

SUFFOLK COUNTY CHILD PLACEMENT BUREAU

Foster Care Placements

- Foster Care services are defined as assessing the need for, arranging for, and providing for placement of and services to individuals under that age of 18 (or under 21 for cases when the child came into care prior to age 18) in a foster home or appropriate group care facility as a result of either a judicial determination or at the voluntary request of the parent or legal guardian.

Permanency For Children

- Foster care is a temporary intervention that keeps children safe, while services are provided for the family, until the time that we can achieve permanency.
- Foster Care is a last resort.
- When there are no interventions that would make it safe for a child to remain in the home, that child is removed from his/her parents' custody and placed in the custody of the Commissioner of Social Services.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act

- The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) requires the agency to make reasonable efforts to preserve and reunify families. If a child remains in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, the agency may be required by law to file a petition to terminate the parental rights and may file before the end of the 15 month period. This process begins at removal.

Permanency Goals For Children

- Return to Parent - When a child is placed in foster care this is the first approved permanency goal.
- Caseworkers work with the family to assist the parents in accessing the necessary services to resolve familial issues and satisfy their court ordered mandates so that the children may eventually be returned to them.

Permanency Goals For Children

- Adoption - Custody and guardianship permanently awarded to a resource, for a child, through Family Court.
- The vast majority of adoptive resources for a child are the foster parents the child was placed with.

Permanency Goals For Children

- > Placement With a Fit and Willing Relative - A child is placed with a relative resource who would like to be a permanent resource for the child, but without adopting or gaining guardianship.

Permanency Goals For Children

- > Another Planned Living Arrangement (APLA)
A child is placed with foster parents that will be a permanent resource for the child but, for one or more reasons, adoption is not an option.

Permanency Goals For Children

- > Refer for Legal Guardianship (KinGAP) - A child is placed with kinship foster parents who file for permanent guardianship for the child. Adoption isn't an option and the parents rights do not need to be terminated. The kinship guardians will be eligible to receive a KinGAP subsidy.

Foster Care Placement Levels

- DSS Certified Foster Care – Foster parents certified by Suffolk County. They complete the Suffolk County certification process and attend ten classes in the Model Approach to Parenting Partnerships (MAPP).

Foster Care Placement Levels

- Kinship Foster Care – Related by blood or marriage (i.e. aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, step-parents) These homes are approved, not certified, receive a letter of approval, not a license. Their approval is for specific relative children and no other foster children are placed in these homes.

Foster Care Placement Levels

- Non-Relative Resources – Individuals or families with a significant relationship with a child or family, and recognized as such by the family, Court, Attorney for the Child, or caseworker (i.e. Godparents, neighbors, ministers, family friend). These homes are certified and may or may not accept other foster care placements.

Foster Care Placement Levels

- Therapeutic Foster Homes - A child is placed in a foster home with a foster family that has received specialized training to deal with foster children who exhibit a higher level of need.
- Children residing in this type of home have higher service needs and require more supervision than children placed in DSS certified foster homes.
- These foster homes belong to contract agencies who receive Suffolk County foster placements.

Foster Care Placement Levels

- Group Homes - A child is put in placement where the child resides in a group facility operated by an agency contracted by Suffolk County, rather than with a foster family.
- Children residing in this type of placement have higher service needs and require more supervision than children placed in therapeutic foster homes.

Foster Care Placement Levels

- Residential Treatment Centers (RTC) - A child is placed in a residential placement where the child resides in treatment center operated by an agency contracted by Suffolk County. The RTC provides an array of services that are dictated by each foster child's specific needs and service plan.
- Children residing in this type of placement have higher behavioral issues and service needs that require more intervention and supervision than children placed in a group home setting.

Foster Care Placement Levels

- Residential Treatment Facilities (RTF) - A child is placed in a residential placement where the child resides in a facility operated by an agency contracted by Suffolk County. The RTF placement is a psychiatric driven placement.
- An RTF is the highest level of placement in foster care. Children residing in this setting have higher service needs and require more supervision than children placed in a group home setting.

