

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES
STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

STANDARDS FOR OUT-OF-HOME CARE SERVICES

6.7 RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT OF FOSTER/ADOPTIVE CAREGIVERS

Council on Accreditation Standards

The Council on Accreditation Standard S21.12 (Human Resources: Personnel Skills) links to and supports Standard 6.7 *Retention and Recruitment of Foster/Adoptive Caregivers*.

Administrative Code

The Ohio Administrative Code Rules 5101:2-5-33 (Foster Caregiver Orientation and Training); 5101:2-5-13 (Required Agency Policies); 5101:2-7-03 (The Care and Treatment Team); 5101:2-42-05 (Selection of a Placement Setting); 5101:2-42-65 (Agency Visits); 5101:2-42-87 (Termination of Substitute Care); and 5101:2-42-90 (Information to be Provided to Caregivers, School Districts and Juvenile Courts; Information to be Included in Individual Child Care Agreement) address Standard 6.7 *Retention and Recruitment of Foster/Adoptive Caregivers*.

I. Philosophy

CFASAs recognize that the most effective recruitment strategy is the retention of current caregivers. As such, CFASAs acknowledge that supporting current caregivers is paramount to all retention efforts and recruitment strategies.

CFASAs seek to retain and recruit foster and/or adoptive caregivers to care for children in need of out-of-home placements (and best served in their own community). Children should maintain community relationships as this reduces trauma and stress to them. For this reason, foster/adoptive caregivers should be recruited in or close to the neighborhoods with the highest rate of removal.

Foster/adoptive caregivers have a need and a right to be part of the team, respected and appreciated for the critical and pivotal services they provide on a daily basis. Having foster caregivers as part of the team is key to successful retention and recruitment efforts. In addition, the strategies should be flexible and speak to the diverse interests, backgrounds and needs of individuals who currently foster and also those who seek to foster.

II. Outcome

Foster/adoptive caregivers are recruited and retained to meet the diverse needs of all children requiring placement.

Foster/Adoptive caregivers are retained and recruited in, or close to, neighborhoods where there is the highest rate of removal to meet the demand.

III. Evaluation

FACSIS events, CPOE and the Federal Health and Human Services outcomes may be considered when evaluating this standard. In addition, the CFSA may consider the following:

- number of prospective applicants per year;
- number of prospective applicants qualifying per year;
- number of prospective applicants completing all necessary paperwork per year;
- number of prospective applicants completing all training requirements per year;
- number of prospective applicants certified or approved per year;
- number of foster or adoptive families recruited, certified or approved from targeted neighborhoods;
- number of foster families that transfer per year;
- number of foster families that terminate license per year;
- number of grievances filed by foster families per year.

IV. Standards for Implementation

A. Retention Efforts

- 1) Recognizing that foster/adoptive caregiver retention efforts are the responsibility of each staff member, the CFSA should actively communicate this value through administrative and service activities.
- 2) Administrative and service activities should include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - a. providing in-house training with staff and foster/adoptive caregivers together to build the relationship between staff and foster/adoptive caregivers;
 - b. treating foster/adoptive parents as full members of the treatment team and respecting them as professionals, including keeping scheduled appointments or calling to cancel;
 - c. inviting foster/adoptive parents to participate in strategic planning and policy development and review;
 - d. responding to requests for support by foster/adoptive caregivers in a timely manner;
 - e. treating inquiries regarding the child in-care or their family as important;
 - f. assuring staff availability 24 hours per day, seven days per week;
 - g. providing a nonbiased process for resolving conflicts and concerns;
 - h. conducting third party investigations with respect and sensitivity; and
 - i. treating out-of-compliance rules findings as learning experiences;
- 3) Staff conducting home visits should make these visits purposeful and meaningful based on set agendas. Agenda items should include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - a. at each visit, the staff should review the status of the:
 - i. foster child;
 - ii. foster family;
 - iii. reunification/permanency progress;
 - iv. birth and foster family relationship;
 - v. respite plan; and,
 - vi. if necessary, develop an action plan of resolution in these areas.
 - b. on at least a monthly basis, one or more of the following agenda items should be addressed:
 - i. child's cultural and developmental needs;
 - ii. placement preservation plan;
 - iii. behavior management issues and strategies;
 - iv. child and/or family separation issues;
 - v. upcoming special events (e.g., semi-annual reviews, medical and educational tests, etc.);

