

Foster Care Coordinators Module 1: Introduction Transcript

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Welcome to the Foster Care Coordinator Pre-Service training!

The information you will learn in this training will provide a general overview of the responsibilities of Foster Care Coordinators related to foster care licensure. In this training, you will hear Foster Care Coordinators simply being called “Coordinators” or “licensors”. It’s important to note this position may carry a variety of titles depending on the agency. In addition, the role of the Coordinator may vary among agencies, depending on their overall job responsibilities. In some agencies, the Foster Care Coordinator is responsible solely for licensing and supporting foster homes, but in other agencies, the Coordinator may also be responsible for other areas of child welfare. Some agencies have several Coordinators, while others have one. Licensing agencies can include county, tribal, or private child-placing agencies. Talk with your supervisor about how the responsibilities described in this training are managed in your agency, as well as additional responsibilities you may have.

Slide 1.1



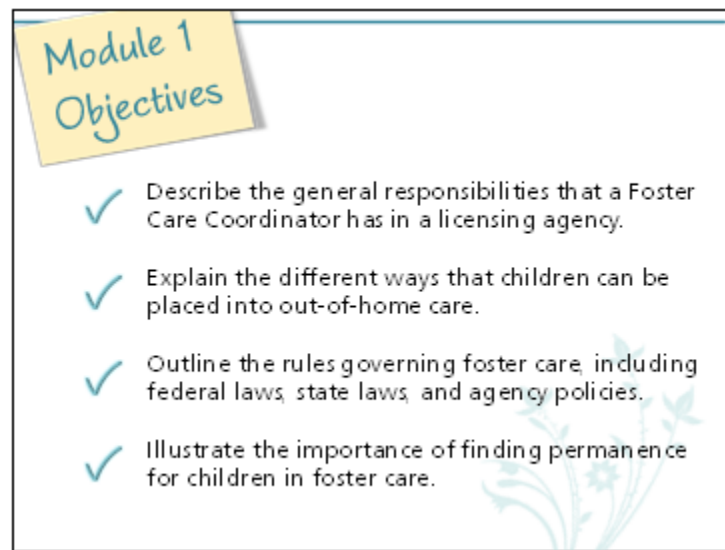
In the subsequent modules of this training, you will learn about:

- The role of the licensing agency and the responsibilities to recruit and retain foster families.
- The Coordinator's role in working with families. And,
- The process the Coordinator must go through in order to license foster homes.

Throughout the training, you'll encounter questions to check your understanding.

As a tip, write down all your thoughts or questions as they come up. Your supervisor is there to answer questions and to discuss any concerns you may have. You can also bring these up during the 56 training or the monthly Out-of-Home Care call.

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Based on the information provided, upon completion of this Introduction module, you should have the knowledge and skills to:

- Describe the general responsibilities that a Foster Care Coordinator has in a licensing agency.
- Explain the different ways that children can be placed into out-of-home care.
- Outline the rules governing foster care, including federal laws, state laws, and agency policies.
- And, illustrate the importance of finding permanence for children in foster care.

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The foundation of the role of the Foster Care Coordinator is licensing and supporting foster homes. Later in this training, you will learn the specifics of the licensing process as well as how to support those foster families in order to retain them as resources for the children served by your agency.

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We asked several coordinators to describe what a typical day looks like for them. Please listen and take note of the differences in each of their daily roles and responsibilities. Keep in mind, your role in your agency may look similar or different from theirs. Click a photo onscreen to hear from that person. After you've heard from everyone, click the forward button.

Dawn:

Usually I start out by checking emails, checking messages. I do have a lot of people that call in and want to find out more about foster care, I spend a lot of time doing that. I also am doing, making sure that we are sending out preplaced -- or prescreening materials, checking references, making sure people are getting fingerprinted, checking caregiver background checks, all that kind of stuff, references, following up with references that didn't give a lot of information. Some days I am meeting with people face to face, some days I am doing training, some days I speak in public about foster care, so it's really different each day.

