

# Session One

## Connecting with PRIDE

- Families' success depends on community involvement and shared problem solving.
- Practice with families is interrelated at every step of the casework process.
- Sustainable success with families is the work of a team.
- The entire system must support frontline practice to achieve positive outcomes with families.
- Every staff position, role, and activity of the Division shows continuous effort to build and maintain professionalism.
- Skill based training and consultation forms the foundation for successful practice with families.
- Quality improvement and accountability guide all of our work.
- How we do the work is as important as the work we do.

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## Session One

### Competencies and Objectives

### Competencies

Prospective foster parents and adoptive parents:

- Understand the factors that contribute to neglect, emotional maltreatment, physical abuse, and sexual abuse.
- Know the conditions and experiences that may cause developmental delays and affect attachment.
- Understand the concept of permanence for children and why children in family foster care are at risk for not being connected to lifetime relationships.
- Know how adoption is a legal and social process that transfers parental rights to adoptive parents.
- Know the needs of specific children awaiting adoption.
- Know the implications of adoption for children at different stages of their development and can provide appropriate information and support.
- Know the roles, rights, and responsibilities of foster parents and adoptive parents.

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### In-Session Learning Objectives

As a result of their participation in this training program, prospective foster parents and adoptive parents will be able to:

1. Define family foster care and adoption.
2. Explain how family foster care and adoption fit into the larger child welfare picture.
3. Explain how the agency uses foster care and adoption services to carry out its mission to protect children and strengthen families.
4. Describe why children and families need family foster care services and adoption services.

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5. Identify the value of helping children and youth stay part of their families and culture, because strengthening families is the first goal of child welfare services.
6. Identify what foster parents and adoptive parents are expected to know and do as members of a professional team whose goal is to protect children and strengthen families.
7. Identify the benefits of family foster care and adoption for children and families.
8. Describe the rewards of fostering and adopting for foster families and adoptive families.
9. Describe the special situations and needs of the various types of children who receive foster care and adoption services.

### **At-Home Learning Objectives**

Through reviewing, at home, the information in their PRIDEbooks, prospective foster parents and adoptive parents will be able to:

1. Describe how foster parenting has changed during its 150-year history.
2. Describe how adoption services have grown more professional in the United States.

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# Session One

## Agenda



### Part I: Welcome and Introductions

- A. Participant Introductions
- B. Use of the PRIDEbook
- C. Review of Session One Competencies, Objectives, and Agenda
- D. Discussion of Teamwork Agreements
- E. Purpose of the Program: Connecting Preservice Training with Assessment, Licensing, and Certification

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### Part II: Connecting with Family Foster Care and Adoption: What? Why? Who? How?

- A. *Making a Difference!* Video
- B. Discussion of Perspectives

### Part III: Closing Remarks

- A. PRIDEbook Resources
- B. PRIDE Connection
- C. Preview of Session Two
- D. *Making a Difference!*
- E. End Session

**Requirements for Participation in the**  
**Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE**  
**Training Program**

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(to be added by agency)

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## **Requirements for Participation in the Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE Training Program**

A family foster home is a private residence of one (1) or more family members that receives from a child welfare agency any minor child who is unattended by a parent or guardian in order to provide care, training, education, custody or supervision on a twenty-four (24) hour basis, not to include adoptive homes. The home must meet foster home standards and the individual child's need for the duration of the placement. Foster care is a team effort involving DCFS, the family foster parents, the foster child, the birth/legal parents, and other appropriate community members.

The Division shall place children in approved foster homes that meet all Minimum Licensing Standards for Child Welfare Agencies as well as DCFS Standards for Approval for foster homes and where the foster parents have satisfactorily completed the Division's pre-service training curriculum, have been cleared through the Child Maltreatment Central Registry, Adult Maltreatment Central Registry, State Police Criminal Record Check, an FBI Criminal Background Check and a Vehicle Safety Check.

An Individualized Training Plan for in-service training shall be developed for each foster parent. The plans shall take into consideration the age and characteristics of children for whom the foster parent is caring and the expressed preferences of the foster parent.

The approval process shall concurrently educate foster parents on the characteristics of children in out-of-home placement and assess their capability to meet those needs and their compliance with the Minimum Licensing Standards for Child Welfare Agencies and DCFS Standards for Approval of foster homes.

In a two-parent home, each person shall be joint applicants and each person shall actively participate in the approval process. The couple shall demonstrate a stable relationship. In assessing relationship stability, considerations may include major life changes such as:

- Death or serious illness among family members
- Marriage, separation, divorce, or other significant changes in the couple's relationship
- Addition of household members (e.g., birth, adoption, aging relative moving in)
- Loss of or change in employment

In a single parent home, the major life changes listed above shall also be considered when assessing the person's ability to be an effective foster parent.

A foster home may not house or admit any roomer or boarder. A roomer or boarder is:

- A. a person to whom a household furnishes lodging, meals, or both, for a reasonable monthly payment; and,
- B. not a household member.

A household member is a resident of the home who:

- A. owns or is legally responsible for paying rent on the home (household head); or,
- B. is in a close personal relationship with a household head; or,
- C. is related to a household head or a to a person in a close personal relationship with a household head.

Any household member who resides in the home for more than 3 cumulative months in a calendar year must clear the following background checks: Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, Arkansas Adult Maltreatment Registry, Arkansas State Police Criminal Record Check, and FBI Criminal Background Check.

An assessment must be conducted on each household member's impact on the child and the child's impact on each household member.

DCFS shall re-evaluate each foster home's ability to care for the children at least annually and whenever there is a major life change in the lives of foster families. Foster parents who do not meet the in-service training requirement will be placed on probation for sixty (60) days. No new children receiving out-of-home placement services may be placed during the 60 day probation period. Foster parents shall complete their annual in-service training requirements before they receive any additional children receiving out-of-home placement services unless an exception is granted.

There are two types of DCFS foster homes: Provisional Foster Homes and Regular Foster Homes.