- vi. child's and foster caregivers' response to visitation;
 - vii. family-centered, neighborhood-based activities;
 - viii. relationship of the foster caregivers and CFSA staff;
 - ix. identification of training needs;
 - x. after hours crisis intervention strategies and resources;
 - xi. foster caregivers' compliance with state rules; and
 - xii. agency policies or procedures changes.
- 4) After a child has left a foster family, the CFSA should conduct an evaluation with the foster family identifying strengths of the placement, as well as any difficulties that may have occurred throughout the placement. The evaluation should elicit suggestions that may improve or support the foster family more with future placements. These suggestions should be incorporated in the CFSA's annual foster/adoptive caregivers support plan.
- 5) Retention is successfully achieved by listening to and hearing the concerns and issues raised by the foster caregivers, whether provided to the CFSA one on one, through coalitions, or member groups. CFSA's should make the commitment to provide timely responses to concerns raised by the foster caregivers regarding agency policies, procedures, and/or practices.
- a. CFSA's should establish a protocol for addressing foster caregivers' concerns and issues. The protocol should include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - i. designated personnel responsible for receiving concerns/issues, coordinating the review and providing a response;
 - ii. set time period for responding to concerns/issues;
 - iii. the method for tracking and reporting incoming concerns, action taken, and level of satisfaction; and
 - iv. resolution to concerns.
- 6) Recognition is an essential component of effective retention efforts. CFSA's should design retention strategies which demonstrate genuine support and appreciation for the foster/adoptive caregiver. This should include strategies that individual foster/adoptive caregivers value and perceive as recognition. Recognition activities may include, but not be limited to, the following:
- a. thank you notes for a job well done;
 - b. annual appreciation luncheon or dinner;
 - c. newspaper articles on outstanding foster caregivers;
 - d. invitation to, and sending to, national conventions;
 - e. additional respite days;
 - f. joint training with staff and foster caregivers;
 - g. family activities passes (zoo, parks, etc.);
 - h. annual family event;
 - i. participation on agency's leadership group, community evaluation teams;
 - j. requesting advice from foster/adoptive caregivers on caring for child;
 - k. participating in reunification/permanency planning activities; and
 - l. planning and participating in recruitment/training activities.

B. Recruitment Efforts

When planning recruitment strategies, the CFSA should consider the following recruitment activities.

- 1) The CFSA should, with input from their key community partners and contracted providers, conduct an assessment of gaps in placement resources. Topics assessed should include: historical data and anticipated needs (trends) according to the age of incoming children, their gender, race, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, special needs, geographic location and other child characteristics such as sibling group size.
- 2) The CFSA should review and analyze the type and location of homes available and determine, based on their analysis, the types of homes needed and the geographic locations that should be targeted for recruitment. While targeting specific populations to recruit the foster caregiver(s) to meet the placement needs of children coming into care, CFSAs should remain flexible and open to interested individuals and/or couples who may fall outside of the "target" population.
- 3) The CFSA recruitment plan should include the development of a clear, brief and "catchy" public message that "attracts and grabs" the targeted population by establishing an emotional connection between the message and the individual receiving the message which creates an impetus for action and involvement on the part of the audience.
- 4) The CFSAs should develop a planful approach to recruitment efforts to maximize limited staff resources. The recruitment plan should be creative. Strategies selected should be tailored to meet the specific interests, needs, etc., of the targeted population. Creative efforts may include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - a. regularly scheduled presentations to social, civic, religious groups;
 - b. regular presentations to public agencies and non-profit organizations (e.g., visiting nurses, hospital employees, AARP);
 - c. creating partnerships with local businesses and labor unions to access their newsletters, involvement in recruitment drives, etc.;
 - d. use of placemats, flyers, etc., in local restaurants, mailers;
 - e. use of radio and television public service announcements, newspaper articles, campaigns and special events;
 - f. billboards, message boards on busses and bus benches and other mass transportation/high visibility sign-boards;
 - g. development and distribution of an Annual Adoption Calendar;
 - h. partnering with foster/adoptive families, associations and support groups;
 - i. providing recruitment incentives to foster/adoptive caregivers;
 - j. foster/adoptive focused web page development;
 - k. developing collaborative partnerships with formal and informal leaders in the targeted neighborhood(s) to engage local stakeholders in the recruitment process.
- 5) Successful recruitment plans should receive the full commitment of the CFSA. Commitment should be demonstrated through in-house activities that focus staff's attention on the importance of recruitment efforts. Activities may include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - a. education of staff on foster caregiver recruitment needs, including attention and commitment to customer service, such as responding enthusiastically and appropriately, with attention to detail and timeliness;

- b. coordinated recruitment activities staff can participate in;
 - c. regular communication with staff on homes available and needed, based on the population of children entering care;
 - d. recognition of efforts and progress made;
 - e. solicitation of staff in the development of the recruitment plan (staff from all program areas of the agency should be asked to participate).
- 6) The CFSA should identify barriers to their recruitment efforts, and take steps to reduce and/or remove those barriers. Barriers may include:
- a. scheduling, location and amount of training;
 - b. rules compliance;
 - c. lack of service supports, such as day care, respite;
 - d. inaccessible caseworkers, response time to inquiries;
 - e. paperwork and red tape;
 - f. role confusion and lack of clarity regarding expectations;
 - g. perception of agency;
 - h. lack of follow-up and follow-through;
 - i. inability to accommodate prospective foster caregiver's work schedules;
 - j. inadequate resources to meet service activity demands.

V. Financial Implications

Costs associated with Standard 6.7, *Retention and Recruitment of Foster/Adoptive Caregivers* include assessment of need, plan development and implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, for a total of:

- a. Needs Assessment: 80 hours x \$89.25/hour = \$7,140
- b. Development of foster caregiver recruitment plan based on Needs Assessment findings: 40 hours x \$89.25/hour= \$3,570
- c. Implement foster caregiver recruitment plan: 1,000 hours x \$89.25/hour = \$89,250
- d. Monitor, evaluate, revise plan: 80 hours x \$89.25/hour = \$7,140.