Dean:

I'm not sure if there is anything called a typical day. A day can vary. Generally speaking, your typical day, if you have such a thing, would involve a lot of phone contact, some paperwork, maybe some report writing, home visits and connecting with the foster children, foster families and other professionals, and a lot of meetings.

Grace:

I'm not certain there is such a thing as a typical day, things that tend to happen every day are several phone calls from different foster parents, asking questions about the child in their home because the worker isn't available, or respite, or questions about adoption, or other things that's happening in their homes. Other things that happen is doing some of the computer work, paperwork that has to be done, as well as home visits.

Mike:

For me, every day is different, some days I'll come in and I'll plan a training for that evening, some days I'll have a licensing interview, some days I'll be writing a home study right away, and other days I'll be reading files for potential placements for our foster parents.

Patty:

As a coordinator, there's a lot of different things that need to be done, it's not just licensing, I think you go into the office one day having an idea of what you're going to do and then there are phone calls waiting for you and social workers that need to talk about different things going on in foster homes. You're doing things like meeting with prospective foster families, taking calls from families that want to be foster parents.

Also, speaking with current foster families, supporting them, helping them with some of the struggles that they're dealing with. Of course there's all of the licensing responsibilities that go along with the job, renewing licenses, making sure that foster families are meeting all of the requirements, along with all of the kind of fun things that go along with retaining foster families, planning banquets and, and picnics, all of those recruitment types of activities that go along with the job, too. There's really not a typical day. There's a lot of different things that need to be done every day when you're a foster care coordinator.

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As the Foster Care Coordinator, you will have to make many decisions on a daily basis regarding the foster homes licensed by your agency. Foster care is governed by different policies, administrative codes, and laws, which are enforced at the county, state, and federal levels.

- Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA):
 - Established minimum federal standards for the removal of Indian children to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families
 - Created specific rules for foster and adoptive placements that are intended to preserve Indian heritage and culture, including an order of preference for placement of Indian children
 - Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA):
 - Wisconsin version of ICWA as codified into Wisconsin statutes in 2009, which mirrors the ICWA and implements the minimum standards referenced in ICWA
- Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA):
 - Created to prevent children from staying in foster care for extended periods of time without achieving permanence
 - Gives the foster parents the right to be heard in court
 - Requires Permanency Planning to begin at the time of placement
- Multiethnic Placement Act and Interethnic Placement Act (MEPA & IEPA):

- Placement of a child into a foster home may not be delayed or denied on the basis of race, color, or national origin of the foster parent or child
- Placements must be consistent with the best interests of the child and not solely based on the race, color, or national origin of the child or potential foster family
- Requires states to actively recruit potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the state for whom placements are needed
- John H. Chafee Act
 - Outlines requirements and provides funding to meet the needs of youth aged 14-21 who are in or what have aged out of foster care
 - Increased funding and services to children up to age 21 who are leaving the foster care system
 - Wisconsin law states that youth aged 14 and older who have been in care for 6 months or longer must have an Independent Living Assessment and Transition Plan, which identifies the knowledge and skills the youth will need to make a successful transition to living on their own
- Fostering Connections
 - Emphasizes the importance of involving relatives throughout a case for familial connections as well as for potential placement options
 - Notice to relatives: Adult relatives will be notified within 30 days of the removal of a relative child from the child's parental home. The notice will inform relatives that the child has been removed and will provide information regarding the benefits of becoming a foster parent.
 - Sibling connections and interaction: agencies will place siblings together when possible, and if this is not possible, agencies will provide for frequent interaction between the siblings.
- State Statutes
 - These statutes, or laws, were created by the Wisconsin State Legislature and must be followed by all agencies. There are no exceptions to either of these statutes
 - Chapter 48, The Children's Code:
<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/48>
 - Chapter 938, The Juvenile Justice Code:
<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/938>
- State Administrative Rules
 - Also called administrative code, or just code, the administrative rules further define programs or requirements set forth in state statute.
 - Ch. DCF 56, Admin. Code <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/0131.pdf>
 - Explains licensing requirements and standards for foster care
 - Ch. DCF 12 Caregiver Background Checks, Admin. Code:
https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/DCF/001_020/12.pdf
 - Sets forth requirements for background checks to meet the caregiver law and includes what crimes or government findings prohibit foster care licensure, how to determine if a crime substantially relates to caring for children, and the rehabilitation review process.