Provisional foster homes are identified and recruited in an effort to preserve family connections and expedite placement, may seek to place a child in foster care with a relative. "Relative" means a person within the fifth degree of kinship by virtue of blood or adoption if one has been identified and is appropriate.

The purpose of opening a provisional foster home is to enable DCFS to make an expedited placement for a child with a relative with whom a bond already exists. Therefore, a provisional home may be opened before the results of the FBI Background Check are received, before the provisional foster parents have completed the pre-service training, and before a full home study is finished (however a visual inspection of the home is required before placement in a provisional home). These are the only differences in approval requirements, including minimum licensing requirements, between provisional foster homes and regular foster homes in Arkansas.

Once opened as a provisional home, DCFS staff works with the foster parents in that home to bring them into full compliance within a six month period. Provisional foster homes that are not in full compliance at the end of six months must be closed and the child(ren) removed, unless the relative has acquired custody. If the home is opened as a regular foster home, the foster parents may then request to care for non-relative children



in foster care with the understanding that additional evaluation of their home would be required to ensure that it would be an appropriate placement for non-relative children.

DCFS staff are only permitted to be agency-approved foster homes for informal respite care purposes but may not serve as an informal respite home for children/youth on their own caseload. The Area Director must give prior approval to any employee seeking to become an agency-approved informal respite home provider. Each DCFS employee's request to serve as an informal respite care home will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Staff from a different county or a contract provider must assess and approve the home. Employees shall not use their employment status as a means to obtain information about the child's case, gain services, or receive preferential treatment.

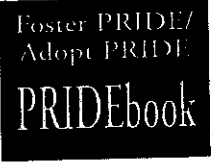
However, in situations where Division staff are relatives to children placed in DHS custody, and it is in the best interest of the child to be placed with the relatives, the DCFS Director may grant approval on a case by case basis for staff to serve as provisional foster parents, and if they meet all regular foster home requirements within the initial 6 month period, regular foster parents to the relative child.

**\*See "Foster Parent Handbook" (Pub-30) and "Standards for Approval of Foster and Adoptive Homes" (Pub-22) for detailed procedures on training, approval, and re-evaluation.**

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## Key Points

### Defining Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE



Foster

Adoptive

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Foster

Adopt(ive)

PARENTS'  
RESOURCE  
for  
INFORMATION  
DEVELOPMENT  
EDUCATION

To **foster** means to nurture, or to help someone to grow. So family foster care means to help a child grow in a family, in a caring way.

To **adopt** means to take as your own. Of course you would nurture your own child, in your family, in a caring way. As an adoptive parent, you would treat the child placed with you in the same way.

For people like you, who wish to become foster **parents** and adoptive **parents**, Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE is a **resource**. Its goal is to share essential **information** for your development into a successful new adoptive family or foster family.

This process includes **education** for all of us. We'll help you learn the knowledge and skills you need to make an informed decision about fostering or adopting, and to get off to a healthy start. You need to educate us about you and your ideas about adopting or fostering.

Then we will make the best decision about whether fostering is right for you, or adoption is right for you. Remember, sometimes folks decide that neither fostering nor adopting is right at this time. That's okay, too. What's important is to make the right decision, together.

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## Connecting Preservice Training Sessions to Assessment, Licensing, and Certification

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The nine training sessions cover the knowledge and skills you will need to *become* foster parents and adoptive parents. We call these “competencies.” Experienced foster parents, adoptive parents, and social workers from around the country worked together to decide upon these competencies. We think they are key to our agency’s mission to protect children and strengthen families.

What we will cover in our training sessions is closely connected to what your Family Development Specialist will discuss with you in your at-home meetings. The training sessions will give you a chance to learn about and experience the competencies that new foster parents and adoptive parents need. In your at-home meetings, you and your Family Development Specialist will assess together whether you have or can develop these competencies and how willing you are to become foster parents or adoptive parents.

By the end of our sessions, we expect one of four outcomes:

- The agency and you agree that your competencies and interests fit with our program goals. We invite you to become part of our team of foster parents and adoptive parents.
- The agency and you agree that your competencies and interests do not fit with our program goals. You choose not to foster or adopt at this time.
- The agency finds that your competencies fit with the program, but you are not interested and you select out of the program at this time.
- You find that your competencies and interests fit but the agency does not agree with you. In this case, the agency has the final say because we are legally required to protect the children in our care. Our job is to find foster families and adoptive families for children, and not to find children for adults who want them. We sincerely hope you understand this.

The Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE program takes a lot of your time and energy when you aren’t certain of the outcome. But we have learned that it’s worthwhile to take time now to make the best assessment possible. It keeps children from further disruptions, and protects you and your family as well from an unhappy experience.

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## Connecting with Fostering and Adopting

### What is family foster care?

- Family foster care is a service provided by child welfare agencies to ensure that children who must be separated from their families are cared for by nurturing families who are trained and (licensed, certified, or approved) to meet the child's needs.
- Provides an opportunity for children and families to heal, grow, and develop.
- Has as its primary goal strengthening families, so that children can be reunited with families who are able to provide safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime.
- Provides an opportunity for children and youth to be connected to other families when reunification with parents or kin is not possible.
- In some situations, may provide a family that is willing and able to make a permanent commitment to the child if reunification with parents or kin is not possible.

### What is adoption?

- Adoption legally connects parents with children who were not born to them; it comes with the same rights and responsibilities that exist between children and their birth parents.
- Should take place by an agency-approved or certified adoptive family; this family may be the child's foster family or may be a resource family certified only for adoption.
- Helps children with no nurturing family of their own to join a family offering care, protection, and opportunities for growth and development.
- Offers parents who cannot rear their children a chance to give those children caring, lifetime relationships with a different family.

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**Why do children and families need child welfare services?**

- Due to tragedies such as alcohol and other drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, special medical circumstances, physical or sexual abuse, neglect, and emotional maltreatment. Poverty or homelessness should not be reasons for separating children from their families.
- Because some parents decide they are not able or willing to raise their children. They choose to end their parental rights.

