



MENTORING PROGRAM

A foster parent mentor is an experienced foster parent who provides guidance, support, and advice to those new to fostering.



Why Foster Parent Mentoring is a Vital Need:

Support during the first year of the foster care journey helps foster families build confidence and improve decision-making. Mentors provide valuable, hands-on experience, empowering new families to navigate challenges effectively. The best learning comes through experience, and seasoned mentors can instill the skills necessary for families to thrive. In addition, mentorship also increases long-term foster parent retention.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

CONNECTION

Building a strong connection with new foster parents begins with genuine empathy and understanding. Take the time to listen to their concerns and celebrate their successes, no matter how small. Encourage them to build supportive networks within the foster care community, including support groups, experienced mentors, and resource organizations. Remind them that connection is also essential for the children in their care, helping to create a sense of belonging and stability.



SAFETY

Help foster parents recognize the impact of trauma and how to provide trauma-informed care. Encourage open communication where children feel safe to express their feelings without fear of judgment. Additionally, support parents in advocating for the resources and professional services their children may need to heal and thrive.



ACCEPTANCE

Promoting acceptance means encouraging foster parents to embrace each child's unique identity and experiences. Guide them in understanding the importance of respecting a child's cultural background, personal preferences, and any expressions of gender or sexual identity. Emphasize that creating an environment of unconditional love and affirmation is key to fostering a child's self-worth and confidence.



RETENTION

Retention of foster families is essential to building a stable, effective foster care system. A strong focus on support, skills development, and resources increases the likelihood that families will stay long-term.

Retain foster families long-term.

Offer tools, resources, and training to help families meet each child's unique needs.

Foster collaborative relationships between foster families, agencies, and case managers.

Develop and support foster, kinship, and adoptive families throughout their journey.



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DEVELOPMENT

Building the skills of foster parents is crucial for their success. This includes helping them manage difficult situations, navigate the welfare system, and foster positive relationships with agencies.

INITIAL CONTACT

Begins with Foster/Adoptive Consultants.

How they present foster care will determine if a family takes the next steps to becoming a resource family.

TRAINING

Crucial element in preparing families to understand the dynamic needs of the children we serve.

LICENSING

The process of going through licensing can be overwhelming. Preparation for what to expect while going through the licensing process and a clear explanation of how each agency is a "separate entity" within the child welfare system.

POST-LICENSING SUPPORT

After completing the licensing process, families are supported while they await their first placement, including connection to peer groups and mentors.

WILL YOU WAIT

Offering a "while you wait" group where they can meet other prospective families, develop a network of parenting partners, and meet parent coaches.

FIRST PLACEMENT

A mentor contacts the family within 48 hours to provide guidance and support through their first placement.



SUPPORT

Building the skills of foster parents is crucial for their success. This includes helping them manage difficult situations, navigate the welfare system, and foster positive relationships with agencies.



SKILLS

Mentors guide families in building confidence and knowledge to meet the diverse needs of children in care.

GUIDANCE

Parent coaches reinforce skills, offer resources, and provide emotional support.

RESOURCES

Foster families have access to services tailored to their needs, based on their region.

CONFIDENCE

Mentors encourage families by offering practical guidance and reassurance.

SUPPORT NETWORK

Foster care staff cannot achieve success alone. It's essential to build a network of support within the system that includes case managers, agencies, and other professionals to ensure that foster parents feel supported and respected.

IMPACT OF SUPPORT

Research shows that foster families who receive targeted, personalized support are less likely to experience placement disruption. Support needs should align with the developmental stage of each family. New foster homes, in particular, need increased support during their first year.

COST OF DISRUPTION

Placement disruptions create additional trauma for the child and strain caseworkers' time and resources.

Retaining foster families reduces the costs of recruitment, licensing, and training new homes



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MENTORS

Mentors are integral to the development and success of foster families. By sharing their knowledge and experiences, mentors can positively influence new foster parents and help them build confidence.

BENEFITS TO BEING A MENTOR:

- Positively impact another individual's development by sharing knowledge and skills.
- Gain satisfaction from helping others succeed.
- Improve leadership, communication, and coaching abilities.
- Build professional networks and expand relationships within the foster care community.
- Strengthen foster parent-agency partnerships, helping to ensure placement stability

KEY MENTORING SKILLS:

- Communication and active listening.
- Positive, solution-oriented approach.
- Ability to manage conflict and provide feedback.
- Experience with biological families and reunification.
- Familiarity with DCFS policies and the licensing process.



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ROLE OF MENTOR



To provide guidance and support to new foster families including:

- Contact upon being paired with family.
- Regular contact upon placement of the child, assisting with questions and concerns, and advocating for special needs.
- Support and guidance with system barriers.
- Support with the school system and court-related issues.
- Guidance to help the mentee understand and share parenting expectations and DCFS guidelines and policies.
- Support for existing and new families crisis.
- Support for disruptions, permanency, reunification, allegations, personal family crisis, grief, and loss of support.
- Assist in recruiting new foster families.
- To maintain confidentiality.
- Ensure new families are equipped with the knowledge they will need to successfully navigate the child welfare system independently.
- Maintain a professional demeanor while representing Utah Foster Care as a mentor and follow all DCFS policies and procedures.
- Establish a personal working relationship with new foster families.
- Make phone calls/emails as required once a week for the first month of a placement and at least twice a month through the duration of the placement.
- Attend all required licensing or mentor training.



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PROGRAM GOALS



The goal of mentoring is to empower foster families, build their confidence, and help them become independent, self-regulating caregivers.

**SUPPORT
NEW FOSTER
FAMILIES**



**ENHANCE
PLACEMENT
STABILITY**



**ENCOURAGE
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT**



**STRENGTHEN
COLLABORATION
WITH WELFARE
AGENCIES**



**INCREASE FOSTER
FAMILY RETENTION**



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TRAINING AND CURRICULUM

- Initial training to review all mentor guidelines, role, and objectives
- Reports, logs, and expectations of mentors
- Boundaries and confidentiality
- Communication and feedback, conflict resolution, and assesment
- Approved training with implementation and guidance to families being mentored
- Shared parenting and expectations
- Court system, DCFS policy and procedures
- Office of Licensing
- School System
- Resources
- Inclusivity



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MENTORING ACTION PLAN - CRISIS SUPPORT

REINFORCE FOSTER PARENT'S ABILITY TO MANAGE CRISIS OR EMERGENCIES

- **Respite and Relief**
- **Request for removal**
- **Allegation Support**
- **24-hour crisis support**
- **Specific crisis plan for placement**
- **Increased Caseworker support**
- **Support During difficult transitions**
- **Support and Resources for difficult behaviors**



MENTORING OUTCOMES

The goal of mentoring is to empower foster families, build their confidence, and help them become independent, self-regulating caregivers.

IMPROVED
RETENTION
OF FOSTER HOMES.

ENHANCED
PLACEMENT
STABILITY

STRONGER
PARTNERSHIPS
BETWEEN FOSTER
FAMILIES, DCFS,
AND OTHER
AGENCIES.

INCREASED
RECRUITMENT
OF NEW
FOSTER FAMILIES.

BETTER
COMMUNICATIONS
AND REUNIFICATION
BETWEEN FAMILIES
AND CHILDREN IN
CARE.

REPORTING AND REIMBURSEMENT

Mentors must document all interactions on the Mentor Activity Log and submit the logs at the end of each week and fill out the Mentor billing form at the end of each month to receive reimbursement, if activity logs are not up to date reimbursement cannot be approved for payment.





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