- Ch. DCF 37 Information to Foster Parents, Admin. Code:
http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/dcf/021_099/37/
 - Provides the requirements of what information and forms are to be used at the time a child is placed into foster care.
- Ch. DCF 54 Child Placing Agencies, Admin. Code:
http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/dcf/021_099/54
 - Establishes the requirements for private child placing agencies who license foster homes.
- State Policies
 - These are published by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) as numbered and informational memos for agencies to follow. Memos can be found here:
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>
 - Individuals may request email notification when new memos are issued here:
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childwelfare/signup>

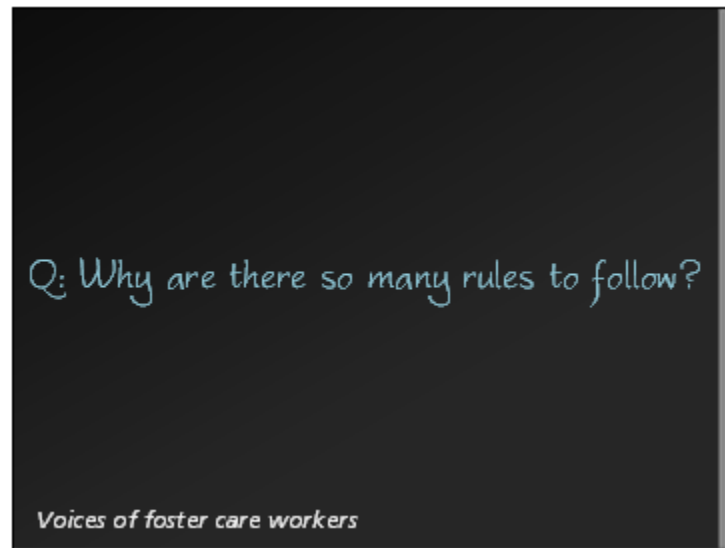
- Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard

The Federal “Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act” of 2014 requires that all states implement a Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard to increase normalcy for children placed in out-of-home care. This law requires out-of-home care providers to apply reasonable and prudent parenting when making decisions involving children placed in their care, so they can allow children to participate in age and developmentally appropriate activities.

The Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard is a standard of decision-making that allows an out-of-home care provider to make certain parenting decisions for children placed in their care. Reasonable and prudent parenting is built on careful and sensible decisions that promote child participation in age or developmentally appropriate extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.

Module 6 of this training covers the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard in depth.

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Voices of foster care workers:

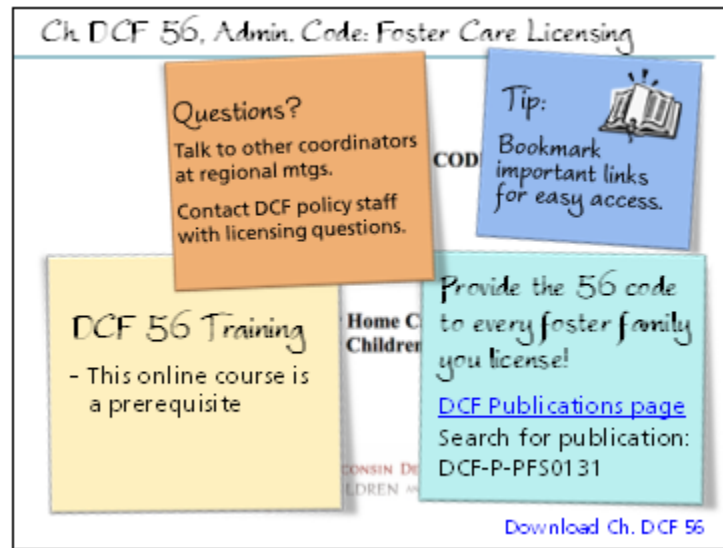
“In our everyday life we follow rules in a million different settings and in foster care probably more than most of the places, it's critical that we have rules to follow, this assures that children get the best possible care, are provided safety, nurturing, all of the things that they need for their development. It helps guide us in our work and keeps us focused on what's important.”

