

	GEORGIA DIVISION OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY MANUAL			
	Chapter:	(14) Resource Development	Effective Date:	September 2015
	Policy Title:	Pre-Service Training		
	Policy Number:	14.8	Previous Policy #:	14.8

CODES/REFERENCES

Title IV-E of the Social Security Act Section 471(a)(24)
Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-183)

REQUIREMENTS

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) shall ensure prospective foster and adoptive parents are adequately prepared with the appropriate knowledge and skills to provide for the needs of a child. As necessary, such preparation shall continue after placement of the child and includes knowledge and skills relating to the reasonable and prudent parenting standard (see policy [14.26 Resource Development: Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard](#)) for the participation of the child in age or developmentally appropriate activities, including knowledge and skills relating to the developmental stages of the cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral capacities of a child and applying the standard to decisions such as whether to allow the child to engage in social, extracurricular, enrichment, cultural and social activities, including sports, field trips and overnight activities lasting one or more days and involving the signing of permission slips and arranging transportation for the child to and from extracurricular enrichment and social activities.

Prospective caregivers must complete a pre-service training program (IMPACT Family Centered Practice [FCP]) to become approved foster or adoptive parents for children in DFCS custody. Caregivers who voluntarily closed their homes while in good standing and desire to have their home reopened are not required to repeat IMPACT FCP if they completed it within the last three years.

Child Placing Agencies (CPAs) shall be allowed to use nationally recognized and approved pre-service training programs [i.e. Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting/Group Preparation & Selection (MAPP/GPS); Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE); Parents as Tender Healers (PATH); or Treatment Parent Readiness Training] if the training was completed within the last three years. Any other pre-service training requires approval from the office of the DFCS State Foster Care Services Director.

Prospective caregivers shall attend pre-service training no later than 60 days after submitting the appropriate documents from the Prospective Caregiver Application Packet they received at the Information Session.

IMPACT FCP Pre-Service Training sessions shall only be conducted by certified IMPACT Leaders who have completed IMPACT Leader Training offered through the DFCS Education and Training Section.

DFCS/CPAs shall not allow parent co-leaders to be solely responsible for an entire IMPACT FCP meeting or an entire group, conducting individual IMPACT FCP sessions with families, or completing In-Home Family Consultations and Family Evaluations.

DFCS shall hold IMPACT FCP sessions on days and times that meet the needs of the participating families. Meetings may be held at night, during the day, and/or on weekends.

DFCS/CPAs shall require participants to attend all sessions. If an unforeseen circumstance results in a missed session, a participant may make up the missed session(s) in another IMPACT FCP group or with individual meetings that satisfy IMPACT FCP requirements. However, the entire course must be completed within a 90-day period or the participant must re-start the training process from the beginning.

DFCS/CPAs shall require all adult household members (age 18 and over) of prospective foster parents to complete IMPACT FCP if they will be involved in the **parenting** of children placed in the home. For adoptive families, these household members are *strongly encouraged* to participate.

DFCS staff who will not actually lead IMPACT FCP classes shall receive an abbreviated “overview session” of the curriculum from Resource Development (RD) staff or another approved trainer. They could also attend the actual IMPACT FCP Pre-service Training for Leaders or participate in an IMPACT FCP group with perspective foster and adoptive families. At a minimum, the following DFCS staff shall be provided an *overview* of the IMPACT FCP Curriculum:

- a. Regional Directors;
- b. Field-based Consultants;
- c. County Directors;
- d. Deputy Directors;
- e. Social Services Program Directors and Social Services Administrators;
- f. Social Services Supervisors and Case Managers; and
- g. Independent Living Specialists.

