



## **TN KEY Informational Meeting Facilitator Guide**

Tennessee Department of Children's Services | Ver. 21.6.28





## **TN-KEY Informational Meeting Overview of Objectives and Process**

The Informational Meeting begins by giving trainers time to introduce themselves to the participants and warmly welcome participants to the meeting, setting a tone of safety. Trainers briefly address any questions that participants may have and let the participants know that TN-KEY deals with foster care, adoption, and kinship care.

Trainers explain the basic value of partnership. They discuss the interactive nature of TN-KEY, stressing that trainers and participants will get to know one another while learning about the challenges of raising children who have lived in the child welfare system. TN-KEY also helps participants assess for themselves whether becoming foster parents is the right decision for them at this time.

Trainers discuss the children who need families/homes. They point out that the partnership consists not only of the foster parents and the child welfare system; it also includes the child's birth family. This inclusion enhances the child's feelings of identity and self-worth while the goals of protection and permanency are being addressed.

Trainers lead participants through the "Finding a Family" exercise. This exercise helps participants understand the importance of the Home Study, which is required for them to gain approval as foster parents. Participants conclude the session by meeting with available agency staff to discuss the steps to become foster parents.

### **2.0 Hour Meeting**

#### **TO PREPARE:**

- Private Providers who wish to attend will contact DCS contract agency.
- Coordinate with private providers who express an interest in attending informational meetings.
- Identify a space for private providers to speak with participants after the meeting.
- It is recommended that trainers schedule an extra hour for those participants staying to meet with DCS and Private Providers.

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## Competencies

- Aware of the primary goals of child welfare services and the types of services that can help abused and neglected children and their families
- Aware of the differences between foster care, adoption, and kinship care and the purpose of each type of care in the child welfare system
- Aware of the importance of permanency when considering placement options for children
- Aware of the possible reasons children need placement
- Aware of the types of family situations and problems that can contribute to physical abuse and neglect of children

# Materials Checklist

## Materials needed for this curriculum:

- ☐ HeartGallery Photos to loop: Link: <https://vimeo.com/193466275/77daa1f200>
- ☐ *What Does It Take To Be A Foster Parent?* Checklist
- ☐ Josh Shipp Video
- ☐ Board Payment handout
- ☐ DCS Discipline Policy
- ☐ Finding a Family Prepared Flipchart
- ☐ TN-KEY Self-Assessment Guide Handout
- ☐ Training Requirements Handout
- ☐ Home Study paperwork packet for them to take home and bring to TN-KEY completed. (Application, Fingerprint Card, Authorization for Release of Information)

## Standard Training Tote:

- ☐ Flip charts & Stands
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ White Board Markers
- ☐ Laptop & Projector
- ☐ Extension Cords
- ☐ Masking Tape
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Pens

## Annotated Agenda

### 2.0 Hour Meeting

Agenda Item	Time	Learning Objectives	Activities
Unit 1: Welcome and Introductions	30 Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Orient class to one another</li> <li>•Become familiar with housekeeping specifics</li> <li>•Discuss Agenda and Objectives</li> <li>•Introduce DCS/Private Providers/ Roles</li> <li>•Define FPS and FSW Roles</li> <li>•Explain the importance of partnership</li> </ul>	Welcome Video: "One Caring Adult" Josh Shipp <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNvQVxQuZpl">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNvQVxQuZpl</a>
Unit 2: The Children We Serve	30 Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Learn about the cultural diversity of children</li> <li>•Recognize the special needs youth have due to abuse and neglect</li> <li>•Describe how trauma affects behavior</li> <li>•Reiterate goal as reunification</li> </ul>	
Unit 3: Foster Parent Roles Within the System	35 Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Define Foster Care Roles: Foster, Kinship and Professional Therapeutic Foster Parent</li> <li>•Define Adoptive Parent Roles: Adoptive Parent, Adoptive Placement, Pre-Adoptive Parent and Pre-Adoptive Placement.</li> <li>•Review the Discipline Policy</li> <li>•Share the Adopt Only policy</li> <li>•Describe the characteristics of successful foster parents</li> </ul>	
Unit 4: Becoming a Foster Parent	15 Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Discover the reasons for requesting so much paperwork</li> <li>•Discuss requirements for licensing</li> <li>•Explain the Home Study process</li> <li>•Learn about the Assessment Criteria</li> </ul>	Finding A Family Activity
Unit 5: What Lies Ahead	15 Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Refer to TN-KEY Training Requirements</li> <li>•CPR/First Aid and Med Admin</li> <li>•Recognize the importance of Self-Assessment and Self-Care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•TN-KEY Self-Assessment Guide Handout</li> <li>•What Does It Take To Become A Foster Parent</li> </ul>
Unit 6: Questions and Breakout Meetings	15 Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit with agency personnel</li> </ul>	Provider meetings

# Unit 1: Welcome and Introductions

## Unit Time: 15 Minutes

### Learning Objectives:

Participants will:

- Become acclimated to the training environment
- Review housekeeping needs
- Discuss Agenda

### Supporting Materials:

- Sign-In Sheet
- *What Does It Take To Be A Foster Parent?* Checklist
- HeartGallery© slides on loop
- YouTube Video: One Caring Adult by Josh Shipp

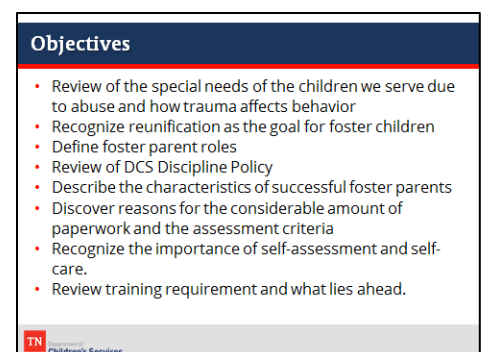
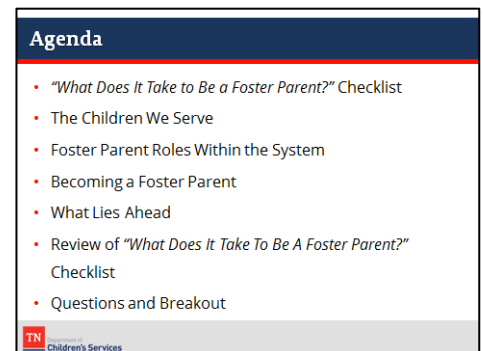
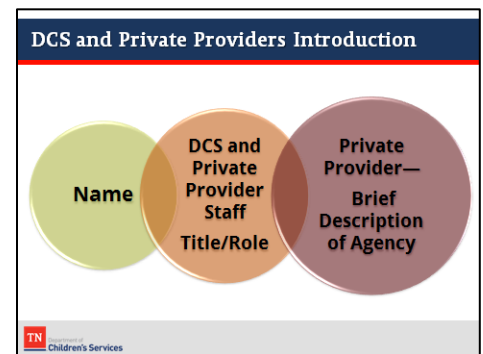
### Key Teaching Points / Instructions

**TRAINER NOTE:** When setting up the room, have the HeartGallery© Photos going on a loop as people arrive as a welcoming visual to the meeting. The link to the photos is: <https://vimeo.com/193466275/77daa1f200>. (There will be no sound.)

- **WELCOME** participants as they arrive, speaking to each one briefly and asking them to complete a sign-in sheet. Once they have all arrived, discuss housekeeping items, explaining that there will not be a break during this 2-hour meeting and to step out as needed. Share housekeeping information such as location of restrooms, snack availability, etc. Also mention the HeartGallery that was looping as they came in, letting the group know more about the photos.
- **INTRODUCE** yourself and briefly relate your experience with the foster care system and the TN-KEY/home study process.



