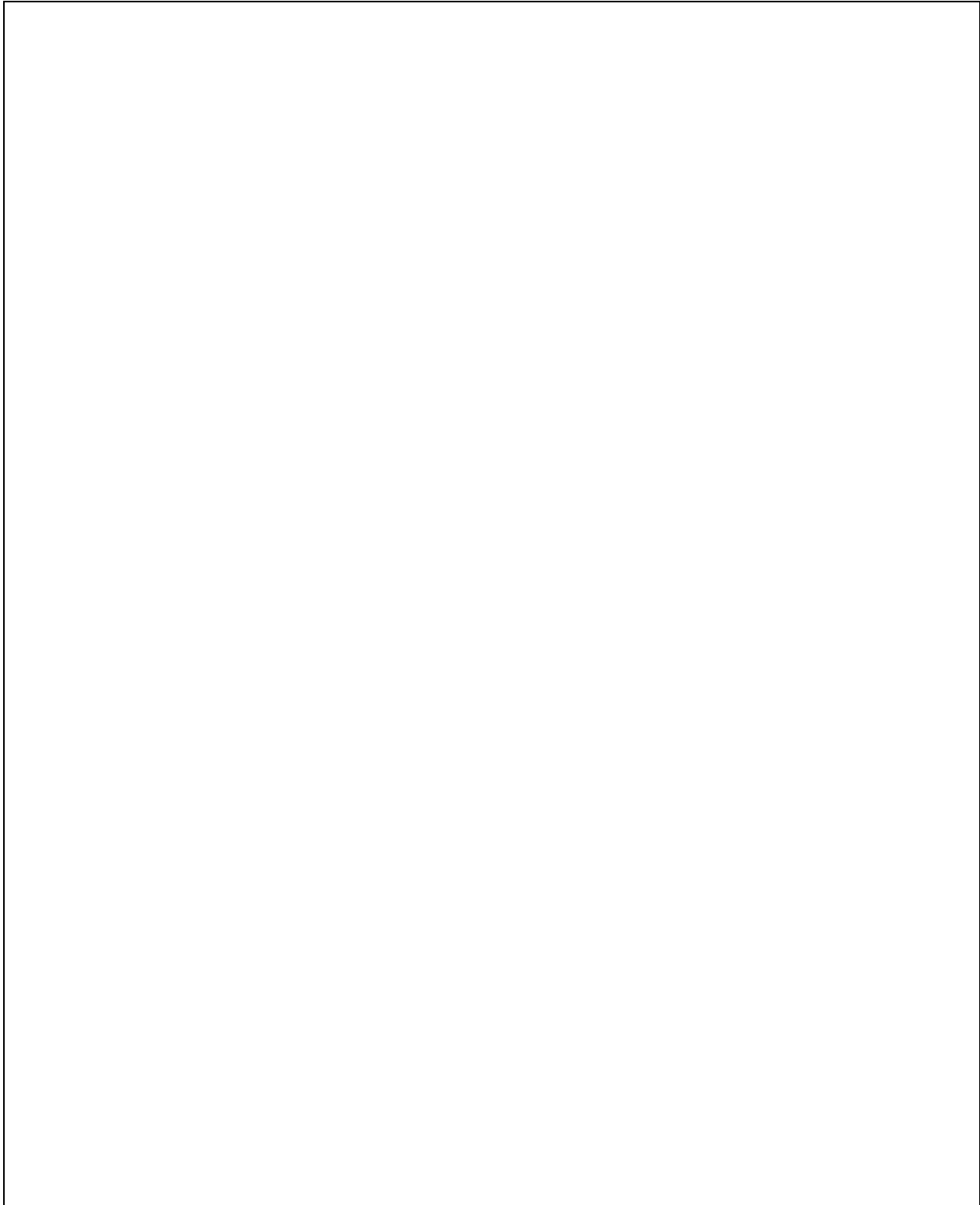


Compare your team’s work to the Permanency Planning Required Timeframes listed in the Appendix.

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Questions and Reflections

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Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

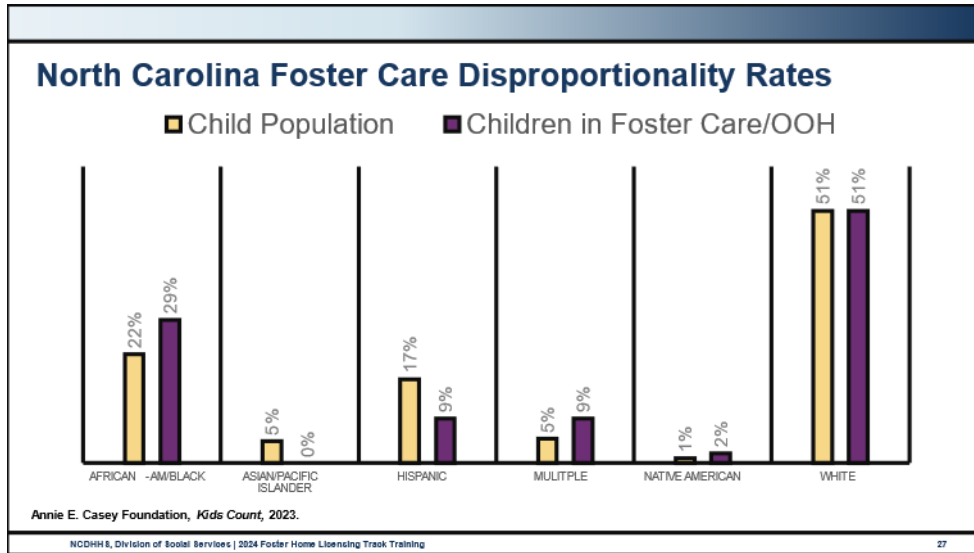
Institutional Racism and Disproportionality in Child Welfare

Video: The Racist Roots of the Child Welfare System

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UsJCFWi_lbE

How does this history impact the work you are doing today?

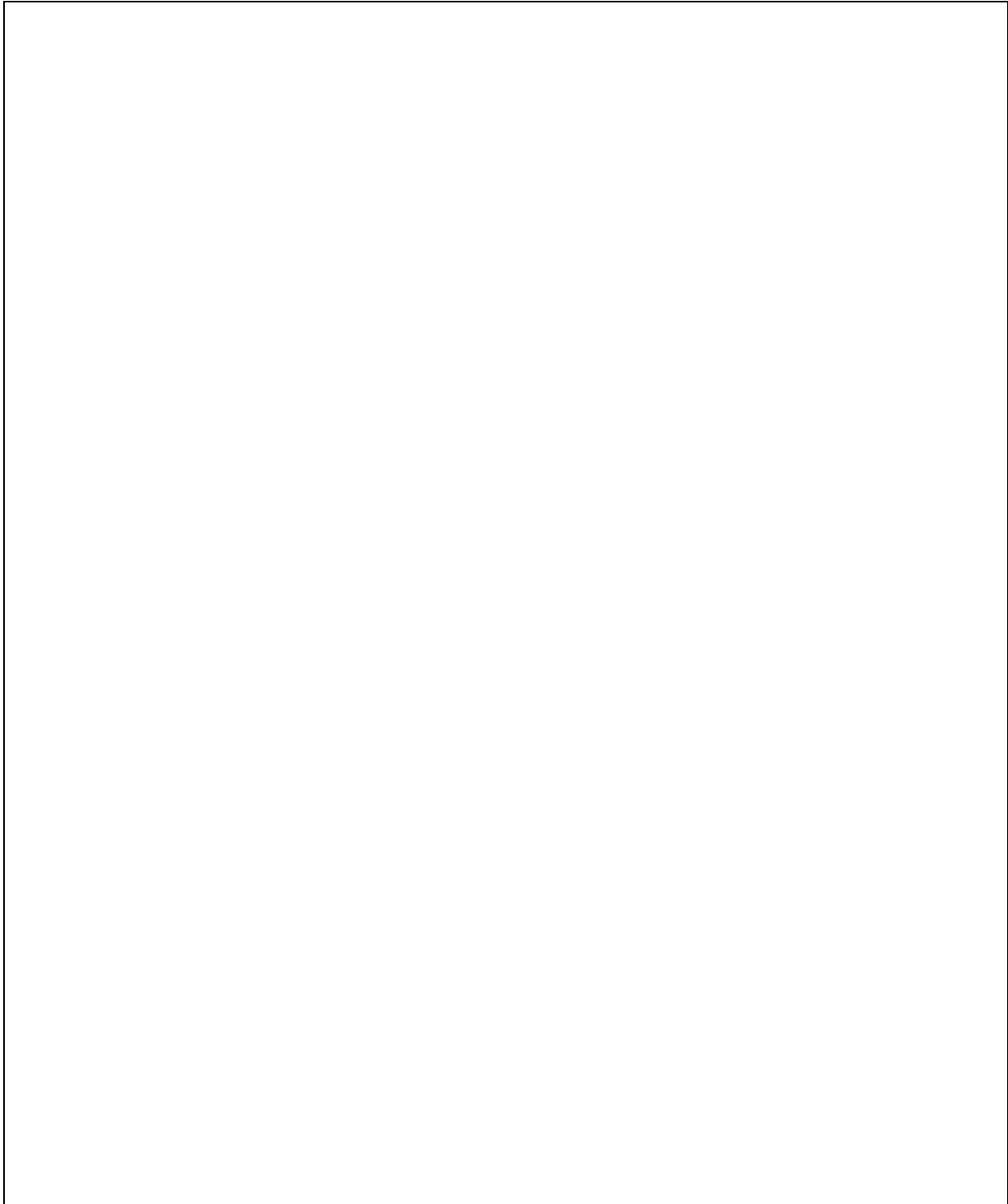
How does institutional racism show up in your cases or in your regions today?



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Video: Implicit Bias in Child Protection
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkxXzzNKUMs>

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Debrief

What are your reflections on this information?

How does this history impact your work with children and families today?

Questions and Reflections

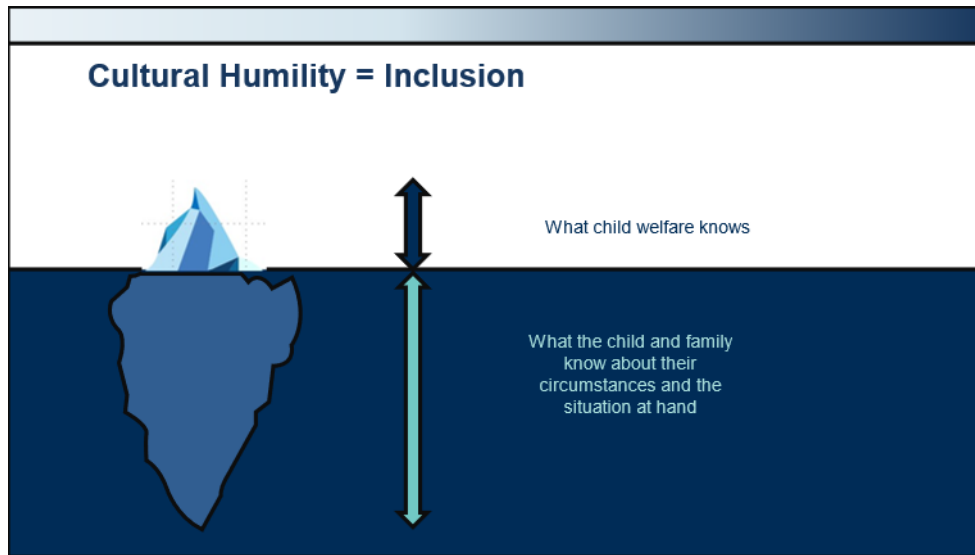
Use this space to record questions and reflections about what you have learned.