**What are the mission and goals of a child welfare agency?**

- Protect and nurture children.
- Strengthen families.
- Provide children and families at risk with the services and supports they need to maintain safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime.
- These goals are also reflected on a national level through Federal legislation. The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 identifies safety, permanence, and well-being as the outcomes to be achieved for all children served by the child welfare system.

**How are children and families referred for family foster care and adoption services?**

- Families usually come to the attention of child welfare services through reports of child abuse and neglect from the community. These reports may be filed by teachers, neighbors, doctors, or family members, or by the families themselves.
- Families may be referred for child welfare services by the court. Most states have provisions for services to youth who are truant or runaway, but who have not committed a crime.

**Why do children need foster care services?**

- Child welfare agencies provide services to help strengthen families. These services are provided while the child remains in the home whenever possible.
- At times it may be determined that the child will be at risk if he or she remains in the home. The child may be removed immediately, especially if there has been severe trauma.

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- In other situations, the agency attempts to work with the family, but if the family does not cooperate with services or correct the situation that brought the case to the attention of the agency, a decision may be made to place the child in family foster care.

#### **Why do children need adoption services?**

- When children are placed into family foster care, the agency usually seeks to strengthen the family and reunite the child with the family.
- In situations where families do not participate in services or do not make the changes to ensure the child's safety and well-being, the agency must begin to make other plans for the child. Adoption is often the plan of choice if a child cannot return home.
- An agency may work toward two plans at one time. Often, the agency may be seeking to reunify the child with the family, but may also be working on an adoption plan in case reunification cannot occur.
- In order to be adopted, the birth parents' rights must be legally terminated. This can occur voluntarily, when birth parents sign a voluntary consent agreeing to allow the child to be adopted. If the parents don't agree with the adoption plan, it can happen through a court process when a judge decides to terminate parental rights and allow the child to be adopted.

#### **What is a "competency" and why do foster parents and adoptive parents need competencies?**

- Competencies are the knowledge and skills you need to do a certain role within an organization to help meet its goals.
- Foster parents and adoptive parents have essential roles within a child welfare agency. To help the agency reach its goals, they must have competencies like every other member of the agency's team.

#### **What are the competencies that foster parents and adoptive parents need?**

- Protecting and nurturing children.
- Meeting children's developmental needs and addressing developmental delays.
- Supporting relationships between children and their families.
- Connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime.

- Working as a member of a professional team.
- There are four levels of competencies: being aware; understanding and knowing; having skills; and using skills. Before being licensed or certified, prospective foster and adoptive parents should be competent at the first two levels: being aware, and understanding/knowing.

What are some examples of the five competencies as seen in the video?

- **Protecting and nurturing:** Emma helps Vernon with his sad, bad, and mad feelings about his mama when he takes out these feelings on Nathan's rose bush. The adoptive parents learn all they can about Vernon to help keep him safe.
- **Meeting developmental needs and addressing developmental delays:** Carleton talks about sexual behavior risks with Nathan. Emma helps Vernon catch up in math. Manuela Hernandez and her family learn the skills to be able to foster and then adopt a child who is medically fragile. Ann Kowalski helps Rose graduate from high school.
- **Supporting relationships between children and their families:** The Hansons help Nathan protect and nurture the rose bush. They support his return to his father. They accept the importance of Vernon's parents through his mother's picture and his father's visits. Ann Kowalski helps Rose stay connected to her brother and grandmother. Vernon's adoptive parents get training to help him stay in touch with his father.
- **Connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime:** The Hansons work with Nathan's social worker to help reunite him with his father. They work with Vernon's social worker to help him make the move to an adoptive family. Vernon's adoptive parents learn all they can about his past life with his mother and the Hansons to prepare for a lifetime relationship with Vernon.
- **Working as a member of a professional team:** Vernon's teacher and social worker (Trisha Walker) talk about how to help Vernon. Emma plans to call Trisha Walker for help with his "big feelings." The Hansons and Trisha Walker work together to return Nathan to his father and to place Vernon with an adoptive family. Vernon's social worker, adoption worker, foster parents, and adoptive parents all cooperate to share information and plan his transition.

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**What are some supports for foster parents and adoptive parents as shown in the *Making a Difference!* video?**

- Family and friends.
- Agency and social workers.
- Foster parent association and adoptive parent support groups.
- Foster parent training programs.
- The community, such as the place of worship.

**What are some of the challenges of fostering, and why?**

- Making the decision to foster.
- Managing the impact on one's own family.
- Sharing parenting with the birth family and the agency (such as making decisions about case planning, visits, or reunification).
- Helping children with their sad, bad, and mad feelings and behaviors. These may be due to poverty, homelessness, alcohol and other drugs, trauma, neglect, and separation from parents, siblings, and kin.
- Learning how to support a child's cultural identity and connections to family, community, and culture.
- Helping children transition into their families and out of their families by working with the child's other caregivers including birth families, kinship families, adoptive families, or other foster families.

**What are some of the challenges of adopting?**

- Making the decision to adopt.
- Managing the impact on one's own family (children, marriage, kin, finances, neighbors, health, employment).
- Sharing the parenting experience with the child's birth parents, the foster parents, and the agency.
- Helping children with their feelings about being adopted as they develop from infancy to adulthood



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- Helping children understand the meaning of adoption as they develop from infancy to adulthood.
  - Forming lifetime attachments with children.

**What are some of the challenges of being a “permanency planning” family?**

- All of the challenges of fostering and adopting, as well as;
- Focusing on the child’s need for permanence, whether that means reunification or adoption in your family;
- Risking separation from a child to whom you are attached.

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## Dates and Overview of Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE Sessions

(Please write dates in space provided)

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### Session One – Connecting with PRIDE

Session One gives you the unique opportunity to learn about the world of foster care and adoption through the stories of children receiving child welfare services. The video *Making a Difference!* portrays how families come to the attention of child welfare agencies and how the team of child welfare professionals work together on behalf of the child. You will see how different foster families and adoptive families work as part of that team to provide for the challenging needs of children in their care. The video stirs feelings of sadness and inspiration and raises questions that will continue to be addressed throughout the training program.