- **STATE** that this TN-KEY Informational Meeting is an opportunity to learn about the steps necessary to become a foster parent for children in the Tennessee foster care system. Once in care, the needs of foster children are assessed to determine what the best placement option will be for them. DCS provides homes for children with low to moderate levels of need, and private provider agencies provide foster homes with moderate to higher levels of need. Because potential foster parents have varying degrees of expertise in caring for children, we are offering the unique opportunity to meet both DCS and Private Provider staff to determine the best fit for families going through TN-KEY. We will now hear from our professional staff where they will share about their role and provide information about the services their agency provides.
- **ASK** all Department of Children's Service (DCS) and private provider staff (if present), to briefly introduce themselves answering the following questions:
  - Name
  - DCS and Private Provider Staff – Title and Role
  - Private Provider – Brief Description of Agency
- **THANK** the agencies for sharing and explain that the goal for this session is to provide a brief look at the child welfare system as a whole and the role of foster parents.
- **REVIEW** the agenda by directing participants to the *"What Does It Take to Become a Foster Parent?"* checklist attached to the back of their handouts. Explain that everything that will be discussed in this meeting is located in this document. Encourage participants to follow along and check





off information as it is cover. Tell the group that they will sign this document at the end of the meeting and give to their trainer.

- **SHARE** the remaining agenda items and the objectives slide.
- **EXPLAIN** that the following information is intended to assist families in deciding whether they are equipped and ready to become foster parents by beginning Tennessee KEY (TN-KEY) classes and completing their home studies. **KEY stands for Knowledge Empowers You** and is required of all prospective foster, adoptive and kinship parents in Tennessee, and is intended to be a process of **partnership** between DCS, private providers, and foster parents. Because each family has different reasons for caring for foster children, and because interests vary from family to family, local private agencies are in attendance as well as DCS staff to meet with families to discuss their programs. At the end of this informational meeting, there will be an opportunity for participants to visit with each agency to decide which program will work best for their family.
- **STATE** that before we take a look at the children we serve, we will watch a Josh Shipp video that describes his experience with the foster care system and has a special message for prospective foster parents, and how they can help children like him.
- **SHOW** the One Caring Adult video at the following link (Length 5:36): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNvQVxQuZpl>
- **DEBRIEF** the video by asking for the audience to give you ONE WORD that describes this video for them. Take only a few and then move to the next unit.





## Unit 2: The Children We Serve

**Unit Time: 30 Minutes**

### Learning Objectives:

Participants will:

- Know the children in care of the child welfare system
- Learn about the cultural diversity of children
- Recognize the special needs youth have due to abuse and neglect
- Describe how trauma affects behavior
- Reiterate goal as reunification

### Key Teaching Points / Instructions

- **SHARE** that the children we serve:
  - Come from all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, and require support to maintain their ethnic and cultural heritage.
  - Consist of all ages, from birth to eighteen.
  - Have often endured physical, mental, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect.
  - Have suffered the death or incarceration of parent
  - Include truant, unruly and delinquent youth
  - Have special needs due to abuse and neglect including physical or mental health, and trauma related needs that will require ongoing treatment and trauma informed parenting.
- **EXPLAIN** that the number one goal for children in care when they exit custody is reunification with the birth family or relatives and to ensure permanency in a stable, loving home as soon as possible. If reunification is not possible, the following options will be possible:

The Children We Serve ...	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Come from all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.</li><li>• Consist of all ages, from birth to eighteen.</li><li>• Have often endured physical, mental, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Death or Incarceration of Parent</li><li>• Include truant, unruly and delinquent youth.</li><li>• Have special needs due to trauma from abuse and neglect.</li></ul>

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#1 Goal for Foster Children Exiting Custody?
 <p><b>Reunification with Birth Family</b></p>

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- **Adoption** of foster children who have been in care for twelve months, following termination of parental rights.
- **Permanent guardianship**, which is an order from a Juvenile Court Judge granting a caregiver permanent custody of a child. In order for permanent guardianship to be granted, the child has to reside in the home of the caregiver for at least six months, the caregiver must be committed to permanently caring for the child, and reunification and adoption cannot be in the child's best interest. The birth parents' rights do not have to be terminated.
- **Planned Permanent Living Arrangement** can be made with foster parents when Reunification, Adoption, Permanent Guardianship and Exit Custody to Relative or Kin are not viable permanency options. The foster family makes a commitment to being the family/caregiver with which the young adult can spend significant holidays or come "home" to during school vacations and share major life milestones, such as: graduation, marriage or the birth of a child are celebrated.
- **Aging Out** occurs when the child is not adopted but remains with foster parents until they are 18-years-old then leave the oversight of the department/court.



***TRAINERS NOTE:*** *Be familiar with all of the above mentioned living arrangements in the event that participants have questions beyond the information provided here.*

- **EXPLAIN** that the next unit will look at the foster and adoptive parent roles within the child welfare system.

## Unit 3: Foster Parent Roles within the System

**Unit Time: 30 Minutes**

### Learning Objectives:

Participants will:

- Define Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship care including Adopt Only policy
- Review the Discipline Policy
- Be able to describe the characteristics of successful foster parents
- Discuss requirements for licensing
- Comprehend the Home Study process
- Recognize the importance of Self-Assessment and Self-Care

### Supporting Materials:

- Discipline Policy (CS-0553)
- Adoption Only Handout
- Characteristics of Successful Foster Parents

### Key Teaching Points / Instructions

- **SHARE** that the Department plays the role of finding the most appropriate and least restrictive placement for children entering custody and strives to make the first placement the best placement for each child. The Department of Children's Vision and Mission statements reflect those goals. They are:
  - **Mission:** Provide high quality prevention and support services to children and families that promote safety, permanency and well-being.
  - **Vision:** To create safe and healthy environments for children where they can live with supportive families and engaged communities.



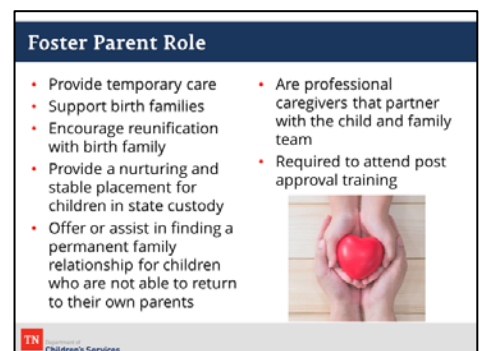
- **EXPLAIN** that along with the vision and mission statements, DCS includes Value Statements about the children and families served:

- **Relationships:** The child welfare system in Tennessee is a collaborative, aligned system of partners that provides unique interventions to our most vulnerable populations.
- **Integrity:** Ethics, fairness and sincerity are the foundation for a successful organization.
- **Diversity:** Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and to maintain strong connections with their identified community, faith and culture.
- **Learning:** Staff should have opportunities and managerial support for continuous professional development and innovation.



- **STATE** there are several types of foster care placements that DCS offers, including the following types of foster care roles:

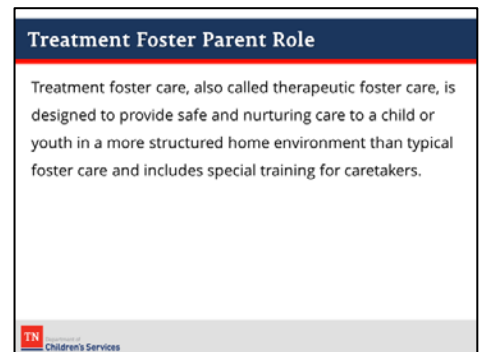
- **Foster Parent** – A foster parent, in many ways, is just like any other parent. Their job is to love, protect and nurture children to help them reach their full potential. However, a foster parent's role is unique in that it is sometimes only for a season. A foster parent may care for a child only until they are able to be reunified with their birth family. This could be for a few days or a few years. For children who do not have the option of being reunited with their birth family, their foster family may be the next best option and given the opportunity to adopt. However, the most important role of a foster parent is to keep the child's best interest in mind - whether that means reunification or adoption.