“There's a lot of rules in foster care really to basically protect the health, safety and welfare of the foster children but it also protects the foster family and the agency from liability, the rules provide some clarity and guidance and fairness for the care of the children and fostering really the rules help the foster parents just really understand how to properly take care of children and it helps foster and balance that relationship between the agency and the foster family and importantly as well the biological family.”

“So there's so many rules to follow to protect not only the children in foster care but as well as the foster parents.”

“Biological parents know that when we're putting their children in somebody else's care that we make sure that they're going to be safe.”

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The requirements for foster care licensure are laid out in Chapter DCF 56 administrative code, sometimes called “56” or “licensing code”. This online course is a prerequisite to the DCF 56 training, which you will attend in person to gain an understanding of the code. During the training you’ll participate in activities related to licensing. The training is conducted by DCF policy staff.

You are required to provide a copy of the licensing code to every foster family you license, so they have a copy of the requirements that they are agreeing to adhere to when becoming a foster parent. Print copies are available by searching for this number (DCF-P-PFS0131) in the publications section of the DCF website. The code is complicated and can be difficult to read, so it is important that you understand it so that you can explain and answer questions your foster families have.

You will find that other Foster Care Coordinators can be a valuable resource when you have questions about licensing code. You’ll have an opportunity to discuss licensing questions at regional Foster Care Coordinators meetings and during the monthly Out-of-Home Care Conference calls. In addition, you can contact DCF policy staff with licensing questions.

Download Ch. DCF 56: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/0131.pdf>

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Check Your Understanding - Role of Coordinator

Question 1 of 1

True or False:
The role of a Foster Care Coordinator varies between agencies.

☐ True
☐ False

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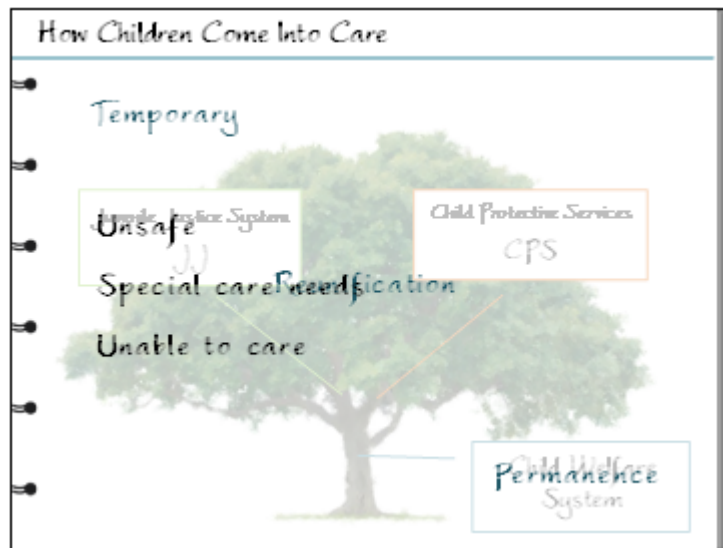
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True or False:

The role of a Foster Care Coordinator varies between agencies.

