Session One
# Session One At-a-Glance

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About Session One

Overview

Session One of the DCFS: A Journey Home serves as an introduction to fostering and our Louisiana foster care system. Each member of the professional foster care team is an important partner in assisting the child or youth and family through this trying time in their lives.

Foster Parents must understand the foster care system, be honest about why they are here and realistic about their expectations. In Session One, you will introduce the process and partners involved in DCFS’s foster care system. In addition, you will cover the mission, vision and values of the Department. You will also begin the discussion on deal breakers and the mutual selection process. Finally, you will introduce the homework element of the training and how the scavenger hunt and other activities are designed as both part of their assessment and to assist the foster parent in organizing their home for their new children or youth.

Case Studies: You will be utilizing case studies throughout the training so that participants may have the opportunity to apply their learning. Today’s session will not include any case study materials.

Real Cases: You will want to make it clear to the participants that all of the case studies used in this curriculum are de-identified families with any identifying information altered or removed.

Learning Objectives

✓ Demonstrate a clear understanding of the Safety Focused Practice goal and how it relates to your role as a foster parent.

✓ Explain the mission, vision and values of DCFS and how your role as a foster parent fits into the LA foster care system.

✓ Identify the court process and the key partners in the foster care system.

✓ Articulate any attributes or issues children or youth may have that you would not be able to accept in your home.

✓ Identify any issues you may have that would make you ineligible for foster parenting.

✓ Explain how the mutual selection process works during the foster parent training and certification process in the foster care system.
Trainer Preparation

In addition to the Trainer's Guide, Participants' Guides, Homework Notebook and PowerPoint Slides, Session One will require the trainer to locate and prepare the following supplemental materials:

**Participant Assessment Form:**
- See appendix for the participant assessment form to be completed by the trainer. If there is a family that has several red flags or concerns, **schedule individual one-on-one time with participants before or after class.**

**Evaluation Form:**
- See appendix for the evaluation form to be completed by the participant.

**Sign In Sheet:**
- See appendix for the attendance form.

**Handouts:**
- *Partnership for Children or Youth in Out-of-Home Placement*
- *Family Profile*
- 427
- Application

**Participant Assessment**

A Home Development Specialist will be identified for each family after meeting two. Phone contact is made with each participant before meeting three. This one-on-one time is important to help you gauge the needs of participants as well as identify any red flags that need to be addressed. Use the participant assessment form to evaluate participants and guide this discussion. Instructions can be found in the appendix.

**Participant's Guide**

You will provide a *Participant's Guide* to each participant today. This guide should be used in class for classroom activities. Additionally, lecture content is presented throughout the guides as well as supplemental content. The participants will keep this guide at the completion of this training.
Homework Notebook

You will provide a *Homework Notebook* to each participant today. This notebook should be used in class for homework activities including journaling assignments, self-assessment, reading assignments and the scavenger hunt. Some suggestions are provided for reading assignments; however, these are at the discretion of the trainer in order to fully incorporate current research in the field as well as local statistical information. You should plan on reviewing this notebook during participant assessment sessions. The participants will turn this notebook in at completion of this training.

Lifebooks

As a culminating transitional activity on the last day of training, you should have each participant bring his/her own completed lifebook of this training experience. Continue to forward any photos, observations, documents, etc. to the participants for inclusion. This activity is intended to allow for parallel process and will help participants see the value in creating lifebooks for their foster children or youth. Participants can share their lifebooks with each other and have other participants share their contact information.
Introduction and Orientation

Materials

- PPT 1.1-1.3
- Distribute Participants’ Guides
- PG 1.1-1.5
- Flipchart Paper/Markers

30 Minutes

Presentation – Introductions

Introduce yourself and welcome the participants to the DCFS’ A Journey Home. Cover the following:

Your name.

Work responsibilities/length of time at your organization.

Why you’re excited to be training this curriculum!

Your role as a trainer for both the classroom and the structured field training elements of the curriculum.

Your role in the assessment of your participants. In addition to training, you will be observing, listening and spending time with each family. In the spirit of partnership, your role of trainer is also to notice red flags, to identify areas of concern, and to guide the participants to the right decisions about becoming a foster parent. You will be completing a worksheet to record your observations at the end of each session. Explain that any concerns you have will be shared with the family. You should provide participants with a copy of this worksheet, found in the appendix of this trainer’s guide, so they may see the competencies you will be using in your assessment. You may review this with them and answer any questions or concerns that come up at this time.

Provide any other information you would like to share to begin allowing the participants to get to know you.

Ask participants to introduce themselves. Ask them to cover the following:

Their name.

Where they live.

Why they are eager for this training.
The overarching goals for: A Journey Home include the following:

- Participants will be able to make informed decisions about fostering/adopting for their family.
- Participants will understand their important roles and commitments as a member of the Department of Children and Family Services foster care team.
- Participants will be prepared to navigate the foster care system.
- Participants will be prepared to provide quality parenting, normal child or youthhood experiences and trauma-sensitive care to the foster children or youth in their home.
- Participants will participate in the mutual selection and assessment process.
The learning objectives for Session One of: A Journey Home include the following:

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the DCFS Safety-Focused practice and how it relates to your role as a foster parent.

- Explain DCFS' mission, vision and values and how your role as a foster parent fits into the foster care system.

- Identify the Louisiana’s court process and the key partners in the foster care system.

- Articulate any attributes or issues that children or youth may have that you would not be able to accept in your home.

- Identify any issues you may have that would make you ineligible for foster parenting.

- Explain how the mutual selection process works during the foster parent training and certification process.

Preparing foster parents for their role as a member of the professional foster care team is one of the most important functions of DCFS. We believe the work you will be doing and our partnership with you is critical to the success of our mission, vision and values.

We are excited you have joined us on this important adventure. It will change your life forever! It will change the life of a child or youth forever! When responding to the statement "Boy you have your hands full," one foster parent simply replied, "No, just very blessed."
Activity – Ground Rules

INTRODUCE the Activity

- Post Slide 1.3 as you introduce this activity.
  - Before we get started, let’s take a moment to build ground rules for our time together.
  - We are going to be together for seven or eight Sessions, and we have a lot to do. Ground rules can make our time enjoyable; help us remain on task; establish an understanding about our needs and confirm our commitment towards our goals, allow us to take shared risks and help to make this training a success.

PURPOSE of Activity

- Reinforce the concept of the group’s ground rules.
- Obtain ownership of and commitment to the course from participants.
- Encourage participants to share personal information.
- Energize participants about their personal strengths for the role of foster parents.
- Help promote an atmosphere that provides for shared risks.

DIRECTIONS for Activity

Say:

- In order to build effective ground rules, we need to keep in mind the goals for our time together, and to then identify how we will work together to effectively reach these goals. This includes a conversation about what you want, what the agency wants us to accomplish, and what each of us has to offer.
Ask:

¿ What would help you work best together to reach the course goals during the seven or eight sessions that you are going to be together?

¿ What can trainers and other participants do to make you most comfortable?

SAMPLE RESPONSES for Ground Rules:

- Turn off cell phones and/or pagers.
- Be on time for class. If we start on time; we end on time!
- Respect others/respect and honor confidentiality. Ask permission to share private information.
- Have fun.
- Cooperate in a team effort.
- Relax and be comfortable.
- Respect other participants.
- Listen to the person who is speaking.
- Be supportive.
- Freedom to pass and not have a conversation in public, may want to address a topic one on one.

Ask:

¿ What do you expect to get out of this training?
SAMPLE RESPONSES for What Participants Want:

❖ Learn about children or youth in foster care.
❖ Learn about my responsibilities as a foster parent.
❖ Learn about the people and agencies I will be working with.
❖ Learn about the foster care system.
❖ Learn about the laws, policies and procedures.
❖ Learn about the court system.
❖ Learn about how to handle difficult situations.
❖ Learn how to provide trauma-sensitive care.