Session One also welcomes you to Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE. It explains how this training program fits in with the process of assessing and selecting foster families and adoptive families. You will discover how families are licensed and certified for this important work. Session One spells out the knowledge and skills (known as “competencies”) that successful foster families and adoptive families need.

Session One introduces several regular features of Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE. These include PRIDE Connections (linking classroom learning with life experiences); *Making a Difference!* (stories illustrating the rewards of fostering and adopting); Key Points (a summary of important information discussed in each session); You Need to Know! (lessons to study at home); A Birth Parent’s Perspective (stories and letters from parents to promote understanding the families of children in care); and Promoting Safety, Permanence, and Well-Being (helpful parenting resources and tips for ongoing use that supplement the training program).

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### Session Two – Teamwork toward Permanence

One of the most challenging tasks for foster families and adoptive families involves developing an understanding of birth family issues—knowing how to talk with children about their families and being able to support their family relationships. This session lays the foundation for this understanding by first exploring the ways in which families support a child’s identity, cultural heritage, and self-esteem. In a video called *Family Forever*, actual foster parents and birth parents talk about their experiences working together on behalf of

child. You will have the opportunity to view and discuss some short video vignettes that demonstrate the skills of “shared parenting.” This session also conveys why we value permanence in the lives of children and how we seek to provide it. Your group will learn why teamwork is the best way to promote permanence for children and families. Through participation in this Session you will discover the important role of foster parents and adoptive parents as members of a professional team.

**Session Three – Meeting Developmental Needs: Attachment**

A unique activity called a “guided imagery” invites you to think through the feelings and experiences of a baby’s entry into the world. In this way, Session Three reviews some of the “basics” of child growth and development. You will be asked to consider how important it is for children to form deep and lasting attachments. Session Three then explores how abuse, neglect, and trauma impact a child’s attachments, development, and behavior. In a video clip, a youth named “Kevin” discusses the impact of his life experiences on his ability to form positive attachments. Your group then work with some additional case vignettes to explore ways in which foster parents and adoptive parents, working with other team members, go about building positive attachments with children so their developmental needs may be met.

**Session Four – Meeting Development Needs: Loss**

When children are separated from the only family they have known, an overwhelming sense of loss may slow growth and development. This session covers the types of losses children have before they enter foster care. It explores how placement can deepen the child’s sense of loss. Session Four reviews the stages of loss, and their impact on the child, with an emphasis on how loss affects the child’s behavior. Your group will have the opportunity to look in greater depth at the losses that Kevin (from the video vignette in the previous session) experienced throughout his life.

Loss is presented as something everyone must face. You will have a chance to consider your own response to loss. Based on this, you will discuss how your might respond to losses that come with fostering and adopting, as well as how you can help children cope with their losses.

**Session Five – Strengthening Family Relationships**

This session focuses on how families instill identity, cultural heritage, and self-esteem in children. You will have the opportunity to learn ways to help a child develop positive cultural identity at different developmental stages.

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The importance of family connections and continuity is also addressed. Session Five reviews the child welfare goal of returning children in foster care to their birth families whenever possible. As this concept is discussed your group will consider how the team can support this goal, known as "reunification."

One way to strengthen family relationships is by scheduling visits between children in foster care and their birth parents. Session Five gives very practical information about how to plan for visits, how to get children ready for them, and how to handle their reactions when the visit ends. Several video vignettes illustrate specific skills related to planning for and handling visits.

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### Session Six – Meeting Development Needs: Discipline

Session Six explores the challenge of discipline. It includes a definition of discipline, a set of goals, and a discussion about how discipline is different from punishment. You will review the agency's policy on discipline and discuss why physical punishment is not permitted. Session Six covers the knowledge, skills, and personal qualities adults need to instill discipline. Your group will explore the meaning of a child's behavior and the factors that influence behavior. The session offers an outline of ways foster parents and adoptive parents can best meet the goal of providing discipline that works. By reviewing several video vignettes you will learn specific discipline skills and their use with different types of children and situations. You will also discuss strategies for managing the behavior of children who have experienced abuse, neglect, and trauma. Finally, the session focuses on the steps to take to manage crisis situations and de-escalate problem behaviors.

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### Session Seven – Continuing Family Relationships

In this session, a "Job Description for Permanency Planning Team Members" outlines the specific tasks needed in order to help children achieve their permanent goal. Goals for reaching permanence are detailed, starting with efforts to support families, and to place children back in their birth families or in the home of a relative. This session promotes understanding of permanency timeframes, and the importance of the "child's clock" in making permanency decisions. You will learn about concurrent planning as a strategy for achieving permanence in a more timely fashion. Session Seven presents other ways to provide lifelong connections for children who cannot grow up in their families. These include adoption, planned long-term foster care, and independent living. The session ends with a discussion of cultural issues in permanency planning, the impact of transracial placements on children, and ways to support children's developing identity when they are in transracial placements.

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**Session Eight – Planning for Change**

How would your family be different after having a child placed in your care? Session Eight takes a practical view of what to expect during the first hours, days, and weeks of a child's placement in a home. You will learn what to ask the worker and how to talk to the child. You will also have the opportunity to explore how placement will impact your family, and particularly your own children. This session explores both the immediate and the long-term impact of placement. Video vignettes explore specific skills in dealing with the impact of fostering and adopting on different family members.

Fostering and adopting carry some risks for families, and these will be discussed. Specifically your group will explore ways to create a safe and healing home environment for children who have experienced sexual abuse, and strategies for handling the behaviors of these children. The session ends with a look at how foster families and adoptive families find support from other team members.

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**Session Nine – Taking PRIDE: Making an Informed Decision**

In this closing session, you will hear from a panel of experienced members of the foster care team. Birth parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, workers, and other members of the child welfare team present their views and answer questions. You will have a chance to reflect on your own growth in the knowledge and skills required for foster parenting or adoptive parenting. You will be on your way toward a final decision about making a commitment to becoming a foster parent or adoptive parent.

