Tennessee KEY

knowledge empowers you

TN KEY Informational Meeting

TN-KEY Participant Guide

Tennessee Department of Children's Services| Ver. 21.6.28

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TN-KEY (Knowledge Empowers You)

Informational Meeting

v20.8.3

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WebEx: Important Information

- If you are watching with someone else, please type their name in the chat box.
- In the unlikely event that WebEx should suddenly stop working, please wait 10 minutes for the presenter to resume the training. If training does not resume in 10 minutes, please check your email for additional instructions
- If you are having difficulty with your connection, you may want to exit the system completely, and retry coming back in, using the same link you began with.

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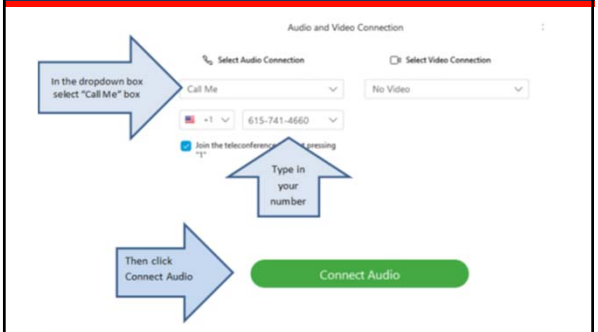
WebEx: Important Information



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WebEx: Ways to Communicate

Chat — Through the Chat box, just type what you want to say and select "SEND TO EVERYONE."

Use "Raise Your Hand" icon to be unmuted and called on

Use the green checkbox to agree

Use the red checkbox to disagree

Camera: We encourage you to use your camera. Be mindful that it shows a large area of your room.

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Welcome and Housekeeping

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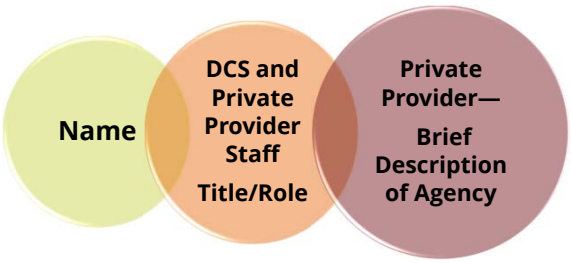
DCS and Private Providers Introduction



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Agenda

- *"What Does It Take to Be a Foster Parent?"* Checklist
- The Children We Serve
- Foster Parent Roles Within the System
- Becoming a Foster Parent
- What Lies Ahead
- Review of *"What Does It Take To Be A Foster Parent?"* Checklist
- Questions and Breakout

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Objectives

- Review of the special needs of the children we serve due to abuse and how trauma affects behavior
- Recognize reunification as the goal for foster children
- Define foster parent roles
- Review of DCS Discipline Policy
- Describe the characteristics of successful foster parents
- Discover reasons for the considerable amount of paperwork and the assessment criteria
- Recognize the importance of self-assessment and self-care.
- Review training requirement and what lies ahead.

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TN-KEY and Partnership

- TN-**K**nowledge **E**mpowers **Y**ou (TN-KEY)
- The TN-KEY process is intended to be a **partnership** between DCS, private providers and foster, adoptive, and kinship parents.

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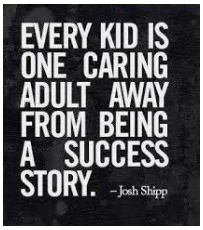
YouTube Video

One Caring Adult – Josh Shipp

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNvQVxQuZpI



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The Children We Serve ...

- Come from all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Consist of all ages, from birth to eighteen.
- Have often endured physical, mental, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect.
- Death or Incarceration of Parent
- Include truant, unruly and delinquent youth.
- Have special needs due trauma from abuse and neglect.

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#1 Goal for Foster Children Exiting Custody?

Reunification with Birth Family

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When reunification is not possible:

- Live With Other Relatives
- Adoption
- Permanent Guardianship
- Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (PPLA)
- Age Out of the System

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DCS Mission, Vision, Values

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.

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DCS Value Statements

Values

- **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.

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Foster Parent Role

- Provide temporary care
- Support birth families
- Encourage reunification with birth family
- Provide a nurturing and stable placement for children in state custody
- Offer or assist in finding a permanent family relationship for children who are not able to return to their own parents
- Are professional caregivers that partner with the child and family team
- Required to attend post approval training

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Kinship Parent Roles

Relative, close family friend, or someone with a significant family connection that provides care for a child in state custody.

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Treatment Foster Parent Role

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.