- True
- False

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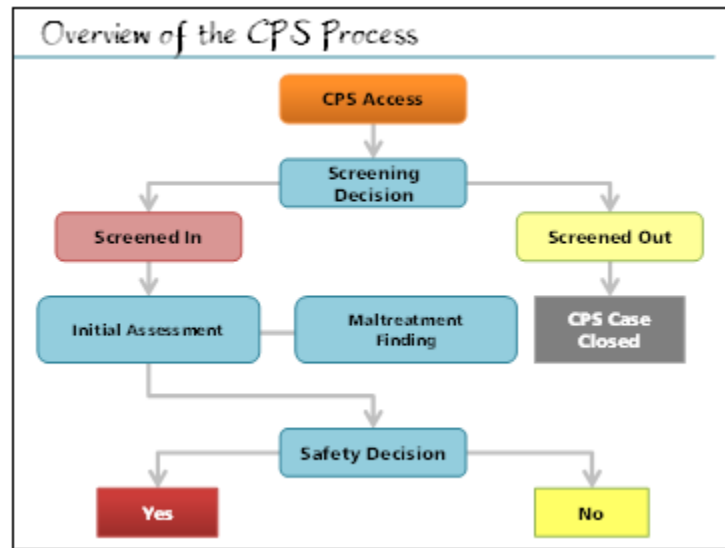
Placement in foster care is meant to be temporary and to provide birth families time to make necessary changes so that the child can live safely in his or her home and community. Most children in foster care return home to their families, which is called reunification. When children can't return home, they find permanence through placement with relatives, adoption, guardianship, or other permanent options.

Foster care is provided by licensed foster parents for children who cannot live with their parents because the children are unsafe, have special care or treatment needs that the parent is unable to manage, or other circumstances resulting in their parents or family being unable to care for them. Children are placed in foster care for various reasons. Some examples include: a child who has been neglected, a child who has been abused, a child whose parent is incarcerated or hospitalized and has no one to care for them during their parents' absence, a youth who has committed a delinquent act, or a child who has significant medical or mental health needs.

The child welfare program in Wisconsin is split into two main branches: the child protective services system (also called "CPS") and the juvenile justice system (called "JJ"). Sometimes children or families are involved in both systems, and sometimes they are involved with just one. Each system has its own laws, guidelines, resources, and services.

We'll begin with CPS to see how a child or family might move through that system.

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Let's take a look at how a child enters foster care through the child protective services system.

First, a report concerning a child who may have been maltreated (abused or neglected) is made to CPS Access or law enforcement. This report can be made by anyone who has reason to believe that a child has been maltreated or threatened with abuse or neglect.

After this report is received, the agency will make a decision whether to screen in or screen out the report based on state statutes and state standards.

If this report is screened out, the case would be considered closed with the agency, but the family could be referred to services in the community.

If the report is screened in, the agency conducts what's called an initial assessment. Then the CPS worker meets with family members and others to collect information needed to understand individual and family conditions, functioning and dynamics, as well as to assess and analyze threats to child safety.

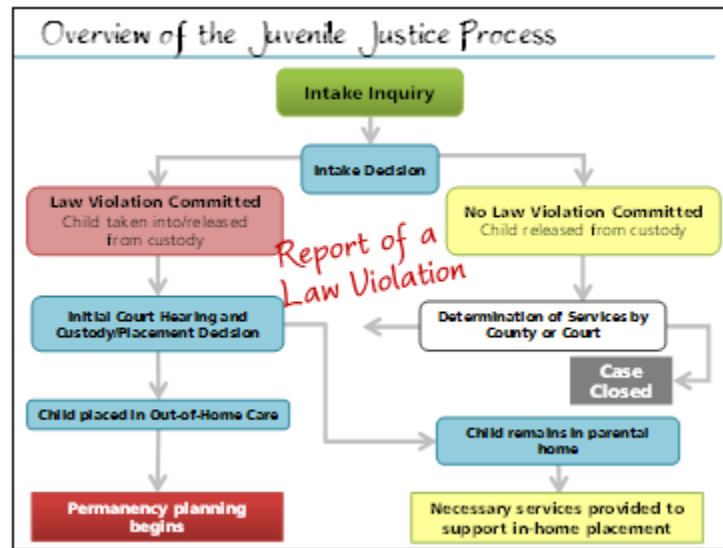
If this assessment finds that a child is unsafe, CPS must take action to control the threats to the child's safety and create a safety plan. This plan may be done in-home with services put in place, but if these services cannot be put in place in the home to control the safety threat, a child may be removed from the home and placed in out-of-home care.