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**Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE  
FDS/Trainer's Worksheet**

Foster PRIDE/  
Adopt PRIDE  
**PRIDEbook**

Family Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Training Dates: \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_  
FDS Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Trainer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Resource 1-F**

**Competency 1: Protecting and nurturing children**  
(Particularly related to Sessions 1, 2, 9)

**Comments**

**Competency 2: Meeting children's developmental needs and addressing  
developmental delays (Particularly related to Sessions 1, 3, 4, 6)**

**Comments**

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**Competency 3: Supporting relationships between children and their families**  
(Particularly related to Sessions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

**Comments**

**Competency 4: Connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime** (particularly related to Sessions 1, 7)

**Comments**

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**Competency 5: Working as a member of a professional team**  
(particularly related to Sessions 1, 2, 5, 7, 9)

**Comments**

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## **Connecting with Fostering and Adopting: Making a Difference! Video**

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### **Resource 1-G**

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#### **About the Video**

*Making a Difference!* is a 35-minute docudrama performed by professional actors. You will see stories told by characters directly to the camera, and dramatic vignettes.

This video is meant to:

- Give you “the big picture” of what is involved in fostering and adopting. This will help you learn the basics during Foster PRIDE/ Adopt PRIDE.
- Inspire and challenge you by connecting you emotionally to the part you might play in protecting and nurturing children, and strengthening families.

The adults, children, and youth in the video are actors. The feelings and behaviors they portray relate to a range of family foster care and adoption issues.

In real life, there are many types of individuals, families, ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and communities. So these actors cannot represent everyone involved in the child welfare system, or all the situations that occur.

It is up to you, along with the Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE trainers, to apply what you see in the video to your own experiences. As you do so, consider your own age, gender, cultural and ethnic perspective, and the role you might play in fostering or adopting.

#### **Questions for Discussion**

- What is family foster care?
- What is adoption?
- Why do children and families need child welfare services?
- What are the mission and goals of a child welfare agency?
- How do children and families get referred for child welfare services?
- Why do children need foster care services?

- Why do children need adoption services?
- What is meant by the term “competency” and why do foster parents and adoptive parents, like workers, need competencies?
- What are the five “competency categories” for foster parents and adoptive parents? How competent do prospective foster parents and adoptive parents need to be?
- What are some examples of competencies you observed in the *Making a Difference!* video?
- What are some sources of support for foster parents and adoptive parents as seen in the video?
- What are some of the challenges of fostering?
- What are some of the challenges of adopting?
- What are some of the challenges of being a “permanency planning” or “concurrent planning” family?

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## You Need to Know! About the History of Family Foster Care<sup>1</sup>

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### Resource 1-H

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Foster parenting, as a formal, institutional practice in the United States, has gone through four major changes in its 150-year history. In the early years, until the 1970s, foster parents were viewed as parents. During the 1970s and 1980s foster parents were viewed as parents plus. In the 1990s foster parents were increasingly asked to develop more skills and to raise children with challenging needs. In this new millenium, more timely and creative strategies for ensuring permanence are a focus.

#### Early Foster Parenting: Foster Parents as Parents

Before family foster care, children in need of care were viewed by many cultures as being the responsibility of the tribe, clan, or extended family. Early Judaism and Christianity required care of dependent children as a duty under law.<sup>2</sup>

A tradition of assistance within kinship networks is an important part of many diverse cultures. Many European and Asian immigrant groups brought to the new world the value that extended family cared for children when parents were not able to do so. Kinship care has long been a tradition among African American families; Native Americans strongly value tribal ties.<sup>3</sup>

During the early history of the United States, African American, Latino, and Asian children received care primarily through the resources of their extended families, tribes, or clans, as did many Caucasian children. Indian children were cared for by their tribes as far as possible; however, government policies and programs limited tribal sovereignty (for example, the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the late nineteenth century established Indian boarding schools to separate children from their families and reservations).<sup>4</sup>

Some children without parents did not receive care through their extended families. These children, primarily Caucasian, lived in orphanages, institutions, and asylums. Often they lived with adults who were mentally ill or who had other disabling conditions, such as mental retardation. The practice of indenture, imported from England, placed needy children with artisans who provided support, care, and training in exchange for work. This practice ended by 1875.

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<sup>1</sup>Adapted from Pasztor, E.M., Polowy, M., Leighton, M., and Conte, R.P. (1992). *The Ultimate Challenge: Foster Parenting in the 1990s*. Washington DC: Child Welfare League of America, pp 12-15.

<sup>2</sup>Downs, S.W., Costin, L.B., & McFadden, E.J. (1996). *Child Welfare and Family Services Policies and Practice*. New York: Longman Publishers, p. 264.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 254-255.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Early foster care was called “placing out.” The father of foster care was Charles Loring Brace, who, in the 1850s in New York City, founded the Children’s Aid Society. Brace believed that the family was “God’s reformatory,” and that all children needed a home.

The “orphan train” movement placed children from poor families (and children who truly were orphans) from eastern cities into farm families in the Midwest. Between the 1850s and 1930, as many as 150,000 children traveled west on these trains.

Foster parents were supposed to provide education, religious training, and job training until children turned 16. At that point, society assumed they would be on their own.

Home studies were done by local screening committees made up of town leaders (ministers, judges, newspaper editors).

Early assumptions about foster care included:

- Foster parents could substitute for the birth family (introducing the term “substitute care”). Foster parenting was viewed as the same as parenting one’s own children.
- Foster care was like adoption. Birth parents generally stayed out of sight and out of mind. The term “up for adoption” may have come from placing the children up on auction blocks when the orphan trains pulled into the stations. Local families could then choose the child they wanted.
- Children were viewed as a legitimate source of labor. Most of the families lived on farms and the more children one had, the more the farm could produce. Teenage boys were often the first youngsters selected.
- Children had no special problems or needs apart from being dependent or neglected. They needed to grow up in families that treated them like “one of their own.”