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Adoptive Parent Roles

- **Prospective Adoptive Parent**
- **Pre-Adoptive Parent**
- **Adoptive Parent**

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About Adopting

- **A percentage of children in DCS custody are available 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**

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"Adoption Only" Message

Are you interested in adopting?

- 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.
- Contact Karen Chamberlain at Karen.Chamberlain@tn.gov or 615-741-9858.

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Learn More about Adopting

- Visit AdoptUSKids.org for children available for adoption.
- Visit HeartGalleryofTennessee.com which features children available for adoption in Tennessee and AmericasKidsBelong.org for videos of those children.
- Visit ParentAChild.org which features children available for adoption in Tennessee.
- Visit https://www.tn.gov/tnfosters
- Contact Karen Chamberlain at Karen.Chamberlain@tn.gov or 615-741-9858.

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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

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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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Policy Review

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Discipline Policy: Prohibited Punishment

- Corporal punishment
- Excessive exercising
- Cruel and unusual punishment
- Assignment of excessive or inappropriate work
- Denial of meals and daily needs
- Verbal abuse, ridicule, or humiliation
- Chemical, physical, or mechanical restraints
- Denial of planned visits, telephone calls , or mail contact birth family, attorney, siblings, Family Service Worker, or pre-adoptive family
- Seclusion as punishment
- Threat of removal from home
- Any punishment that occurs more than 24-hours after the incident.

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Characteristics of Successful Foster Families

- 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

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"Finding a Family" Activity

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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

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About Home Studies

Home Study Writer Assigned During TN-KEY Classes

Home Visit Scheduled

Interviews –Everyone in Home

Two Caregiver Applicants = 3 Visits
Single Applicants = 2 Visit

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Home Study Provides Information Using:

- Family History Questionnaires
- Interviews
- Impact on Family
- Assessment Criteria
- History of Child Rearing
- TN-KEY Homework

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Verifications

- Income
- Employment
- Marriage
- Divorce
- Adoptions
- Birth
- Health
- References
- Home Safety – Firearms/pets/smoke detectors, etc.

✓ 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 be delayed.

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Background Check

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

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Background Check

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

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Background Check

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

- Physical assault or battery
- Crime against a person
- A drug/alcohol related offense

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Assessment Criteria

Looks at potential foster parents' ability to:

- Communicate Effectively
- Work in Partnership/Share Parenting
- Build Self-Esteem
- Manage Trauma Behavior
- Assess the Impact of Becoming a Foster Parent
- Become Loss and Attachment Experts
- Assure Health and Safety
- Apply Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards
- Adhere to Agency Policies
- Build Connections
- Be Lifelong Learners

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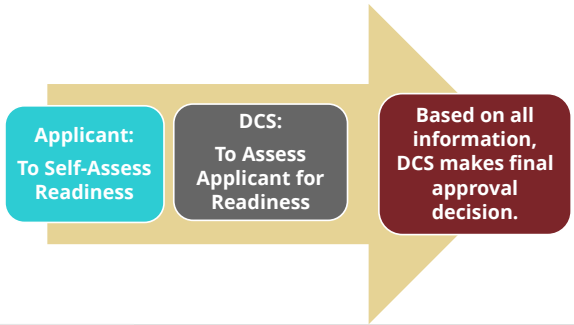
Use of Assessment Criteria



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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)

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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

EMS SAFETY

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

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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

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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.

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Staying on Target for Approval

Participants may only miss one session of TN-KEY.

A missed TN-KEY session must be made up.

If more then one session is missed, applicant must begin the TN-KEY process again.

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After TN-KEY Approval

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).

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Questions to Ask BEFORE Moving Forward

- 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?

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Review TN-KEY Self-Assessment Handout

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What Does It Take To Be A Foster Parent?

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

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Close and meet with agency representatives

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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***

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- ***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 completed by each participant after each module (All roadwork should be submitted to the trainer at the beginning of TN-KEY the following week)

☐ **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

☐ **Attend a TN-KEY class within 6 MONTHS** from attending an Informational Meeting.

****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

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Effective July 1, 2017 foster care rates were adjusted as a step toward reaching the median income levels of the USDA cost of living in the urban South. The foster care rates affect the age category rates.