Cultural Humility, Inclusion, and Identifying and Addressing Bias in Foster Home Licensing

Video: What Exactly is Cultural Humility?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UR58nYjm5xo&t=1s>

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Activity: Child Welfare Practice Strategies to Center Families

PART 1: Create a list of aspects of your culture that make your family unique and may not be visible or known to outsiders.

What about your family culture would CPS be challenged to understand without explanation or content?

What in your culture might be interpreted negatively without that family context and information?

PART 2: Discuss your answers to Part 1 with your group and answer the following questions:

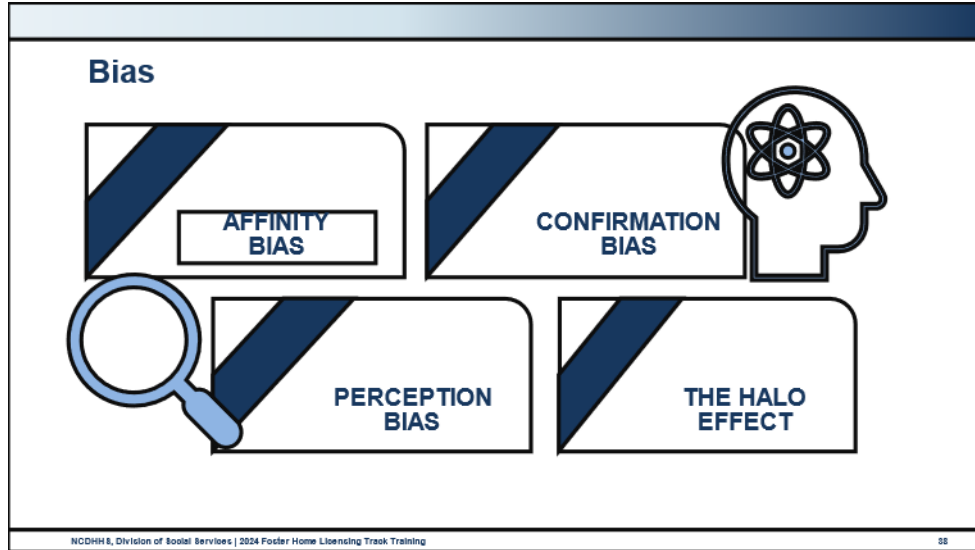
How would CPS get your family to talk about those topics?

How do you practice inclusion with families in CPS?

Questions and Reflections

Use this space to record questions and reflections about what you have learned.

Identifying and Addressing Bias



Affinity Bias: The tendency to warm up to people who are similar to ourselves; favoring those who have things in common with us.

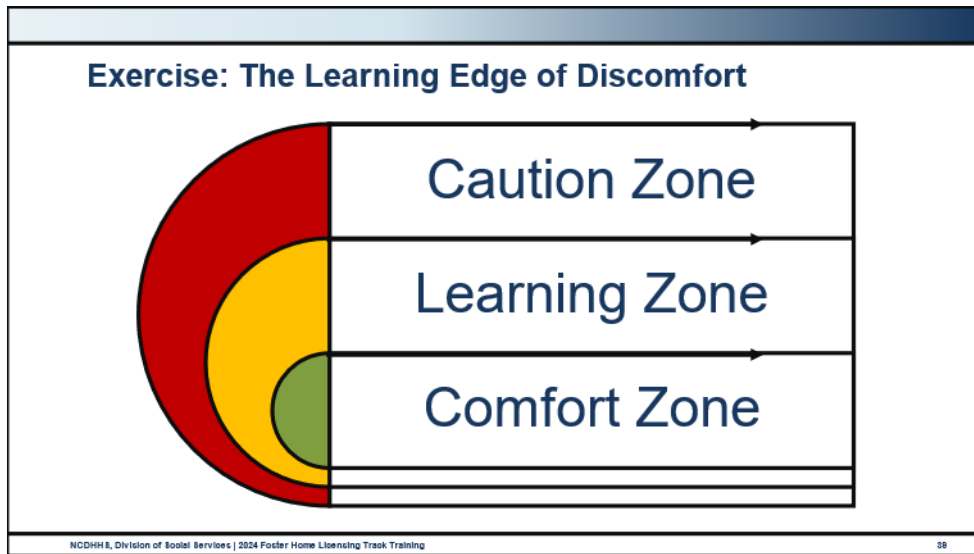
Confirmation Bias: Seeking out evidence that confirms our initial perceptions, ignoring contrary information.

Perception Bias: The tendency to form stereotypes and assumptions about certain groups that makes it difficult to make an objective judgment about individual members of those groups.

The Halo Effect: The tendency to think everything about a person is good because our first impression of them was good.

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Activity: Learning Zones



What about this work have I found challenging and what did I do about it?

How do I reflect on my own biases?

How do I mitigate or prevent negative impact from my biases?

How will you sit with the discomfort of the learning zone to learn about families?

Handout: Overcoming Unconscious Bias

HOW INDIVIDUALS CAN CHALLENGE IMPLICIT BIAS

LEARN MORE	Learn about the root causes of implicit bias. Think about how bias affects interactions between employees and coworkers, and outcomes such as who gets hired, promoted, or offered stretch assignments and new opportunities.
IDENTIFY BIAS	Become familiar with different types of biases regarding people's inherent characteristics, such as ageism , gender bias , beauty bias , and weight bias , as well as racism , colorism , and bias against the LGBTQ+ community . How do these play out in your workplace?
START WITH YOU	Engage in critical self-reflection. Consider times when you may have made automatic assumptions about colleagues based on stereotypes, without giving them the chance to be individuals. How could that lead to unintended consequences? Reflect on how this might conflict with your personal and/or organizational values.
QUESTION YOUR OWN ASSUMPTIONS	Start to ask yourself: Why am I thinking this way? Would I be drawing the same conclusions if this scenario involved someone of a different profile (e.g., a man instead of a woman, a person with no children instead of a parent)?
CONSIDER THE OPPOSITE	Notice the next time you find yourself making a judgment about someone based on a group stereotype (e.g., automatically assuming that an older employee isn't tech savvy or that a colleague with a heavy accent isn't competent), and then consider whether the opposite is true.
OBSERVE AND CONSIDER	Look around your workplace. How are colleagues treated when they are the only person of their race, ethnicity, and/or gender in a group? Who gets heard in meetings? Who suggests an idea that seems to be ignored, but gets restated by someone else who gets credit for it?
BE CURIOUS	Make personal connections and spend time learning how your coworkers experience your workplace. Talk with someone new in the breakroom who is from a different demographic group than you are. Ask questions and listen.
ACCEPT DISCOMFORT	The journey of unlearning implicit biases requires confronting qualities of ourselves that we may not like. Know that discomfort = growth, and that perfection is not the goal. Be willing to admit when you've demonstrated bias, instead of becoming defensive or making exceptions for yourself.
STAY COMMITTED	We all have biases that change and evolve even when we confront them. Remain committed to sustained action over time.

Note: While many people use the term "unconscious bias," Catalyst prefers the term "implicit bias." Unconscious bias implies that these biases are outside our awareness and control. All people at an organization have the ability to become aware of implicit biases in themselves and others and take action to mitigate their impact on building diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces.

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Questions and Reflections

Use this space to record questions and reflections about what you have learned.

Licensing Non-Discrimination Policy

Purpose of Non-Discrimination Policy

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Color
- National Origin
- Sex
- Religion
- Age
- Disability
- Political Belief



[Foster Home Licensing December 2023 \(ncdhhs.gov\)](#)
NCDHHS, Division of Social Services | 2024 Foster Home Licensing Track Training 42

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Relevant Laws

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA)



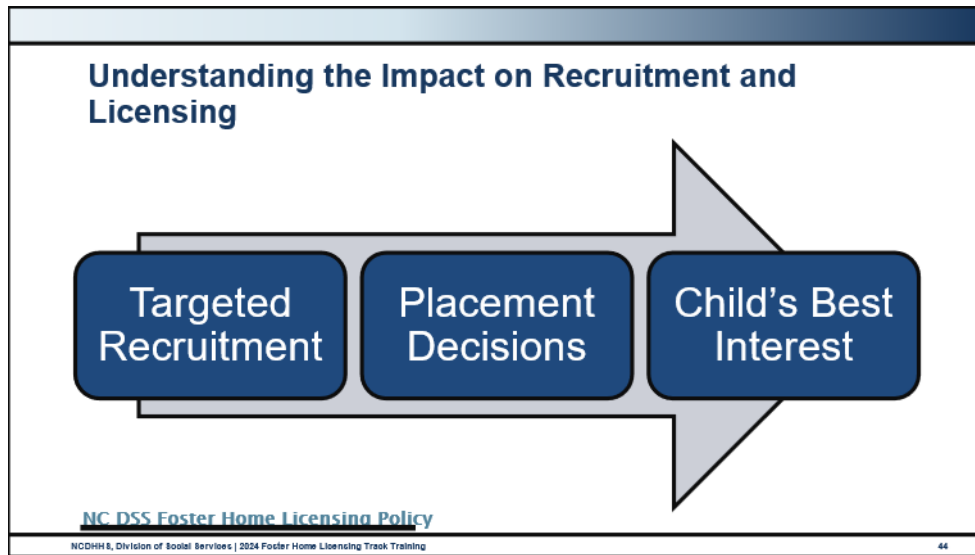
Foster Home Licensing December 2023 (ncdhhs.gov)

NCDHHS, Division of Social Services | 2024 Foster Home Licensing Track Training

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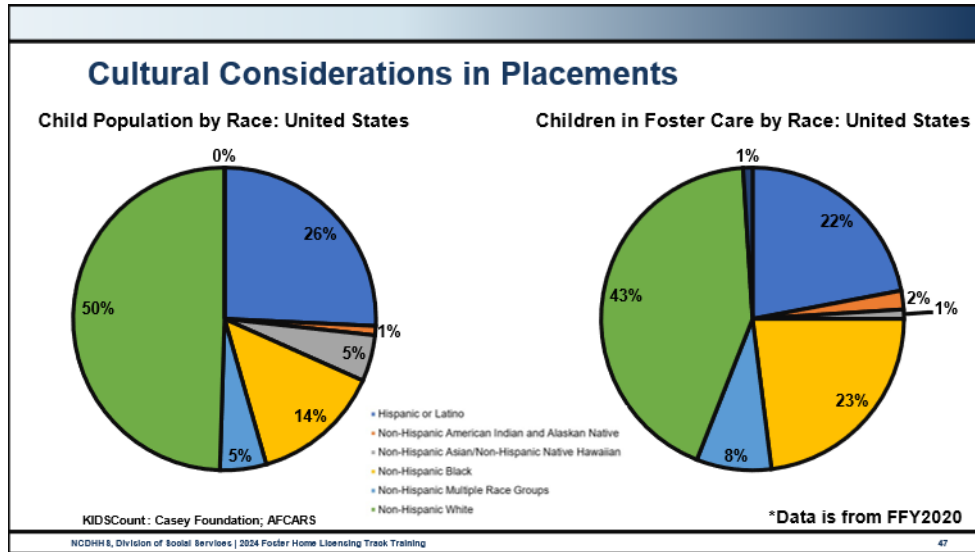