The first White House Conference on Children, convened in 1909, acknowledged the right of every child to grow up in a family. The U.S. Children’s Bureau was established in 1912. In 1920, the Child Welfare League of America was founded. It set national policies and standards.

The years 1920–1970 saw a growing awareness that foster parents had to provide more than just basic child care. A controversy arose over whether foster parents, in relation to the agency, were most like social workers, colleagues, children’s parents (clients), or something in between.

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## The 1970s and 1980s: Foster Parents as Parents, *Plus*

### In the 1970s:

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- Studies uncovered the problem of foster care drift. This refers to children growing up in foster care when their parents actually could care for them, and children moving from home to home without any permanence.
- The foster care population grew to 500,000 by 1978.
- The media and the National Commission on Children in Need of Parents attacked foster care as “a sure way to waste money and harm children.”
- The National Foster Parents Association (NFPA) was formed by the U.S. Children’s Bureau and the Child Welfare League of America.
- “Parenting Plus,” the first nationally standardized foster parent training program, was funded by the Children’s Bureau and developed by the Child Welfare League of America. It is based on our belief that foster parenting requires more than the basic parenting skills.

### In the 1980s:

- The permanency planning movement recognized the need and right of every child to grow up in one family, with caring parents and relationships intended to last a lifetime. This is based on research showing that being without permanent parents harms children psychologically.
- Public Law 96-272, the federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, provided incentives to keep children in their own homes and place children for adoption. It caused a short-term decrease in the foster care population by almost 50%, and an increase in foster parent training programs nationwide.
- A new population of children with “special needs” emerged. This included children with more serious emotional problems, behavioral problems, handicapping conditions, and learning disabilities. Often, sibling groups, older children, and children of color were included in this category. “Special needs” children have also been labeled “hard to place,” a phrase that blames the children for their needs.

By the mid to late 1980s, dramatic changes were occurring:

- The number of child abuse and neglect cases increased 140% in one decade, to 2.4 million nationally in 1989.
- The number of children in out-of-home care increased to 370,000, up from 225,000 in the early 1980s.
- The number of foster families decreased to 125,000 from 147,000 earlier in the decade.
- A large number of children of color were separated from their parents and placed in foster care. This highlights the impact of poverty, homelessness, and racism on the child welfare system.

### **The 1990s: New Challenges, New Skills**

Foster parenting changed significantly during the 1990s because the needs and problems of children and youth required foster parents to offer more than general parenting skills. At national, state, and local levels it was recognized that the role of fostering had changed. With the change came the need for better preparation for the fostering role, more ongoing supports, increased attention to ongoing professional development, and increased and ongoing efforts to promote teamwork on behalf of children and their families.

The development of the PRIDE model grew out of the recognition of the foster parent's and adoptive parent's changing role. It is representative of the commitment that states, counties, and agencies must make to develop and support competent family resources. Across the country, child welfare systems have worked to meet this challenge.

Within the child welfare system, other changes occurred during the 1990s. Most significant was the recognition that children were still languishing within the foster care system. Efforts to address "foster care drift" had not been successful, or at best had been overshadowed by the need to respond to the ever increasing numbers of children entering the foster care system over the previous two decades. While agencies struggled to build strong child welfare teams, there was one area in which team members were usually in agreement: the system needed to be more responsive and timely in meeting children's needs for permanence.

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The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) was a landmark attempt to significantly change the way in which child welfare systems delivered services and worked toward permanence for children. This national legislation set forth clear timelines for decision making, hoping to promote permanence in a more timely manner and reduce the length of time children remain in foster care.

At the end of the 1990s, it was clear that the child welfare system on a national level was struggling to determine how best to meet the requirements of ASFA.

Concurrent planning was one approach to more timely permanence. Simply put, concurrent planning means the agency works toward two goals at one time, so that if one goal does not work out, the other can be implemented. For example, the child welfare team may be working to reunify a child with his or her family, while also exploring adoption. If the child is unable to return to the family, then efforts will already be underway toward adoption.

Other changes that were not solely a result of ASFA but were supported by the ASFA legislation included:

- Increased efforts to coordinate permanency planning with legal and court systems.
- Greater focus on increasing the number of adoptions.
- Emphasis on developing “Permanency Planning Foster Families” or families who would be able to help reunify a child with the parents, but who were willing to consider adoption if the reunification could not occur.
- Increased efforts to involve birth families in planning for their child’s permanence.

Finally, an evolving change has been the recognition that foster families and adoptive families do not usually reflect two separate populations. In fact, with ASFA and the need to develop Permanency Planning Foster Families, the differences between the two roles have further blurred. While recognizing that adoption and foster care represent two different and distinct services for a child, we have long recognized that there are many similarities in the skills needed for each role. In the late 1990s, more than half of the children adopted within the child welfare system remained with their foster families.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Petit, M.R., Curtis, P.A., Woodruff, K, Arnold, L., Feagans, L, & Ang, J. (1999). Child abuse and neglect: A look at the states. Washington, DC: Child Welfare League of America.

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## 2000 and Beyond

As we consider new challenges, it is important to remember that within child welfare we have made great strides. Managing very complicated issues, where people have many strong and conflicting feelings, the child welfare system has emerged with clear goals. We have learned from our past and are struggling to build new and improved practice models to support what we know. We know that children and youth in care today have needs that require a different role for foster parents. We know that:

- Almost all children and youth in foster care have special needs. Some, with HIV/AIDS, or alcohol and other drug exposure, have extraordinary needs.
- No one can substitute completely for the birth family. Out of sight does not mean out of mind.
- Most youth in care are not ready for independent living by the age of 18, or even 21, and need long term relationships.
- Children and youth in care have more contact with foster parents than anyone else, so the foster parent's relationship with them is invaluable.