Ask:

? What do you have to contribute, both as you continue to learn about fostering and as a group member?

SAMPLE RESPONSES for Personal Contributions:

❖ Cares about the material and am excited to learn.
❖ Willing to learn and try new things.
❖ Willing to be an active participant.
❖ Enthusiastic about learning.
❖ Willing to share my feelings and experiences.
❖ Always comes prepared.
❖ Good listener.
❖ Respects differences.

SUMMARIZE

► Participants will attend all seven or eight sessions of training.
► Participants are expected to provide feedback to the trainer
and each other throughout the session.

- Participants should honor confidential information.
- Any field activities are expected to be completed by the assigned dates.
- Participants may pass anytime they are asked a question or asked to volunteer, but participation is strongly encouraged.

**REVIEW: Housekeeping Items**

- Cell phones.
- Evaluations.
- Places to Eat.
- Restrooms.

**DISTRIBUTE PARTICIPANT’S GUIDES**

*Distribute participant guides and review the components:*

- Introductory Letter
- Table of Contents
- Content
- Worksheets

**TRANSITION**

- Let’s begin our discussion by talking about the goal of the Louisiana Department of Children and Families Services as well as the mission, vision and values.
DCFS Mission, Vision and Values Statement

Presentation – Introduction to Topic

- In order to be a fully prepared and engaged partner in our system and on our professional foster care team, it is important for you to know who we are. It is also important for you to understand our mission as well as the vision and values for the foster care program.

- We are going to begin this training by explaining the goal for the Advanced Safety-Focused Practice of the Department of Children and Families Services (DCFS).

- We will also introduce you to our partner agencies. (Resource Centers, CASA, Foster Parent Associations, etc.)

PowerPoint Presentation – DCFS Advanced Safety-Focused Practice Goal (SLIDE 1.4)

SLIDE 1.4

PowerPoint Slide: DCFS Advanced Safety-Focused Practice Goal

- The goal of the DCFS Advanced Safety-Focused Practice is to achieve safe and permanent homes for children or youth, where their well-being needs are met, while safely reducing the number of children or youth entering care.
Ask:

? If the state is trying to reduce the number of children or youth in foster care, why is foster care training and certification still so important?

- In order to successfully reunify families, the safety and well-being of children or youth need to be maintained as families work through their case plans.

- The safety and well-being of children or youth must be maintained as a permanent living situation is established.

PowerPoint Presentation – DCFS Mission, Vision and Values (SLIDES 1.5-1.7)

SLIDE 1.5

PowerPoint Slide: DCFS and Partners

▶ Let's start the discussion by talking a little bit about the role of child protective services.

▶ Local Law Enforcement will assist Child Protective Services when needed.

▶ Direct case management services for children or youth and their families are performed by the Department.

▶ Many other partner agencies and providers deliver very important services and supports for our families including, but not limited to, placement services, group care and crisis intervention. **Name those for your region.**

▶ Local Foster Adoption Parent Associations provide training, services, support, special events and assistance to foster
children or youth and their foster families.

SLIDE 1.6

PowerPoint Slide: Louisiana DCFS Mission

► DCFS’ Mission is caring for the safety and well being of all Louisiana’s people.

► As foster parents, you are an important partner in reaching our mission. Effectively preparing you for that role is of critical importance, which is why we are here today. This commitment is ongoing, and the pre-service training is just one of many training opportunities you will receive.

SLIDE 1.7

PowerPoint Slide: Louisiana’s DCFS Vision

► Treating all people with dignity, compassion and respect while providing services and integrity.

SUMMARIZE

► When a child or youth comes into your home, you hold a deep responsibility for that child or youth’s well-being. You must be prepared to treat the child or youth as if he/she is your own while also providing the care needed for a child or youth who is dealing with trauma and loss. **Additionally, you must be prepared for co-parenting and understand that the best outcome for this child or youth, if possible, is reunification with his birth parent(s).**

► During this training, we will be working on developing new skills and knowledge and building on your existing skills and knowledge so that together we can change the world, one family at a time – and achieve positive outcomes for the children or youth and families we serve in Louisiana.
Let's continue our discussion by talking about how the foster parent fits within the professional team.

The Department of Children and Family Services is a Quality Parent site that ensures excellent parenting for every child under the care of the child welfare agency.

In Louisiana, this is what makes a great foster parent:

- Foster parents and kinship caregivers in LA are respected members of the professional team that determines and puts the child’s best interest first.
- They are well educated and informed about their roles and responsibilities, child development, the effects of trauma on children and families and the judicial system.
- Great foster parents co-parent with birth parents for a successful overall outcome for the child, birth parents and foster parents with the support of DCFS, CASA, the judicial system and other partners.
- Foster parents are given the resources to meet the immediate needs of children and their families while providing opportunities for them to thrive long term.

Foster Parents as Partners

**Materials**
- PPT 1.8-1.10
- PG 1.7-1.9

**Flipchart Paper/Markers**
**Handout: Partnership for Child or youth in Out-of-Home Placement**

**20 Minutes**

**Presentation – Introduction to Topic**

- We will be discussing your roles and responsibilities as a member of the professional foster care team throughout this training, but for now I want to spend some time giving you a broad overview of the commitments you are making when you sign up to be a foster parent.

- I also want to introduce you to an important document that helps to clarify our responsibilities toward each other and to the child or youth: the *Partnership for Children and Youth in Out-of-Home Placement*. This document helps to solidify the mission, values and vision of DCFS.

**DISTRIBUTE Handout**

- *Distribute and Review Partnership for Children and Youth in Out-of-Home Care* which can be found in the appendix.
Activity – Partnership for Children and Youth

INTRODUCE the Activity

- Post Slide 1.8 as you introduce this activity.
  - The Partnership for Children and Youth in Out-of Home Care allows us to establish, up front, expectations for our partnership.
  - Let us explore each of these areas and identify some of our strengths and needs.
  - Again, during the training--and as a part of our on-going commitment--we will be building on your strengths and helping you with your needs.

PURPOSE of Activity

- Reinforce the concept of the Partnership for Children and Youth.

- Allow participants the opportunity to identify their strengths and needs in meeting the guidelines of the Partnership for Children and Youth.

- Provide examples. For example, an experience and strengths they already have with "Responsible Partnership" is a successful marriage or parenting their birth children or youth together.

DIRECTIONS for Activity

Ask:

? What strengths and experience do you already have in order to help you meet the guidelines of the Partnership for Children and Youth as a foster parent?
? What needs do you have?

Refer participants to: Foster Parent Partner Strengths and Needs Worksheet.

Allow the participants 15 minutes to complete the worksheet.

Ask participants to walk about the room, adding their input to the flipcharts prepared with the titles found in the sample responses.

SAMPLE RESPONSES for Respectful Partnership and Professional Behavior (Strengths):

- I treat others with respect.
- I honor the opinion, feelings, skills and knowledge of others.
- I have a successful marriage.
- My spouse and I make decisions as a team when parenting our own children or youth.
- I have successfully worked as a member of a team.
- I involve others into the decision-making process if it involves them too.
- I enlist the help of others when I need it.
- I keep private information, private.
- I am willing to share what I know and how I feel.
- I am a good listener.
- I am willing to follow instructions and requirements.
- I understand that to be a fully-committed partner, I must fully participate in all aspects of care, including case planning.
SAMPLE RESPONSES for Excellent Parenting (Strengths):

- I am an effective parent to my own children or youth.
- I provide gentle discipline.
- I am very empathetic.
- I try to treat everyone I know as an individual with their own unique background, needs, relationships and desires.
- I enjoy family outings and events.