Foster Care Certification Process

- Every foster parent must go through a certification process.
- Prospective foster parents attend an orientation session, which is where the application to become a foster parent is given to them and the process begins.
- DSS completes State Central Registry clearances for child abuse/ maltreatment, fingerprinting and local police records clearances, and staff exclusion clearances for people who worked with vulnerable populations.

Foster Care Certification Process

- DSS provides mandatory training for all prospective foster parents.
- Model Approach to Parenting Partnerships (MAPP) is a ten session training program for non-kinship foster parents
- Caring For Our Own is a nine session training program specifically designed for kinship foster parents.

Foster Care Certification Process

- DSS conducts a home study during the time period that the foster parents are attending their mandatory training program.
- In addition to a thorough inspection of the home, to insure that it meets regulatory requirements, DSS secures budget/income information, medical examination information, and references for the prospective foster parents.
- This process determines if the applicants can be either licensed to foster children or approved as kinship foster parents.

Court Process

- Permanency Hearings - Eight months after a child is removed and placed into foster care, Family Court conducts a the first permanency hearing. After the initial hearing the court schedules subsequent permanency hearings at six month intervals.
- At these hearings, the entire case is reviewed. The parents' progress towards meeting their court ordered mandates is assessed and the progress they are making towards achieving reunification is evaluated.

Court Process

- At the hearings, the Family Court Judge approves the existing permanency goal or makes a ruling on a request to change to a different permanency goal.
- If the court determines that reunification is no longer a possibility, the judge may order DSS to file a termination of parental rights (TPR) petition against the parents.
- If the judge makes a finding of permanent neglect, mental illness, mental retardation, or abandonment on the TPR petition then a child will be freed for adoption.

Outcomes Leading to a Child Being Freed

- Termination of Parental Rights - The Family Court Judge rules in favor of the TPR petition filed in court and permanently terminates the parents rights to the child.
- Once established a TPR finding can be used in future Family Court proceedings involving other children the parents have.
- The ruling can be appealed by the parents.

Outcomes Leading to a Child Being Freed

- Voluntary Surrender of Parental Rights - To avoid the trial and the finding leading to the termination of the parents' rights, a parent may voluntarily surrender their rights to a child
- Unconditional Surrender - The parent voluntarily surrenders all their rights to the child without any stipulations whatsoever.
- Conditional Surrender - The parent voluntarily surrenders all their rights to the child, with the existence of certain conditions.

Adoption

- Once a child is freed for adoption the adoptive resource must then undergo a process similar to the one they participated in when they were originally certified or approved as foster parents.
- DSS conducts an adoption home study.
- DSS completes updated State Central Registry clearances for child abuse/maltreatment, fingerprinting, and local police records clearances.

Adoption

- The majority of the foster children that are adopted receive an adoption subsidy.
- The subsidy is dependent on the child's ongoing needs and is determined by DSS, in conjunction with the State.
- An adoption subsidy can continue until the child reaches 21 years of age, under certain specific criteria.
- In the case of the death of an adoptive parent, the subsidy can be transferred to another person to receive it, on behalf of the child.

KinGAP

- In cases where a child has been in a kinship home (related by blood, marriage, or adoption) for at least six months, there is a strong attachment between the kinship foster parents and the child, and adoption or reunification is not an appropriate permanency goal, the kinship foster parents can file a petition for permanent kinship guardianship (KinGAP) of the foster child.
- Although DSS assists with the process, this must be initiated by the kinship foster parents.

KinGAP

- The parents' rights do not have to be terminated for a KinGAP petition to be established.
- Custody and guardianship are permanently awarded to the kinship guardian.
- The order may be vacated in the future, depending on a judge's ruling after a petition is filed.
- Similar to adoption, a subsidy for the child is established.
