

Practice Guide for Licensing Workers

Engagment

MITEAM COMPETENCY

Licensing is the process of collecting and assessing information to determine if a home is suitable for a foster care placement. The assessment process involves the licensing staff engaging with potential caregivers to acquire the information needed to assess compliance, along with the caregiver’s capacity and commitment to serve the characteristics of the children in care. Licensing staff utilize opportunities for engagement to assess the needs of caregivers in an effort to provide support and aide in recruitment and retention strategies.

Engagement is a series of intentional interventions that work together in an integrated way to successfully establish a relationship with children, parents and other individuals. Caseworkers will engage with the child, mother, father, extended family, primary caregiver, professionals working with the family and other team members for the purpose of building an authentic and collaborative working relationship.

FIDELITY MEASURES

Observation:

- Treats individual(s) with respect.
- Treats individual(s) with empathy.
- Acknowledges his/her authority and the disproportionate amount of power in the relationship.
- Helps the individual(s) identify people who are supportive.
- Addresses reasons for reluctance to including specific team members.
- Assists the family with navigating agency systems and processes.
- Discusses with the family the success of the child(ren)/youth beyond case closure.
- Provides trauma education to the individual(s).
- Provides feedback to the individual(s).
- Observation: Asks for feedback from the individual(s).

Documentation:

- A team that provides support to the child(ren)/youth and family has been formed.

Interview:

- The individual(s) was able to identify helpful activities of the worker.
- The individual(s) feels understood by the worker.
- The individual(s) feels respected by the worker.
- The individual(s) reports the worker acknowledged religious and/or cultural beliefs.

In Supervision:

- Identify what is most important to the individual/family.
- Identify Positive supports for the individual(s).

POLICY REQUIREMENTS

- Support and educate prospective caregivers to ensure safety of children in out of home placements.
- Give preference to placement with a relative - if all requirements are fulfilled - when children must be removed from their home.
- Place children in the most family-like setting and keep siblings together whenever possible.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial and ongoing assessment of rule compliance and safety, as well as thorough recruitment and retention efforts. • Preserve and encourage permanent connections with siblings and caring and supportive adults. • Assess placements that helps facilitate and support return home if the permanency plan is reunification. • Consider a placement with a view toward preparing the child for permanency.
<p>HOW TO USE YOUR SUPERVISOR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second set of objectives eyes when you are trying to identify concerns. • Explore, with supervisor, community resources and services to assist in placement stability. • Discuss with supervisor ways to facilitate engagement with family members. • Seek review by supervisor of assessment and decisions around placement. • Explore, with supervisor, ways to assess a prospective caregiver’s willingness and ability to assist in ensuring that birth parents spend natural, quality time with their child. • Track causes of foster home closures to identify effective recruitment and retention strategies.
<p>LICENSING ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>PRACTICE GUIDANCE TECHNIQUES</p>
<p>LICENSING ACTIVITY</p> <p><i>Create an environment of empathy, genuineness, respect and empowerment for all caregivers.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be mindful and aware of the grief, loss and frustration that relative caregivers may be feeling. • Make sure caregivers are full participants in family team meetings. • Attend Family Team Meetings with caregivers for support. • Express empathy during the assessment process to encourage caregivers to be open and honest about family dynamics and traumatic events that may have occurred. • Encourage caregivers to work with the birth parents. • Listen to caregivers and reflect back what you understand from them. Do this often. • Spend time with them. Be available. Return phone calls. • Discuss with the caregiver the preferred method of communication, e.g. phone message, email, etc. • Share information with them that is both accurate and timely. • Facilitate open communication between MDHHS/Agency and caregivers. • Prepare them for the assessment process and explain that it is comprehensive and may feel intrusive at times. • Respond when a need is identified. • Identify non-training barriers to the family’s performance of the essential tasks of fostering. • Develop a plan to build on the caregiver’s knowledge and skills. • Make sure caregivers are provided needed training. • Make sure caregivers are a part of the placement planning process by ensuring that they have an opportunity to share with the team their knowledge and opinions about children in their care. • Assist caregivers with obtaining documentation, completing paperwork and completing tasks. • Work closely with relative caregivers as they go through the licensing process. • Keep caseworkers up to date on where caregivers are in the licensing process.
<p>LICENSING ACTIVITY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to caregivers about emerging needs and identify trainings/resources to assist them in meeting those needs. • Support caregivers by attending Family Team meetings as a resource for the caregivers. • Assist caseworkers in responding to the needs of caregivers.

<p><i>Support foster/adoptive/kinship parents</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in with the caregiver during times of transition. This includes initial placements, when a child is having difficulty, or after a child is replaced from their home. • Make sure you understand from the foster/adoptive/kinship parent what they feel they need to be successful and identify members of the family team and other resources to help meet these needs. • Make sure parents are full participants in family team meetings. • Do your best to respond. Be available and accommodating. • Utilize active listening skills and empathy so that caregivers feel heard and understood. • Review and discuss written material and any necessary written information. • Make sure they understand any forms you are asking them to sign. • Recognize and acknowledge them through gift cards and awards. • Hold support groups. • Assist prospective parent throughout the licensing process to facilitate a timely and reasonably stress-free process. • Identify and connect new foster parents to mentoring opportunities with experienced caregivers.
<p>LICENSING ACTIVITY</p> <p><i>Use child specific, targeted and general recruitment efforts to increase the number of appropriate foster homes.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize that families take time to think about becoming a foster parent before contacting an agency. Therefore, ongoing recruitment efforts spread out over a period of at least 12 months are most effective to create a climate of awareness over time. • Recognize the connection between support of existing families and their ability to recruit additional families. Well supported families are more likely to be retained and to encourage others to foster or adopt. • Coach and train current foster parents to present at and/or organize community events to assist in recruitment efforts. • Arrange compensation for foster parents who assist in recruitment efforts. • Establish relationships with agencies and/or providers that may be a resource for recruitment. • Expand partnerships with small businesses, community organizations, and faith based organizations to recruit and support foster/adoptive families. • Insert self in arenas that may be a potential resource for recruitment (PTA meetings, church groups etc.) and support. • Engage the community with the highest placement needs to help recruit families who can best meet the needs of children from their community entering foster care. • Engage in community activities that involve community leaders, media, schools and businesses. • Engage community partners in finding ways to support caregiving families. • Engage the faith community, current foster/kinship/adoptive parents and agency staff to help recruit families. • Focus the majority of marketing and recruitment activities on the strategies that generate the most initial inquiries; Word of Mouth, Internet, media events, and recruitment activities within the community including faith based communities. • Utilize MARE and other tools to help match children to prospective families.