This assessment will determine whether or not maltreatment occurred, who the maltreater is, and whether the child is in need of protection or services. If the child is found to be in need of protection or services, the case is opened with the CPS agency.

When children are placed in out-of-home care, the agency will provide services to the parents and child that, if successfully completed, should allow the child to return home with a safety plan. At the same time, the agency will work with the family to make needed changes so the child can remain safely in the home.

Some agencies also provide services to families on a voluntary basis or may work with them to identify available services in the community.

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Now let's take a look at how a youth could enter foster care through the Juvenile Justice system.

First, a report of a law violation or other uncontrollable behavior is made to law enforcement or to the county agency.

An Intake Inquiry is then completed to determine the youth's needs as well as to assess community safety. A decision will be made whether or not a law violation was committed and whether or not the child should be taken or remain in custody and placed into out-of-home care. This is where the process splits into two branches.

If a law violation was committed, the youth will attend an initial court hearing, and the judge will make a decision regarding custody and placement of the youth. If the judge determines that an out-of-home placement is necessary in order to meet the youth's needs or to ensure community safety, the youth will be placed in out-of-home care and permanency planning begins immediately.

However, if a law violation was not committed, the county will determine the level of services needed. At this point, there are two different decisions that can be made.

One, if the county feels that an out-of-home placement is necessary in order to meet the youth's needs or to ensure community safety, the county will bring a petition before the court. The judge will then either decide to continue the placement of the youth in out-of-home care, or decide that the youth's needs and community safety can be managed while allowing the youth to stay in his or her home. If the youth remains at home, the county will provide the necessary services to the family to support the youth at home.

The county or judge could also decide that no services are necessary for this youth or family and the case will be closed.

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Now you've heard stories about the importance of your role in the Child Welfare System. Before we conclude this module, let's hear again from our experienced coordinators what they wish someone would've told them.

Dawn:

Well, I wish I would have had more of an idea about the responsibility placed on licensing somebody, you know, we really do take a chance with people, and 'cause we are trusting them with our most vulnerable children, but at the same time, I think you have to have fun with it too, and you have to enjoy people, you have to make them comfortable so that they are open with you.

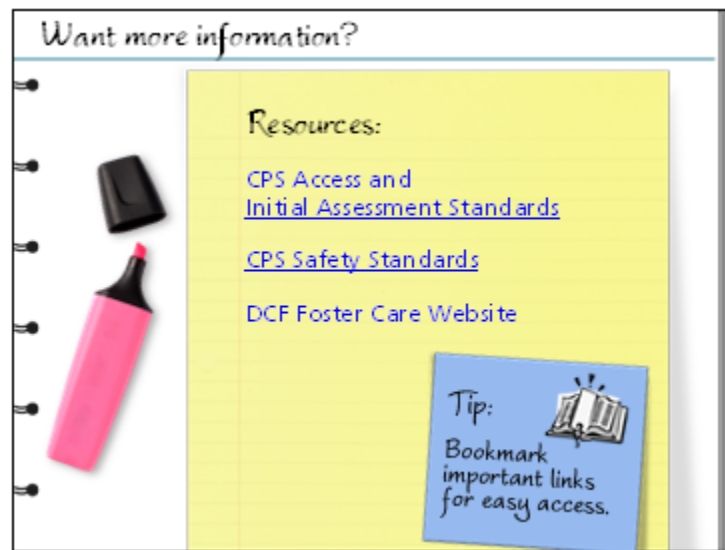
Dean:

I wasn't sure what I was getting into because I came from a different background, corrections in the medical field, didn't know a lot about child welfare and I wish somebody would have perhaps given me a little advice in terms of how complex child welfare can be. People think that, well, it's working with kids, how hard can that be, but in reality, when you're dealing with abused, neglected children and the impact of trauma on them, and the impact of trauma on their families and how it plays out in their behavior and their struggles in foster care and in the community. The complexity and the struggles in what these kids have experienced is something that I don't think I was prepared for and I wish that perhaps I could have got a little bit more training, a little bit more advice of a practical nature when I first started out.