SAMPLE RESPONSES for Responsible Placement (Strengths):

- I understand my own strengths and limitations and am able to openly communicate them.
- My partner, children or youth and I are able to openly communicate our needs to each other.
- I am open to other cultures and backgrounds.

SAMPLE RESPONSES for Professional Development (Strengths):

- I seek information and help when I need it.
- I take constructive criticism well.
- I am a life-long learner.
- I am open to learning new skills and knowledge.

SAMPLE RESPONSES for Services and Support (Strengths):

- I seek support when I need it.
- I am able to delegate.
- I see teamwork as a group of people with various strengths coming together and I am able to effectively utilize the talents and resources of others.
- I understand the roles of the various partners.
SAMPLE RESPONSES for Avoiding Disruption and Providing Smooth Transitions (Strengths):

- I make plans well in advance.
- I like to be prepared in case life throws me a curveball.
- I understand that this child or youth may not be in my home forever and that I need to prepare both of us for the day he or she has to leave.
- I want to make an impact, so I want to be a part of happy memories and make a difference for somebody’s future.

SAMPLE RESPONSES for Family Mentoring and Respect for Child or Youth’s Connections (Strengths):

- Open to many experiences myself.
- Open-minded.
- I like to meet new people.
- I like to be surrounded by my family and my culture.

SAMPLE RESPONSES for Obtaining and Maintaining Records (Strengths):

- I take detailed notes.
- I understand the importance of accurate record keeping.

SAMPLE RESPONSES for Child Advocacy and Case Planning (Strengths):

- I stand up for what I believe in.
- I am able to communicate clearly.
SAMPLE RESPONSES for Full Participation in Child or Youth's Mental and Physical Well-Being (Strengths):

- I keep all my medical appointments and get my teeth cleaned every 6 months. I do the same for my child or youth.
- I know what to do in an emergency.
- I seek advice and help when I need it.
- I am able to provide care to a child or youth with special physical or mental needs.

SAMPLE RESPONSES for Supporting School Success (Strengths):

- I believe in the value of education.
- I participate in school meetings and events.
- I ensure my child or youth are prepared for school each day by making sure they get the proper amount of sleep, providing them with the proper nutrition, checking their homework, helping them study for tests, and making sure they have their supplies and books.

SUMMARIZE

- During this training, we will be building the tools we need so that you, as foster parents, can meet your part of the Partnership for Children and Youth in Out-of Home Placement.

- Additionally, we will continue to discuss the roles and responsibilities of each member of the professional foster care team and how each professional can help you meet the needs of your child or youth in care as well as the needs of your family.

TRANSITION

- Now that we have discussed DCFS' mission, values and vision as well as the roles and commitments of the professional foster care team, let's turn now to the requirements of the system by exploring the law and the court system as well as the specific people and agencies involved.
in the foster care system.

Louisiana’s Children’s Code

Presentation – Introduction to Topic

- We have a moral obligation and commitment to the child or youth in our care, but we also have legal obligations.
- These legal requirements have been created to provide positive outcomes for children or youth and their families. They include the policies and procedures we must follow in Louisiana’s child welfare system.

PowerPoint Presentation – ASFA (SLIDES 1.9-1.15)

SLIDE 1.9

PowerPoint Slide: What is the Louisiana’s Children’s Code?

- It provides the legal framework for everything we do in the state of Louisiana’s child welfare system.

SLIDE 1.10

PowerPoint Slide: What is ASFA?

- In 1997, President Bill Clinton signed the Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA) into law. ASFA was a fundamental change in the way we think about child or youth welfare. The health and safety of children or youth clearly became the primary concerns of child welfare.
- The main goal of ASFA is to assure the health and safety of children and youth and to promote permanent homes for children and youth.
- ASFA identified seven major outcome goals for child welfare and required the states to comply. We will discuss these as
they relate to Louisiana in a moment.

SLIDE 1.11
PowerPoint Slide: Overarching Outcomes for Children and Youth

- The major outcome goals that ASFA seeks to achieve are reflected in Louisiana's overarching outcomes for children and youth.

- These outcomes for children or youth, as addressed in the Children's Code, Licensing Regulations and Child Welfare Policy are to ensure:
  - Safety
  - Permanency and
  - Well-Being.

SLIDE 1.12
PowerPoint Slide: Safety Outcomes

- Safety outcomes include:
  - Children and youth are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
  - Children and youth are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Ask:

? What do you think the threshold might be for opening a case of abuse or neglect?

Sample Responses:

- A child or youth has marks or bruises from physical beatings.
- A child or youth tells someone at school that they are being hurt by someone in their household.
It is important to note that according to statute (Louisiana Law), reports can and should be made whenever there is a reasonable suspicion or knowledge that a child or youth is being hurt. As we will discuss when looking at the case flow, a report in and of itself is not cause to open a case but rather a reason to assess whether the report is valid (substantiated) based on a matrix of types of abuse and neglect and impact on the children and youth. Some key factors in assessing whether a case is opened, which may or may not lead to removal, are:

- The severity and impact of the abuse or neglect on the child or youth and the current and future safety.
- The child or youth factors: their age, vulnerability, special conditions that make the child or youth more likely to experience serious and/or long term effects and or death.
- The parent/caregivers: parent/caregiver willingness and ability to provide safety for the children or youth, parent/caregiver willingness to seek and utilize help in attaining safe conditions and providing protection for the child or youth.

It is also important to know that we will discuss the decision making process later in this session as we go through the case flow.

- Determining whether a case will be opened is a decision that begins with the hotline call (Centralized Intake) and is made over the course of an initial investigation using the Safety Risk Assessment.

- It also must be pointed out that many of the calls received by the Hotline do not result in cases being opened AND that many children or youth and families whose cases are opened remain intact while services are delivered.
SLIDE 1.13
PowerPoint Slide: Overarching Outcomes for Children and Youth

- Permanency Outcomes:
  - Reunification
  - Adoption
  - Guardianship

- Relatives and non-relative caregivers who are close friends of the family are the first to be considered if removal is deemed necessary to provide for stability and continuity.

- The Louisiana court system is built around a 12-months to permanency model, but many factors can impact this outcome.

- The foster parent is a key link to helping a child or youth reach permanency by working with the birth family and participating in case planning activities.

- Concurrent planning, which we will discuss more in-depth shortly, is often conducted to promote permanency outcomes.

Ask:

? What do you think the term Concurrent Planning means?

Sample Responses:

- Having two goals at the same time.
- As we work towards reunification, we are concurrently planning for alternate permanency options during the whole time to make sure children and youth are not left hanging.
Well-being outcomes include:

- Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their child or youth's needs.
- Children and youth receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
- Children and youth receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Ask:

? How do you think we can help families develop an enhanced capacity to provide for their children or youth's needs?

Sample Responses:

- Providing them with needed services like parenting classes, alcohol and drug programs, mental health services.
- Providing them with mentoring, support and modeling.

Ask:

? What types of services can we provide children and youth to help meet their educational needs?

Sample Responses:

- Enrolling them in school.
- Participating in school conferences, events, and meetings.
- Involving the birth family in educational decisions and events.
- Providing special services and tutoring.
- Providing them with financial assistance and scholarships.
Ask:

What types of services can we provide children and youth to help meet their physical and mental health needs?

Sample Responses:

- Ensuring they have regular medical and dental care.
- Ensuring they receive prescribed medications.
- Ensuring they have specialized physical and mental health care, if needed.
- Ensuring they have emergency care, if needed.

Opening a case is not the same thing as taking a child or youth into custody or placing them into foster care. We will get to the details about how that decision can look for different scenarios, but for now, let’s think about the mandates of safety, permanency, and well-being in the context of decision-making in general for children and youth who have been abused and neglected.

