

Child Foster Care Work Plan
August 10, 2015

Charge	Task	Indicators of success that are equitable, developmentally based, and are driven in an ongoing manner by quality assurance processes
I. Improve Recruitment, application, and licensing processes for foster homes	<p>A. Develop a protocol for licensing applications, training requirements, and placement decisions for potential foster parents.</p> <p>1. Review foster care recruitment and licensing policies in other states; and review and revise pertinent Minnesota statutes.</p>	<p>Agencies have uniform procedures that allow prospective foster parent to complete the process in a timely way*.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible, delays in the background study process are reduced <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Barriers to gathering fingerprints are resolved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase locations and hours available for applicants to get fingerprinted ▪ Improve timeliness in obtaining records from other states where applicant previously resided ○ Disqualification reconsiderations and variances are more quickly processed by DHS • Where possible, delays in the foster care application process are reduced <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Foster care application is streamlined and instructions are clarified to reduce process time for county staff ○ Availability of foster parent training-in frequency and accessibility-is increased ○ Reduce barriers to local fire marshal inspections-scheduling and associated costs. • Reduce delays in home study process Secure sufficient staffing resources so home studies completed in a timely manner <p>*County Child Foster Care Licensing Survey Dec. 2014</p>
	B. Develop inter-county agreements for the referral and completion of relative/kin licensing for emergency placements.	<p>Proactive and strategic referral process for timely relative/kin licensing to support the child safety, permanency, and well-being.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The percent of relatives who are licensed within 6 months is increased.**

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	C. Design foster care recruitment and licensing processes to enhance Concurrent Permanency Planning procedures and outcomes. Use to train and prepare a foster family to support stability and permanency for a foster child.	<p>Children are provided placement stability and timely permanency.***</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are in stable placements and any changes in their placement are in their best interests and consistent with achieving their permanency goals • Permanency goals for children are established in a timely manner • Concerted efforts are made to achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangements • Time to permanency for children in care is reduced <p>***Child and Family Services Review tool</p>
	D. Ensure child foster care licensing application forms and process correspondence are in plain language and accessible. E.g., background study result notifications.	<p>Parents, caregivers, prospective foster parents and other stakeholders understand what's expected from them and the available services and processes to get them licensed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster care application is streamlined and instructions are clarified so as to reduce time and resources from county staff.
	E. Review foster care license revocations to determine whether additional supports could prevent future revocations.	Resources and supports are implemented to assist foster parents maintain their license.
	F. Create a child foster care web-based resource center. Develop an accessible streamlined user friendly electronic foster care application and licensing process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster youth, prospective foster parents, relatives/kin and child welfare staff have access to application process, training, and resources. • DHS will have access to applicant demographic and timeliness data for statewide recruitment planning and support services.
	G. Improve caregiver's access to quality training.	Prospective foster parent may complete initial required online training as part of the online application and have access to additional and ongoing Minnesota Child Welfare Training System (MCWTS) training to support child placement safety, well-being and permanency.

	H. Increase the number of department staff to develop and implement guidance, provide consultation and procedures for oversight of foster families.	DHS, Child Safety and Permanency Division and Licensing Division staff are able to provide children, parents, and caregivers with practice guides, forms, processes, consultation and quality assurance oversight that address safety, permanency and wellbeing, and sustain recruitment efforts for prospective foster parents.
	I. Initiate ongoing statewide foster home recruitment efforts with assistance from the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment.	Statewide plan for diligent recruitment of child foster care families is successfully implemented.
	J. Identify barriers in the licensing process and develop supports for applicants.	Applicants have access to on-line and in-person support during the application process.
II. Improve policies that determine how children are removed from their home, to minimize and treat trauma	A. Develop a practice guide for safety and risk assessment, and assure safety and protective plans maintain children safely in their homes, if possible.	Parents have access to protective plans, safety plans and services to prevent out-of-home placement.
	B. Explore juvenile court intake worker models that permit child protective service juvenile court intake workers to take children into custody and place in care pending the 72-hour Emergency Protective Care hearing. 1. A uniformed patrol officer/detective with a squad car and weapons could create a fear and trauma response for children.	The trauma of removal is minimized to the extent possible. Child Protection Social Workers could engage thorough safety assessment and protective/safety planning to manage safety in the home to potentially avoid removal. Children are placed with their siblings in a relative/kin home whenever possible.
	C. Develop a practice guidance and developmentally appropriate, child safety focused criteria for removing children from their parent/caregiver's supervision and care.	Develop and implement a crisis plan for every child in placement so there are less restrictive safety interventions used, if appropriate, prior to removal from the home An immediate child protection removal process that is trauma informed.