Mike:

I wish someone would have told me how time consuming the job can be and the fact that the hours can be very odd. But you learn to work around that and that's a relatively small price to pay.

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Here are several resources useful to your work.

CPS Access and Initial Assessment Standards:

<http://wcwpds.wisc.edu/preservice/access/docs/access-ia-standards.pdf>

CPS Safety Standards: <http://wcwpds.wisc.edu/preservice/access/docs/safety-intervention-standards.pdf>

DCF Foster Care Website: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/fostercare/parent>

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As a Coordinator, you will have to make many decisions that affect not only the foster parents whom you license but also the children who are placed into their homes. Given the magnitude of the responsibilities that you have to manage on a daily basis, it can be easy to lose sight of the perspective of the children who are being placed into foster care. The video on the following page is included to provide you with that perspective. Throughout this training, you'll hear from other current and former foster youth from Wisconsin and hear their perspectives on foster care.

The video you're about to see is also included in the Foster Parent Pre-Placement training so that foster parents can hear the same perspective from children they are caring for. This video is incredibly powerful and may be difficult to watch. You are encouraged to debrief with your supervisor after watching the video.

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Video from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzNvAJQZ7xU&feature=related>
 and is linked from <http://www.wifostercareandadoption.org/site/indexer/459/content.htm>
 Song source: *Angel* by Sarah McLachlan

Video Text on Screen:

“There are over 126,000 children in this country that need a home; this is one child’s story...”

“I am a cute 12 year old boy. Everyone tells me how beautiful my dimples are. Everyone tells me how beautiful my smile is. Nobody took the time to see me on the inside. Nobody really cares. I was 4 when the cops came and took me away. Mommy couldn’t wake up. And daddy fought the cops trying to get me back. I was taken to a stranger’s house. They told me it was going to be temporary. They told me it was going to be OK. They didn’t tell me when Mommy and Daddy were going to come take me home. I cried for them. For Days. For Months. For Years. They didn’t come to save me. At my new home there are many children. Some don’t like me. When we are alone the older boy beats me. Nobody notices. Or maybe nobody cares. So I start to break stuff around the house. When there is nothing to break I start to pee on the walls. I am taken away from the house because I am causing too many problems. So I go to the next house. And the next house. And the next. And the next. Until I finally make it to your door 8 years later. You tell me what everyone else told me. This is my final move. This will be my home. How do I know that you’re not going to beat me? Or touch me? But I know better now. I will fight your kids. Maybe I’ll burn your wedding pictures. I’ll never give you the chance to love me. Just to have you take me back like everyone else.

But do remember. Every time you roll your eyes. And every time you smile. I’m watching. I need your support. I need you to be my role model. I might not tell you. And I might have a weird way of showing it. But if you don’t give up on me. Some day when you least expect it. I will thank you.”

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In your role as a Coordinator, you will need to continually consider permanence for the children in the care of your families. When you think of permanence, you likely think of the legal definition – those safe and nurturing relationships that can be expected to last at least until the child turns 18 and, hopefully, for a lifetime. You also need to consider the emotional definition of permanence as it's defined by the children in out-of-home care – the idea of developing and sustaining connections to important people in their lives.

Please listen to current and former foster youth as they describe what permanence means to them.