There are some ways that the three outcomes provide room for discussion and guide decision-making in individual cases.

The need for SAFETY: this need can mean that children and youth must be removed and placed in care in order to keep them safe: when there is not a parent or caregiver available to protect a child or youth, or when a parent or caregiver is a danger to a child or youth in real and immediate terms, removal may be the best path to insuring safety. HOWEVER, the implementation of ASFA was designed to make sure that this solution is not over-used. The need for SAFETY can also guide us to make sure that we put in services and supports, including family and alternate caregivers within the household, to assure safety while change is occurring in the underlying causes that led to the child or youth abuse and neglect.

The need for PERMANENCY can mean that children and youth need to stay in their home with family if safety can be created. The process of removal is traumatic in and of itself, as we will discuss in future sessions. Creating a safe
environment where there has been harm can be difficult and scary, however the value of children or youth retaining important primary relationships and staying in familiar settings is a motivator to us in trying to preserve families whenever safely possible.

- The need for **WELL-BEING** permeates the decision-making process as well-being includes emotional and mental health which can be adversely impacted by removal or by remaining in an unsafe, unsupervised environment. Well-being can be negatively impacted by either decision.

- As you can see, the outcomes described in ASFA as the underpinning of our work often guide the case-by-case decision-making about whether families remain intact or children and youth are removed.

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**PowerPoint Presentation – (SLIDES 1.15-1.32)**

**Louisiana’s Foster Care System**

**SLIDE 1.15**

PowerPoint Slide: Journey Through Foster Care Flowchart

- There are procedures we must follow, forms we must fill out, rules we must abide by.
- Let's take a look at this system, how a child or youth's case is processed and who is involved in the process.

Refer participants to PG page 1-10: **Journey Through Foster Care**

- This flow chart illustrates what happens to a family's case from Hotline (Centralized Intake) to Permanency Hearing. Let's walk through it together.

- PowerPoint Slide:
1. CALL TO THE HOTLINE (Centralized Intake)

If any person has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, abandonment or neglect, they have a moral and legal (in some cases, mandated) responsibility to call the Hotline (1-855-452-5437) or (855-4LA-KIDS).

Mandatory reports of child abuse, abandonment or neglect... “Any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child or youth is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child welfare, as defined in this chapter, or that a child or youth is in need of supervision and care and has no parent, legal custodian, or responsible adult relative immediately known and available to provide supervision and care shall report such knowledge or suspicion to the department.

Foster parents, like social specialists and other professionals are required to give their names when reporting.

The Child Protective Service Specialist will make an assessment based on the available information and will decide if it is sufficient to accept a report.

Ask:
What types of information received do you think would prompt an Intake Specialist to accept a report?

Sample Responses:
- Allegations of serious harm or impending serious harm.
- Typical high risk factors: young children or youth, use of substances, allegations of domestic violence, and allegations of untreated and serious mental health issues.
- Reliable information and detailed reports of why the reporter believes there is a reason to suspect child abuse or neglect.
- The abuse or neglect is alleged to occur either by a parent or caregiver OR the parent/caregiver is not protecting the child or youth from abuse or neglect.

Once the Child Protective Service Specialist conducts the investigation, they along with their supervisor will determine if the
case is valid or invalid. If the case is invalid, the investigation is closed. If the case is invalid but high risk, it will be referred to Family Services and the investigation will be closed. If the case is valid, a verbal instanter order will be requested by the specialist from the Judge.

2: INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED ABUSE, ABANDONMENT OR NEGLECT

- If a report is accepted, the Child Protective Service Specialist (CPS) will be sent to the home.

- The CPS investigates the allegations and determines the next course of action. These include:
  
  **Closed** – no services are needed as abuse/neglect is not found.

  **Opened for services** – abuse/neglect are identified or the risk of abuse or neglect are present. Children or youth remain in the home where services are provided. A Case Plan is developed focusing on safety and strengthening the family.

  **Opened for services** – abuse/neglect or imminent risk are present. Child or youth is removed for safety and placed with relative, non-relative or with a foster family. A Case Plan is developed focusing on safety, strengthening the family and reunification.

Ask Question:
What kind of services do you think they would offer if the child or youth was not removed from the home?

Sample Responses:

- In-home counseling.

- Referral to substance abuse or mental health treatment.

- Referral to counseling or services for domestic violence where one parent is willing and able to protect the children or youth from the impact of domestic violence.

- Support services related to special or medical needs of a child or youth that would allow the parents/caregivers to more
effectively provide safety and well-being for the children or youth.

Ask: If child or youth was Removed?

Sample Responses:

- While the majority of cases do not result in removal, the purpose of this flowchart is to illustrate what happens if removal is necessary. It is the event that triggers the subsequent steps on the road to permanency for this child or youth.

- Removal is a traumatic event for a child or youth that is already facing trauma in his/her life. Making this transition easier is a major goal for everyone on the care team.

Ask: When a child or youth is first removed from his home, what are your gut reactions to how he/she might be feeling?

Sample Responses:

- Angry
- Sad
- Scared
- Confused
- Overwhelmed

Court Proceedings

The Child Protective Services Specialist (CPS) shall be responsible for cooperating with the District Attorney’s office with regard to filing of a petition to the court to have a child or youth adjudicated as a “child in need of care” by completing a full report of the allegations and facts obtained regarding the child abuse/neglect so that all pertinent information is included in the petition. A filing of a petition is required if any of the following exists:

- The court has continued a child or youth in the custody of the Department of Children and Family Services at a continued custody hearing and the Department is recommending that the child or youth remain in custody.

- The Department is recommending a reassignment of custody of a child or youth as a result of an investigation of child abuse and/or neglect.
The Department requests an adjudication of a “child in need of care” in order for the court to order specific treatment, supervision and/or other conditions for the parent/caretaker to retain custody of a child.

If a child is continued in custody, a petition shall be filed by the District Attorney as per the Louisiana’s Children’s Code, Article 632 within thirty (30) days of the hearing to determine continued custody.

**Appearance Hearing**

The Louisiana Children’s Code in Article 646 requires the parent to appear in court to answer the petition prior to the Adjudication Hearing but no later than fifteen (15) days after the filing of the petition. The article also provides that if the petition is filed prior to or during the continued custody hearing, the court may order the parent to answer the petition upon completion of the hearing. At the hearing, the court may either convene a prehearing conference or set a date for a prehearing conference. The court may schedule a future hearing to serve notice in open court.

The CPS Specialist is expected to attend the hearing prepared to discuss the case. This should include the chronology of the facts of the case as well as the facts that support the department.

At the appearance hearing, the court advises the parent of his rights and if the parent has not stipulated, decides whether the parent admits or denies the allegations in the petition. If the parent denies the allegations, the court will proceed with scheduling the adjudication hearing. If the parent admits the allegations, the court decides whether there is a factual basis for adjudication and then whether the parent consents to adjudication. When the court determines the parent has consented to the adjudication, the child or youth is determined to be “a child in need of care”

If the court determines that the child is dependent, then the case is scheduled for a disposition hearing.

If the court determines that the child is not dependent, the child can be immediately returned to the parent(s)/legal custodian(s).

**Stipulation**

Article 647 provides that once a prehearing conference has been held, the parent may consent to a judgment or stipulate that the child
is in need of care with or without admitting the allegations of the child in need of care petition. This requires the approval of the District Attorney and the Department when the child is in the custody of DCFS. The CPS Specialist is responsible for notifying the Foster Care Specialist of any stipulated judgment.

**Adjudication Hearing**

If the child is continued in custody and there has been no stipulated judgment, Article 659 of the Louisiana Children’s Code requires that the court set the matter for the adjudication hearing within forty-five (45) days from the filing of the petition.