- **Kinship Parent** – Kinship care refers to the care of children by relatives, close family friends (often referred to as fictive kin), or significant family connection. Relatives are the preferred resource for children who must be removed from their birth parents because it maintains the children's connections with their families. As a kinship foster home the child lives with you, and DCS along with the Child and Family Team makes decisions regarding the child's medical care and education.



- **Treatment Foster Parent** - Treatment foster care, also called therapeutic foster care, is designed to provide safe and nurturing care to a child or youth in a more structured home environment than typical foster care and includes special training for caretakers.

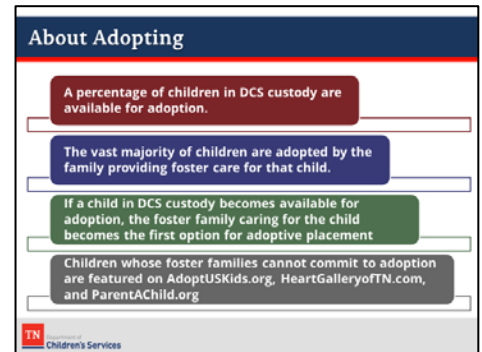


- **Prospective Adoptive Parent**- Prospective adoptive parents are foster parents or individuals who have shown an interest in pursuing adoption, or any family who has been selected as an adoptive match for a child free for adoption in DCS foster care.
- **Pre-Adoptive Parent** – Foster parent who has committed to legally adopting the child placed in their home for the purpose of adoption and providing that child with a *"forever family"*.
- **Adoptive Parent** – An adoptive parent is a person who has committed to becoming the *"permanent"*, legal parent of a child through the process of adoption with all the social, legal rights and responsibilities of a parent.

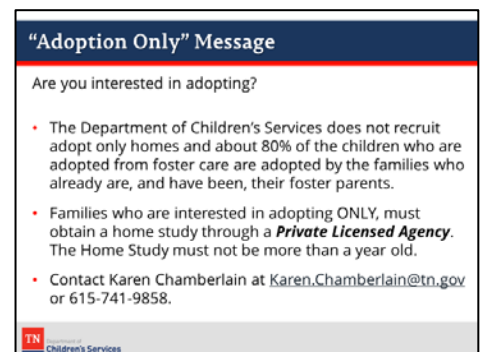




- **SHARE** with participants that adoption is the Department's commitment that every child in custody should have a permanent, loving family, and if reunification with the birth family is not possible, adoption is the next best option.
- **DISCUSS** the following information about adopting:
  - A percentage of children in DCS custody are placed for adoption.
  - The vast majority of children are adopted by the family providing foster care for that child.
  - If a child in DCS custody becomes available for adoption, the foster family caring for the child becomes the first option for adoptive placement.
  - Children whose foster families cannot commit to adoption are featured on AdoptUSKids.org, HeartGalleryofTN.com, and ParentAChild.org.



- **REVIEW** the "Adopt Only" Message by asking: Are you interested in adopting? If so, the Department of Children's Services does not recruit adopt only homes and about 80% of the children who are adopted from foster care are adopted by the families who already are, and have been, their foster parents.

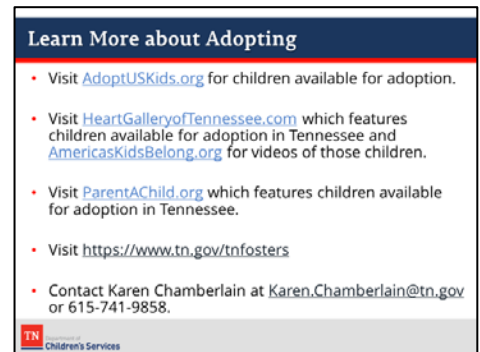


Families who are interested in adopting ONLY, must obtain a home study through a Private Licensed Agency. The Home Study must not be more than a year old.



- **SHARE** Approximately, 90% of the children in DCS foster care who are available for adoption and in need of an adoptive home are between the ages of 11-17. Adoptive placement decisions are based on the needs of the child and the family's ability to meet those needs. You can learn more about adoption and the children in need of adoptive homes at:

- Visit [AdoptUSKids.org](https://www.adoptuskids.org) for children available for adoption.
- Visit [HeartGalleryofTennessee.com](https://www.heartgalleryofTennessee.com) which features children available for adoption in Tennessee and [AmericasKidsBelong.org](https://www.americaskidsbelong.org) for videos of those children.
- Visit [ParentAChild.org](https://www.parentachild.org) which features children available for adoption in Tennessee.
- Visit <https://www.tn.gov/tnfosters>
- Contact Karen Chamberlain at [Karen.Chamberlain@tn.gov](mailto:Karen.Chamberlain@tn.gov) or 615-741-9858.



- **SHARE** the following slide information Who Can Provide Foster, Kinship or Adoptive Care:

- Single or married applicants
- Applicants with, or without, children of their own
- Those who can financially meet their own needs
- Applicant in sufficient good health
- Must be at least 21-years-old (Kinship: 18-years-old)
- Must be a Tennessee resident



- **SHARE** with participants that foster parents are considered partners with the Department (DCS), the system, birth parents and youth to achieve permanency for children and youth. Partnership means that foster parents:


- Support relationships among children and their birth parents, siblings and other important connections
  - Encourage permanent placement, focusing on reunification of the child with their birth family or other options determined by the department and the courts
  - Provide transportation to appointments and visits
  - Attend child and family team meetings and court dates
  - Work with Foster Parent Support worker (FPS), Family Service Worker (FSW), and/or private provider staff and other members of the child and family team.
  - Adhere to DCS Protocol and Policy
- **SHARE** that two examples of Protocol and Policy that foster parents must adhere to is the Monthly DCS Board Rate Reimbursement and the DCS Discipline Policy.
    - Foster parents will receive a monthly board payment for each child placed in their home which changes periodically and is based on age and level of needs of the child in care. Foster Parents will be required to follow the protocol around receiving payments.

**Partnership means that foster parents:**

- Support relationships among children and their birth parents, siblings and other important connections
- Encourage permanent placement, focusing on reunification of the child with their birth family or other options determined by the department and the courts
- Provide transportation to appointments and visits
- Attend child and family team meetings and court dates
- Work with Foster Parent Support worker (FPS) and Family Service Worker (FSW)
- Adhere to DCS Protocol and Policy

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**Monthly Board Payment (Reimbursement)**




- Foster parents receive monthly board payments for each child in the home, based on age and level of needs.
- These funds assist in providing for daily expenses and are not based on the means of the foster family.

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**TRAINER NOTE:** Provide DCS Board Rate handout for participants.

- **STATE** that Foster parents must also adhere to the discipline policy without exception.
- **REVIEW** the Discipline Policy by sharing that the following forms of punishment must NOT be used:

**Policy Review**



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1. Corporal Punishment such as slapping, spanking, or hitting with any object
2. Excessive exercising (particularly of a military nature), running laps, repetitive sit-ups, etc.
3. Cruel and unusual punishment
4. Assignment of excessive or inappropriate work
5. Denial of meals and daily needs
6. Verbal abuse, ridicule, or humiliation
7. Permitting a child to punish another child
8. Chemical, physical, or mechanical restraints (e.g., use of psychotropic medications as a restraint, holding the child down where they cannot move, etc.)
9. Denial of planned visits, telephone calls, or mail contact with birth family, attorney, siblings, Family Service Worker, pre-adoptive family, or attorney
10. Seclusion as a punishment
11. Threat of removal from the foster home
12. Any punishment that occurs more than 24 hours after the incident

Discipline Policy: Prohibited Punishment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporal punishment</li> <li>• Excessive exercising</li> <li>• Cruel and unusual punishment</li> <li>• Assignment of excessive or inappropriate work</li> <li>• Denial of meals and daily needs</li> <li>• Verbal abuse, ridicule, or humiliation</li> <li>• Chemical, physical, or mechanical restraints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denial of planned visits, telephone calls, or mail contact birth family, attorney, siblings, Family Service Worker, or pre-adoptive family</li> <li>• Seclusion as punishment</li> <li>• Threat of removal from home</li> <li>• Any punishment that occurs more than 24-hours after the incident.</li> </ul>

- **STATE:** Foster parents are successful because of their commitment to foster children and providing a stable, nurturing environment in which to thrive. While no parent is perfect, the department has noted several qualities that successful foster parents possess or have developed over their time providing foster care. This list can be used as part of self-assessment.
- **REVIEW** the Characteristics of a Successful Foster Parents:

- **Willingness to Partner**

Successful foster families are willing to partner with the system, birthparents and support systems while working toward reunification and permanency. This will include good communication with all team members, as well as our own family members, such as birth children, close relatives, and close friends or neighbors that will have contact with foster children.