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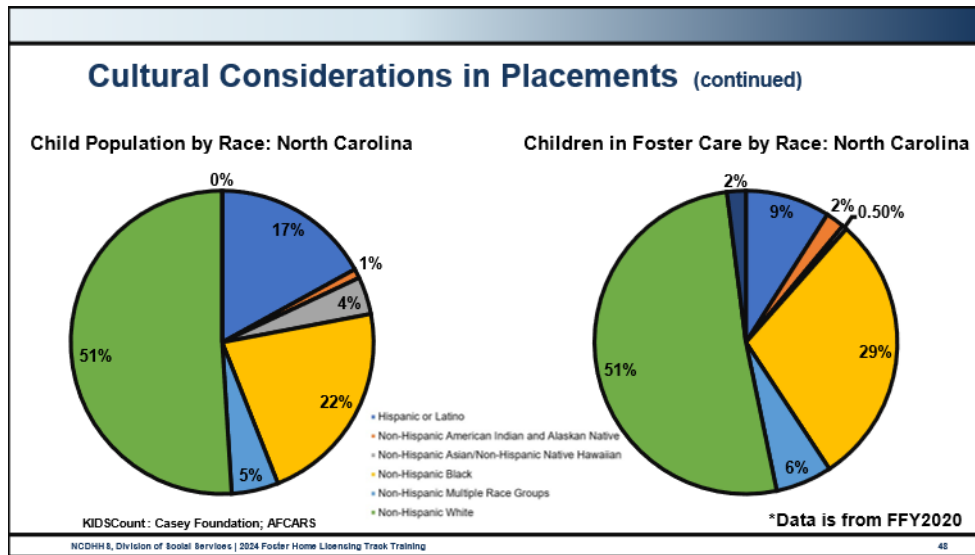
Questions and Reflections

Use this space to record questions and reflections about what you have learned.

Considerations for Diverse Populations



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Activity: Considerations for Diverse Communities

Select roles for your group:

- **Picker** – will choose the scenario for the group
- **Writer** – will scribe for the group on flip chart paper
- **Speaker** – will teach back what you have learned to the larger group

Utilize your professional knowledge, reputable internet resources, NC policy, and the following federal laws to identify the legal and cultural considerations from your assigned scenario:

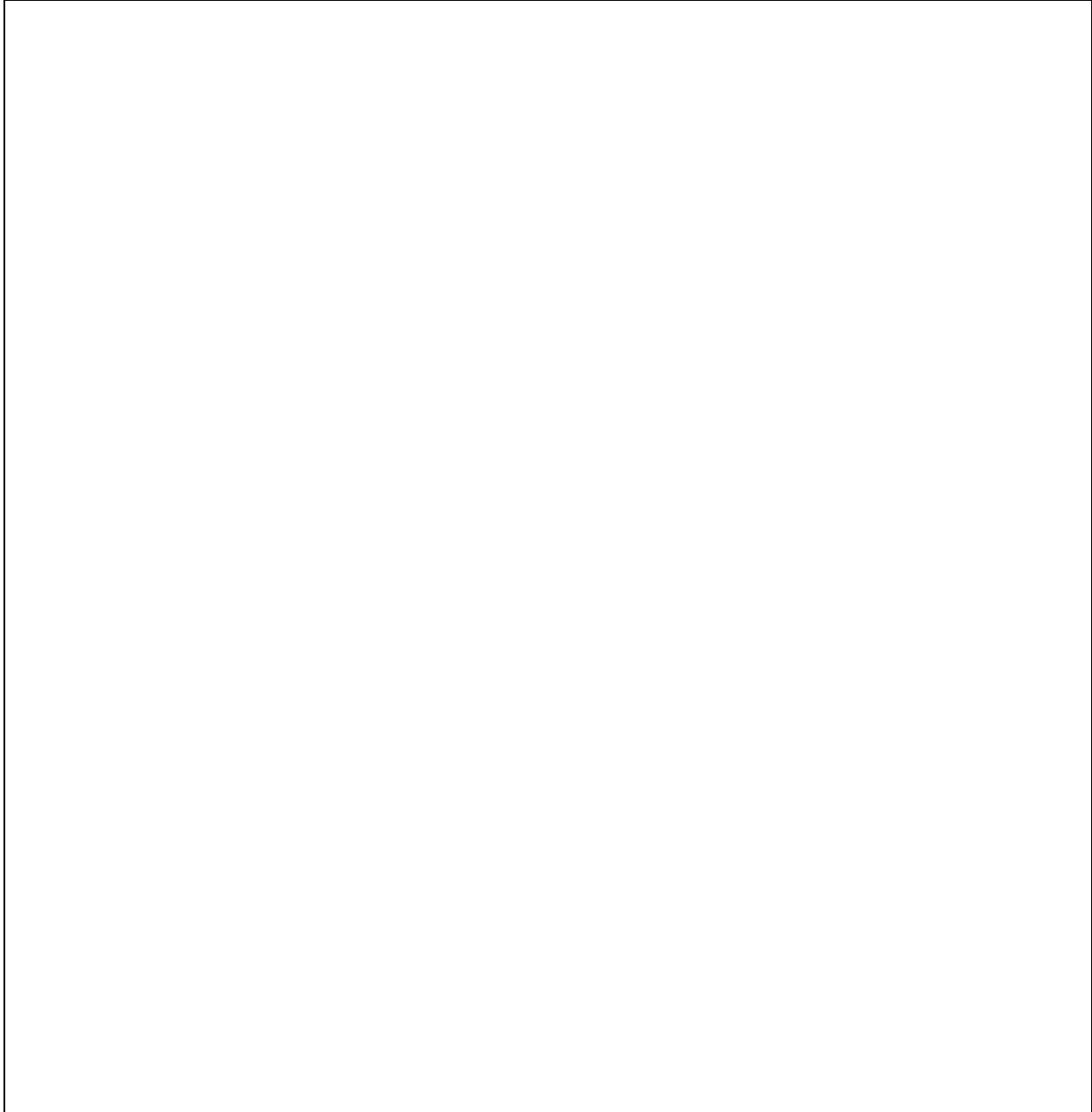
- Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)
- Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA)
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
- Fourteenth Amendment-Equal Protection Clause

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Skills Practice: Serving Children and Youth in Diverse Populations

PART 1: Focus on Community Diversity. With your group, create a list of who in your community might fit the definition of a marginalized population. Once completed, write this list on the flip chart, leaving space to add information under each population you identify.

PART 2: Focus on identifying Community Resources. Using your knowledge and your phones or laptops to search, list all diverse service providers in the area/county/state for each identified population.

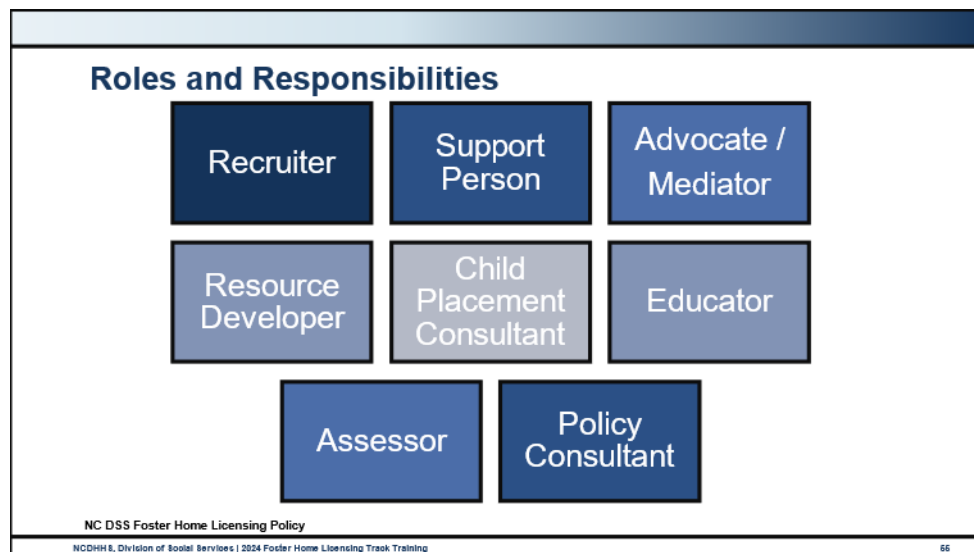
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Questions and Reflections

Use this space to record questions and reflections about what you have learned.

Licensing Worker Roles and Responsibilities

Review of the Foster Home Licensing Process



Recruiter: Recruitment is an agency effort to encourage people in the community to become foster families.

Support Person: Once a foster family is licensed, it is also the job of the licensing worker to help “retain” the family as a placement option for the agency by providing encouragement and support for the family for as long as the family is a part of the foster care network.

Advocate / Mediator: The licensing worker may mediate between the foster family and the agency, community, birth parents, or even the child.

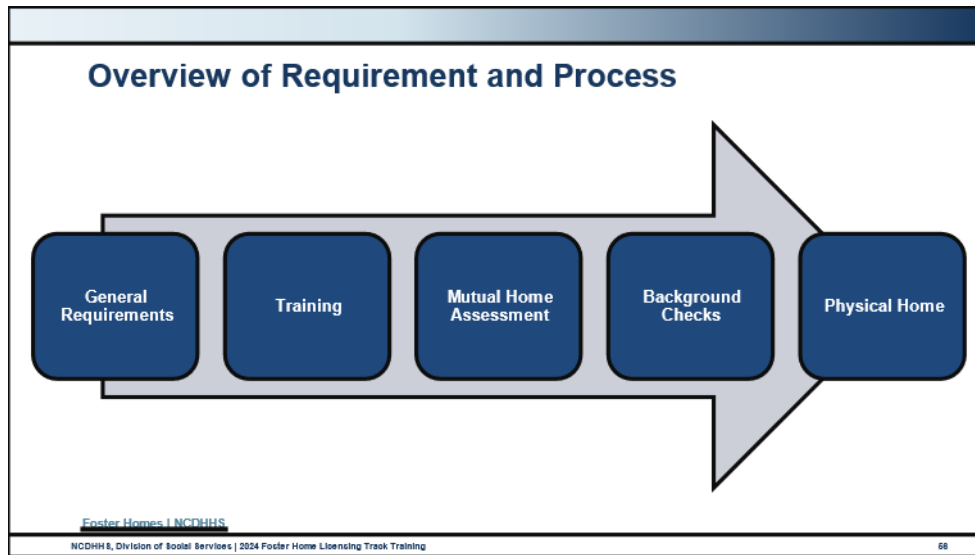
Resource Developer: The worker addresses needs that arise either during or after the licensing process.

Child Placement Consultant: As part of the assessment process, the licensing worker learns the strengths and needs of each foster family, as well as the characteristics of children that each family is able to successfully parent. Thus, the licensing worker is a valuable resource for selecting an appropriate placement for a child.