PROCEDURES

IMPACT FCP leaders will:

1. After an applicant has completed the Information Session, evaluate the needs of the family, as well as the needs and resources of the agency, to choose a mode of pre-service preparation (i.e., group or individual sessions) for the family. Group is the preferred mode.
NOTE: Approval must be obtained from the Regional Adoption Coordinator (RAC) in order to pay for individual sessions.
2. Help participants make the decision to “select out” as a part of the joint selection process whenever participants decide they do not wish to foster or adopt. Participants who select out may be allowed to remain in the group, unless they are disruptive to the group. However, one-to-one sessions are discontinued.
3. Complete IMPACT FCP within 10 weeks of initiation. County DFCS Offices may offer IMPACT FCP classes in the configuration that best meets the needs of their participants

and still allows for completion of all hours within 10 weeks. There is an exception to this timeframe if there are missed sessions.

4. Throughout the pre-service training process, conduct a minimum of three in-home consultation visits with applicants that run concurrently with classroom training. When possible, the initial in-home consultation visit should occur before the applicant attends the first session of IMPACT FCP Classroom Training. Document all consultations in the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (Georgia SHINES) under the Contact/Summaries tab.
5. Request a waiver of pre-service training for families who are approved to foster or adopt in another state and are moving to Georgia with children placed by that state through the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC).
 - a. All applicable ICPC requirements must be met and the Georgia ICPC Administrator must authorize the placement of children from other states into Georgia.
 - b. ICPC allows provisional approval of families. This means ICPC families can be provisionally approved before IMPACT FCP is completed. The family will have to complete IMPACT FCP within 120 calendar days in order to maintain approval status.
6. If applicants were approved in other states, take the following actions to confirm the training hours and begin collecting information for the Family Evaluation:
 - a. Obtain a Release of Information.
 - b. Contact the other state in writing.
 - c. Obtain a description of the training content and number of hours earned as part of pre-service and in-service hours.
 - d. Request a copy of the family's initial evaluation and any subsequent evaluations.
 - e. Request a written recommendation from the state as to the capabilities and protective capacities of the family (upload into Georgia SHINES).

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

IMPACT Family Centered Practice (FCP) Pre-service Training

IMPACT FCP is a pre-service training program used to prepare prospective foster and adoptive families for their role and to expose them to the basic skills and competencies needed to begin providing foster and adoptive care. IMPACT FCP involves an instructive approach to preparing families. The curriculum includes an assortment of visual aids, audio-visuals, role-play, and vignettes to support the acquisition of skills and competencies. Woven throughout the training will be applicable references to cultural and disciplinary issues related to caring for children in placement. Upon completion, participants must demonstrate at least minimal mastery and internalization of the skills and competencies presented.

The IMPACT FCP pre-service training addresses several areas that are required in establishing the basic skills and competencies needed to parent children placed in foster or adoptive care. These areas include the following:

1. ***The Fostering/Adoption Process*** – includes supervision and safety issues for children in care; communication with the agency and other foster care partners; the judicial/legal process; discipline policy requirements and behavior management; cultural, ethnic, and religious issues; supports for the resource family; an awareness of personal and family strengths/needs and resources required to successfully foster/adopt; and understanding the role of the resource family in concurrent planning;

2. ***Emotional/Cognitive/Behavioral Implications in Fostering/Adopting*** – includes loss and attachment issues and techniques for intervention; the impact of placement on the cognitive functioning of children; the family’s role in working with professionals in meeting the medical, psychological, educational, etc. needs of children; supporting the agency in moving a child into the appropriate level of care; the immediate and long- term effects of placement on the resource family; the agency’s role in supporting collaboration between partners; recognizing and responding to emotional, psychological, and bio-chemical disorders;
3. ***Sexuality and Sexual Orientation*** – includes sexuality as it relates to different age groups; recognizing and supporting children who have been victims of sexual abuse; supporting and responding to children who express sexual identity and sexual orientation issues; learning to recognize and avoid personal vulnerability to sexual maltreatment accusations and alleged overtures for sexual intimacy; expecting, recognizing, and coping with exaggerated sexualized behaviors;
4. ***Communication and Partnership*** – includes defining the basics of communication patterns and the dynamics involved in communicating with partners; roles and responsibilities in initiating various types of communication; procedures to follow when communication is problematic; defining partnership and the various partners (e.g., resource families, agency staff, community agencies, faith-based groups, biological/extended family members, professional resources, and other resource families) involved in communication; and
5. ***Identity and Cultural Issues*** – includes an examination of cultural, religious, ethnic and transracial factors impacting the placement and care of children, including the importance of cultural and ethnic identity; diversity; practical cultural and identity issues for resource families, including grooming, hygiene, customs, manners, social interaction, and dietary considerations.

