

Welcome to IMPACT Orientation. As you begin this process, it is our hope that you develop a partnership with the agency. Along with developing this partnership it will be important that you obtain the knowledge and skills that will be necessary to parent Georgia's children.

SLIDE: IMPACT – DFCS RESOURCE FAMILY TRAINING INITIATIVE

IMPACT is an acronym. IMPACT addresses the areas that will be focused on throughout the certification process. The I is for Initial Interest. It is the I that brought you here today. Many of you have heard about the need for foster and adoptive parents and are ready to proceed and many of you may feel the need for additional information. It is hoped that you will be provided with as much information today as possible to help you decide if you would like to move to the next step in the process. The M is for Mutual Selection. A partnership will be developed between yourself and the agency in order to determine if becoming a resource family is right for your family. The P stands for the twenty hours of Pre Service training required to complete the certification process, called IMPACT certification training. During the training many topics will be addressed such as the fostering and adoption process, emotional cognitive and behavioral implications, discipline policy, and cultural and identity issues. The A is for the most critical piece, the Assessment that all families must complete. This step in the process includes the gathering of information to help the agency assess a family's ability to parent Georgia's children and looks at the family's areas of strength. This information is gathered through home visits, as well as an assessment tool in the form of a questionnaire. The C is for Continuing Development. Just as it is important to provide you with information prior to accepting children in your home, you will also be required to continue with on-going training to assist you in meeting the needs of children placed in your home. Finally, the T, which signifies Teamwork. It is our greatest hope that once you have completed the certification process that you will have developed a team of supports from family, friends, agency staff and other resources.

SLIDE: IMPACT (ACRONYM)

Let's take a look at the Mission Statement of the Foster Care Program. The purpose of Foster Care is to strengthen families and protect children from further abuse and neglect and assure that every child has a permanent family. The IMPACT Certification Process supports this mission.

SLIDE: Foster Care Program Mission

The Goal of The Division of Family and Children Services for children includes safety for all children, providing for the well being for all children and permanence for all children in the foster care system.

SLIDE: DFCS GOALS

These three laws have significant impact on how child welfare operates. Let's briefly discuss each. The Multi-ethnic Placement Act of 1994 amended by the Inter-Ethnic Provision Act of 1996 requires us to do two things. First, it requires that diligent recruitment be provided for the children in care. Second, that race be removed as a factor for the placement of children.

ASFA, the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, requires states to achieve permanency for children in foster care within a specified timeframe. Basically, children should no longer linger in the foster care system. Two of the primary goals are reunification and adoption. We will spend a great deal of time on these two goals throughout the certification process.

HIPPA is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. Many of you may be familiar with this law after having visited your doctor. You are probably wondering how this relates to foster care and adoption. This law requires protection of personal information. A family and child's case information falls into this category. It is critical that our resource families work with us to prevent this information from being disclosed.

SLIDE: Laws that support DFCS Practice

Let's look at why there is a need for resource families.

In 2003, there were 1,004 children in state custody adopted in Georgia.
So far this year 801 children have been adopted into homes in Georgia.

SLIDE: Need for Resource Families- Finalizations

This pie chart further demonstrates the need for Resource families. Notice that the largest number of placements for children in care was made with Foster Parents, Foster/Adopt, and Adoptive placements. These homes made up 88% of the placements.

SLIDE: Need for Resourced Families – Pie Chart

Of the approximately 14,000 children in Foster Care, 58% of these children are placed in foster homes. Clearly we are in need of additional foster homes for children placed in the custody of the state.

SLIDE: Need for Resource Families – Foster Care in Georgia

So, what is a resource family? Resource families fall into three categories. . .

foster families.

adoptive families

foster/adoptive families

Foster families are volunteers who offer safety and security to children in the state's custody on a temporary basis.

Adoptive families are those families who chose to make a lifetime commitment to meet the emotional, physical and social needs of a child.

Adoption is a legal process that occurs after a child's parental rights have been terminated or have been surrendered. Once a person adopts a child they obtain the same rights as birth parents.

Foster/Adoptive families become dually certified as foster and adoptive resources. Their primary interest is providing a foster care placement for a child with a permanency plan of adoption.

SLIDE: Resource Families are...

Resource Families should work in partnership with DFCS to support the goals of a child's case plan. The agency should share as much information as we possess about a child placed in Family's home. This is not always possible as most placements occur in crisis situation and very little information is known at the time of placement. However, we can only share what we know, this is why it is equally important for resource families to share with the agency any information they obtain regarding a child placed in their home. This is so important, as it helps the agency and Resource Families work together for the purpose of meeting children's emotional, physical, medical and educational needs.

SLIDE: Roles and Responsibilities of a Resource Family

(Provide the Family with a copy of the Foster Parent Bill of Rights.)

The Foster Parent Bill of Rights was passed in 2004 by the Legislature.

Be sure to read this important piece of legislation. It provides for the safety and protection for children, the well being for children and permanency for children. Notice that the Bill of right are in line with the mission of foster care.

There are many responsibilities for foster parents. (*Foster Parent Manual pg. 11*)

Foster parents must provide for the most nurturing care as possible, using the agency's guidelines and policies, and the child's case plan requirements as a guide for setting goals for children.

They must follow confidentiality guidelines and adhere to safety agreements including discipline standards. Foster parents must provide day-to-day care, supervision, nurturance and guidance. They must be available for supervisory visits. They must share in responsibility for transporting children. Foster parents must keep records and support the child's visitation and permanency plan. They must assist with moves and communicate with birth parents during visits.