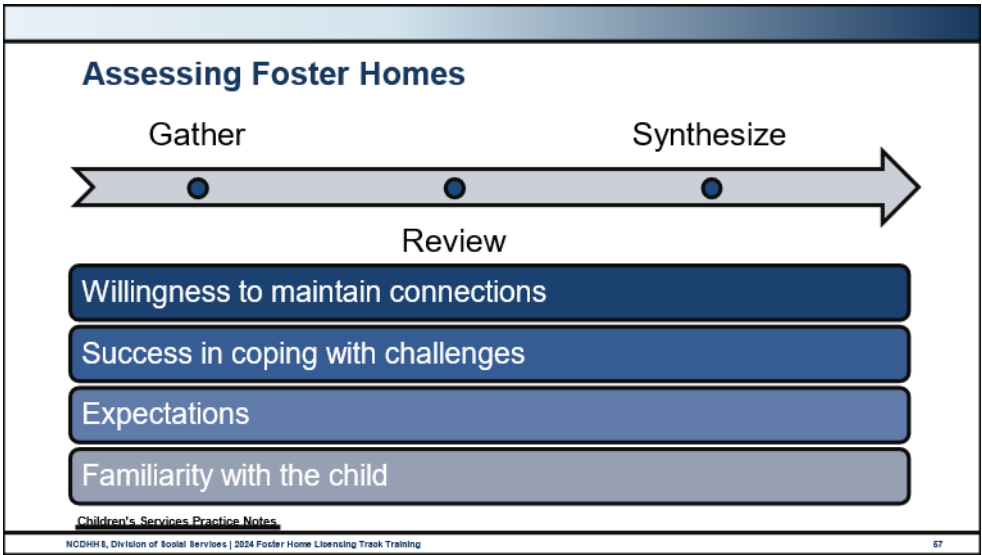
Educator: Depending on the size of the agency, pre-service and in-service training can also be assigned to the licensing social worker.

Assessor: The licensing worker is always assessing the family and their ability to demonstrate the twelve skills.

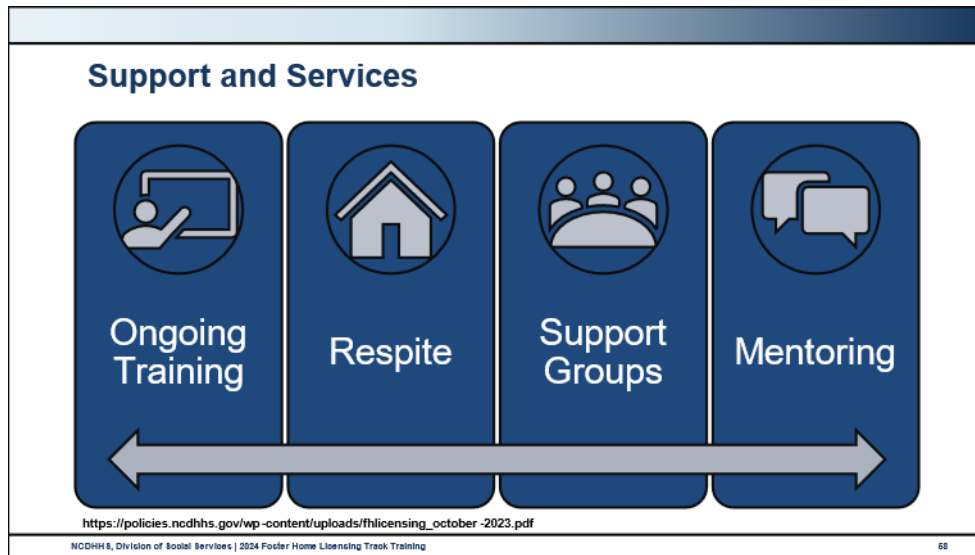
Policy Consultant: The licensing worker also serves as someone who is knowledgeable about the policies of the state.



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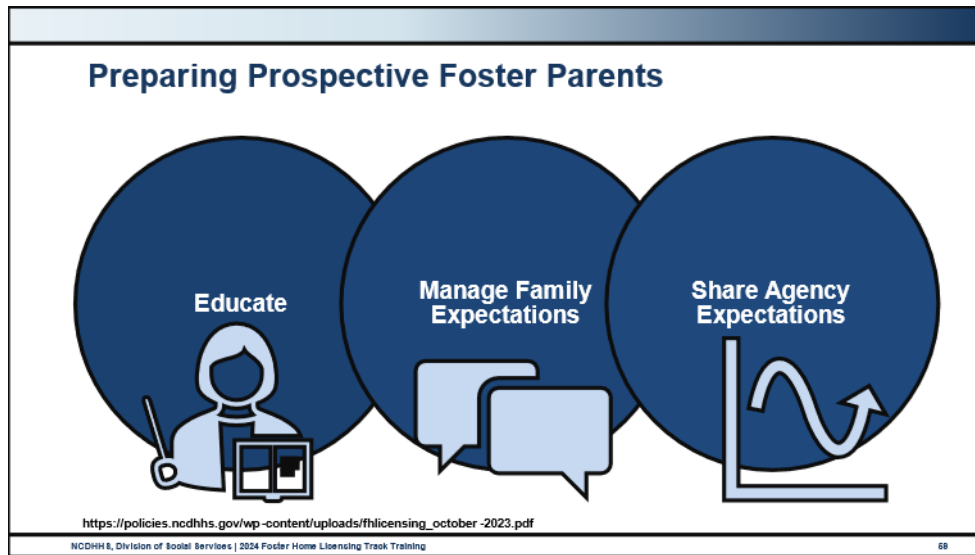


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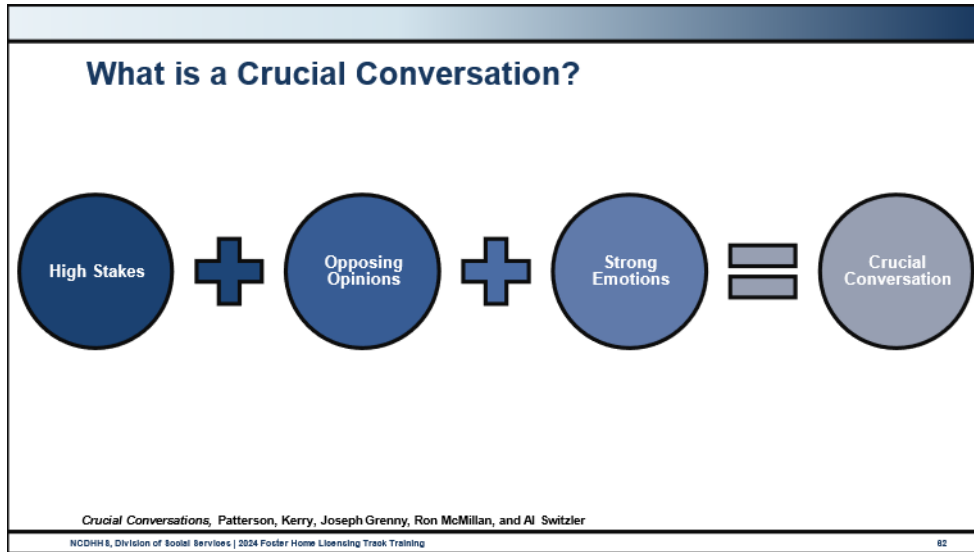
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Questions and Reflections

Use this space to record questions and reflections about what you have learned.

Crucial Conversations and Managing Conflict



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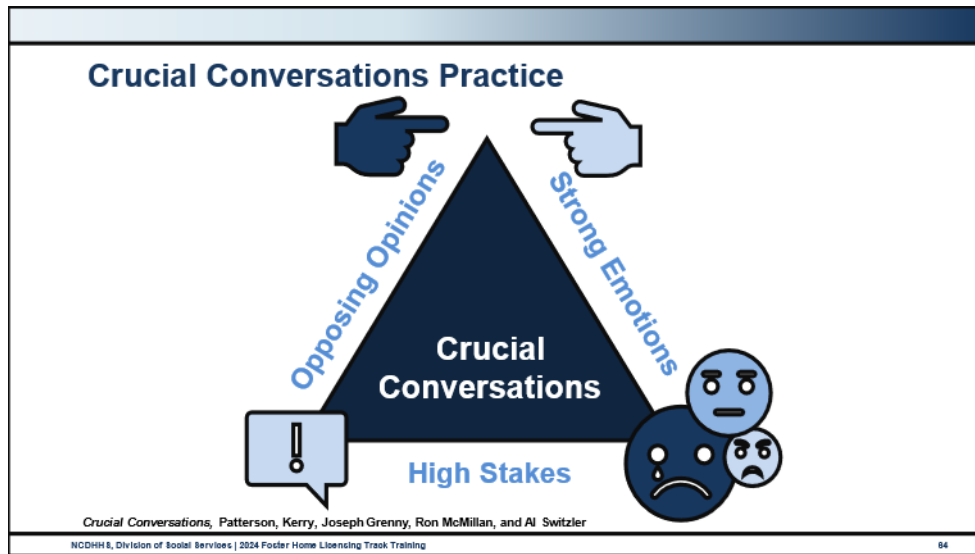
Crucial Conversations

- Start With The Heart
- Learn to Look
- Make it Safe
- Master Your Stories
- State Your Path
- Explore Others' Perspectives
- Move to Action

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Use this space to record notes.

Skills Practice: Crucial Conversations Practice



Steps	How Do I Do This?
Start with the Heart.	Start from a genuine, well-intentioned place. Start a conversation gently.
Learn to Look.	Look for signs of stress, conflict, and emotional elevation. Notice when your safety is at risk. Manage your own response tendencies. Look for language and behavior that could escalate the conversation
Make it Safe.	Notice when others don't feel safe to respond, check to make sure you are listening well and validating. Keep highlighting the common goal. When you notice a risk, "step out" of the conversation and work to restore safety.
Master Your Stories.	Manage intended and unintended bias and check how you see others. "Stories" are assumptions we make for why others are doing what they are doing. Assumptions can interfere with your conversation.
State Your Path.	Share very specific concerns and a clear explanation of the purpose for the conversation. Talk about your experience and inquire about the ways of others. Speak cautiously to be clear and not too soft or too firm.

Explore Others' Perspectives.	Active listening becomes key, and empathy is critical. Validate the person's feelings while maintaining the importance of what needs to be accomplished.
Move to Action.	Make decisions and commit to action together.

Source: Patterson, Kerry, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler. 2002. *Crucial Conversations*. Maidenhead, England: McGraw-Hill Contemporary.

Worksheet: Crucial Conversations Planning Sheet

In your group, select one person to be the licensing worker and one person to be the foster parent to roleplay the scenario conversation.

Scenario:

You are a licensing worker assigned to a foster home with a placement. You receive a call from the permanency planning worker on that case. The permanency planning worker states that they have received a call from the child’s therapist. The child has weekly therapy appointments, and the foster parent has routinely been bringing the child 5 minutes late. This causes the therapy session to be shortened every week and impacts the amount of progress that the child can make. The therapist indicated that they typically encourage clients to arrive 15 minutes before the start of the appointment.

You must address these concerns while maintaining a respectful and collaborative approach. Create a conversation plan for this crucial conversation.

Step 1: Start With Heart (Stay focused on what you really want)

What do you need to accomplish in this conversation? How will you approach this conversation?

Step 2: Make it Safe (Create a safe environment for dialogue)

Where and when will you have this conversation? How will you invite the foster parent to feel safe in this conversation?