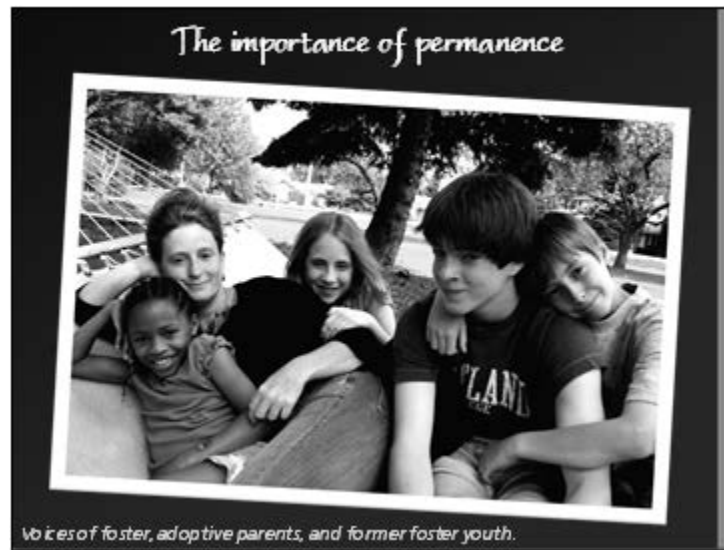
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Voices of foster youth:

"Permanency is having a place to do laundry, having someone to talk to when you've had a bad day. Having someone who loves you even when you screw up or hurt them. Someone who remembers your birthday. Someone who borrows/gives you money in times of need. Someone whose cabinets you can raid when food is low. Someone who will be at your high school graduation when you graduate. Someone who helps you find your potential. A place to go for the holidays. Someone who I would put down when they ask for my emergency contact. Someone who treats me like their own child even if I am not. Someone who helps you when times are hard. Someone who encourages you to be better! Someone who LOVES you NO MATTER WHAT!"

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Voices of foster, adoptive parents, and former foster youth:

"A child who doesn't have permanency is always just feeling like they're wandering and a little bit unsafe, so permanency for a foster child is knowing that they don't ever have to move, they don't have to go somewhere, they don't have to live with a new family, they don't have to make new friends and new siblings and new teachers and new schools. It could be through adoption, it could be through reunification, it could be through a variety of options, but for that child permanency has to mean they don't need to pack their bags anymore."

"Permanency is having a permanent home forever, that you have one home (also as a former foster child and an adoptive parent) it is just something that I want to give both my birth child and my adopted child that we're going to be there forever them no matter what happens, no matter what happens. I think that is the key to having people understanding that – whether it's foster, working for birth homes, or foster to adopt, is that permanency is really, in one home, where someone's going to stick with you through thick or thin."

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Check Your Understanding - Rules & Licensing

Question 1 of 2

Please match the following terms to their definitions:
(scroll down to see more)

A law that indicates placement of a child into a foster home may not be delayed or denied on the basis of race, color, or national origin of the foster parent or child. -- Select --

The administrative code that sets forth background check requirements for the caregiver law, which includes foster parents. -- Select --

Foster Care Licensing Code, which outlines licensing and documentation requirements for the licensure of foster homes. -- Select --

The act that established minimum

PROPERTIES
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1. Please match the following terms to their definitions:

- DCF 56
- ICWA
- DCF 12
- MEPA
- A law that indicates placement of a child into a foster home may not be delayed or denied on the basis of race, color, or national origin of the foster parent or child.
- The administrative code that sets forth background check requirements for the caregiver law, which includes foster parents.
- Foster Care Licensing Code, which outlines licensing and documentation requirements for the licensure of foster homes.
- The act that established minimum standards for the removal of Indian children to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families and created specific rules for foster and adoptive placements that are intended to preserve Indian heritage and culture, including an order of preference for placement of Indian children.

2. True or False: Once you complete this training, you will be prepared to license foster homes.

- True
- False

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In this module, you have learned about the general role of a Foster Care Coordinator, rules governing foster care, how children enter out-of-home care, the importance of permanence, and the perspective of children in foster care. In subsequent modules, you'll learn about the role your agency plays in supporting foster parents, your role in working with families, and the licensing process.

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Thank you for completing Module 1: Introduction.
When you're ready, continue on to the next module:
Module 2: Licensing Agency Role