Characteristics of Successful Foster Families	
• Willingness to Partner	• Strong Support System
• Flexible Expectations	• Makes and Keeps Commitments
• Tolerance for Rejection and Negative Feelings	• Committed to Developing a Relationship with the Child
• Sense of Humor	• Openness to Personal Learning and Development
• Ability to Self-assess and Provide Self-care	
• Ability to Delay Parental Gratification	

- **Flexible Expectations**

Successful foster families have realistic, flexible expectations of themselves and their children. They acknowledge and appreciate small steps toward reaching a goal. They also are able to view each child's behaviors in the context of his/her past trauma.

- **Tolerance for Rejection and Negative Feelings**

Successful foster families are able to withstand testing behaviors by their children, including hurtful, angry, rejecting comments. Children from the foster care system—especially older children with special needs—often come to their foster and adoptive families with deep pain from their past, destructive behaviors, and more. These children tend to draw out powerful negative feelings in their foster and adoptive parents—often parallel to what the children themselves feel. Successful foster and adoptive parents are able to feel these negative feelings, process them, and separate them out from what is coming from the child. They do not judge themselves harshly for feeling anger, are able to feel anger and not act on it and know their feelings will pass. These adults are also able to use humor to defuse their reactive emotions and can talk about their feelings with other parents, therapists, or workers.

- **Sense of Humor**

Successful foster families are able to use humor to cope with the stress that can result from rearing children who have lived in the child welfare system. They allow themselves to laugh and find humor in daily exchanges with their children.

- **Ability to Self-Assess and Practice Self-Care**

Successful foster families must know how to assess their needs, and practice self-care. They feel good about taking personal time as a couple and as individuals. They take breaks and use respite care to prevent burnout.

- **Ability to Delay Parental Gratification**

Successful foster families are aware that their relationships with the children in their home are not give and take, and they can tolerate giving love without receiving much in return. They are secure in their commitment to their children and know that they are doing the right thing. They also are confident that the rewards of rearing these children will come later.

- **Strong Support Systems**

Families who are in the process of becoming foster and adoptive parents will need words of encouragement, a listening ear, supportive thoughts, and a “go to” person when times get rough. It is vital that families are able to rely on others who can provide essential support and understanding.

- **Makes and Keeps Commitments**

Foster parents have the personal commitment necessary to provide the required continuity of care and stability to decrease the likelihood of placement disruptions. They are able to follow through on commitments made to children in their care.

- **Committed to Developing a Relationship with the Child**

Successful foster and adoptive parents of older children know they have a limited time frame to turn things around for the child. They don't have time to hold back and wait for the relationship to develop. Effective parents are active and do what parents of infants and toddlers do—"they assume control, try to anticipate behaviors, interrupt behavior-spirals early, provide a great deal of praise, positive reinforcement, and physical affection...[they] take the lead in the relationship and are not deterred by the child's protest or withdrawal" (Jernberg, 1979). These parents can appear intrusive but in a caring way. They make up for lost time and try to establish contact and intrude much like parents of infants do by making eye contact and body closeness to build intimacy and trust.

- **Openness to Personal Learning and Development**

Successful foster parents understand the importance of continued education in order to understand current trends in foster children with trauma behaviors and special needs. They are committed to meeting learning requirements and incorporating new skills into practice.

- **SHARE** that perfect parenting does not exist, and most people will possess some of these characteristics, but may not develop others until they have been fostering for a length of time. These characteristics have been observed in successful parents. Ask if there are any questions and then move to the next unit.
- **STATE** that we will now look at the process of becoming a foster parent.



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# Discipline Policy

Discipline is a teaching process that is initiated by a trauma informed caregiver who is able to identify the underlying need of a foster child. It is through this process that a child develops the self-control, self-reliance, resiliency, and orderly conduct appropriate life skills necessary to assume responsibilities, make daily living decisions and live according to accepted levels of social behavior. The goals of discipline for foster children are:

- ❖ To problem-solve appropriate ways of getting needs met (i.e. needs for attention, ways to express feelings, etc.)
- ❖ To feel good about relationships with other adults and other children
- ❖ To have a positive self-concept
- ❖ To acquire appropriate regulation skills on their own to be able to relate and reason when their needs are not being met
- ❖ To have secure attachment and connection with other adults and children
- ❖ To be resilient in the face of adversity, causing them to have a foundation of true self-esteem

In order to accomplish these goals, the following guidelines should be followed:

- ❖ Encouragement and praise of good behavior is often more effective than punishment and is a must in disciplining a child. The child's acceptance of discipline and ability to profit by it depends largely upon feeling that he/she is liked, accepted and respected.
- ❖ Practice regulation methods that were taught in Pre-Service training to help reroute the child in times of dysregulation.
- ❖ Approach the child with words and actions that will form secure attachment and connection.
- ❖ Discipline must be determined on an individual basis and meet the child at the developmental and cognitive level of the child.
- ❖ All discipline shall be limited to the least restrictive appropriate method and administered in an appropriate manner.

The following forms of punishment must **not** be used:

- 1) Corporal Punishment such as slapping, spanking, or hitting with any object,
- 2) Excessive exercising (particularly of a military nature), running laps, repetitive sit-ups, etc.
- 3) Cruel and unusual punishment,
- 4) Assignment of excessive or inappropriate work,
- 5) Denial of meals and daily needs,
- 6) Verbal abuse, ridicule or humiliation,
- 7) Permitting a child to punish another child,
- 8) Chemical, physical, or mechanical restraints (ex; use of psychotropic medications as a restraint),
- 9) Denial of planned visits, telephone calls, or mail contact with birth family, attorney, siblings, Family Service Worker, pre-adoptive family, or attorney,
- 10) Seclusion as a punishment,
- 11) Threat of removal from the foster home, or
- 12) Any discipline that occurs more than 24 hours after the incident.

I have read this discipline policy of physical punishment and do comply with it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Foster Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Foster Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Characteristics of Successful Foster Parents

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- **Willingness to Partner**

Successful foster families are willing to partner with the system, birthparents and support systems while working toward reunification and permanency. This will include good communication with all team members, as well as our own family members, such as birth children, close relatives, and close friends or neighbors that will have contact with foster children.

- **Flexible Expectations**

Successful foster families have realistic, flexible expectations of themselves and their children. They acknowledge and appreciate small steps toward reaching a goal. They also are able to view each child's behaviors in the context of his/her past trauma.

- **Tolerance for Rejection and Negative Feelings**

Successful foster families are able to withstand testing behaviors by their children, including hurtful, angry, rejecting comments. Children from the foster care system—especially older children with special needs—often come to their foster and adoptive families with deep pain from their past, destructive behaviors, and more. These children tend to draw out powerful negative feelings in their foster and adoptive parents—often parallel to what the children themselves feel. Successful foster and adoptive parents are able to feel these negative feelings, process them, and separate them out from what is coming from the child. They do not judge themselves harshly for feeling anger, are able to feel anger and not act on it, and know their feelings will pass. These adults are also able to use humor to defuse their reactive emotions and can talk about their feelings with other parents, therapists, or workers.