Step 3: Master My Stories: (Challenge assumptions and fill in the blanks)

What assumptions need to be eliminated? What circumstances need to be addressed? What is not being considered here?

Step 4: State Your Path (Share your facts, story, and purpose)

How will you present the specific concerns? What will you say to share the purpose of the conversation?

Step 5: Explore Others' Perspectives (Encourage dialogue and seek mutual understanding)

What questions will you ask to encourage the foster parent to share their perspective? What will you say to validate their feelings while emphasizing the importance of the child's well-being and full access to services?

Step 6: Move to Action (Make decisions and commit to action)

How will you work with the foster parent to create an action plan? What needs to be included in that plan?

Debrief

What went well? What didn't?

What impact did your planning make on your conversation?

In thinking about your conversation, which components do you think you'll need to work on?

Questions and Reflections

Use this space to record questions and reflections about what you have learned.

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Appendix: Handouts

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Practice Model Self-Assessment



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North Carolina Practice Standards Worker Assessment

North Carolina Worker Assessment

The North Carolina Practice Standards builds skills and behaviors in the workforce that provide the groundwork for learning, and they are the foundation of North Carolina's Practice Model. The Practice Standards are anchored by our core values: safety-focused, trauma-informed, family-centered, and cultural humility. They are described in observable, behaviorally specific terms to illustrate how social workers will conduct the essential functions of child welfare and how supervisors and leaders will support them. The Practice Standards are divided into five essential functions: communicating, engaging, assessing, planning, and implementing.

The North Carolina Worker Assessment tool is a companion document to the Practice Standards. This assessment is a useful tool to evaluate ways in which you incorporate the Practice Standards into your own practice and areas to improve upon. Assessments are used as a quality improvement measure and will support your learning to enhance your skills and behaviors. This assessment tool can be used in a variety of ways, such as a self-assessment, peer review, or a 360-degree evaluation. Following the assessment tool is an Action Plan you will complete where you will identify the specific actions you plan to take to implement the behaviors of the Practice Standards into your work paying particular attention to the areas noted as occurring 'sometimes' or 'never.'

Self-Assessment

A self-assessment is your evaluation of your own practice, behaviors, and attitudes, in particular your implementation of the Practice Standards within your work. When completing the assessment tool as a self-assessment, you will complete the tool on your own following the below instructions. Reflective, thoughtful, and honest responses to each item will provide you with the information necessary to improve your practice to the benefit of the children and families you work with.

Peer Review

A peer review is an evaluation of your practice and professional work by others in similar positions who you work with. A peer review provides a structured framework for other workers to assess and provide feedback to you on your work and implementation of the Practice Standards. When completing the assessment tool as a peer review, you will ask other workers to complete the tool as an evaluation of your work following the below instructions. You can use the information gathered through the peer review as you complete your action plan.

360-Degree Evaluation

A 360-degree evaluation is a process where you receive confidential and anonymous feedback on your practice and work from others who work around you, including leaders in your organization, your supervisor, and other workers. It's important that a 360-degree evaluation be completed by a variety of your colleagues in different positions. A 360-degree evaluation is a helpful assessment that will provide you with greater insight and understanding of your practice and behaviors, particularly those that relate to the Practice Standards. When completing the assessment tool as a 360-degree evaluation, you will ask leaders, supervisors, workers, and other staff within your organization to complete the tool as an evaluation of your work following the below instructions. You can use the information gathered through the 360-degree evaluation as you complete your action plan.

Instructions

The North Carolina Worker Assessment tool is divided into several sections; there is one section for each corresponding Practice Standard. Each section may be completed in one sitting or completed over time. The assessment should be completed individually, and keep in mind the assessment will be looking at your practice as a whole. Each core activity within the Practice Standards is broken down into three stages: optimal, developmental, and insufficient. These stages should be used to anchor the ratings in the assessment. Each stage is a steppingstone to the

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next allowing you to gradually improve your skill set as a child welfare professional. This assessment will help you, as a learner, identify goals and objectives to begin integrating the Practice Standards into your work.

The assessment is completed by determining which number on the rating scale corresponds best to your own practice behaviors. There is also space to take notes where a rationale for the rating can be added. Each behavior will be rated on a three-point scale: (1) always, (2) sometimes, (3) never.

1. Always: I implement this standard consistently in my own child welfare practice
2. Sometimes: I inconsistently implement this standard in my own child welfare practice
3. Never: I never implement this standard in my own child welfare practice

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North Carolina Worker Assessment: Communicating

Introduction

Communicating is defined as timely and consistent sharing of spoken and written information so that meaning, and intent are understood in the same way by all parties involved. Open and honest communication underpins successful performance of all essential functions in child welfare.

There are four Communicating core activities: (1) use clear language and checking to assure two-way understanding, (2) using respectful, non-judgmental, and empowering language, (3) operating with transparency, and (4) respecting confidentiality and privacy.

Table 1. Core Activity: Using clear language and checking to assure two-way understanding

Practice Standard 1: Ensure clarity when communicating				
	A	S	N	Notes
I use clear, specific, understandable oral and written communication	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I share important information with families verbally and in writing	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 2: Adapt communication to family needs and preferences, and provide consistent information to all family members who need it				
	A	S	N	Notes
I consider language barriers, preferences, literacy, and tailor communication	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I use preferred gender pronouns	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I attend to the child and family's language and use their words	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ask families for their communication preferences	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I share appropriate information, provide consistent information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 3: Allow time to enhance two-way communication with families through questions and checks for understanding				
	A	S	N	Notes

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I seek to allow enough time for two-way communication	(1)	(2)	(3)
I inform families of time limits, fully present, schedule follow-up meeting	(1)	(2)	(3)
I actively listen to families, reflect back	(1)	(2)	(3)
I ask questions for deeper understanding	(1)	(2)	(3)
I encourage and respond to questions from families, confirm understanding	(1)	(2)	(3)

Table 2. Using respectful, non-judgmental, and empowering language

Practice Standard 4: Speak with youth and families in a non-judgement, respectful manner				
	A	S	N	Notes
I convey interest and respect through body language	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I use consistently objective, strengths-based language	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I regularly seek out families' feelings, validate them	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 3. Operating with transparency and honesty

Practice Standard 5: Clearly and openly express to youth and families what is expected from them and what they can expect from child welfare				
	A	S	N	Notes
I explain the role of child welfare, what to expect, decision points, timeframes	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I fully inform families of options and opportunities, seek options from families	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I follow through with commitments, explain changing circumstances	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I set timeframes for responses to questions, follow through	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I answer questions honestly	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 6: Always tell the truth, including during difficult conversations, in a manner that promotes dialogue				
	A	S	N	Notes
I acknowledge mistakes and misunderstandings	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I acknowledge when information is not known, cannot be shared	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I consistently model transparency and honesty	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I share important information without threatening or attacking, promotes dialogue	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 4. Core Activity: Respecting confidentiality and privacy

Practice Standard 7: Diligently respect confidentiality while sharing information when necessary and appropriate				
	A	S	N	Notes
I clarify and follow legal expectations for confidentiality, explain what can be shared	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I follow-up with my supervisor on what can be shared	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I take the release of information process seriously	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ensure families know their right to revoke release of information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I anticipate and minimize breaches of confidentiality	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I understand that families perceive confidentiality as isolating, discuss confidentiality, obtain releases

(1) (2) (3)

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North Carolina Worker Self-Assessment: Engaging

Introduction

Engaging is defined as empowering and motivating families to actively participate with child welfare by communicating openly and honestly with the family, demonstrating respect, and valuing the family’s input and preferences. Engagement begins upon first meeting a family and continues throughout child welfare services.

There are three Engaging core activities: (1) Focused attention to understand families, (2) demonstrating interest and empathy for families in verbal and non-verbal behavior, and (3) acknowledging family strengths.

Table 1. Core Activity: Focused attention to understand families

Practice Standard 1: Fully present when meeting with families				
	A	S	N	Notes
I attend to families, ignore other distractions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I explain notetaking, present and paying attention	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I acknowledge the statements of families	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I am aware of cultural norms and family preferences	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I allow families to finish speaking	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I establish rapport	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 2: Prepares in advance to be able to connect with families				
	A	S	N	Notes
I develop clarifying and follow-up questions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I prepare questions, is flexible based on meeting dynamics	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I prepare for interactions based on individual needs	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I remember action items for future discussions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I collaborate with families, brings understanding to all interactions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I understand, adjust to cultural considerations and preferences	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 3: Considers the family's perspective in all exchanges and actions				
	A	S	N	Notes
I operate with belief that families are experts of their own situation	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I listen and acknowledge families' perspective	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ask questions to understand	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I treat families as essential partners	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I show respect by including families in planning	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I include families in decision making	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I appropriately build relationships with families from other cultural groups	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 2. Core Activity: Demonstrating interest and empathy for families in verbal and non-verbal behavior

Practice Standard 4: Recognizes the family's perspectives and desires				
	A	S	N	Notes
I empower families to feel confident and comfortable	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I provide opportunity for families to co-lead conversation	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I engage with families to check-in after tough situations	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I recognize the power dynamics in uncomfortable situations	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I am open minded	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I engage families in problem solving, encourage ownership	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 5: Use body language to convey interest to families				
	A	S	N	Notes
I maintain eye contact	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I lean in when speaking	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I am mindful of facial expressions and nod my head affirmatively	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I understand culture may play a role in body language	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 3. Core Activity: Acknowledging family strengths

Practice Standard 6: Acknowledge and celebrate strengths and successes				
	A	S	N	Notes
I build on small successes and verbally recognize progress	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I am consistently strengths-based and objective	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I identify positives	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I take a holistic approach, focusing on strengths	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I encourage families to identify their strengths

(1) (2) (3)

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North Carolina Worker Assessment: Assessing

Introduction

Assessing is defined as gathering and synthesizing information from children, families, support systems, agency records, and persons with knowledge to determine the need for child protective services and to inform planning for safety, permanency, and well-being. Assessing occurs throughout child welfare services and includes learning from families about their strengths and preferences.

There are four Assessing core activities: (1) gathering information from children, caretakers, and other family members, (2) gathering and reviewing history, including agency records and other service assessments, (3) gathering information from collateral sources including service providers and persons with relevant knowledge, and (4) using critical thinking to synthesize information, assess what additional information is needed, and inform decision making.

