

Resource Families Program Statement



The Resource Family Program is responsible for assessing all families who wish to be a foster, adoptive or guardianship family, ensuring standards of safety are met in each resource family home. The Resource Family Section includes foster care licensing, adoption, guardianship and recruitment services for the OCS. Resource families are necessary to OCS, as children in out-of-home placement need to live in safe homes while they are not living with their parents. In the event that a child cannot permanently return home to their parents, OCS strives to place children for adoption or guardianship in safe, nurturing, permanent homes.

Resource families consist of relative or kinship families, licensed foster care families, guardianship families or adoptive families. Regardless of the type, resource families play a key role in the life of a child in care.

When out-of-home placement is needed to keep the child safe, OCS makes diligent efforts to identify, evaluate and consider relatives, family friends and those culturally tied to the family as the primary placement option. When relatives cannot be a placement option for the child, OCS makes efforts to actively recruit and

support resource families within the child's home community and in as close proximity as possible to the child's parents. OCS is committed to assuring the child may continue to maintain important and lasting cultural, familial, educational and community-based connections.

Relative assessments, licensing standards, and homestudies are utilized by OCS staff to ensure children are placed with resource families who can provide a safe environment for the child. Families and resource families, in partnership with OCS workers, work together to ensure the placement best meets each child's individual needs. OCS promotes reunification of the family whenever possible.

While placement of the child with their siblings is always preferred, frequent visits are arranged when siblings are placed apart due to the specific needs of the child. Frequent visits are arranged between the parents and the child to ensure the child remains connected to their parents and the parents remain a primary force in the child's life.

At the point of family reunification, OCS staff and resource families actively support the child and the child's family to successfully and permanently return home. Should the child be unable to safely return to the parent's home, OCS actively prepares the child for adoption or guardianship with a permanent, "forever" family.

There are many places the Resource Families Program intercepts with other program activities.

During the initial assessment, the Resource Family Program assesses the resource family and their supportive services. If a relative is identified for the placement of a child, the licensing worker will assess the relatives' ability to meet basic licensing standards for care. Training for resource families is valued and mandated by OCS. Each resource family completes a basic training program called CORE, which is vital to a child's positive transition





and adjustment to foster care. Birth parents are welcome to partake in the resource family training.

In some regions the OCS worker will request a Team Decision Making meeting, or a case staffing, to determine if out-of-home placement is necessary to keep the child safe. At this meeting, all placement options are considered for the child, with first priority given to a safe, relative placement. Should there be a safe relative identified for the child, the foster care licensing staff works with the relative to become licensed for foster care.

A part of the licensing process includes a fingerprint background check to determine if there are any potential safety threats for a child placed in the home. In the event that a safe relative is not available for placement of the child, foster care licensing is asked to identify a safe, licensed foster home where the child can reside. The foster care licensing worker may identify several homes the worker can contact; the worker makes every effort to place the child in a home that allows for the child's important relationships to continue, such as family contacts, school placements, and maintaining connections to the child's culture.

OCS strives to have foster parents work cooperatively with the child's parents to ensure a child's transition to a foster home is positive, and that all parents' questions are answered. Most importantly, foster parents will be able to best assist the child with a quick and safe transition back to their family home.

For families who have adopted, or become the guardian of a child, the initial assessment can be utilized to bolster supports and resources for the family. This may be done through a re-evaluation of an adoption or guardianship subsidy to support services to the family and/or a family referral to services for adoption support.

All children are entitled to a permanent, forever home. OCS believes that the very best permanent home for a child is with their parents and strives to reunify the child with their parents whenever possible. In some instances, despite the best efforts of all involved, it may never be safe for a child to return to the care of the parents. In these cases, OCS is mandated to identify a forever family for the child. The child's worker has resources available to assist them with making the best adoption match for the child and family. Child-specific recruitment resources, such as diligent relative searches, tribal searches, and adoption exchanges, are just some of the avenues a worker may use to locate a permanent family for a child. In some regions of the state, the use of the

Heart Gallery or Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruitment efforts may be available to increase the recruitment resources for finding a permanent family for a waiting child.

In some cases, the child is placed for adoption, in some cases the child is placed in the legal guardianship. No matter what the type of permanent home, an assessment of the adoptive or guardianship family is essential to ensure the permanent home is safe, nurturing and can meet the long-term needs of the child. The Permanent Families for Adoptive/Guardianship children program is utilized to thoroughly assess adoptive and guardianship parents' readiness for adoption. Each family is assessed through an adoptive or guardianship homestudy. Families are assessed based on their abilities to meet the long-term needs and connections for the child. Adoptive and guardianship parents are encouraged to continue to maintain the child's connections to their birth families, communities, and culture.

Pre-adoptive and pre-guardianship support services are available to adoptive families to assist them with the child's and family's adjustments to adoption.

Transitioning Children Home and Permanency

In a perfect world, all children who come to the attention of OCS would remain in their parents' home. However, when children come into the care of OCS, reunification is always the first permanency goal for the child and family. In order to support the reunification efforts of children in care, the Resource Family Program encourages foster parents to work with the parents to make the child's transition to the parents' care smooth and positive. Foster parents are encouraged to continue to support the child and family after the child has returned to the parents' care in a supportive manner.

Should the child's return home not be possible, the Resource Family Program makes every effort to recruit and prepare a safe adoptive home, where the child's connections to family, culture and community can remain intact. Services for adoption support are available to assist adoptive families with any emerging challenges that the family may face as the child grows older.

The Resource Family Section is committed to seeing children grow up safe, in loving homes where parents' are committed long-term to the health, safety, and emotional development of the child.