- **Sense of Humor**

Successful foster families are able to use humor to cope with the stress that can result from rearing children who have lived in the child welfare system. They allow themselves to laugh and find humor in daily exchanges with their children.

- **Ability to Self-Assess and Practice Self-Care**

Successful foster families must know how to assess their needs, and practice self-care. They feel good about taking personal time as a couple and as individuals. They take breaks and use respite care to prevent burnout.



- **Ability to Delay Parental Gratification**

Successful foster families are aware that their relationships with the children in their home are not give and take, and they can tolerate giving love without receiving much in return. They are secure in their commitment to their children and know that they are doing the right thing. They also are confident that the rewards of rearing these children will come later.

- **Strong Support Systems**

Families who are in the process of becoming foster and adoptive parents will need words of encouragement, a listening ear, supportive thoughts, and a “go to” person when times get rough. It is vital that families are able to rely on others who can provide essential support and understanding.

- **Makes and Keeps Commitments**

Foster parents have the personal commitment necessary to provide the required continuity of care and stability to decrease the likelihood of placement disruptions. They are able to follow through on commitments made to children in their care.

- **Committed to Developing a Relationship with the Child**

Successful foster and adoptive parents of older children know they have a limited time frame to turn things around for the child. They don't have time to hold back and wait for the relationship to develop. Effective parents are active and do what parents of infants and toddlers do—“they assume control, try to anticipate behaviors, interrupt behavior-spirals early, provide a great deal of praise, positive reinforcement, and physical affection...[they] take the lead in the relationship and are not deterred by the child's protest or withdrawal” (Jernberg, 1979). These parents can appear intrusive but in a caring way. They make up for lost time and try to establish contact and intrude much like parents of infants do by making eye contact and body closeness to build intimacy and trust.

- **Openness to Personal Learning and Development**

Successful foster parents understand the importance of continued education in order to understand current trends in foster children with trauma behaviors and special needs. They are committed to meeting learning requirements and incorporating new skills into practice.

## Unit 4: Becoming a Foster Parent

**Unit Time: 15 Minutes**

### Learning Objectives:

Participants will:

- Discover the reasons for requesting so much paperwork
- Discuss requirements for licensing
- Explain the Home Study process
- Learn about the Assessment Criteria
- Recognize the importance of Self-Assessment and Self-Care

### Supporting Materials:

- Find a Family Flipchart
- Assessment Criteria handout
- Self-Assessment homework

### Key Teaching Points / Instructions

- **ASK** participants to think of children that are special to them, whether it is birth children, nieces, nephews, god children or even special pets who are like children in the family. Ask the group to pull up pictures of these children and share with the ones around them. Talk about how special these children are to us. Then ask for a volunteer to share information about their child with the audience. Then explain that we are going to pretend that one or all of their children will have to come into care tonight and to pick one of the strangers in the room to care for their child.

**TRAINER NOTE:** *The goal is for them to say that there is no one in the audience they would trust their child with. If they choose a person, ask them to explain what it is about the family they selected that makes their home safe for their*




*child. After a minute, move into the discussion of what we would want to know about a family before we felt reassured their home is safe.*

- **ASK** the volunteer what they would want to know about a family before they would feel secure enough to allow the child to stay with them. **RECORD** their responses on a prepared flipchart, then open the brainstorming to the entire room, making a list of all of the information they would need to know about anyone who is taking care of their children. **EXAMPLES INCLUDE:** Criminal history, religious background, finances, medical history, other children in the home, community resources and supports, etc.
  - Criminal History
  - Religious Background
  - Finances
  - Medical History
  - Are there other children in the home
  - Community resources/supports
  - Will they work with birth parents for reunification
- **SHARE** that we naturally want to know as much as possible about a person or family who will be taking care of our child even for a short period of time. It is also information that DCS wants to find out about prospective foster parents going through the TN-KEY process, and becomes part of the home study and approval process. Birth parents love their children and like us, they would want to know the same facts about those caring for their children. While in care, the department must ensure that the needs of foster children are being met.
- **EXPLAIN** that the primary purpose of a home study is to ensure that each child is placed in a suitable home and that good matches are made between children and families. Home studies ensure that prospective foster parents can meet health, safety needs, basic needs, and special needs of children. Further, they provide perspective and knowledge of fostering after completion of TN-KEY.

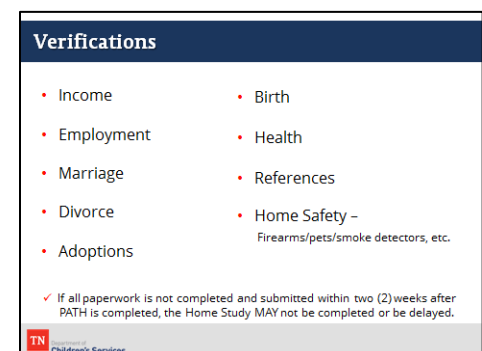
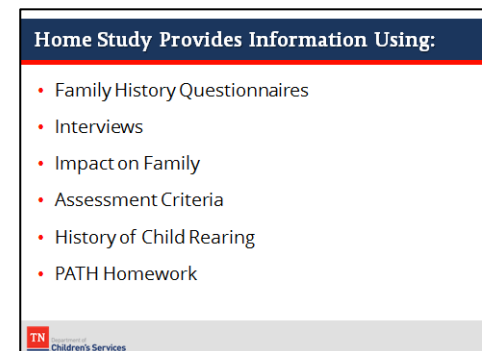
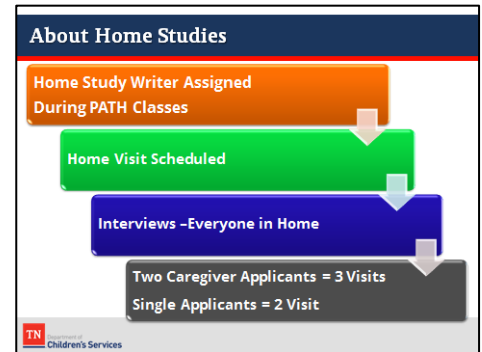
### About Home Studies

- The primary purpose of a home study is to ensure that each child is placed in a suitable home and that good matches are made between children and families.
- Home studies ensure that prospective foster parents can meet health, safety needs, basic needs, and special needs of children.
- Provides perspective and knowledge of fostering after completion of TN-KEY



TN Children's Services

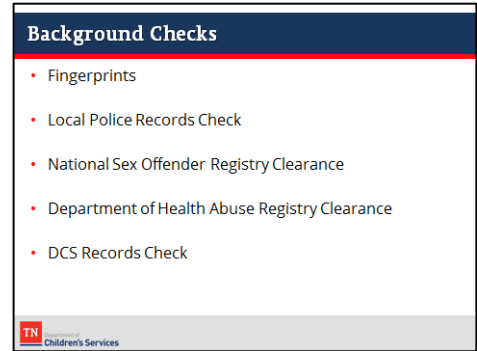
- STATE** that a home study writer will be assigned to your family and the home study process begins with the first session of TN-KEY. After the third session of TN-KEY, the home study writer will schedule a home visit to complete the home inspection checklist and complete interviews with everyone living in the home, including children. A two parent applicant will have at least 3 meetings with the home study writer, and a single applicant will have at least 2 meetings. At least one home study meeting will be held in the home.
- The home study provides information about who prospective foster parents are by gaining information using the following items:
  - Family History Questionnaires
  - Interviews
  - Impact on Family
  - Assessment Criteria
  - History of Child Rearing
  - TN-KEY Homework
- SHARE** that during this process, home study writers will also verify the following documents in order to complete their assessment of the prospective foster home. **If all paperwork is not completed and submitted within two (2) weeks after TN-KEY is completed, the home study may not be concluded or may be delayed.**



**TRAINER NOTE:** *Emphasize the importance of completing paperwork as part of the home study process, and that putting it off could delay the process.*