IMPACT FCP Used in Corrective Action Plans

Pre-service training modules within the IMPACT curriculum may be used to address specific parenting needs when the County DFCS has developed a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for a foster or adoptive parent. Families may be required to repeat all or specific sessions of the IMPACT program (e.g., meetings addressing discipline, sexuality, safety issues, etc.). This is applicable when the specific skills and competencies are available within the corrective action timeframe. The implementation of the CAP is not delayed due to the unavailability of the IMPACT series.

Maximum Group Size

The maximum group size for IMPACT FCP is based upon the needs of the Agency and the number of families with whom Team Leaders can comfortably work during the process. Counties must make the most effective use of their time and resources. A suggested average group size is 20 participants.

Reducing the Waiting Period

Potential applicants could become discouraged or lose interest if they are left waiting to begin pre-service training. Some strategies to help reduce the amount of time applicants have to wait to participate in pre-service training include:

1. Conducting IMPACT FCP groups across county lines;
2. Having reciprocal arrangements with other counties and agencies to make groups

available to each other;

3. Co-leading groups with other public or private agencies that have approved trainers;
4. Referring prospective adoptive families to the Regional Adoption Coordinator (RAC) for linkage to a private adoption agency under contract with DFCS.

Training Materials

For materials and updates, counties must contact the Education and Training Unit or visit the following web address: <http://167.196.164.34/IMPACT/default.aspx>.

IMPACT FCP Team Leader Training

Leader training is obtained through the DFCS Education and Training Unit.

Consistent Group Leaders

It is preferred that group leaders remain the same throughout all assigned sessions of the IMPACT FCP curriculum to enhance effectiveness. Leaders should not start group or individual training if it is known in advance that they will not be able available for the entire duration of the series. Each leader brings unique perspectives and experiences to the learning process.

Parent Co-Leaders

Pre-service preparation is most effective when jointly presented by DFCS staff and a competent, experienced foster or adoptive parent using an instructive and practical approach. DFCS County Offices/Regions and CPAs should maintain enough certified parent co-leaders to meet the training needs of the county/region. Parent co-leaders should be active partners in conducting groups and share an active role in planning, scheduling, logistics, and delivery. The DFCS and parent co-leaders should collaborate following each group meeting to discuss the meeting and exchange feedback on performance. Caregivers selected to become approved co-leaders should:

1. Be an approved, active caregiver;
2. Demonstrate the ability to grasp and impart information;
3. Have at least two years experience as a caregiver;
4. Demonstrate functional knowledge and understanding of the general needs of the children in foster care;
5. Demonstrate the ability to manage, nurture, and support children in foster care;
6. Demonstrate a functional understanding of the DFCS mission to strengthen and support birth families;
7. Have a positive working relationship with DFCS;
8. Provide an environment that ensures the health and safety of the child;
9. Understand the role they have assumed as caregivers and the ongoing impact this has on their family and themselves; and
10. Have no active CPS investigations.

Parent Co-Leader Scheduling

Counties/Regions should develop an annual training plan and inform parents of plans and approximate times that parents will be co-leading groups. DFCS and parent co-leaders must ensure the needs of the child(ren) placed in the parent co-leader's home are being met before scheduling the parent to co-lead IMPACT FCP groups. The parent co-leader must be

able to state how the child(ren)'s needs will be met during the parent's absence. Parent co-leaders with children placed in their home should not co-lead more than two IMPACT FCP groups a year or more than one group at a time.

FORMS AND TOOLS

[Bill for Services Rendered](#)

[IMPACT Material website](#)

[IMPACT Leader Trainings and overview trainings](#)