The adjudication hearing is a trial before the judge at which the state must prove, by a preponderance of the evidence, that the allegations stated in the petition are true and that the child is “in need of care”. The District Attorney represents the State at the hearing.

**Disposition Hearing**

The Louisiana Children’s Code requires that following an adjudication that a child is “in need of care”, the court conduct a disposition hearing to decide the disposition for the child. The Children’s Code specifies in Article 678 that the disposition hearing may be conducted immediately after the adjudication. The time limit may be extended for good cause. The Children’s Code also specifies that the court may choose from the following options for the disposition for the child.

- Place the child in the custody of a parent or such other suitable person on such terms and conditions as deemed in the best interest of the child including but not limited to the issuance of a protective order;

- Place the child in the custody of the agency;

- Grant guardianship of the child to any individual; or,

- Make such other disposition or combination of the above dispositions as the court deems to be in the best interest of the child.
**Foster Care**

Once a child or youth is placed in a foster home, a case plan is developed focusing on safety, strengthening the family and reunification. It is important that foster parents realize from the beginning that the initial goal is reunification until and unless the parental rights are terminated.

**Foster Care Specialist Visitation**

The Foster Care Specialist will visit your home regularly while the child or youth is placed in your home. They will visit the child or youth alone to see how the child or youth is adjusting and to spend quality time with the child or youth. They will also visit with you alone and visit with both you and the child or youth.

**Ask: Why do you think a Foster Care Specialist conducts weekly visits to your home during this initial stage of placement?**

Sample Responses:

- To check on the safety and well-being of the child or youth.
- To determine if the child or youth requires any services.
- To get to know the child or youth and build a relationship with the child or youth.
- To talk with the foster parent about the child or youth's needs.
- To work with the child or youth and the foster parents as part of the team, regarding working towards the case goals and supporting the family.

**Ask:**

? **What do you think the Foster Care Specialist should do on these visits to best ensure that safety, permanency, and well-being are assured?**

Sample Responses:
Visit with the child or youth alone.

See the child or youth's room.

Talk with the child or youth and foster family.

Make sure requirements for school, health care, etc. are being met.

Arrange visitations with the birth family.

Help the child or youth or youth and the caregivers in making sure that there are links and communication to promote the team goal.

SLIDE 1.27 PowerPoint Slide: PLANNING MEETING

During the **Case Planning/Family Team Meeting**, all the parties including the birth family, foster parent(s), relatives, CPS Specialist, Foster Care Specialist and anyone else of relevance should come together to determine the services needed for reunification.

The **Case Plan** is the document that lists all the tasks the birth parents to complete in order to resolve the issues which caused removal. There may be responsibilities assigned to the foster parent as well. (i.e. Trauma Behavioral Health Screening (TBH).

The **Case Plan** will typically include tasks that will help the family and the agency get more information about what the underlying needs are that led to the child abuse and neglect. These tasks may include drug or alcohol abuse evaluations and treatment, random urine/hair screens, and a psychological evaluation and/or psychiatric evaluation that will help the family and agency to determine the next steps.

The **Case Plan** will also likely include some more long term tasks that directly fall from the initial allegations: for example parenting classes, substance abuse treatment (as recommended by the evaluation), services to address domestic violence, and services and tasks that address basic needs such as safe and adequate housing, and family stability.
Ask:

? Why is it so important for all the involved parties to be at the case planning meeting?

Sample Responses:

- To gather as much information about the situation as possible so that needed services/tasks may be planned effectively.
- To ensure all parties are engaged and feel part of the plan.
- To ensure that everyone understands the goals for this family, especially the goals of achieving child or youth safety, well-being and family reunification.
- So that everyone can meet each other and begin the communication and partnership process.
- To arrange visitation plans.

SLIDE 1.30 PowerPoint Slide: WORKING FOR REUNIFICATION

- In every case, Family Reunification is the goal for children or youth until and unless parental rights are terminated (TPR). All the parties must work toward that family reunification goal.
- The Foster Care Specialist provides services and visits minimally every thirty (30) days to ensure the child or youth’s well-being in foster care and meets with the birth family to promote achievement of the family reunification goal and monitor progress.
- As we mentioned earlier, children or youth may also have a Concurrent Goal to ensure that they do not remain in foster care. Concurrent goals are additional permanency goals, such as adoption or guardianship.
- When a child or youth has a concurrent goal, the Foster Care
Specialist and team are working towards both goals at the same time (concurrently) knowing that if reunification cannot occur within the timeframe that would best meet the child or youth’s need for permanency, another outcome will become the goal or final plan for the child or youth.

» As a foster parent, you may be asked if you are willing to provide a permanent family for a children or youth if they cannot return home. Particularly for children who are young, being removed is traumatic and the idea of making the first placement the best placement is critical in case planning.

» If you believe that you and your family can provide a permanent home, you will be working on two goals yourselves: one being the goal of supporting a child or youth’s family making the changes needed to assure safety, and the other of being prepared to move towards adoption if the efforts of the family to change are not successful. In the end, the judge makes the decision and there are decision-making points all along the way wherein children or youth could be removed from your care without much notice.

» As you now understand, court involvement is constant and diligent in attending to the whole family, including parent and relative capacity to provide safe and secure placement, and attending to the child or youth’s adjustment, safety, permanency, and well-being while in your care.

SLIDE 1.31 PowerPoint Slide: JUDICIAL REVIEWS

» The purpose for judicial reviews is to review the case in court, to review the status of the case and to review the case plan.

» The first judicial review occurs within 90 days of the disposition hearing, but no later than six months from the date of removal.

» Additional reviews occur every six months.

» During judicial review hearings, the court receives updates on the birth parents case plan progress.

» The following people, among others, must be notified of judicial review hearings: the birth parent(s), the foster parent, the attorney for the child or youth, and the child or youth (12 years of age or older).
Ask:

? Why is it important to participate in or prepare with the Foster Care Specialist and birth parents for the Judicial Review?

Sample Responses:

- As a caregiver, you have the most current information about the child or youth's needs, capabilities, current functioning, and wishes that may help the judge, parents, and agency make the plan most effective.

- Your role as a foster parent of the child or youth will allow you to make parts of the plan happen in the most normal and natural way, for example participating in or supervising visits, sharing parenting around well-being needs, etc.

- You need to know what is happening so that you can support the child or youth(ren) as their future is determined and they have questions and responses to the outcome of the review.

SLIDE 1.32 PowerPoint Slide: JUDICIAL REVIEW-PERMANENCY HEARING

A permanency hearing must be held no later than 12 months after the date the child or youth was removed from the home.

At the permanency hearing, the court considers the permanency options of reunification, adoption, and guardianship.

Ask:

? Why is your presence and participation important in the Judicial Review - Permanency Hearing?

Sample Responses:

- You may be the best option for the child or youth in regards to permanency if the birth parents do not succeed in changing the factors that resulted in the child or youth’s entry into care.
Your perspective on what would help the child or youth achieve permanency is critical.

Your support when children or youth transition home or to alternate placements is a critical role of fostering.

PowerPoint Presentation –

Now let’s take a look at the system in terms of the partners who are involved in a child or youth’s case and the birth family's life.

SLIDE 1.33

PowerPoint Slide: Family

At the first level in the Louisiana Foster Care System, we have the child or youth’s family. This includes:

- **Child or youth.** Once the child or youth has been adjudicated, the court has jurisdiction over the child or youth until his 18th birthday and/or until the court releases jurisdiction over the child or youth. He has the right to go to court and should always try to attend. He can also speak to the judge by telephone or through a letter.