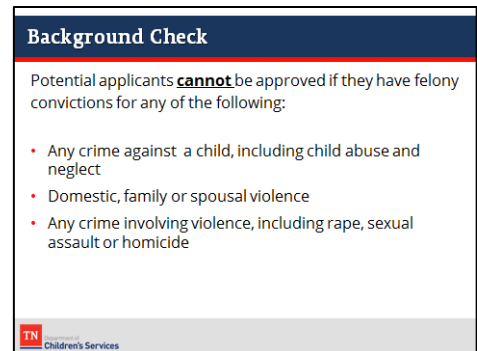
- **EMPHASIZE** that there will also be back ground checks of the following:

- Fingerprints
- Local Police Records Check
- National Sex Offender Registry Clearance
- Department of Health Abuse Registry Clearance
- DCS Records Check



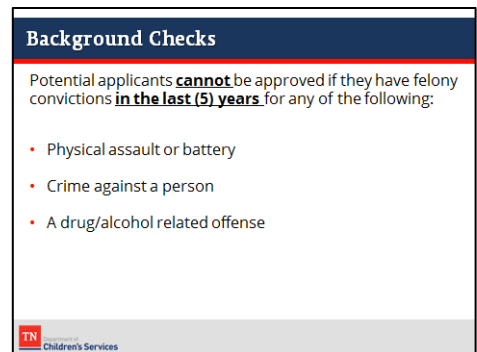
- **EXPLAIN** that potential applicants cannot be approved if they have felony convictions for any of the following:

- Any crime against a child, including child abuse and neglect
- Domestic, family or spousal violence
- Any crime involving violence, including rape, sexual assault or homicide



- **FURTHER**, if potential applicants cannot be approved if they have felony convictions in the last (5) years for any of the following:


- Any crime against a child, including child abuse and neglect
- Domestic, family or spousal violence
- Any crime involving violence, including rape, sexual assault or homicide



- **EXPLAIN** that all of this information is collected during the TN-KEY course and becomes part of the completed home study. Home study writers have 90 days from completion of TN-KEY to complete their study.
- **REFER** participants to the Assessment Criteria handout in their participant packet and remind participants that foster parents are expected to be partners with the Department/Agency and birth parents. They must work together to enhance the child's feelings of identity and self-worth while the goals of protection and permanency are being addressed. The Assessment

Criteria is used by home study writers and TN-KEY trainers to assess prospective foster parent's abilities and desire to participate fully as foster care providers as well as during the foster home reassessments.

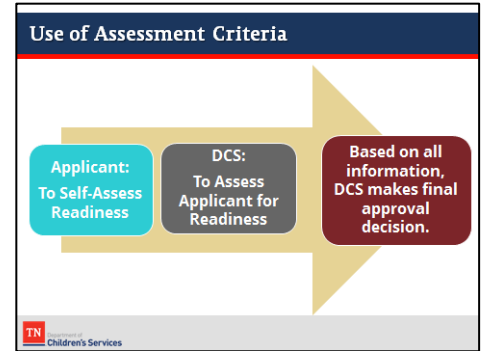
- **SHOW** the slide and ask participants to pick out a criterion that stands out to them or would be a challenging area for their family. Discuss each one mentioned, and then go over the ones that were not.

Assessment Criteria	
Looks at potential foster parents' ability to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communicate Effectively</li><li>• Work in Partnership/Share Parenting</li><li>• Build Self-Esteem</li><li>• Manage Trauma Behavior</li><li>• Assess the Impact of Becoming a Foster Parent</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Become Loss and Attachment Experts</li><li>• Assure Health and Safety</li><li>• Apply Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards</li><li>• Adhere to Agency Policies</li><li>• Build Connections</li><li>• Be Life Long Learners</li></ul>
	

## Assessment Criteria Handout

<b>Communicate Effectively</b>	Use and develop communication skills needed to foster or adopt. Be an active listener. Give clear messages, listen well, and use appropriate tone of voice. Abused and neglected children may feel worthless and may think their emotions are not worthy of being heard. Parents must listen in order to help build positive self-esteem. This shows the child an important skill which may help them be successful in other relationships.
<b>Work in Partnership (Share Parenting)</b>	Develop partnerships with children and youth, birth families, the agency, and the community to develop and carry out plans for permanency. You may be the person who teaches the birth parents the skills they were never taught, or the person who helps the agency decide when a different permanency plan needs to be made. Know your community resources.
<b>Build Self-Esteem</b>	Help children and youth build on positive self-concept and positive family, cultural, and racial identity. Accentuate each child's strengths and their success as being part of your family. Encourage them to be proud of their cultural and racial identity. Model a positive attitude about your own identity.
<b>Manage Trauma Behaviors</b>	Foster parents must demonstrate an ability and commitment to use discipline methods that do not include physical punishment with foster children and be willing to adopt trauma informed methods of parenting.
<b>Assess the Impact of Becoming a Foster Parent</b>	Assess the way fostering or adopting will affect your family. Talk to each family member privately to ensure that you know their feelings and can accurately make a decision on behalf of the family. You will want to look at the positive outcomes fostering or adopting could bring, as well as any negative outcomes that family members may expect.
<b>Become Loss and Attachment Expert</b>	Help children and youth develop skills to manage loss and attachment. Remember, children separated from birth parents have difficulty trusting adults. They become frightened and confused easily. Take the time to become well informed on loss and attachment. The more informed you become the better resource you are for your children and other parents.
<b>Assure Health and Safety</b>	Provide a healthy and safe environment for children and youth and keep them free from harm. Make your home a safe haven and ensure that all children feel secure, not threatened, in your home. Adequate food, clothing, and shelter are essential in modeling how parents should care for a child.
<b>Apply Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard</b>	Foster parents must be able to provide normalcy for the foster youth, mentoring and encouraging the foster youth's participation in his/her case planning, and understanding the responsibility of decision making for the foster youth's participation in age, and developmentally, appropriate activities.
<b>Adhere to Agency Policies</b>	Foster parents are required to work within state policies, share responsibility with the agency, and participate in ongoing training opportunities.
<b>Build Connections</b>	Help children and youth maintain and develop relationships that keep them connected to their pasts. Assist the child in staying in contact with family members. If this is a healthy relationship, and supported by your agency, this will help the child maintain a sense of connection. Find local organizations that will include the child in cultural programs to maintain their heritage.
<b>Be Life Long Learners</b>	Foster parents are asked to possess the belief that learning never ends. Don't be content with what you know, but make a commitment to learn new ways to expand and to sharpen your skills as a foster parent.

- **STATE** that it is intended that the requested paperwork, verifications and the Assessment Criteria be utilized not only by the home study writer, but also by potential foster parents as a guide to assist in determining if their family fits into the needs of the child welfare system. Sometimes families decide they are not ready, and withdraw their application. Learning about this special kind of parenting is the purpose of the process, and their decision to withdraw their application is respected.
- **EXPLAIN** that there will be occasions where the family feels ready to begin this foster parenting journey, but the Department or Private Provider may assess the situation differently based on the paperwork and interviews, denying the approval of the application. The Department of Children's Services is ultimately responsible for the care of all foster children that come into care and must weigh all of the information to make an informed decision. Becoming a foster parent is not automatic and will ultimately be decided by the Department of Children's Services.