We also know, therefore, that it is essential to:

- Protect and nurture children and youth in a safe, healthy environment with unconditional positive support.
- Meet developmental needs by: building self-esteem; supporting cultural and spiritual identity; providing positive guidance; using appropriate discipline; supporting intellectual growth; and encouraging friendships.
- Support relationships between children and youth and their birth families.
- Promote permanence for children, leading to a return home or other safe and nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime.
- Work as part of a professional team because the needs of children, youth, and their families are so complex and perplexing that no one can do all the care and social services alone.

Increasingly, children and their families require the help and services of a diverse professional team that includes foster parents. It helps to have others who share the problems, and the successes!



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## You Need to Know! About the History of Adoption<sup>6</sup>

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Like foster care, adoption has its roots in informal child care arrangements in many cultures dating from ancient times. References to adoption are found in the texts of the Chinese, Hindus, Babylonians, Romans, Hebrews, and Egyptians. The purpose of adoption varied, from continuing family religious traditions to providing an heir to expressing kinship-based and tribal values. An inscription from the tomb of a Babylonian king from 2,800 BC illustrates this age-old practice:

The River carried  
Me to Akki, the water carrier.  
Akki the water carrier  
Lifted me up  
In the kindness of  
His heart.  
Akki the water carrier  
Raised me as his own son.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Portions of this history were adapted from Downs, S.W., Costin, L.B., & McFadden, E.J. (1996). Child Welfare and Family Services Policies and Practice. New York: Longman Publishers.

<sup>7</sup>Merton, Robert K., et al. (1957). The Student-Physician: Introductory Studies in the Sociology of Medical Education. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 598.

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## Early Adoption Policies and Practices in the United States

As it was with ancient people, so it is with many groups in this country. Care by kin is a time honored tradition among most cultures. Among people of color, for example, informal adoption, or kinship care, has long been a means of caring for children who cannot live with their parents.

Informal adoption means the full-time care, nurturing, and protection of children by relatives, members of their tribes or clans, godparents, stepparents, by other adults who have a kinship bond with a child, or by unrelated adults whom the family considers to be family members. In these informal arrangements, families decide that children will live with kin; the courts are not involved in the decision.

African American families have informally adopted children in their kin networks for many generations. "Through the years, thousands of African American children have been reared by loving, concerned grandparents, aunts, uncles, other relatives, or friend of the family because, for some reason, the children's birth parents were unable to raise them. . . ."<sup>8</sup>

Until the 1970s, most adoption agencies served middle class Caucasian families; for many reasons African American families did not use these agencies. Informal rather than formal adoption has been the custom until recently, when the need for and interest in legal adoption has grown.

Before the nineteenth century, Indian children needing care were provided for by their tribes. Indian communities had a cohesive communal life; children belonged to the community, not to an individual or couple. Parenting was shared within the extended family by members who provided long-term care for children who could not live with their parents. Beginning in the nineteenth century, official U.S. policy emphasized the forced assimilation of Indians into the world of the white society. The result was that by the 1970s one quarter of all Indian children were separated from their tribes, and living in boarding schools, foster families or adoptive families. The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 reaffirmed the jurisdiction of the tribal courts over the placement of Indian children with the intent of reducing the number of Indian children placed with non-Indian families.

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<sup>8</sup>National Adoption Information Clearinghouse. (1995). *Adoption and African American Families*. Washington, DC: Author.

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The practice of kin parenting children when parents cannot is a value that was shared as well by many early European and Asian immigrant groups, who provided for their children needing long-term care through informal adoption by extended family members.

Adoption as a formal, legal process emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, and it primarily involved Caucasian children. Formal adoption means the social, emotional, and legal process through which children who cannot be reared by their birth parents become legal members of another family who can meet their on-going developmental needs. As the practice of legal adoption grew, laws governing it were passed, patterned after English law. For example:

- Texas passed the first adoption law in 1850 as a means of transferring property to a child.
- Massachusetts passed a law in 1851 that allowed for adoption with “the written consent of the parents, if living, or of his guardian or next friend if the parents were deceased.”
- Individual adoptions in other states took place by special state legislative acts, by informal practice and agreement between birth parents and adoptive parents, or by contract.
- Most adoption agencies were founded and staffed by lay persons, even into the twentieth century.
- An 1891 Michigan law required judges to check on families before entering a decree of adoption, but there were no standards to guide them or the agency handling the task.
- A 1917 Minnesota law required a social investigation by certain people or agencies before the court review.
- Gradually, laws and court decisions built a record of considering the “best interests of the child” and protections including:
  - a trial period before the final decree was entered.
  - adoptive records kept from public inspection.
  - changes in birth certificates.
  - limits on advertising about adoption.

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## Adoption As a Professional Service

Several developments furthered professional adoption practices in the U.S.:

- In 1921, Sophie van Senden Theis of the New York School of Philanthropy (now the School of Social Work of Columbia University) developed a manual of professional principles for adoption practices focusing on:
  - the parents' role.
  - the study and selection of the adoptive family.
  - agency responsibility for placing and supervising the child.
- The U.S. Children's Bureau encouraged and supported public child welfare services.
- CWLA in 1938 studied adoption practices and published its first professional standards to guide adoption agencies.
- The large number of homeless children at the end of World War II increased demand on adoption agencies and changed many requirements and selection practices. It increased the practice of independent adoptions, or placements arranged by individuals rather than licensed child-placing agencies.
- Adoption agencies responded by professionalizing their staffs and expanding their focus. They began recruiting adoptive parents for children of color and sibling groups.

### Adoption in the 1970s and 1980s

- Originally adoption was considered a service for Caucasian infertile couples seeking normal, healthy infants. Increasingly adoption developed as a service for virtually all children who could not stay with their parents or kin, and who need stable, nurturing families.
- Two important national child welfare reform laws that supported adoption services were enacted during this period:
  - the Adoption Opportunities Act of 1978 (Public Law 95-266) provides federal support for recruiting adoptive families, and for post-adoption services.
  - the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (25 U.S.C. 1902) was passed to "protect the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families." ICWA establishes federal requirements that apply to the jurisdiction, placement, and permanency of any child in state custody who is a member or is eligible to be a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe.