Table 1. Core Activity: Gathering information from children, caretakers, and other family members

Practice Standard 1: Differentiates between information and positions				
	A	S	N	Notes
I moderate information gathering sessions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I gather information that supports all positions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I understand my own biases that may cloud positions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 2: Takes time to get to know families and explain the assessment process				
	A	S	N	Notes
I take time to conversationally gather the family's story	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I use engagement to build family participation in assessment process	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I get a picture of the family's hopes, aspirations, challenges, and worries	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I explain the assessment process, reiterating purpose	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I authentically share with the family about the process	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I keep in mind the culture of the family when gathering information					(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 3: Asks questions based on information needed and at ease asking uncomfortable questions								
	A	S	N		Notes			
I ask open-ended, strengths-based questions	(1)	(2)	(3)					
I understand what type of questions elicit the best type of answers	(1)	(2)	(3)					
I have the ability to hear difficult information without reaction	(1)	(2)	(3)					
I engage in crucial conversations	(1)	(2)	(3)					
I utilize a narrative approach to gather perspectives on historical information	(1)	(2)	(3)					

Table 2. Core Activity: Gathering and reviewing history, including agency records and other service assessments

Practice Standard 4: Stays open to different explanations of events in the record, keeping biases in check								
	A	S	N		Notes			
I continuously gather information	(1)	(2)	(3)					
I am diligent in pursuing information	(1)	(2)	(3)					
I understand how to factor historical information into current situation	(1)	(2)	(3)					
I keep an open mind	(1)	(2)	(3)					
Practice Standard 5: Balances what is read in the record and what families share								
	A	S	N		Notes			
I review information ahead of meeting the family, but ask them to share their perspective	(1)	(2)	(3)					

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I identify in the record what has historically worked well for the family	(1)	(2)	(3)
I have an understanding of what biases I hold when reviewing history	(1)	(2)	(3)

Table 3. Core Activity: Gathering information from collateral sources including service providers and persons with relevant knowledge

Practice Standard 6: Obtains all sides if there are differing positions among collaterals, engaging families in the process				
	A	S	N	Notes
I seek out wide number of collaterals and balance collateral sources	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I obtain information from as many collaterals as time permits	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I consider all relevant collateral sources	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I am honest with families when I must reach out to collaterals the family is unhappy with and explain why	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I let the family help identify collaterals and ask their permission before contacting	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 4. Core Activity: Using critical thinking to synthesize information, assess what additional information is needed, and inform decision making

Practice Standard 7: Synthesizes information and considers sources, prioritization, and timelines				
	A	S	N	Notes
I continually gather information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I understand assessment is ongoing process in determining needs	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I rank information received based on relevance and priority	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I prioritize information that negatively impacts children to address first	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 8: Remains non-judgmental when processing information				
	A	S	N	Notes
I am inquisitive from the beginning of assessment process	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I understand the family's community as they define it	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I operate with cultural humility	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I persevere in gathering information, follow the information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I understand not all information is relevant	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I normalize reactions family has to information and assessment results	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I understand fight, flight, or freeze response	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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North Carolina Worker Assessment: Planning

Introduction

Planning is defined as respectfully and meaningfully collaborating with families, communities, tribes, and other identified team members to set goals and develop strategies based on the continuous assessment of safety, risk, family strengths, and needs through a child and family team process. Plans should be revisited regularly by the team to determine progress towards meeting goals and make changes when needed.

There are Four Planning core activities: (1) synthesizing and integrating current and previous assessment information and family history to inform plans, (2) preparing families for the teaming/planning process, (3) conducting child and family team meetings with children, youth, and families, and (4) completing and revising behaviorally based case plans.

Table 1. Core Activity: Synthesizing and integrating current and previous assessment information and family history to inform plans

Practice Standard 1: Engages family in understanding assessment and history, focusing on strengths to customize plans				
	A	S	N	Notes
I transparently share assessments with families	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I see family input into what has and hasn't worked in the past, apply information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I partner with families owning their plan, creating buy-in	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 2: Discovers root causes and underlying reasons for family involvement				
	A	S	N	Notes
I seek input from others with knowledge of family history, keep an open mind	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I focus plan on identified needs, tied to assessment	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ask questions and seek information to help families understand root cause	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I discuss DSS concerns with family, get feedback	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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Table 2. Core Activity: Preparing families for the teaming/planning process

Practice Standard 3: Believes and practices the importance of preparation, both for self and for the family, for teaming and planning				
	A	S	N	Notes
I come to meeting prepared based on review of information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I prepare families for meetings ahead of time, providing copies of documents	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I consider adjustments to better accommodate families	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ensure families understand CFTs are their meetings, explains rights	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ask families who they would like to invite to meetings	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ask families what they want to accomplish during meetings	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 4: Actively engages family in identifying their team				
	A	S	N	Notes
I explain to families the purpose of teams, role they play	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I explore ways to involve children in CFT	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I work with families to identify supports, encourage families to invite to meetings	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I explain why having support is important	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I creatively explore and troubleshoot with families past supports	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 3. Core Activity: Conducting child and family team meetings with children, youth, and families

Practice Standard 5: Promotes family voice as the cornerstone of the meeting

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	A	S	N	Notes
I encourage families to start meetings sharing strengths or concerns	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I encourage children and youth to participate	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I reinforce strengths of families through meeting, share protective capacity examples	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I provide families options about aspects of meetings to engage families	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 6: Facilitates and engages participants throughout, acknowledging and managing conflict				
	A	S	N	Notes
I set and reinforce boundaries and expectations throughout meetings	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I make sure all voices are heard and expressed during meetings	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I show empathy and acknowledge how distressing situation may be, provide support	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I am clear on concerns, ask families to identify solutions	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I diffuse situations when conversations escalate	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I manage emotions in the room well	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 4. Core Activity: Completing and revising behaviorally based case plans.

Practice Standard 7: Actively involves families in developing behavioral based case plans				
	A	S	N	Notes
I co-create plans that are flexible and individualized	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I invite families to identify issues they want to change, include in plan	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I utilize harm and danger statements to identify safety issues	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I plan with families not for or about families	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I structure plan around behaviors desired to change, not completion of programs	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I prioritize tasks in plans and break down tasks into manageable steps	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 8: Revisits the case plan regularly, willing to modify or update as needed, but at a minimum per policy				
	A	S	N	Notes
I bring subject of case plan into every conversation	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ensure families have a copy of their case plan	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I update plans with every success to show progress, keep families motivated	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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North Carolina Worker Assessment: Implementing

Introduction

Implementing is defined as carrying out plans that have been developed. Implementing includes linking families to services and community supports, supporting families to take actions agreed upon in plans and monitoring to assure plans are being implemented by both families and providers, monitoring progress on behavioral goals, and identifying when plans need to be adapted.

There are three Implementing core activities: (1) supporting families to take actions agreed upon in the plan and connecting families to services and community support, (2) collaborating with providers and informal supports in the community to help families achieve desired outcomes, and (3) coaching with families and partnering with providers to assure plans are being implemented, progress is made, and outcomes achieved.

Table 1. Core Activity: Supporting families to take actions agreed upon in the plan and connecting families to services and community support

Practice Standard 1: Supports families to take actions				
	A	S	N	Notes
I prioritize the family's availability and convenience when providing support	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I offer to call or link families to providers as a first step	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I show families through actions and words that I am interested in their success	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 2: Works with families to find solutions to challenges				
	A	S	N	Notes
I ask questions tailored to individual family needs to identify challenges to engaging in services	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ask families what their concerns about services and service delivery	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I advocate for families and help them navigate the system	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ensure families are participating in the amount of services they can handle	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I support families in their service prioritization	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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Practice Standard 3: Explains to families what services are and what they could do for the family to provide information and informed decisions				
	A	S	N	Notes
I engage families in conversation about purpose of recommended service	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I check-in for families' understanding of services purpose on ongoing basis	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I provide families with contact information for service providers	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I make suggestions on the frequency families should follow-up with providers	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ensure recommended services are behaviorally specific, not duplicative	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I seek to understand and empathize families' concerns related to services	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 4: Offers an array of service providers to choose from if there are choices to be had				
	A	S	N	Notes
I identify resources available and provide information to families	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I offer to think with the families as they decide on service providers	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I point out service providers based on knowledge of families' history	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 2. Core Activity: Collaborating with providers and informal supports in the community to help families achieve desired outcomes

Practice Standard 5: Advocates with and for families with providers on what behavioral change is expected to ensure quality service delivery				
	A	S	N	Notes
I communicate with providers and families about agreed upon behavioral changes being sought	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I share with providers relevant assessment and case plan information	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I provide feedback to providers, ask questions about services	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I regularly check-in, monitor service delivery	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I escalate problems to my supervisor	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I understand what treatment being provided, what is expected, and evidence of results	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I ensure services delivered are tailored to meet families' needs	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 6: Accesses natural supports in the community to assist families to achieve their goals				
	A	S	N	Notes
I engage families to identify community supports	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I educate families regarding how to access community resources	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I encourage families to reach out to other systems	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I facilitate meetings between families and support systems	(1)	(2)	(3)	

Table 3. Core Activity: Coaching with families and partnering with providers to assure plans are being implemented, progress is made, and outcomes achieved

Practice Standard 7: Checks-in on an ongoing basis with families on progress with the Family Service Agreement				
	A	S	N	Notes
I routinely ask families if services are good match	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I provide families feedback if they are or are not making efforts	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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I follow-up with families when appointments missed to identify challenges	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I problem solve with families to find solutions to challenges	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I reassess barriers once services begun	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 8: Assesses progress in implementing actions of plan, making adjustments as needed				
	A	S	N	Notes
I work with families to identify when changes needed in service delivery	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I troubleshoot when goals not achieved to determine root cause	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I engage collaterals about progress made and additional service needs	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I make changes in actions in plan when necessary, not when convenient	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I celebrate wins when goals achieved	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Practice Standard 9: Tracks service delivery for achievement of safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for the family				
	A	S	N	Notes
I routinely check-in with service providers on progress	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I assess successful completion of service in connection with desired behavior change	(1)	(2)	(3)	
I consider the long-term outcomes when determining achievement of outcomes	(1)	(2)	(3)	

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North Carolina Worker Action Plan

Action Planning

This Action Plan will help you identify the specific actions you plan to take to implement the behaviors of the Practice Standards into your work. While you complete the Action Plan, pay particular attention to the behaviors noted as happening 'sometimes' or 'never' and identify specific actions to address these areas.

	Practice Standard Behavior	As a result of what I learned through this assessment, I am going to...	I will know I am succeeding with this objective when...
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			

North Carolina Worker Practice Standards Guide



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Worker Practice Standards Desk Guide

Practice Standards are essential behaviors in working with agencies, staff, and families that apply to all members of the child welfare system, including leaders, supervisors, and workers. For workers, Practice Standards describe how they should interact with children, youth, and families from the beginning to the end of child welfare services. Each essential function has accompanying core activities, which embody that function, and practice standards, or desired behaviors that staff at all levels should be saying and doing to practice in accordance with the Practice Model and to help achieve positive outcomes for children, youth, and families.



North Carolina's Practice Model Pyramid



What is a Practice Model?

Practice Models provide a framework or organizing principles to guide the agency to achieve their mission and values. (Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group. Adopting a Child Welfare Practice Framework)

What is a Practice Standard?

Practice Standards provide guidance to workers on the concrete actions and behaviors they should be demonstrating to carry out the agency's Practice Model. (Metz, A., Bartley, L., Blase, K., & Fixsen, D. (2011). A guide for creating practice profiles. Chapel Hill, NC: National Implementation Research Network, FPG, Child Development Institute, UNC.)