## Unit 5: What Lies Ahead

**Unit Time: 15 Minutes**

### Learning Objectives:

Participants will:

- Identify the next steps in the approval process
- Ascertain the importance of lifelong learning
- Recognize the need for self-assessment and self-care

### Supporting Materials:

- TN-KEY Self-Assessment Guide


### Key Teaching Points / Instructions

- **STATE** that all foster parents must successfully complete the TN-KEY course within 60 Days from beginning TN-KEY. The TN-KEY classes consist of the following sessions:
  - Navigating the Child Welfare System (3-Hours)
  - Exploring the Impact of Trauma (3-Hours)
  - Roadmap to Resilience (3-Hours)
  - Rerouting Trauma Behaviors (3-Hour)
  - CPR/FA (4-Hours):
    - Required by DCS
    - Offered at the end of TN-KEY
    - Only a 4-hour PARTICIPATION class
    - Not a certification course
    - No test required
    - Must be taken every two years
    - If you are currently certified through another company, you do not have to

**What Lies Ahead**

All prospective foster parents must successfully complete the TN-KEY course within 60 Days from beginning TN-KEY. The classes consist of the following 7 sessions:

1. Navigating the Child Welfare System (3-Hours)
2. Exploring the Impact of Trauma (3-Hours)
3. Roadmap to Resilience (3-Hours)
4. Rerouting Trauma Behaviors (3-Hour)





**What Lies Ahead**

5. CPR/FA (4-Hours):

- Required by DCS
- Offered at the end of TN-KEY
- Only a 4-hour PARTICIPATION class
- Not a certification course
- No test required
- Must be completed every two years

❖ If you are currently certified through another company, you do not have to take the class; however, you must provide a current certification card.


take the class; however, you must provide a current certification card.

- Medication Administration (4-Hours):
  - Required by DCS
  - Taught by an RN or LPN through a contract agency
  - Offered at the end of TN-KEY
  - 4-hour class
  - Must take a 10-question test to pass the course
  - Must be taken every two years

What Lies Ahead

**6. Medication Administration(4-Hours):**

- Required by DCS
- Taught by an RN or LPN through a contract agency
- Offered at the end of TN-KEY
- 4-hour class
- Must take a 10-question test to pass the course
- Must be taken every two years




- Mutual Assessment Process (MAP) Meeting (1 to 2 Hours):
  - Is REQUIRED for each foster family going through the TN-KEY process
  - This is a face-to-face meeting with your TN-KEY trainer to further discuss and assess knowledge of the requirements for becoming a foster parent.
  - You will not receive a TN-KEY Completion Certificate until after a MAP Meeting has been conducted by the TN-KEY Trainer.

What Lies Ahead

**7. Mutual Assessment Process Meeting (MAP) (1 to 2 Hours):**

- Is REQUIRED for each foster family going through the TN-KEY process
- This is a face-to-face meeting with your TN-KEY trainer to further discuss and assess knowledge of the requirements for becoming a foster parent.
- You will not receive a TN-KEY Completion Certificate until after a MAP Meeting has been conducted by the TN-KEY Trainer.



- **TELL** participants that there will be roadwork (homework) after every session which must be completed by each participant after each module then submitted to the trainer at the beginning of TN-KEY the following week. This is not optional.
- **SHARE** that in order to stay on target for approval, participants may only miss one session of TN-KEY, and a missed session must be made up. If more than one session is missed, the applicant must begin TN-KEY again.

Staying on Target for Approval



Participants may only miss one session of PATH.

A missed PATH session must be made up.

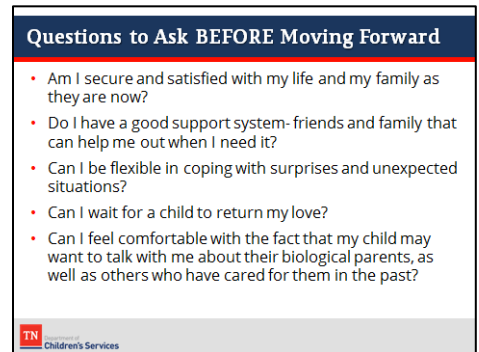
If more than one session is missed, applicant must begin the PATH process again.



- **EXPLAIN** that all approved foster homes must complete a minimum of **15 hours** of continuing education classes annually. All approved foster homes must be reassessed biennially (every two years).
- **STATE:** The decision to become a foster parent is one of the most important decisions your family can make and requires families to consider their ability to meet the needs of a foster child as well as DCS requirements. Communicating the desire to foster should be discussed with all members of the household and extended family that will provide support along the way. Here are some questions to help get you started: **(they should not answer these aloud)**



- Am I secure and satisfied with my life and my family as they are now?
- Do I have a good support system- friends and family that can help me out when I need it?
- Can I be flexible in coping with surprises and unexpected situations?
- Can I wait for a child to return my love?
- Can I feel comfortable with the fact that my child may want to talk with me about their biological parents, as well as others who have cared for them in the past?



- **SHARE** that along with those questions, a TN-KEY Self-Assessment Guide has been developed to assist families in making this important decision.
- **REVIEW** the **TN-KEY Self-Assessment** handout briefly and explain that as part of our roadwork, we are to complete the assessment before attending the TN-KEY classes. Participants will not turn in their roadwork, and our responses are for our personal assessment in determining the next steps in



providing foster care and the impact on our family.

- **REDIRECT** participants to the document “What Does It Take to Become a Foster Parent” that they were given at the beginning of class and review in full as an overview of the Informational Meeting to make sure they have received all information necessary to move forward. Have participants sign that they understand the information listed and ask them to turn in to the trainer before leaving the Informational Meeting.

#### What Does It Take To Be A Foster Parent?

Sign the form  
at the bottom  
and turn it in to  
the trainer.



TN  
Department of  
Children's Services



# Foster, Kinship, and Adoptive Care Self-Assessment Guide

TN-KEY (Knowledge Empowers You) training is a 21-hour pre-service Foster, Kinship, and Adoptive Parent training to prepare potential families to become professional caregivers to the foster children in Tennessee state custody. The training is co-led by a social worker and foster parent trained to facilitate TN-KEY classes. The training will help you assess how your family meets these ten skills, called the Assessment Criteria, for becoming professional caregivers by assessing a family's ability to:

1. Communicate Effectively
2. Work in Partnership (Share Parenting)
3. Build Self Esteem
4. Manage Trauma Behaviors
5. Assess the Impact of Becoming a Foster Parent
6. Become Loss and Attachment Experts
7. Assure Health and Safety
8. Apply Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standards
9. Adhere to Agency Policy
10. Build Connection
11. Be Lifelong Learners

Over the years, a list was developed of the characteristics that the most successful foster parents possess, and should be included in the overall assessment process.

## Characteristics of Successful Foster Parents

- Willingness to Partner
- Flexible Expectations
- Tolerance for Rejection and Negative Feelings
- Sense of Humor
- Ability to Self-assess and Provide Self-care
- Ability to Delay Parental Gratification
- Strong Support System
- Makes and Keeps Commitments
- Committed to Developing a Relationship with the Child
- Openness to Personal Learning and Development



## Foster Parent Beliefs and Attitudes

Every adult living in your home should complete this survey. Discuss the results openly and honestly, and discuss your plans with the children living in your home. The results of this assessment will help you and your family to understand your feelings about providing care to a foster child.

Consider these statements: (✓ your answer)	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree
I need a foster child so I won't feel so unhappy.			
Foster children are easy to please because they are so happy to have a home.			
Providing a foster home is a way to rescue children from a difficult situation.			
The money paid by the state for foster care will help me meet all my household expenses.			
All that foster children need is a lot of love.			
I can contribute to a better society by being a good foster parent.			
I did a pretty good job with my children so I think I'll be good with a foster child.			
My child needs a playmate.			
Having a foster child is a good way to prepare for adopting a child.			
Childhood can be a difficult time. I feel I can relate to children going through rough times.			

***What can you learn from your responses?*****1. I need a foster child so I won't feel so unhappy.**

Give yourself one point if you said "disagree." If you are unhappy you should think twice about becoming a foster parent. It is not fair to the child to expect their presence to improve your mood. Speak to a counselor first. If you are able to rid yourself of depression for a six-month period, then you can consider being a foster parent for a positive reason.