- **Birth Parent(s).** Birth parents receive services that allow them to work through tasks on their case plan in order to be reunified with their child or youth. They should be involved in the co-parenting of their child or youth and visit their child or youth unless otherwise ordered by the court. Parents are also responsible for the continued financial support of their child or youth while in out-of-home care. In court, they have a right to be represented by or appointed a lawyer. They must be notified about all court hearings and be present at them.

- **Birth Relatives.** The extended birth family of a child or youth in foster care should maintain a relationship with the child or youth as long as it is a safe and healthy relationship. The birth family can be a helpful part of the
team by giving family health information and helping keep the child or youth connected to their culture.

SLIDE 1.34

PowerPoint Slide: First Response

► At the next level in the Louisiana Foster Care System, we have the first response team. This includes:

► **Child Protective Services (CPS).** The Child Protective Service Specialist is the first responder on the team. It is their job to determine if a child or youth is in immediate danger in their home environment and if they should be removed. The CPS Specialist will try to put any supports that they can into the home to help prevent having to remove a child or youth from their home due to the fact that the removal of a child or youth from their home can be a very traumatic experience. If removal is necessary, the CPS Specialist takes the child or youth to a safe place, requests an instanter order from the court. The CPS Specialist conducts a diligent search to find a placement at the home of a relative or close friend (pending background approval). If not, the CPS Specialist works with Home Development to find a foster home match.

► I want to take a moment here to point out that the CPS Specialist also investigates **Foster Homes, Residential Facilities/Group Homes** which include allegations of abuse and neglect against Foster Parents or Group Home staff. As a Foster Parent, you should prepare yourself for this by understanding what to do if it happens and how to avoid it to the extent possible. We will discuss this in further detail in an upcoming session.

► **Family Services.** This is a critical component of the team established to respond immediately to crisis situations within a family prior to a case being opened for services. This team will work with the Child Protection Service Specialists and provide crisis services to families with the focus being to avoid needing to come into the formal system, and if the family does come into the system, to minimize the need for out of home placement.
SLIDE 1.35

PowerPoint Slide: Case Planning

► At the next level, we have case planning.

► **Foster Care Specialist.** The Specialist provides and coordinates services in the child or youth’s case. They maintain regular contact with the family and visit with the child or youth alone. The Specialist provides the direct service to the foster child or youth. The Specialist’s primary role is to be the advocate for the child or youth in court and the source for referrals should the child or youth need therapeutic or other related services. The Specialist attends all hearings and tells the court what kinds of services the child or youth and family need. The Specialist prepares most of the reports for the court, including the Court Report.

SLIDE 1.36

PowerPoint Slide: Case Planning

► At the next level, we have foster care.

► **Foster Parent(s).** Foster parents are trained and certified adults who care for child or youth and must keep them safe until they can return home or live elsewhere. The foster parent’s role includes providing a safe and caring environment for the child or youth, meeting the child or youth’s developmental needs and working with the rest of the team to help the child or youth stay connected to their family, culture, and identity. The foster parent must be prepared to work as part of a care team, including the birth parents, to provide the child or youth with normalcy and trauma-informed care. The foster parent has the right to, and should, attend Court Hearings, the family team meetings and should advocate for the child or youth.

► **Home Development Specialist.** The Home Development Specialist’s role is to be a support for the foster family. These dedicated staff members are your support system in the certification arena. They will ensure that your home is meeting all necessary licensing standards. This is the person that the foster parent can call when they need
At the next level, we have the courts.

- **Child or Youth’s Attorney.** An attorney is usually assigned to a child or youth at the time of the 72 hour hearing. The attorney works for the child or youth’s best interest in court and is an additional resource for the foster parents, birth parents and the child or youth. However, they do not provide any case management services or transportation.

- **Birth Parent’s Attorney.** The birth parent’s attorney provides legal advice and guidance to the birth parent at every stage of the court process. The child or youth’s attorney (Attorney ad Litem) is appointed by the judge to advocate for the child or youth and represents only the child or youth.

- **Judge.** The judge decides what is in the best interest of the child or youth and how to keep the child or youth safe. After listening to everyone involved in the case and reading the reports, the judge determines if removal is in the best interest of the child or youth, if the child or youth should be adjudicated, if supervision should be terminated and if parental rights should be terminated. The judge approves the case plan and conducts a judicial review every six months to review the status of the case plan until permanency is achieved.

- Finally, we have other important people in the child or youth’s life such as:
  - **Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).** They are
appointed by the court to advocate for the child or youth.

- **Doctors/Therapists.** Their role is to help determine the physical and mental health of a child or youth and help improve or maintain that health.

- **Teachers.** Teachers are an important part of the team. Teachers can help with identifying behavior and developmental problems. By having open communication with your child or youth's teachers, you can work together to help the child or youth adjust to their new surroundings. If your foster child or youth struggles in school, their teacher is the best person to link you to the help that they need in a school setting.

**Other Community Resources.** When preparing a case plan and identifying services for the family and the foster family, the Foster Care Specialist will look to other community resources for available services (each region should have a list of their resources).

Ask:

**? Why are so many people included in a child or youth’s care team and case?**

Sample Responses:

- Child or youth welfare is complex. We are dealing with human emotions and we are also dealing with the law.

- Professionals with specific roles involving the child or youth, the family and the foster family provide better service for the child or youth.

Ask:

**? Which professional works primarily for the foster child or youth?**

Sample Responses:

- Foster Care Specialist

- While the Foster Care Specialist does provide assistance to the foster family, their specific role is to provide services to
the foster child or youth and their family.

Ask:

? Which professional works primarily for foster parent?

Sample Responses:

❖ Home Development Specialist

❖ The Home Development Specialist is the person who really gets to know your family through the certification process. This is the person you should call if you need help.

SUMMARIZE Stopped

❖ Understandably, this is a lot of information to digest about a complex foster care system.

❖ Many factors are considered when making decisions about removal, placement, case planning, reunification, and termination of parental rights.

❖ It is also very important to note that judges can change the removal order or waive the case plan at any time. A situation can change dramatically throughout the case plan process and as foster parents you need to be prepared for this.

❖ Additionally, many people and agencies provide support and services to meet the child or youth's needs, the foster parent's needs and the birth parent's goals.

Activity – The Statistics

INTRODUCE the Activity

❖ Post Slide 1.39 as you introduce this activity.

❖ We have talked a lot about Louisiana’s Foster Care System. Let’s do a brief activity to demonstrate how many children or youth come into foster care.
**PURPOSE of Activity**

*Illustrate the statistics of children or youth in the foster care system.*

**DIRECTIONS for Activity**

**Do the math.** Using the current statistics, prepare a sticky note with a status (No Case Open __%, Case Opened, Remain in Home __%, Case Opened, Relative/Non-relative Caregiver __%, Foster Care __%).

**Distribute** sticky notes with statements that represent a status.

- Ask everyone to stand. *Explain that everyone standing represents a call into the Hotline.*
- Ask everyone that has **No Case Opened** to sit down.
- Ask everyone that has **Case Opened, Remain in Home** to sit down.
- Ask everyone that has **Case Opened, Relative/Non-relative Caregiver** to sit down.

**Ask:**

> How many children or youth are left standing?

**Sample Response:**

- A small percentage.
- Only a few.

**SUMMARIZE**

- While foster care is a critical element in meeting positive outcomes for children or youth, a fairly small percentage of children or youth end up in the foster care system.
TRANSITION

- We have established the legal framework for the Louisiana Child Welfare System, now let's explore some of the specific requirements for foster care certification as well as your personal responsibility to identify your own deal breakers and develop strategies for dealing with things you might find uncomfortable.