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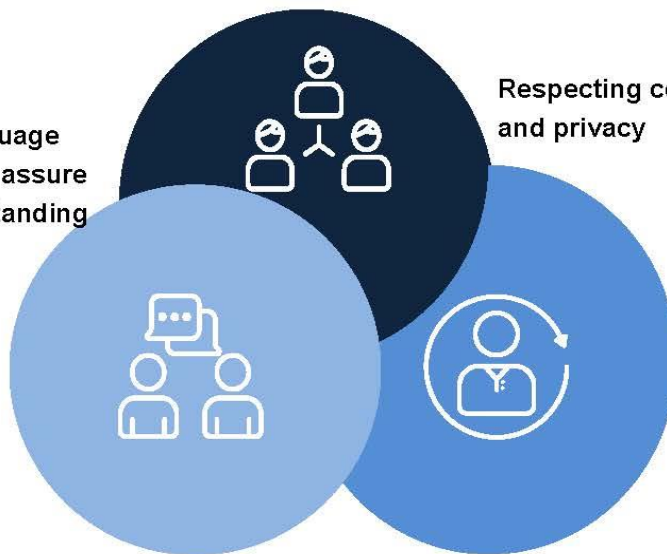
Key Behaviors and Core Activities

Communicating: *Timely and consistent sharing of spoken and written information so that meaning, and intent are understood in the same way by all parties involved. Open and honest communication underpins successful performance of all essential functions in child welfare.5j*

#1	Ensure clarity when communicating.
#2	Adapt communication to family needs and preferences and provide consistent information to all family members who need it.
#3	Allow time to enhance two-way communication with the family through questions and checks for understanding.
#4	Speak with the family and youth in a non-judgmental, respectful manner.
#5	Clearly and openly express to youth and the family what is expected from them and what they can expect from child welfare.
#6	Always tell the truth, including during difficult conversations, in a manner that promotes dialogue.
#7	Diligently respect confidentiality while sharing information when necessary and appropriate.

Communicating Core Activities

Using clear language and checking to assure two-way understanding



Respecting confidentiality and privacy

Operating with transparency and honesty



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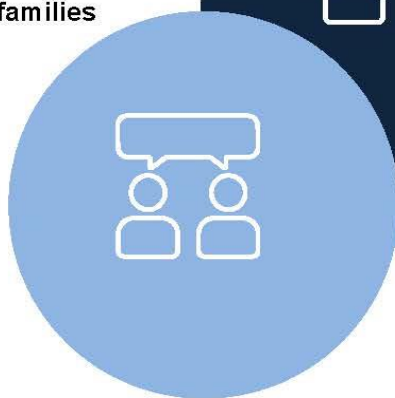
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Engaging: *Empowering and motivating families to actively participate with child welfare in the functions of assessing, planning, and implementing by communicating openly and honestly with the family, demonstrating respect, and valuing the family's input and preferences. Engagement begins upon first meeting and continues throughout child welfare services.*

#1	Be fully present when meeting with the family.
#2	Prepare in advance to be able to connect with the family.
#3	Consider the family's perspective in all exchanges and actions.
#4	Recognize the family's perspectives and desires.
#5	Use body language to convey interest in the family.
#6	Acknowledge and celebrate strengths and successes.

Engaging Core Activities

Focusing attention to understand families



Demonstrating interest and empathy for families in verbal and non-verbal behavior



Acknowledging families' strengths



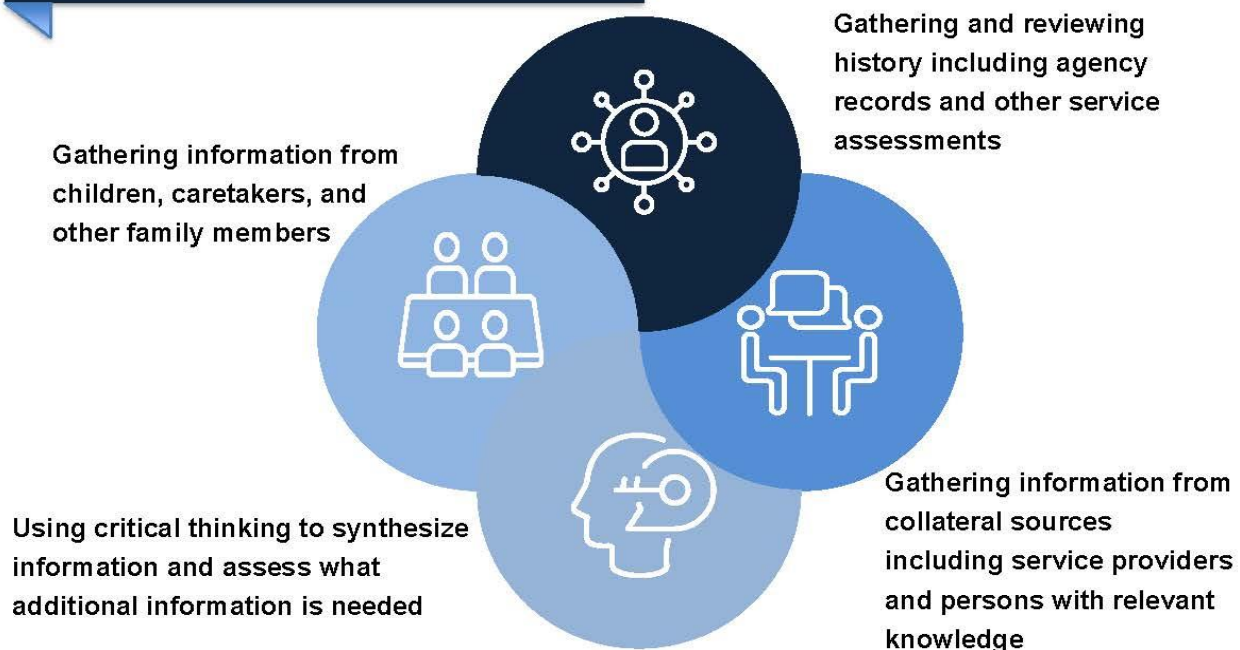
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Assessing: *Gathering and synthesizing information from children, families, support systems, agency records, and persons with knowledge to determine the need for child protective services and to inform planning for safety, permanency, and well-being. Assessing occurs throughout child welfare services and includes learning from families about their strengths and preferences.*

#1	Differentiate between information and positions.
#2	Take time to get to know the family and explain the assessment process.
#3	Ask questions based on information needed and at ease asking uncomfortable questions.
#4	Stay open to different explanations of events in the record, keeping biases in check.
#5	Balance what is read in the record and what the family shares.
#6	Obtain all sides if there are differing positions among collaterals, engaging the family in the process.
#7	Synthesize information and consider sources, relevance, and timelines.
#8	Remain non-judgmental when processing information.

Assessing Core Activities





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Planning: *Respectfully and meaningfully collaborating with families, communities, tribes, and other identified team members to set goals and develop strategies based on the continuous assessment of safety, risk, family strengths, and needs through a child and family team process. Plans should be revisited regularly by the team to determine progress towards meeting goals and changes made when needed.*

#1	Engage the family in understanding assessment and history, focusing on strengths to customize the plan.
#2	Discover root causes and underlying reasons for the family's involvement.
#3	Believe and practice the importance of preparation both for self and for the family for teaming and planning.
#4	Actively engage the family in identifying their team.
#5	Promote the family's voice as the cornerstone of the meeting.
#6	Facilitate and engage participants throughout, acknowledging and managing conflict.
#7	Revisit case plan regularly, willing to modify or update as needed, but at a minimum per policy.

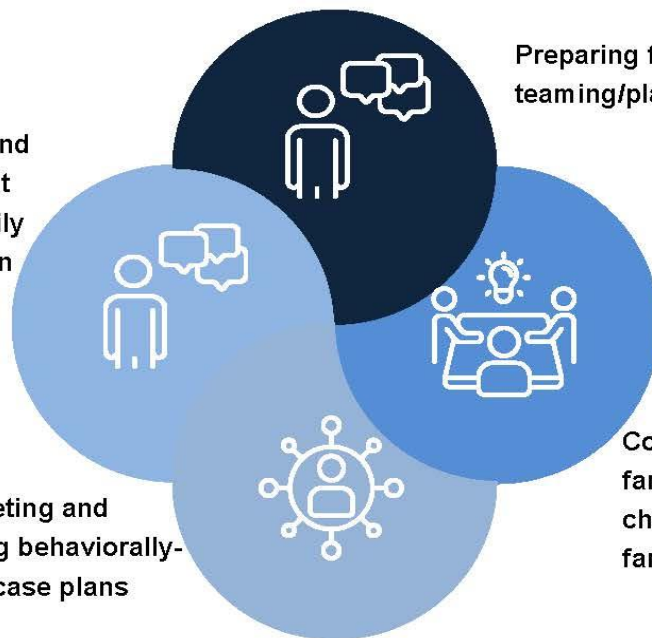
Planning Core Activities

Synthesizing and integrating current and previous assessment information and family history to inform plan

Preparing families for the teaming/planning process

Completing and revising behaviorally-based case plans

Conducting child and family meetings with children, youth, and families





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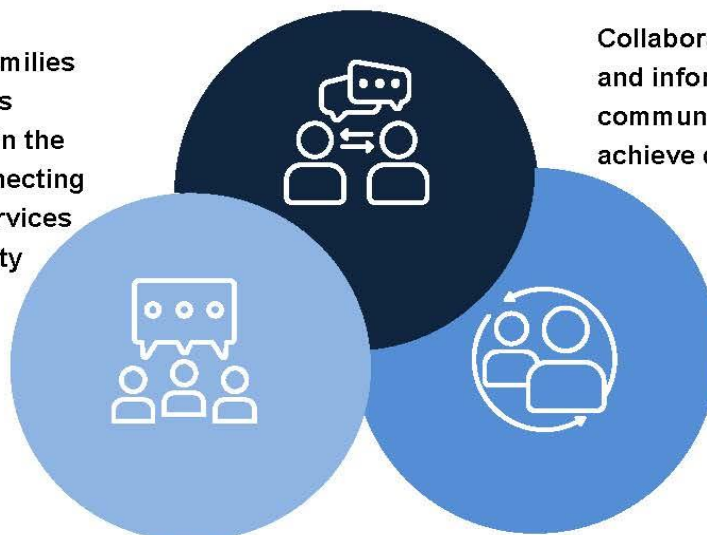
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Implementing: *Carrying out plans that have been developed. Implementing includes linking families to services and community supports, supporting families to take actions agreed upon in plans and monitoring to assure plans are being implemented by both families and providers, monitoring progress on behavioral goals, and identifying when plans need to be adapted.*

#1	Support the family to take action.
#2	Work with the family to find solutions to problems.
#3	Explain to the family what services are and what they could do for the family to provide information and informed decisions.
#4	Offer an array of service providers to choose from if there are choices to be had.
#5	Advocate with and for the family with providers regarding what behavioral change is expected to ensure quality service delivery.
#6	Access natural supports in the community to assist the family to achieve their goals.
#7	Check in on an ongoing basis with the family on progress with the Family Services Agreement.
#8	Assess progress in implementing actions of the plan, making adjustments as needed.
#9	Track service delivery for the achievement of safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for the family.

Implementing Core Activities

Supporting families to take actions agreed upon in the plan and connecting families to services and community support



Collaborating with providers and informal supports in the community to help families achieve desired outcomes

Coaching with families and partnering with providers to assure plans are being implemented, progress is made, and outcomes achieved



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Strategies for Applying Practice Standards in Your Everyday Work

Communicating

- Use clear understandable language, both when speaking and writing, avoiding acronyms and jargon.
- Understand the unique communication needs of the family, including communication preferences or language barriers. If barriers exist, ensure that appropriate language services are provided.
- Continually practice active listening, which means asking questions to both understand and show you are listening.
- Through your words and actions, show the family interest, respect, and empathy. Examples include leaning in when they speak, head nodding to show understanding, and being transparent with note taking.
- Make sure you understand and can explain the “why” behind certain requirements and decisions with the family.
- Always respect the family’s right to privacy and be cognizant of who you are sharing information with, what you are sharing, where you are sharing, and why you are sharing.
- Have honest discussions with the family regarding expectations, both yours and theirs. Be sure to follow up and follow through on your conversations.
- Model transparency and honesty, including when information is not known, difficult, or incorrect.