**Record your score** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Foster children are easy to please because they are so happy to have a home.**

You get a point if you said "not sure" or "disagree." While many foster children are happy to have a home, they may not be so easy to please. Some will test your patience by acting up, being sad and/or shy. Don't expect foster children to be extra grateful and obedient. They didn't ask to be put in their position and they don't owe you anything because you accept them for foster care.

**Record your score** \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Providing a foster home is a way to rescue children from a difficult situation.**

Score a point if you chose "not sure" or "disagree." Folks who have a rescue approach to foster care are likely to resist reasonable contact with the foster child's birth parents. They may also get in the way of efforts to reunite families. Remember that foster care is temporary and the goal of foster parents should be to work with agency professionals so that families are reunited.

**Record your score** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. The money paid by the state for foster care will help meet all my household expenses.**

Score a point for checking "disagree." Being a foster parent should not result in financial sacrifice. However, nobody should decide to become a foster parent because they think it will help them financially.

**Record your score** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. All that foster children need is a lot of love.**

Score a point for those who said "disagree." While a lot of love is a nice thing to provide, foster parents also must have good parenting and communication skills and an understanding of their role as foster parents. Being patient, consistent and following through on rules and expectations are all important. Love is great, but it takes more than a loving attitude to be a successful foster parent.

**Record your score** \_\_\_\_\_



**6. I can contribute to a better society by being a good foster parent.**

If you said “agree” give yourself two points. Score one point for “not sure.” A good foster parent can put the needs of the child, the child’s family and society ahead of personal needs. Viewing oneself as providing a necessary service to the child and to society is a positive reason for becoming a foster parent.

**Record your score** \_\_\_\_\_

**7. I did a pretty good job with my children so I think I’ll be good with a foster child.**

Score a point for those who “agree” or are “not sure”. Having been a successful parent indicates that you have certain skills and personality traits that make you an effective parent. Wanting to use these talents to help out as a foster parent is a plus.

**Record your score** \_\_\_\_\_

**8. My child needs a playmate.**

Score a point if you “disagree.” Being a foster parent is about caring for others and contributing to society in general; your need to have a playmate for your child should not be a significant factor in your decision.

**Record your score** \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Having a foster child is a good way to prepare for adopting a child.**

Score a point if you checked “agree” or “not sure.” Being a foster parent will help you determine your suitability to be an adoptive parent. Be careful, however, about becoming overly attached to a foster child. While adoption is occasionally possible, it should not be your primary purpose for becoming a foster parent.

**Record your score** \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Childhood can be a difficult time. I feel I can relate to children going through rough times.**

A point if you selected “agree” or “not sure.” If you were a foster child or experienced other significant hurdles, you indeed “know what it’s like.” Even if you didn’t have a difficult childhood you feel able to understand how troubling childhood can be. This will increase your skills as a foster parent.

Be cautious, however, if you feel your childhood experiences have left you angry, depressed or resentful. Strong negative emotions from your own childhood could hinder your efforts to be a positive parent figure. If you feel you have such difficulties to a significant degree, you should seek personal counseling before becoming a foster parent.

**Record your score** \_\_\_\_\_

***How did you do on the survey?***

With a possible score of eleven, (remember you could get two points on item six) compare your total to the scale below.

<b><i>Total Score</i></b>	<b><i>What It Means</i></b>
9 – 11	Your beliefs and attitudes suggest you will be a successful foster parent.
5 – 8	You are a good candidate for being a foster parent but should think about some of your beliefs and attitudes. Can you accept the other point of view?
4 – 7	Your beliefs and attitudes are not consistent with being an effective foster parent. Do you hold these beliefs firmly or do you feel you understand the need to modify some of your beliefs and attitudes? Examine your position closely and see if you can accept the need to change your thinking in some areas.
0 – 3	Think again about your reasons for becoming a foster parent. Talkover your belief system with a professional in the field of foster care. If you can see the areas where you need to change and can make changes, you may be a good candidate for being a foster parent in the future.



## What Does It Take to Become a Foster Parent?

- ☐ **Home Visits/Interview** (two for single applicants, three for couples, at least one of which must be conducted in the home)
- ☐ **Forms and Verifications.** If all paperwork is not completed and submitted within two (2) weeks after TN-KEY is completed, the Home Study MAY not be completed or could be delayed.
  - Income
  - Employment
  - Marriage
  - Divorce
  - Adoptions
  - Birth
  - Health
  - References
  - Home safety (firearms/pets/smoke detectors/carbon monoxide detectors/fire extinguishers)
- ☐ **Background Checks**
  - Fingerprints
  - Local police records check
  - National Sexual Offender Registry Clearance
  - Child Abuse Registry Clearance
  - DCS Records Check
- ☐ **Potential applicants cannot be approved if they have felony convictions for any of the following:**
  - Child abuse and neglect
  - Spousal abuse
  - A crime against a child, including child pornography
  - A crime involving rape, sexual assault, or homicide, but including physical assault or battery
- ☐ **Potential applicants cannot be approved if they have felony convictions in the last five years for and of the following:**
  - Physical assault
  - Battery
  - A drug/alcohol related offense
- ☐ **Participants must complete all 8 modules** in the curriculum within **60 days** from beginning TN-KEY.

- ***Informational Meeting***

- ***Navigating the Child Welfare System***
- ***Exploring the Impact of Trauma***
- ***Roadmap to Resilience***
- ***Rerouting Trauma Behaviors***
- ***CPR/FA***
- ***Medication Administration***
- ***Mutual Assessment Process meeting with the TN-KEY Trainer***

- ☐ **CPR/First Aid and Medication Administration** must be completed **every two years**.
- ☐ **Roadwork** must be completed by each participant after each module (All roadwork should be checked by the trainer at the beginning of TN-KEY the following week. The family will keep the Roadwork until the MAP meeting with the trainer.)
- ☐ **No more than one session may be missed.** Each missed course must be made up. If more than one course is missed, applicants must begin the TN-KEY process again.
- ☐ **Annual Training:** All approved foster homes must complete a minimum of **15 hours** of continuing education classes annually.
- ☐ **All approved foster homes must be reassessed biennially (every two years).**  
The reassessment process consists of reviews of the following:
  1. Discipline Policy
  2. Oath of Confidentiality
  3. Oath to Report Child Abuse or Neglect and to Abide by Child Safety restraint Laws
  4. Monthly Family Financial Income and Expenditures
  5. Foster Home Mutual Reassessment
  6. Annual Foster Parent Medical Self Report
  7. Home Safety Checklist
  8. HIPPA Notice of Privacy Practices, Adopt US Kids Acknowledgement

**\*\*I have attended the Informational Meeting, and have been trained on what it takes to become a foster parent.**

Foster Applicant Signature

Date

Foster Applicant Signature

Date

## Unit 6: Closure and Breakout Meetings

**Unit Time: 15 Minutes**

### Learning Objectives:

Participants will:

- DCS workers will provide the class with approval information
- Meet with DCS or agency staff.

### Supporting Materials:

- Paperwork to take home (Application, Release of Information, Fingerprint Card)
- Certificates of completion

### Key Teaching Points / Instructions

- **ASK** if there are any questions.
- **THANK** everyone for attending the Informational Meeting, and explain that the DCS worker will discuss several items including the paperwork packet that will be taken home to complete. After DCS finishes their portion, participants can meet with private provider agencies that are in attendance or speak to DCS representatives. They are free to go if they do not wish to meet with agency staff.
- **INVITE** DCS representatives to present the information outlined in their presentation guide and to go over the paperwork with participants so they will be able to complete the documents at home before beginning TN-KEY.

**TRAINER NOTE:** *If there are no private provider agencies in attendance, dismiss the group after DCS completes their presentation.*

## References

Partnership for Strong Families, <https://www.pfsf.org/partner-family-orientation/>

DCS Vision, Mission, and Value Statements, <https://www.tn.gov/dcs/about-us/mission.html>

Child Welfare Information Gateway <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption/adoptive/home-study/>

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