Mutual Selection and Deal Breakers

Presentation – Introduction to Topic

- As we begin the topic of mutual selection and deal breakers, I want to remind you that part of my role as trainer will be to observe, listen and talk with you for assessment purposes. As we get to know each other, I may discover or you may share deal breakers. These deal breakers may result in an inability to become certified. They will result in a clearer picture for the matching process, which we will begin discussing in upcoming weeks.

- So, when it comes to deal breakers, it is important to note that this is a mutual selection process as well as a process of discovery.

- You may discover through the course of this training that the things you thought were deal breakers are not. But, you may also discover that things you thought your family was ready for, you are not.

- And, we may also discover that while you may be a terrific candidate for foster parenting, there are legal requirements you simply do not meet.

PowerPoint Presentation – Deal Breakers (SLIDES 1.40-1.42)
SLIDE 1.40

PowerPoint Slide: Deal Breakers: Certification Requirements

There are minimum qualifications you must meet in order to become a certified foster care provider in the state of Louisiana. These immediate deal breakers include:

► **Age.** You must be at least 21 years old.

► **Financial Security.** You must be in a position to financially provide for your own family as well as the care of a foster child or youth. You must be employed or have another source of legal income. You will be asked to provide proof of income. Receiving assistance from the state (e.g. Section VIII housing, food stamps, etc.) must be disclosed and will be carefully assessed to ensure your financial solvency without reliance on the foster care board rate.

► **Background Checks.** All adult members of your home over the age of 18 will be fingerprinted. If you or any adult residing in your home has been convicted of certain criminal offenses, you cannot become a Foster/Adoptive Parent. Also, you must not have a history of abusing a child or youth.

There are other deal breakers that will be considered during the certification process. These include:

► **Your Home.** Your home should be clean, safe and have adequate space for the child or youth(ren). You must pass a home safety inspection including, fire safety, health standards, pet safety and water safety. If you have water near your home (swimming pool, spa, pond) measures must be taken to ensure safety. Adequate bedroom space is also required.

► **Your Transportation.** You must have a way to transport the child or youth to meetings, doctor’s appointments, etc.

► **Your Health.** You must not have any health issues that would prevent you from caring for the child or youth(ren).

► **Your Motivation and Willingness to Co-Parent.** If you
are in this for the singular reason to adopt, you are in the wrong place. True, many foster children or youth that become available for adoption are often adopted by their foster families. However, the goal of the foster parent should be to provide a safe and nurturing environment for the child or youth while the family works towards reunification.

**SLIDE 1.41**

PowerPoint Slide:  Deal Breakers: Your Requirements

- You either already know or will discover your own deal breakers including:

  - **Sex, Age and Number of Children.** You will need to consider which ages you are comfortable with and which ages you think you may have concerns about. It is important to note that, statistically, it is unlikely you will be getting an infant in foster care. You should also consider if you have any concerns or issues with females or males in your home.

  - **Health of the Child or Youth.** There are many healthy children or youth in foster care, but there are also children or youth with health issues including some serious disorders. You should consider what your family is unwilling or unable to handle in terms of health issues and why.

  - **Education of the Child or Youth.** Children or youth come at all levels of educational motivation and success. Some are high achievers and some have special education needs. You should consider if you are unwilling to spend the time and effort on special education needs and extra tutoring. Remember though, that just because you value education and a child or youth is a low achiever, does not mean this is a poor match. You can provide the low achiever with guidance and support and help them learn to value education.

  - **Characteristics and Behaviors of the Child or Youth.** Like all children or youth, the child or youth in foster care
come with their own set of behaviors, both positive and negative. Depending on the negative experiences they have faced in their lives, they may also have trauma-induced/related behaviors you may have not seen before. You should consider if there are certain behaviors that you deem inappropriate for your family or your ability to handle. For example, if the child or youth tends to reject father figures and there is a strong male influence in your house, this may cause issues. Is it a deal breaker? Maybe. Or, if you have other children or youth in your house and the child or youth has a history of inappropriate sexual behavior, you may consider this to be a deal breaker.

**Family History/Culture of the Child or Youth.** Children or youth in foster care come from many backgrounds. Many children or youth in foster care have siblings. Many children or youth have strong ties to their families. Some have been sexually abused. Some have birth parents with drug and/or alcohol abuse problems. Some have no family at all. Where do you personally draw the line? For example, do you feel confused, frightened, and unsure of the impact the sexual abuse of a child or youth may have on your child or youth and family. Additionally, if a child or youth's culture is different from your own, are you willing to provide that child or youth with cultural connections and experiences or allow that child or youth to go to a different church than yours?

**Your Feelings Toward Openness.** Are you willing to meet with the birth family and arrange visitations with siblings? Are you willing to share information with the birth family? This could be a mutual deal-breaker. If you are unwilling to work with the birth parents, then your ability to meet the family goal of reunification will be severely restricted.

While you may consider some of these circumstances deal breakers now, educating yourself through this training, through discussion with your peers and through the certification process, may change your mind. It is important that we use our ground rules of honesty and respect (*TRAINER'S NOTE: build on the ground rules in this comment*) because your ability to know yourself and your own limits and deal breakers is going to be very crucial in making sure that you can provide a healing and helping response to children or youth who come into care. As we
have established, this is a small number of children or youth compared to the general population, however these children or youth have already had a huge number of life experiences that make it imperative that they be able to count on the adults on their ‘team’ during their journey to permanency. There is no shame in being able to say that you cannot provide the specific type of care that children or youth who have experienced abuse and neglect require, and we invite you to keep this idea of ‘deal breakers’ in mind as we continue.

Activity – Cultural Diversity

INTRODUCE the Activity

- Post Slide 1.42 as you introduce this activity.

- The Child Welfare League of America defines cultural diversity as "the ability of individuals and systems to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and faiths or religions in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, tribes, and communities, and protects and preserves the dignity of each.

- Because the foster care system includes children or youth from many cultural backgrounds, your cultural competence is a critical skill for you to have and understanding your personal limitations and strategies for preparing for differences is a key to your success as a foster parent.

- Foster children or youth already feel isolated and alone, it is important in the mutual selection process for you to make clear situations that make you truly uncomfortable and unable to parent effectively.

- Let us take some time to explore some of the cultural circumstances you may face.

PURPOSE of Activity

- To allow participants to talk through some of their issues regarding cultural differences.
• To allow participants to identify and share strategies for dealing with cultural differences.

• To allow the trainer the opportunity to observe participants and listen to their concerns/issues.

**DIRECTIONS for Activity**

**Post** the following posters in the room:

- The mission of DCFS (normalcy, partnership and trauma informed care).
- The vision and values of DCFS.
- The three overarching goals for Louisiana’s child welfare program (safety, permanency and well-being).

**Divide** participants into small groups.

**Provide** each group with one or two cultural situations such as the following examples (place each on card stock and distribute):

- Child or youth not taught the value of education.
- Child or youth who’s second language is ‘cursing’.
- Child or youth of a different race/ethnic group.
- Child or youth raised by a grandparent/relative
- Child or youth who speaks a different language.
- Child or youth raised in an environment where substance abuse or domestic violence occurred.
- Child or youth with racial issues.
- Child or youth who needs a haircut.
- Child or youth who doesn’t value religion.
- Child or youth with multiple tattoos and piercings.
- Child or youth of Muslim faith.
- Child or youth who is openly homosexual or questioning.
- Child or youth who wants to observe the Jewish holiday and you are Christian or vice-versa.
- Ear piercing.
- Child or youth who does/does not have a circumcision.
Child or youth that is sexually active.

**Instruct** participants to take 15 minutes to discuss the problems that could occur in these situations. Also, ask them to discuss how they would respond, using the principles of cultural diversity, the ideas we discussed about safety, permanency, and well-being, and the critical goals/values of this organization.

**Instruct** each group to select a speaker to report to the large group.

**After** 15 minutes, ask each small group’s reporter to share the issues they feel would come up and strategies they would use.

Ask:

- Did anyone discover that they may have a deal breaker they were not aware of?
- Did anyone discover they thought they had a deal breaker but after talking it through with others, believe they could identify strategies to handle it?
- Which of the visions/values of the agency, ASFA, and cultural diversity guided you in your answers?

**Elicit** responses and discuss.

**SUMMARIZE**

- Because we are a diverse culture, the children or youth we serve will be diverse as well. As we discovered through this activity, people come with many feelings and concerns, both expected and unexpected, about cultural differences. This is why cultural diversity is so important in child welfare.

- Let’s explore deal breakers some more now.

**Activity – Deal Breakers**

**INTRODUCE the Activity**
• **Post Slide 1.43 as you introduce this activity.**

  ▶ During the certification process, you will participate in a Safety Assessment which will identify if there are any concerns in your home; and a home study in which you will be asked to answer assessment questions and information related to the types of children or youth you would feel comfortable being matched with.

  ▶ It is a good idea to begin thinking about the requirements for the licensing process and the mutual selection process.

  ▶ It is also a good idea to truly identify what your deal breakers are so that children or youth with those issues are not placed in your home during the matching process.

  ▶ It is important for you to examine your continued motivation to foster in light of the requirements, deal breakers and mutual selection.

  ▶ Finally, during each session, I plan on spending time getting to know each family on a personal basis and answering any questions you may have. While you are completing this activity, I will be coming around the room and visiting with each family for around 5 minutes.

**PURPOSE of Activity**

- Allow participants to begin thinking about their deal breakers.
- Allow participants to begin thinking about licensing requirements and the mutual selection process.
- Allow participants to begin thinking about the matching process.
- Allow participants to examine their continued motivation to foster in the light of the requirements, deal breakers and mutual selection.
- To allow the trainer the opportunity to observe participants and listen to their concerns/issues.

**DIRECTIONS for Activity**

Ask:

? Are there any requirements you may not clear during
What are your personal deal breakers?
What are your concerns?
What is your motivation to foster considering the requirements, deal breakers and mutual selection?

Refer participants to PG page 1-17 to 1-20: Recognizing Deal Breakers Checklist.

Allow the participants 30 minutes to complete the worksheet (or more depending on how many families you need to visit).

▶ Take your time and really think about these items. If you identify a deal breaker, try your best to explain why you feel this way. As you progress through the course, the discovery process may change your mind, but be honest about how you feel now.

▶ Also, think about the strengths and needs you identified earlier. For example, you may have identified your educational expectations as a strength, but how would you feel if you are fostering a child or youth who is struggling to stay in school?

Explain that you will be reviewing these deal breakers when you meet with the families during your individual assessments. Explain that during these meetings you will talk about their motivation for fostering, their concerns and any concerns you might have.

Review the activity by asking if anyone would like to share their deal breakers or concerns with the large group. Be sensitive, but provide insight and brief discussion. Discuss:

- Certification requirements.
- Sex, age, number of children or youth.
- Health of child or youth.
- Education of child or youth.
- Characteristics and behavior of a child or youth.
- Family history/culture.
- Feelings towards openness.
SUMMARIZE

► This activity should have resulted in some good old-fashioned soul searching. These are very important things to think about because a successful match will make for a successful experience for both the child or youth in care and your family. A poor match, will likely result in more upheaval in the child or youth's life and the added trauma of an additional placement.

► While some of you may have unexpectedly discovered that foster parenting is not right for your family at this time, others may have discovered that the skills they already have make them more comfortable with a whole new group of children or youth they once thought would not be a good match.

TRANSITION

► You will continue this discovery process throughout the training. As you learn new skills and develop critical knowledge for fostering, what was once frightening to you may not be so scary anymore.

► Let's talk a little now about how you can start developing some of these skills outside the classroom.

Introduction to Homework Assignments

Presentation –Introduction to Topic

► Let's take some time to discuss the homework element of DCFS: A Journey Home.

DISTRIBUTE HOMEWORK NOTEBOOKS

Distribute participant guides and review the components:
Distribute homework notebook and review the components:
   About this Homework Notebook.
   Use in Assessment.
   Journaling Assignments.
Self-Assessment.

Reading Assignments.

Scavenger Hunt.

PowerPoint Presentation – Purpose of Homework Assignments (SLIDES 1.44-45)

SLIDE 1.44

PowerPoint Slide: Purpose of Homework Assignments

- The purpose of the homework element to this training is to reinforce the skills and knowledge you are building in the classroom.

- The journaling assignments and self-assessment will help you identify your strengths, needs, motivations and desires which is critical if you are going to effectively bring a child or youth into your home.

- The reading assignments will help build your knowledge.

- The scavenger hunt field training experience will provide you with:
  - First-hand experience with the foster care system BEFORE you are directly involved in it yourself.
  - An opportunity to gather resources and contact information BEFORE you have a child in care.

SLIDE 1.45

Refer participants to Homework Notebook: Session One Homework Overview.

Explain this week’s Journaling Assignment, Self-Assessment and Reading Assignments.

Trainer’s Note: Reading Assignments are at trainer discretion. A place is provided in the Homework Notebook for responses and reflection. You may provide participants with a list of questions.
Elicit questions and comments about the homework. Briefly discuss.

Remind participants that participants you will be using the Homework Notebooks in the ongoing assessment and mutual selection process.

Refer participants to Homework Notebook: **10 Things to Hunt Down** which lists resources or events foster parents will be required to contact or visit including:

1. Scavenger Hunt for Ages 0-5
2. Scavenger Hunt for Ages 6-11
3. Scavenger Hunt for Ages 12-18

Instruct participant to read this article.

Elicit questions and comments. Briefly discuss.

Explain that these are not all due the following week, but must be completed before the end of the training. However, you recommend that participants complete at least two before the next session as you will be talking about their experiences and asking for participation. Activities 1-6 should be completed or scheduled by Week 5 or 6 and they should complete the Foster Family interviews as quickly as possible, so they may answer journaling questions based on these interviews.

**Trainer’s Note:** You will need to provide dates and locations of FPA meetings, court cases, safety assessments, court, and case planning conferences.

Refer participants to Homework Notebook: **Worksheets for the Scavenger Hunt.**

Explain that these worksheets will need to be completed for each of the resources or events they visit. The forms provide specific things to see and look for as well as a place for observations and questions. They can also add contact information to the worksheets.
SUMMARIZE

- Taking the time to complete this homework and field work will provide you an opportunity for self-reflection, a greater sense of fostering and will allow you to transfer the skills and knowledge you are building in the classroom.

- I will help you in any way I can with your scavenger hunt, but I also recommend you talk to others. Talk to current foster parents! You might want to start by attending your local Foster Parent Association or visiting their website for community resources.

TRANSITION

- Let us wrap up for the Session.

Wrap-up

Presentation – Wrap-up

Post Slide 1.46.

Process the work Session with the participants.

Ask:

? What did you learn from today’s session?

? How will you integrate these new skills into your plan to become a foster parent?

? What did you experience today that would not be useful to you as a foster parent?

Elicit responses and briefly discuss.
SUMMARIZE

► This is just the beginning session. There will be lots to learn within the next six sessions and field training.

► Please be open-minded and take advantage of this new learning experience. Our goal is to have you see if fostering is a good fit for you as well as to develop knowledge and learn important skills for this very important job. If, through this process, you discover that fostering is not for you, you can still help in so many ways.

► Thanks for your input and participation and I will see you ______ (date, time, and location of the next Session of training).

EVALUATIONS

If evaluations are being used they should be distributed and completed at this time.