



DEPARTMENT OF  
**PUBLIC HEALTH &  
HUMAN SERVICES**

# **Child and Family Services Division Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan CFSP 2025-2029: Updated June 2025**



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## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Montana's contact for the 2025 – 2029 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) and subsequent Annual Progress and Service Report (APSR) is:

Brandi Loch  
Deputy Division Administrator  
[BrandiLoch@mt.gov](mailto:BrandiLoch@mt.gov)  
406-799-1823

The final document is formatted so it is accessible to individuals with visual impairments per Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

## **FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT DILIGENT RECRUITMENT PLAN OVERVIEW**

As of June 2024, Child and Family Service Division (CFSD) foster homes provided for approximately 2200 children in out-of-home care in Montana. Nearly one-half of the children in out-of-home placement are five years old or younger, and approximately 31% of the children in care are Native American. (CFSD) uses a variety of strategies to diligently recruit and retain kin and members of the community to provide care for children in our system.

The Licensing Bureau (LB) team (formerly known as the statewide Licensing Workgroup) will continue its work over the next five years. The group consists of five Resource Family Specialist Supervisors (RFSS), the Foster Care Licensing Bureau Chief (LB Chief), and Resource Family Specialists (RFS). The LB team will also continue collaboration with staff from the adoption and guardianship programs.

Families will continue to pursue licensure for foster care through CFSD, local Tribal Social Service agencies or licensed child-placing agencies. Families can pursue adoptive approval through CFSD, some Tribal Social Service agencies and licensed adoption agencies. CFSD has listings for adoption agencies on their adoption web page. Information about licensed child-placing agencies will be added to the CFSD foster care web page.

There is no cost in Montana to pursue foster care licensing through CFSD or through a Child Placing Agency (CPA).

CFSD has the capacity to access interpreters to deal with any linguistic barriers that occur when dealing with resource providers.

## **TRAINING FOR RESOURCE FAMILY SPECIALIST (RFS)**

CFSDs RFS staff are required to complete initial training, which includes condensed Montana Child Abuse and Neglect Orientation Training (MCAN), Child and Youth Development, Non-Discrimination, Culture, Children and Adult Mental Health, Substance Use Disorders, Professional Skills, Understanding Poverty and Documentation as well as training through the onboarding manual regarding Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), Centralized Intake, Family-Centered Practice, Substitute Care, Legal Process, and Runaways and Sex Trafficking.

Upon first being hired, RFS staff are required to participate in Keeping Children Safe (KCS) and Creating a Lifelong Family (CLF) training prior to being a presenter of the trainings. CLF is the required training for adoptive families. RFS staff also complete the KCS Core required training for resource families, which includes Grief/Loss, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Child Development, Positive Discipline, ICWA/Cultural competency and Reasonable and Prudent Parenting.

RFS staff continue to be required to complete Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE) training through the Consortium for Children at first hire and refresher training biannually.

Staff will also continue to be trained under the National Training and Development Center (NTDC) "Train the Trainer" program for those entities using the NTDC curriculum, to enhance the skills required for training resource families and other stakeholders. Staff will also continue to attend SAFE home study initial training and refresher training, when necessary, that develops the skills necessary to assess families for licensure.

CFSD will also consider the possibility of RFS obtaining additional training through the National Center for Enhanced Post-Adoption Support, to develop and implement culturally responsive, comprehensive, and accessible services to related and unrelated adoptive and guardianship families.

CFSD will review the current onboarding and training received by RFS staff to support development of training opportunities for RFS staff that will serve to enhance their skills and abilities. A calendar of ongoing staff training has been developed for the upcoming year to ensure staff comprehension of agency procedures and practices, as well as increased skill in working with resource families and providing ongoing support to families. Future training will be developed based on staff surveys and other information made available through monthly meetings with the entire RFS staff, regional meetings with staff, and individual meetings with staff and supervisors. RFS staff will continue to attend advanced practice training through CFSD, when appropriate and available.

## **RECRUITMENT OF KINSHIP PROVIDERS**

CFSD continues to consider placement with kin a high priority. CFSD will continue to use Family Engagement Meetings (FEM), as well as Seneca Searches and other available search tools/resources (i.e. Connect Our Kids through Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK)), to identify and recruit kin during the lifetime of a case for connection, placement, and permanency.

RFSs will continue contacting kinship providers within 72 hours of placement to provide support, resources, and introduction to licensing. RFSs will continue to maintain all kinship homes on their caseload, regardless of licensure status, to ensure ongoing support. This timely contact process is designed to engage kinship families and identify needs for support and resources, in addition to those identified by placing workers. Having an RFS assigned to all kin placement providers is expected to decrease timelines to licensure, permanency, and the possibility of disruption by identifying needed supports and services during the lifetime of a placement.