Engaging

- Be fully present by eliminating any potential distractions.
- Review previous notes from meetings with the family and prepare follow-up questions and items to discuss. Demonstrating your preparedness shows the family that you respect your time together.
- Treat the family as the “expert” of their own situation. They know their strengths and struggles best.
- Put the family first in conversations and consider the perspective of the child and family. For example, engaging relatives for placement is important from an agency perspective, but can be extremely meaningful from the family’s perspective.
- Show empathy and acknowledge any struggle experienced by the family when talking through courageous conversations.
- Empower the family to feel confident, encouraging their active involvement in problem solving and planning, and help the family identify their own strengths and successes.
- Engage the family through body language and demonstrate interest, empathy, and understanding when they speak.



Assessing

- Ask open-ended, strengths-based questions.
- Be transparent and share the purpose of gathering and assessing information, and who may be contacted as part of the process.
- Understand that assessing is an ongoing skill and never ends during the life of a case.
- Provide space for reflection on opinions and biases and how they could impact your work. Brainstorm strategies to mitigate bias with your supervisor.
- Prepare ahead and review what is in the record to understand what has worked for the family in the past, while also being cognizant of what the family is communicating with you in the present.
- Know what questions to ask that will elicit the most comprehensive answers and share along the way what is being learned by those questions.
- Gather information and observations from a wide variety of collateral sources, while understanding they may also contain opinions and biases as well.
- Be inquisitive, not judgmental through the assessing process.
- Before contacting collaterals, engage the family in what information is being obtained and when you intend to make contact, when it is possible to do so.

Planning

- Create buy-in for the family by involving them from the beginning, ensuring that their voice is used throughout the plan.
- Fully process information gathered to best inform case planning.
- Dig deep to understand and address the root cause for child welfare involvement, using creative ideas and solutions that are congruent with the needs of the family.
- Check for plan alignment with the root cause of involvement. The family should not be asked to complete tasks that are not directly tied to concerns.
- Prepare yourself for Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTs) by thoroughly reviewing the case history, documenting questions, and consulting with your supervisor.
- Prepare the family for CFTs by explaining the purpose, letting them know what to expect, and engaging them in setting the agenda.
- Help the family identify relatives, friends, and others to be involved in the planning process as an advocate and source of support.
- Thoroughly review plans to ensure that the plan's goals and objectives continue to tie back to the family's assessment and reason for involvement.
- Update the plan accordingly when tasks are completed so the family can see and feel progress.



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Implementing

- Partner with the family on determining services and service delivery and what will work best for their family.
- Offer to make initial phone calls to assist in navigating a complex service array system.
- Bust barriers to accessing services, such as lack of transportation, lack of a communication device, or lack of funds.
- Help the family fully understand the purpose of each service so that they understand what progress will look like.
- Use a three-step process of: "What is going well?"; "What needs to happen?"; and "What are our next steps?".
- Continuously assess services with the family and adjust as needed. Reassess barriers once services begin to ensure the family can continue to be successful or if changes are needed.
- Always remember the power differential that exists and that the family may be unsure of how to advocate for themselves with providers, therefore you must advocate both for and with them.
- Consider the family's interests, culture, and faith when exploring natural supports that may help them feel confident and supported during the process.
- Celebrate along with the family when progress is made, and goals are achieved.

Resources

North Carolina Worker Practice Standards

Practice Standards Worker Self-Assessment

Transfer of Learning Tools: Self-Assessment, Peer Review, and 360-Degree Evaluation

24 Rights of Children in Care

SECTION .1100 – STANDARDS FOR LICENSING 10A NCAC 70E .1101 CLIENT RIGHTS

- (a) Foster parents shall ensure that each foster child:
- (1) has clothing to wear that is appropriate to the weather;
 - (2) is allowed to have personal property;
 - (3) is encouraged to express opinions on issues concerning care;
 - (4) is provided care in a manner that recognizes the child's cultural values and traditions;
 - (5) is provided the opportunity for spiritual development and is not denied the right to practice his or her religious beliefs;
 - (6) is not identified as a foster child in any way;
 - (7) is not forced to acknowledge dependency on or gratitude to the foster parents;
 - (8) is encouraged to contact and have telephone conversations with family members unless contraindicated in the child's visitation and contact plan;
 - (9) is provided training and discipline that is appropriate for the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and past experience;
 - (10) is not subjected to cruel or abusive punishment, as established in G.S. 7B 101(1) and (15);
 - (11) is not subjected to corporal punishment;
 - (12) is not deprived of a meal or contacts with family for punishment or placed in isolation time-out except when isolation time-out means the removal of a child to an unlocked room or area from which the child is not physically prevented from leaving. The foster parent may use isolation timeout as a behavioral control measure when the foster parent provides it within hearing distance of a foster parent. The length of the isolation time-out shall be appropriate for the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and past experiences;
 - (13) is not subjected to verbal abuse, threats, or humiliating remarks about himself or herself or his or her family;
 - (14) is provided a daily routine in the home that promotes a positive mental health environment and provides an opportunity for normal activities with time for rest and play;
 - (15) is provided training in nutrition and personal hygiene. Each child shall be provided food with nutritional content for normal growth and health. Diets prescribed by a licensed medical provider shall be provided;
 - (16) is provided medical care in accordance with the treatment prescribed for the child;
 - (17) of mandatory school age, as established in G.S. 115C-378(a), maintains regular school attendance unless the child has been excused by the authorities;
 - (18) is encouraged to participate in neighborhood and group activities, to have friends visit the home, and to visit in the homes of friends;

(19) assumes responsibility for himself or herself and for household duties that are appropriate for the child's age intelligence, emotional makeup, and past experiences. Household tasks shall not interfere with school, sleep, or study periods;

(20) is not permitted to do any task that violates child labor laws, as established in G.S. 95-25.5 and Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), incorporated by reference including subsequent amendments and editions, or not appropriate for the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and past experiences;

(21) is provided supervision that is appropriate for the child's age, intelligence, emotional makeup, and experience;

(22) if less than eight years of age or weighs less than 80 pounds, is properly secured in a child passenger restraint system in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions;

(23) is protected from disclosure of confidential information about the child or the child's family. Such confidential information shall not be shared unless lawfully authorized; and

(24) is encouraged to participate in extracurricular, recreational, enrichment, cultural, and social activities in accordance with G.S. 131D-10.2A.

Permanency Planning Required Timeframes

PERMANENCY PLANNING SERVICES

Required Timeframes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of Non-Secure Custody Order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanency Planning Services case begins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 24 hours of placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of Custody Letter given to placement provider and the juvenile’s school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 3 days after the day of placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determination of Foster Care Assistance Benefits and/or Medical Benefits Only (DSS-5120) initiated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 7 business days of placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determination of Foster Care Assistance Benefits and/or Medical Benefits Only (DSS-5120) completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 7 calendar days of placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face visit with child(ren); this contact is in addition to any contact or interaction with the child(ren) on the day of placement • Face-to-face contact with placement provider (at least one adult caretaker) in the provider’s home; this is in addition to any contact or interaction with the placement provider(s) on the day of placement • Family Time (visitation) for child(ren) with parent(s)/caretaker(s) and sibling(s) • Complete the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Face-to-face contact with parent(s)/caretaker(s) ○ Initial Health Screening (Health Summary Form – Initial Visit) (DSS-5206) ○ Educational Stability addressed (Child Education Status) (DSS-5245) or NC Best Interest Determination Form (DSS-5137) completed) including BID meeting (within 5 school days) prior to any school change ○ SIS Client Entry Form (DSS-5027) ○ Child Placement and Payment System Report (DSS-5094)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 14 calendar days of placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Parenting meeting • Family Time and Contact Plan (DSS-5242) developed jointly with parent(s) • Family Time and Contact Plan developed for siblings to visit each other (if in separate placements) (DSS-5242)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 30 calendar days of placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the Permanency Planning Family Services Agreement (DSS-5240) • Develop the Transitional Living Plan (TLP) (DSS-5096a) for any child 14 years old or older

PERMANENCY PLANNING SERVICES

Required Timeframes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make diligent efforts to identify and notify adult relatives and other persons with legal custody of a sibling of the juvenile. When it is safe and appropriate children must be placed with relatives. • All information about diligent efforts to locate must be documented and filed with the court. • Complete the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relative Notifications [e.g., via Relative Notification Letter (DSS-5317) ○ Health Summary Form - 30-day Comprehensive Visit (DSS-5208) ○ Health History Form (DSS-5207), and provide copies to the placement provider ○ Review and update (if needed) the Child Education Status (DSS-5245) ○ Review of the Family Assessment of Strengths and Needs (DSS-5229) ○ Review of the Risk Assessment (DSS-5230) • Begin the child(ren)'s life book
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 60 calendar days of placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Permanency Planning Review and complete the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Permanency Planning Review (DSS-5241) ○ Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (DSS-5229) ○ Family Reunification Assessment (DSS-5227) ○ Review and update (if needed) the Permanency Planning Family Services Agreement (DSS-5240) • Adjudicatory Hearing (within 60 days of the filing of the petition, unless the judge orders it be held later)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 90 days of the 60-day CFT/PPR (150 calendar days of placement), and every 90 days thereafter throughout the life of the case 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanency Planning Review and complete the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Permanency Planning Review (DSS-5241) ○ Review and update the Permanency Planning Family Services Agreement (DSS-5240) ○ Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (DSS-5229) ○ Family Reunification Assessment (DSS-5227)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every 12 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the Education Status (DSS-5245) • Update the Health History Form (DSS-5207)* • Complete Redetermination of Foster Care Assistance Benefits and/or Medical Assistance Only (DSS-5120A)

PERMANENCY PLANNING SERVICES

Required Timeframes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete credit check for any youth 14 years old or older • Photograph of the child • Update the Verification of Custody Letter <p style="text-align: center;"><i>*See Planning Forms for additional required timeframes</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency of contacts with parent(s), child(ren), home visits, and collaterals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Required Contacts Section
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current within 7 days of any case activity or action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Staffing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once a month • Whenever there is a change in circumstance that impacts permanency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanency Planning Hearing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanency Planning hearing held within 90 days of initial Disposition: subsequent permanency planning hearings must be held within every 6 months thereafter.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child and Family Team (CFT) Meetings 	<p>In addition to the timeframes noted above, a CFT must be held on the following occasions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in placement (or potential change in placement) of the child; • Change in family circumstance and it is necessary to reconvene the team to discuss the case, this includes when there is a change in the juvenile’s school; • Change in the permanent plan; or • Any time the family or child request the team be convened.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Reunification Assessment (DSS-5227) • Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (DSS-5229) OR Family Risk Reassessment (DSS-5226) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track with required Permanency Planning Review (PPR) / Permanency Planning Family Services Agreement Updates (on the DSS-5240) • See Decision-Making Tools Section for additional requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close SIS Client Entry form (DSS-5207) • Close Child Placement and Payment System Report (CPPS) (DSS-5094)