It will be important for resource families establish partnerships in your local community in order to meet the needs of the child or children in your care. These partnerships should may be developed with the school system, medical services, therapists, childcare providers, agency and others. It takes many supports to provide for the well being of a child.

Let's look at the demographics of the children in foster care. While we need foster homes for all children our greatest needs are for African American and Caucasian children. Many of the children are older African American males. The average age is 8. Some of the children have health concerns and emotional needs. Many of them are part of a sibling group. Most of the children in care have endured trauma, separation,

*Utilize the Foster Care Fact Sheet – Found at www.georgia.gov website.
Also if you have local demographics for your county incorporate this information as well.*

SLIDE: Demographics of Children in Care

We just mentioned that many of the children in foster care are experiencing trauma, separation, grief and loss issues. The reason children experience these issues is a direct result of being removed from their parents or caregivers. Children enter into foster care because of abuse, neglect and/or abandonment. More time will be spent during the IMPACT training explaining how children enter foster care and how we can help them deal with the issues of being in foster care.

SLIDE: Reasons Children Come Into
grief and loss issues.

While a child is in Foster Care financial support is provided to meet the needs of the children in care. Financial support is provided on a reimbursement basis in a per diem amount based on the age of the child. Financial support is disbursed at the end of each month. The payments as of April 2004 for Family Foster Care were: Age 0-5 - \$12.75 per day, per child; Age 6-12 - \$13.50 per day, per child and age 13 and older - \$14.25 per day, per child.

SLIDE: Financial Support Services

Along with Financial support several services are available to support the Foster Care family.

Some of these are Child Care. This support is for parents who are employed, if married both parents must be employed and also for attendance at foster parent trainings.

Medicaid is available for children in care to provide for payment of health services.

An initial clothing allowance is provided. Children also receive an annual allowance for clothing.

NOTE: In this county we provide (talk about any additional services offered through your county)!-

SLIDE: Services

Adoption Assistance is provided to assist families in meeting the needs of their child/children. Children are eligible for Adoption Assistance if they are in the permanent custody of the Division, in an adoptive placement and meet Georgia's definition of special needs. Special needs for the purpose of adoption includes the following: African American children over the age of 1, white children 8 and older, sibling groups of 2 with at least one child that has a special need, sibling groups of 3 or more, and any child with a diagnosed disability. A family adopting a child/children with special needs will typically receive 100% of what the child receives for their foster care per-diem.

SLIDE: Adoption Assistance

Adoption Assistance comes in four categories. The first category of assistance is the monthly supplement. This is what a family will receive each month and is typically 100% of whatever amount the child receives in foster care.

The second category is non-recurring adoption expenses. Eligible families may receive up to \$2,000 to assist in the expenses relating to the adoption such as the attorney's fees and court cost.

The third category is Special Services. These funds may be requested by a family when a child has a need that the family cannot meet through the monthly supplement, Medicaid, or other sources. These funds can assist with such items as orthodontics.

The last category is Medicaid. Medicaid assists families in meeting a child's medical needs.

SLIDE: Adoption Assistance Categories

In addition to the financial support for children, there are other resources available through local partnerships with various county agencies. Some of the services that may be available to support children in care include counseling, therapy, crisis intervention and tutoring.

NOTE: Examples in this county include (list your county resources, if applicable)

In recognizing that adoption is a lifelong commitment, families are provided with post adoption services. There are Regional Adoption Coordinators, Resource Services Coordinators, Resource Development staff and other County staff available to assist you in identifying post adoption services. In most cases families can receive assistance with counseling, therapy and tutoring after an adoption is finalized

Each of you have been provided an Orientation Packet. There are several forms that you will need to complete and return. Included in this packet is the Letter of Intent. The Letter of Intent provides you with three choices. The first block is to be checked if you are interested in continuing with the IMPACT certification process. The second block should be completed if you are not interested in becoming a resource family but would like to volunteer in other ways. The third block is to be completed if you are not interested at this time. You may chose to return the Letter of Intent in the self-addressed stamped envelope or you may want to sign it today. Please try to respond to the Letter of Intent within 10 days. Also found in your packet is the Resource Parent Approval Process Document Checklist. *(Have the family look at this sheet and address the requirements on the checklist and answer any questions the family has.)*

So...you may be wondering what your next steps are. The decision to become a foster, foster/adopt or adoptive parent is very important. Take time to look over the information in your Orientation packet so that you can make an informed decision. Remember that you may decide to select out of the certification process at any point. The certification process is one in which many activities happen at the same time that you are participating in the 20 hour IMPACT training class. You must complete The IMPACT training, a criminal records check through a fingerprint check, a medical exam, a drug screen and the family assessment which will include completion of a couple of questionnaires and at least 2 home visits. There are also additional required documentation listed on the checklist in your packet to be completed.

SLIDE: Next Steps

IMPACT is a mutual selection process. This means that DFCS assesses your abilities and knowledge to provide care for a child that might be placed in your home. At the same time, we hope that you will take the opportunity to assess your own abilities, knowledge and willingness to provide a home for a child in care.

It is our goal to learn more about you and for you to learn more about a resources family's role as it relates to caring for children in foster care. We want to make sure the partnership is strong and that Resource families have the tools needed to be effective caretakers for our children.

The primary concern for both DFCS and a resource family is meeting the needs of children in care.

SLIDE: Next Steps

The orientation packet also contains brochures that review the information that you received today. Please take time to review this information when you get home.

The next IMPACT Certification Training class will begin on _____

Contact information can be found in your folder if you have any additional questions

Speaking of questions, does anyone have any?

Please remember to return you Letter of Intent within 10 days! Thank you for your interest in providing care for Georgia's children! I look forward to seeing you in the next training class.