CFSD will continue to use its current licensing and approval process for kinship families, which includes assessment and approval for foster care, guardianship, and adoption at the time of initial approval of the family. This creates greater efficiencies in the placement and case management process and minimizes delays related to updating studies or requesting additional approvals if adoption or guardianship is necessary. While the emphasis remains on reunification, if possible, maintaining an efficient process for concurrent planning and placement, benefits children, and families.

CFSD will assess the viability and necessity of changes to the current kinship licensing rules specific to the changes made in federal rules by the Office of Administration for Children and Families Children's Bureau (CB). The LB leadership team will continue the ongoing review of practices, procedures and forms, including those specific to kinship licensing to assess efficiency and effectiveness and the need for any modification. The review process has been initiated and will continue over this five-year period. The review and development process are being completed by members of the RFS staff and will include input from other stakeholders such as the Connected Voices for Montana Kids (CVMK) board.

The Montana Kinship Navigator Program (MKNP) will continue to be a resource for kinship families, regardless of their licensure status. The RFSs will continue to ensure all kinship caregivers receive information regarding the MKNP. RFS staff have recently begun a review of an 'initial placement folder' provided to families (including kin) at the time of placement to ensure the most current resource information is included. The 'initial placement folder' includes information that informs and shares updates with resource families and stakeholders (CPA, WWK, etc.) about MKNP, as well as the services and resources it provides. Members of the LB leadership team will continue to attend the MKNP advisory board meetings, which provides access to the most current information from the MKNP. These meetings also provide an opportunity for CFSD to share information regarding the kinship licensing process, as well as their support to the MKNP, providers, and other stakeholders who engage with kin through their programs and services.

CFSD will continue to provide kinship families with access to fire safety equipment (smoke alarms, fire extinguishers and CO2 detectors) when families have difficulty obtaining these items, which would otherwise be a barrier to placement or licensure. CFSD will also continue to pay the cost of water testing if the costs are a barrier to families being approved for licensure. This process is another way of decreasing timelines to licensure and ensuring safety of youth and families, which can impact timelines to permanency.

CFSD will continue the use of provisional licensing approvals when financial burdens occur because of kinship placement. Provisional licensing allows for payment of a full foster care payment when the background and home safety assessments have been completed but is issued prior to a home study being completed and the family being approved for full licensure. CFSD will continue the use of non-agency providers to assist in the timely completion of studies to approve kin families for full licensure. Non-agency providers supplement the work of the RFS by assisting in the completion of kinship studies, which decreases timelines to licensure and timelines to permanency. CFSD will continue the practice of considering exceptions to certain non-safety licensing standards, including training, and sleeping arrangements. Those exceptions are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

CFSD will continue to identify training for both staff and families, as well as resource opportunities through engagement with the Grandfamilies and Kinship Support Network.

CFSD will also continue to maintain connections with programs such as Child Bridge, Promise 686, and other faith-based and community agencies that aid all families, including kinship families, in meeting needs for hard goods, home modifications or services that are barriers to placement or licensure. Some of those same programs also provide ongoing support to families through support groups and training opportunities (free of charge).

## **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF LICENSED PROVIDERS**

CFSD will continue engagement with the CVMK board through regular interaction by the LB Chief, through attendance at monthly calls and in-person meetings and members of the board participating in State Advisory Council (SAC) meetings.

The CVMK Board will continue to provide input regarding training, procedures, and processes to the agency, specifically the licensing bureau. The CVMK board will continue to have public comment periods at their quarterly in-person meetings and make ongoing use of surveys to identify needs, concerns, and suggestions of the resource families in Montana. The board will also continue to seek membership from those who are outside of the current member demographic (foster parents and birth parent). The CVMK board will continue to use the CFSD Listserv, as well as their social media pages and in person meetings, as a mechanism to communicate with resource families. The board will also consider ongoing opportunities to have a visible presence at community events (Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect Conference (PCAN), etc.) to increase awareness and engagement by other resource providers.

CFSD will continue to use the Foster Care List Serve (Listserv) to provide information to resource families across the state. Families are added to the Listserv by referral from their RFS or as families make a request through the system. The information shared on the Listserv is derived not only from CFSD but from local, state, and national entities who provide training, resources and support to resource families. As of June 2025, there are 1601 addresses on the Listserv. CFSD has a ninety-seven percent delivery rate, and the average opening of emails has ranged from thirty to forty-eight percent, depending on the topic. CFSD will evaluate ways to increase the percentages of emails that are opened through Listserv as the current rate is near or exceeding national rates for bulk mail. