

POLICY

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

Experienced foster parents teaching parents through a personal intervention. The personalized parent trainers teach parenting skills, identify the parents' needs and issues in the context of raising, caring, and nurturing their children, homemaking, and household management, help rebuild self-esteem, identify and promote life management skills utilizing a positive role model, and assist in the building of a support system for the family.

GOAL OF THE PROGRAM

To teach natural parents the skills necessary to successfully rear their children, teach homemaking skills and household management, promote independence and self-esteem through a personalized program that allows the natural parents to retain their dignity.

TARGET POPULATION

Client families of the Agency who will be considered eligible for the program will include:

- Parents who participate voluntarily or through Court Order
- Parents who have special needs children
- Parents who need specific training in parenting skills, homemaking skills and household management.
- Parents whose children are in the process of being returned from foster care

PROGRAM BENEFITS

1. The program demonstrates how the Agency and the Personalized Parent Trainers jointly reach out to families in need.
2. The program provides an avenue for the successful transition of the child from foster care to their own home.
3. The parents will develop a healthier, safer, more nurturing home environment.
4. The parents will gain hope and independence and improve self-esteem.
5. There will be a reduction of out of home placement of children and of the length of time children remain in placement. This will impact positively on placement cost.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO BECOME A PARENT TRAINER

The expectation to work with families referred to this program requires the parent trainer to bring with them an appreciation of life experiences. The minimal requirements of any parent trainer are:

1. Approval as foster parents of the Children and Youth Agency.
2. At least one-year experience as an active foster parent with a foster child placed in their home and having had a satisfactory annual evaluation.
3. An experienced foster parent from another agency who has undergone the entry requirements of the Agency foster care program.
4. Attendance at mandatory program meetings and training scheduled by the program coordinator.
5. Completion of a three-session orientation program and several sessions of observing with experienced Parent Trainers.
6. A willingness to work with people, a belief in the preservation of the family and that people are capable of change.
7. Have a dedication and commitment to the programs as well as the client families.

WORK ASSIGNMENT OF THE PARENT TRAINER

With many of the families referred to this program, we will encounter some areas that will need clarification. As a minimal expectation, each parent will:

- Meet with caseworker, coordinator and client family to establish goals and objectives.
- Participate in completing a 30-day assessment and meeting with the caseworker and coordinator when necessary to re-evaluate the client's goals.
- The Parent Trainer will submit a monthly progress report to the coordinator by the thirtieth (30th) day of the current month.
- Contact coordinator immediately after two unsuccessful attempts to contact the client family in person.
- Maintain appropriate records, and when required extensive documentation for Court preparation.
- Be available to testify on behalf of the Children and Youth Agency in court hearings, when necessary.
- Meet regularly with the client family as described under the section entitled "Service Hours."
- Complete a Client Skill Assessment at the designated time intervals.

SERVICE HOURS

It is difficult to ascertain the amount of time that a Parent Trainer will spend with the client family assigned to them. The needs of the individuals in the family will dictate the goals and time allowance. As a guideline, the estimated amount of time with each family should not exceed 30 ½ hours per month. Of this, a full month should average 24 hours of direct service, 4 hours of administrative time, 2 hours of mandatory meeting and ½ hour of training.

PAYMENT FOR SERVICES

The approved Parent Trainer enters into a contractual agreement with the County of Berks to provide the above-mentioned services. This agreement delineates specific services to be provided and a current hourly rate of compensation for these services. Mileage reimbursement will be consistent with the current rates established by the county for all staff.

The Agency will make the determination as to which families are referred to the program. As a general rule, no more than two client families will be assigned to a Parent Trainer in any one-month. Exceptions are based on the JOINT decisions of the PARENTING INSTRUCTOR, PROGRAM COORDINATOR, AND BERKS COUNTY CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES SUPERVISOR.

ROLE OF THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The Program Coordinator will:

- Be familiar with each client family referred to the program.
- Facilitate an initial meeting with the client family, caseworker and parent trainer to further explain the program and prepare a working contract.
- Meet with the parent trainer on a regular monthly basis to review case material.
- Maintain Agency records of parent trainer interaction and time spent for auditing purposes.
- Develop an In-service training program and schedule regular training meetings.
- Intercede and assist the parent trainer in those situations where Program intervention is necessary.
- Review, distribute, and follow up on all monthly reports, client skills assessments, and billing prepared by the parent trainers to ensure that documentation is accurate and services provided are goal-oriented, appropriate, effective and warranted.
- Schedule case reviews with all parties based on the client skills assessments to determine the necessity and appropriateness of continued service.
- Maintain a log of the meetings, attendance records, training schedule and other pertinent data relevant to the operation of the program for compliance.

REFERRAL PROCEDURE

The caseworker discusses the family for referral with his/her supervisor and Program Coordinator. The family is deemed appropriate for the program and the following procedure is affected.

The caseworker submits a Referral Form, current Family Service Plan or Placement Amendment Review, updated Face Sheet, recent Risk Assessment Summary, and Court Order when services are either court ordered or specified by the court to the program coordinator.

The program coordinator will schedule the client family situation for presentation and assignment at the next regularly scheduled meeting. The caseworker may be requested to attend or participate in the presentation when necessary or appropriate.

The coordinator presents the family to the group. After a brief discussion, assignment of a parent trainer is made for the family upon the mutual agreement of the program coordinator and parent trainer based on the family's needs and the parent trainer's availability, skills and experience.

A joint meeting of the caseworker, parent trainer, and client is arranged to further discuss the program and effect a contractual agreement. (Note: The parent trainer has an opportunity to schedule the first meeting with the client at this time.)

PROGRAM REPORTING

The parent trainer will maintain contact with the referring caseworker at least once a month to inform them of the progress the family is making. These meetings can be held in person or via telephone based on need and availability.

The parent trainer will maintain a chronological record of contacts with the family and submit a completed monthly summary of activities to the program coordinator by the 30th day of the current month.

The parent trainer will submit a completed mileage report to the parent coordinator, including receipts if necessary, on a monthly basis.

The program coordinator will meet with the referring caseworker when necessary to assess the service effectiveness and to determine if continued services are appropriate and warranted per the program guidelines and policies.

The program coordinator will schedule a meeting with the parent trainer and caseworker to discuss a mutually agreeable time for termination of personalized parenting services.

RECORDS

The following records will be kept by the Program Coordinator.

Parent Trainer: (will include)

- Application to become a parent trainer
- Contractual Agreement
- Record of the training attended
- Record of monthly supervision

Personalized Parent Family Record: (includes)

- Completed Face Sheet
- Program Referral form
- In-Home parent contract
- Client Skill Assessment Summary
- Monthly progress reports

Agency Audit Record:

- Record of families enrolled and active
- Statistical records of families enrolled
- Trainer/client activity log
- Payment agreement schedule
- Training schedule
- Monthly invoice for payment

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT – CONFIDENTIALITY

Information that may be used to identify the child or the parents by name or address and information contained in the case record is confidential. A staff person or the Parent Trainer may not disclose or make use of information concerning the child or the parents other than in the course of the performance of his duties.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

This program is continually monitored by the program coordinator who is responsible for the assignment of families to the parent trainers and who is the liaison with the casework staff.

At the end of each month a progress report is submitted by the parent trainer summarizing the activity with the family. This information is shared with the caseworker and is included in the narrative of the family record. (See Guidelines for Reporting/Notification).

One of the criteria used to determine the program's effectiveness will be whether or not the children's needs were met in the home. In other words, how successful was the program in avoiding the removal of the children.

If the child is in placement, we will be looking at how successful was the service in sending children home from placement, and are the parents able to maintain the child at home.

The parent trainers will administer a Client Skills Assessment Summary thirty days after initial assignment and quarterly thereafter in an effort to monitor client's progress.

When other agencies are actively involved with the family, we will be asking them to assess changes in the family. This is especially true of the referring agency.

Additionally, the coordinator meets with the parent trainers on a regular basis to discuss the case activity, training issues, and ongoing progress.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF FAMILIES

Families will be considered:

- Who are willing to commit themselves to working with the parent trainer for a minimum of 2 to 6 hours weekly.
- Where the mental health, physical health and/or drug/alcohol issues have been stabilized and do not impede the progress of the family.
- When a plan for the return of a child to its own home has been affected and reunification of the family is the primary focus.
- When families are unable to avail themselves of structured agency parenting classes because of social isolation, mental limitation, and lack of motivation.
- Where the family has stabilized their domestic violence issues and are focusing on rebuilding the family unit and keeping the family together.