

	GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL			
	Chapter:	(14) Resource Development	Effective Date:	March 2015
	Policy Title:	Introduction to Resource Development		
Policy Number:	14.0	Previous Policy #:	1014, 1015.1	

Georgia’s Foster Care Program seeks to strengthen families, protect children from further abuse and neglect, and ensure permanency for every child in care. When it is necessary for children to experience out-of-home placements due to safety threats in their own homes, the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) is committed to ensuring their safety and well-being. To fulfill this commitment, DFCS recruits and works closely with relatives and members of the community interested in serving as caregivers for this population of children. DFCS also works in partnership with Child Placing Agencies (CPAs), which expands the number of placement family resources available to children in foster care. CPA caregivers who are to be considered for placement of children in DFCS custody must be approved, annually re-evaluated, and held accountable to and supported according to the policies in this chapter.¹

Qualified individuals with disabilities will be afforded an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, the DFCS foster care and adoption program. Moreover, DFCS and CPAs will not discriminate on the basis of disability in decisions relating to the selection, retention, or termination of participants in the foster care and adoption program. This applies in every phase of the process to become a foster or adoptive parent, from initial inquiry to approval. For more information, see policies [1.4 Administration: Non-Discriminatory Child Welfare Practices](#) and [1.5 Administration: Americans with Disabilities Act](#).

The DFCS caregiver practice model is called **Partnership Parenting**². Partnership Parenting is a trauma-informed shared parenting model between caregivers and birth parents that is designed to keep parents *parenting* while their children are in out-of-home placement. By keeping parents connected and involved with parenting their children, permanency can be achieved faster, the trauma of placement can be reduced for children, child and parent bonds are preserved, and parents have the opportunity to demonstrate and increase their parental protective capacities. Partnership Parenting also emphasizes and supports concurrent permanency planning.

Caregiver Types

Throughout this chapter, the general term “caregiver” is used to collectively refer to all foster parent types, including those who serve through CPAs. The Partnership Parenting model has

¹ Whether or not directly stated (as in “DFCS and CPAs must...”), the policies in this chapter apply to both CPA and DFCS caregivers. CPAs should consult with the Office of Provider Management regarding any questions about policies related to administrative procedures (such as annual recruitment plans), which may or may not be applicable to CPAs.

² Partnership Parenting will be fully implemented as a component of the 2014-2019 Child and Family Services Plan.

the following types of caregivers:

Partnership Parents (PPs) are foster parents who provide temporary homes for children in foster care. They are expected to work in partnership with birth families and act as parenting mentors whenever possible. PPs share parenting responsibilities with birth parents through “parenting opportunities.” Parenting opportunities are any favorable times, occasions, situations, or conditions that allow a parent to safely teach, support, nurture, discipline, care for, or guide children.

Relative Partnership Parents (RPPs) are foster parents related by blood, marriage, or adoption to children placed in their home. They provide temporary homes for their relative’s children who are in foster care. They may also serve non-relative children. RPPs follow the same approval process as regular PPs and have all the benefits and responsibilities associated with being a PP, including full foster care per diem reimbursement. RPPs have the same expectations as PPs.

Adoptive Parents are “forever families” who make a lifelong commitment to a child. They serve children whose birth parents’ parental rights have been voluntarily surrendered or terminated by a court, thus making the children legally free for adoption. Adoptive Parents may also be relatives in which case they are called **Relative Adoptive Parents**.

Adoptive Parent-Legal Risk Parents are adoptive parents who accept for placement children who are not completely legally free for adoption and thus, legal risk exists in accepting the placement.

Resource Parents (RPs) are a hybrid of a foster parent and an adoptive parent. They act as both a PP (temporary foster care placement) and are willing to become the adoptive parent (permanent family) for the child. Children placed with RPs have a concurrent permanency plan, meaning that two permanency goals are being pursued simultaneously. At least one of the permanency goals is adoption with the RP named as the permanency resource. RPs must be able to concurrently fulfill the roles of being a PP and an adoptive parent. A RP may also be a relative in which case they are called **Relative Resource Parents**.

Caregivers serving children through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) are known as **ICPC-Partnership Parents, ICPC- Adoptive Parents, ICPC-Relative Partnership Parents** and **ICPC-Relative Adoptive Parents**.

Caregiver Applicants

Prior to final approval, all prospective caregivers are referred to as applicants. Applicants are evaluated to ensure they possess the protective capacities needed to ensure children in foster care remain safe from danger and are able to provide appropriate nurturing and family life for the children. Applicants who meet the qualifications for approval partner with DFCS, CPAs, and parents to ensure the safety, well-being and permanency of children.

The caregiver preparation and service continuum helps applicants make an informed decision about becoming a caregiver. Applicants receive information and training to enhance their parenting knowledge and skills, as well as to clarify their role when working with children, their families, and other community partners. The preparation and training

continuum includes a mechanism for providing practical knowledge of available financial, structural, and administrative support. It also addresses skills and competencies required to meet the behavioral and psychosocial needs of children in care. Moreover, the preparation and service continuum serves as a strategy to develop and enhance the pool of approved caregivers. A well-prepared and supported caregiver directly impacts the strength, success, and overall positive outcomes of Georgia's foster care program.

Caregiver Preparation and Service Continuum

The preparation and training continuum addresses three important phases of family readiness in caring for children in foster care:

Phase 1: Inquiry

Inquiry is made through the Inquiry Information Line at 1-877-210-KIDS.

Phase 2: Information Session

The Information Session provides basic information about the child welfare system, types of caregivers, safety screening requirements and other key points to help prospective caregivers decide whether to proceed or opt out of the evaluation process.

Phase 3: Pre-service Training and Initial Home Evaluation

IMPACT Family Centered Practice (FCP)³ training provides families with preliminary information, competencies and skills, as well as the philosophical framework they will need to begin providing care for children. The acronym IMPACT stands for:

Initial interest

Mutual selection

Pre-service training

Assessment

Continuing development

Trauma-Informed Teamwork

After final approval of their Initial Family Evaluation, caregivers are reassessed annually. Support services including on-going educational activities are also provided. Continuing education is crucial and impacts the continued readiness of families to meet the ever-changing and varied needs of children in care. It begins during the first year of approval. This requires honest disclosure by families and keen observations by DFCS Case Managers regarding the training needs of these families. These on-going skills and competencies may be obtained through specialized training sessions based on specific needs and expectations,

³ CPAs may also utilize the following nationally recognized pre-service training programs: Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP); Parents as Tender Healers (PATH); Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE); or Treatment Parent Readiness Training.

seminars, workshops, conferences, etc. Families may also have additional opportunities to experience personal growth by reflecting on their own personal needs and experiences in order to give their best to children placed in their care. The annual continuing parent development requirement continues to focus on skills and competencies required by families for the on-going challenge of parenting children placed in their home.