Regular Board Rates

(Effective 7/1/2017)

Ages	Foster Care	Adoption Assistance	Subsidized Permanent Guardianship
Ages 0 – 11	$25.38/day	$25.33/day	$25.33/day
Ages 12 +	$29.09/day	$29.04/day	$29.04/day

Special Circumstances Board Rates

Ages	Foster Care	Adoption Assistance	Subsidized Permanent Guardianship
Ages 0 – 11	$27.92/day	$27.87/day	$27.87/day
Ages 12 +	$32.00/day	$31.95/day	$31.95/day

Independent Living Rates

Regular Board Rate Age 18 - 20	Graduated Board Rate Age 18 – 20
$14.06/day	$7.03/day

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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

Assessment Criteria

Attachment Criteria are the areas that home study writers and PATH trainers use to assess prospective foster parents' abilities and desire to participate fully as professional caregiver partners. The criteria look at potential foster parents' ability to:

Communicate Effectively	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.
Work in Partnership (Share Parenting)	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.
Build Self-Esteem	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.
Manage Trauma Behaviors	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.
Assess the Impact of Becoming a Foster Parent	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.
Become Loss and Attachment Expert	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.
Assure Health and Safety	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 is essential in modeling how parents should care for a child.
Apply Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard	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.
Adhere to Agency Policies	Foster parents are required to work within state policies, share responsibility with the agency, and participate in ongoing training opportunities.
Build Connections	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.
Be Life Long Learners	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.

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.

Total Score	***What It Means***
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.

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 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.

Total Score	***What It Means***
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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 are the best reasons for becoming a foster parent?

The best reasons are those that do not involve intense personal needs such as feeling lonely or wanting the self-satisfaction of “saving” a child. If your reasons are based on calm thinking and knowing that you can be a positive influence in a child’s life, you are on the right track. It is okay to want to express love and feel that you will be doing something worthwhile for a child. The key idea is that your actions are for others rather than to fill a personal need. If you can say “My life is good, I’m a reasonably happy person and I care about others,” then being a foster parent is an enrichment of an already fulfilled person. This makes for a foster parent who can make logical choices, be reasonably objective and keep the child’s welfare as the number one priority.

On the following page is a list of beliefs and attitudes that people who are interested in becoming foster parents may have. If your thoughts are most like the person in the left column, you are likely to have a positive foster care experience. If you are more like the person described in the right column, you should think things over and perhaps talk to a professional counselor before applying to be a foster parent.

You are Ready	***Think it Over***
I care about children and want to share my good fortune.	I am depressed and think I could feel better if I had a child to fuss over.
I am kind and loving but can be firm when it's required.	I just love children and don't feel they should ever be disciplined, scolded or punished.
Foster children have had it tough. I want to make their life a little easier and more fun.	These children have been abused and neglected - I want to protect them from their birth family members.
I didn't have children. By being a foster parent I can share my home and give my time and attention to a worthwhile cause.	I don't have children, and I feel that having a foster child will fill a lonely void in my life.
I did a good job as a parent and know how to work with children. I'd like to use my skills to help other children.	I don't know much about children, but I believe that if you just love them enough everything will be okay.
As a foster parent, my job is to make this child feel comfortable and accepted in my home. I know that someday the child will leave and that's okay.	These poor children have been mistreated and I want to protect them or even adopt them so their family never hurts them again.

Motivations for Considering Adoption

Consider these statements: (✔ your answer)	**Agree**	**Not Sure**	**Disagree**
I want a playmate for my birth child.			
A child would fill up my emptiness			
I am well off, so I could give many things to an adopted child.			
All that foster children need is a lot of love.			
I just love kids and want to add one more to our family.			
I just want to cry when I think of those poor children who do not have a family. I'll just take one in.			
My belief system tells me to reach out to those less fortunate.			
Our marriage is shaky, and a child will bring us back together.			
Since we can't have birth children, I guess we might as well adopt.			
There's no difference anyway. Adoptive parenting and birth parenting are the same.			
I know I have a lot to learn about parenting these children, but I want to begin.			
I want to adopt but my spouse is unsure.			

Things to Consider When Reviewing Your Motivations:

- Adoption is a lifelong experience, not a one-time event.
- Adoption is not about pretending the child was born to you, but about celebrating adoption as an equally valid way to build a family.
- Adoption is a distinct form of family building which includes the same challenges as parenting children born to you as well as added challenges and joys unique to adoption.
- Parenting is NOT a do-it yourself project.
- Adoption support before, during, and after placement is a crucial element of adoption success.
- Advocacy is the act of maximizing all types of resources to be accessed that can help you become a better parent and advocate and to cope with parenting challenges.
- There are skills to learn, tools to develop, and resources to be accessed that can help you become a better parent and advocate and to cope with parenting challenges.
- Reaching out for information and support does not need to be painful, nor does it mean you are an inadequate parent.
- Your peers are often the best sources of information and support.

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