		Diligent relative/kin search is initiated and relatives/kin are considered for placement at the point of removal of a child from their home.
	D. Request assistance from the National Resource Center on Permanency and Family Connections or other pertinent national resource centers to review and provide advice on best practices for the revised procedures.	Minnesota improved practice standards will use best practices, information and processes that have been successful in other states.
III. Improve quality and availability of staffing and resources to improve outcomes for foster children	A. Improve protocol for priority of placement settings to reduce trauma, improve safety and reunification/permanency.	Guidance for family-finding, including notice and consideration of placement with relatives/kin as the first step in placement decisions. Children are placed with their siblings whenever possible.
	B. Implement concurrent permanency planning to include pertinent permanency options: reunification, transfer of permanent legal and physical custody, adoption, and/or in rare exceptions, extended foster care.	Foster Children are provided placement stability and timely permanency. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are in stable placements and any changes in their placement are in their best interests and consistent with achieving their permanency goals • Permanency goals for children are established in a timely manner • Concerted efforts are made to achieve reunification, guardianship, adoption, or other planned permanent living arrangements • Concerted efforts are made to provide appropriate services for the family to protect the children and prevent re-entry into foster care after a reunification with the family. • Placement re-entry is reduced <p>***CFSR tool</p>

	<p>C. Protocol to address foster child’s well-being, including comprehensive and coordinated screening, assessment, and treatment planning to identify trauma, mental health, physical health, educational, and developmental needs.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of a coordinated service team model for foster children with complex needs. 2. Develop a process for tracking a foster child’s medical records when a child moves. 3. Develop a process for tracking a foster child’s school records when a child moves 4. Examine criteria for child welfare reporting of exemptions regarding mental health screenings. 5. Develop a best practice model of what a foster care experience should be. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster children receive individual, culturally appropriate services to meet their educational, physical and mental health, including treatment to recover from trauma. • Foster children receive a medical examination at the time of placement, and ongoing periodic checkups consistent with the Child and Teen Checkup schedule. * • Foster children receive a mental health screening at the time of placement, unless exceptions apply. When indicated in screening, children will receive an additional assessment by a mental health professional, and appropriate services.** • Foster children receive screening, assessment and treatment for trauma. • Foster children remain in their school of origin and any changes in schools are in their best interests.*** • Children receive ongoing periodic developmental, educational, and mental health assessments throughout placement • For foster children taking psychotropic medications, there are policy and protocol for medication monitoring and ongoing communication between the prescriber, the child and their caregivers, and other healthcare providers, including a mental health therapist, a child welfare social worker, and other key stakeholders.**** <p>*state law requirement (enhanced), CFSR **state law requirement (enhanced), CFSR ***state law requirement, CFSR, ****Federal IV-B requirements for foster children on psychotropic medications.</p>
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	D. Develop guidelines for the continued engagement of caseworkers in ongoing case management and out-of-home placement plans that are based on the child's individual needs ensuring safety, permanency, and well-being.	Foster child will have a case plan that addresses safety, outlines reasonable (active) efforts for permanency planning, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and promotes the child's well-being. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseworkers stay engaged throughout the life of a case and visit the foster child at least once a month.
	E. Implement Northstar Care for Children for children and caregivers.	Agency practices are fair and provide equal access to Northstar benefits.
	F. Assure child care resources are available for foster children.	The decision to be a foster parent is not hampered by ability to access child care.
	G. Reasonable and prudent parent standards are developed and implemented to ensure normalcy for children in out of home care.	Foster children will be able to participate in age appropriate activities, e.g. cell phones, overnights with friends with adult supervision, obtaining a driver's license, extra-curricular activities, dating, etc.
	H. Run away and missing foster children are reported in a timely way to law enforcement and efforts are made to locate them. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster parents receive training that specifically prepares them to serve youth who are victims of sex trafficking. 2. Foster parents are trained to know what to watch for to keep youth safe from sex trafficking. 	Foster children are protected from sex trafficking
	I. Implement foster child bill of rights to assure that a foster child has a means for communicating and knows and understands the agency's plans for them.	Foster children know what they can expect from the child welfare and foster care system
	J. Visitation policies are established for foster children with their family.	Foster child's family relationships and connections are preserved
	K. Update guidance for facility child protection investigation and licensing investigation procedures.	Uniform processes are developed to ensure foster children are safe in their foster homes across the state.