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- the Child Welfare and Adoption Assistance Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-272) commits federal resources to placing children with adoptive families and required permanency planning efforts on behalf of children.

## Adoption in the 1990s

Throughout the 1990s, the child welfare system continued to struggle to meet the permanency planning needs of children in the foster care system and the requirements of The Child Welfare and Adoption Assistance Act of 1980. A significant challenge was the dramatic increase in the number of children placed in family foster care and requiring permanency planning services. In addition, the profile of children in need of adoption was changing. The children were often older, part of a sibling group, and had physical, emotional, and developmental needs due to exposure to alcohol and other drugs, HIV, and child trauma. In addition, many of the children were of color.

As the profile of children needing adoption changed, the focus of recruitment efforts for adoptive families also began to change:

- Recruitment began to focus on people who could effectively meet the challenges of the adoptive role; from older parents who had already raised children, to two-parent working families, to single parents. Adoptive families were sought that represented all cultures, ethnic groups and religions, and included families with modest incomes as well as those who were wealthy.
- Many agencies began to recognize their responsibility to reach out to families of color to help them feel more welcome and more comfortable about formal adoption. The tradition of informal adoption among families of color continues today and will probably continue far into the future. Unfortunately, however, so many children of color in family foster care needed permanent homes that informal arrangements alone could not meet their needs.<sup>9</sup>

Along with these changes, there were changes in adoption practice as well. As older children and sibling groups were being adopted, we were simultaneously learning more and more about the importance of birth families to the child's identity, growth, and development. This led to greater "openness" in adoption—meaning that adoption in all cases does not mean a complete and final separation from all contact with the birth family. Openness can refer to yearly letters and pictures, or some type of yearly structured contact, or informal contact on an ongoing basis.

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<sup>9</sup>National Adoption Information Clearinghouse. (1995). *Adoption and African American Families*. Washington, DC: Author.

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All of these changes in adoption services began to point to one group of families with tremendous potential to be effective adoptive families—foster families. These families were often familiar with special needs, enjoyed older children and sibling groups, and had in many situations demonstrated skills in working with birth parents. This practice had at one time been frowned upon, but it became clear that foster families could become effective adoptive families. An added benefit for many children was that this prevented an additional transition to another home.

### **The Future of Adoption**

With the passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, adoption was championed. The challenges of meeting the requirements of ASFA are paramount. As agencies move in a more timely fashion, the need for more adoptive families increases. In addition, these children often have special needs, have ties to their birth families, and have experienced different types of trauma.

Recruiting and preparing families for the challenge of adopting remains an important focus of the child welfare system; and so does assisting foster families to make the decision to adopt and preparing foster families for the adoptive role. Thousands of adoptive families bear testimony to the rewards of adopting, and providing a child with the legal and social status that comes from having a family of your own and lifetime relationships.

**PRIDE Connections**

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Family Development Specialist: \_\_\_\_\_

**Resource 1-I**

When families first call the agency to ask about foster care or adoption, they have certain expectations. Even before you called, you probably thought about what fostering or adopting would mean to your family. Think, now, about three things you hoped would happen if you became a foster parent or adoptive parent.

**When I think about fostering or adopting a child, I hope these three things will happen for me and for my family:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What you have learned so far about foster care and adoption may be just what you expected, or it may challenge some of your expectations. Read the following statements about foster care and adoption, and circle an answer: "Not at all what I expected," or "Somewhat as I expected," or "Exactly what I expected."

1. **Because of the life experiences and special needs of the children, foster care and adoption can have a significant impact on all members of the foster family or adoptive family.**  
Not at all what I expected      Somewhat as I expected      Exactly what I expected
2. **Being a foster parent or adoptive parent means sharing the child with birth parents and professionals, and making decisions as a team on behalf of the child's best interests.**  
Not at all what I expected      Somewhat as I expected      Exactly what I expected
3. **Foster parents and adoptive parents have to be ready to talk with children about sensitive issues in order to help the children when they are feeling confused or troubled.**  
Not at all what I expected      Somewhat as I expected      Exactly what I expected
4. **In many cases foster parents have to be able to help children return to their birth parents.**  
Not at all what I expected      Somewhat as I expected      Exactly what I expected

- 
5. **Vernon, in the film, was acting out typical behavior of a young child who is separated from his family.**  
Not at all what I expected      Somewhat as I expected      Exactly what I expected
6. **Foster parents do not necessarily adopt the children in their homes, even if those children will not return to their birth families.**  
Not at all what I expected      Somewhat as I expected      Exactly what I expected
7. **Many children in foster care and adoption will be involved with a counselor or therapist while living with the foster family or adoptive family.**  
Not at all what I expected      Somewhat as I expected      Exactly what I expected
8. **Foster parents and adoptive parents need to be able to use help from a lot of people and places in order to meet the needs of the children and their birth families.**  
Not at all what I expected      Somewhat as I expected      Exactly what I expected
9. **Foster families and adoptive families need a lot of information on how to protect and nurture children, meet their needs, support their family relationships, and work with teams.**  
Not at all what I expected      Somewhat as I expected      Exactly what I expected
10. **Foster parents and adoptive parents have to be committed to continue learning about how to meet the needs of the children in their home.**  
Not at all what I expected      Somewhat as I expected      Exactly what I expected

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Session One:

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Resource 1-J

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## Making a Difference!

Thanks to the professionals of the child welfare system, Vernon, Nathan, Rose, Maggie's kids, and the Hernandez's child will have a chance to grow up with the basic rights denied to so many children:

- The right to be protected against neglect, cruelty, abuse, and exploitation.
- The right to safe housing, health care, and an education that prepares them for the future.
- The right to be a unique person whose individuality is protected from violation.
- The right to prepare for the responsibilities of parenthood, family life, and citizenship.
- The right to maintain relationships with people who are important to them.
- The right to a stable family.
- The right to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime.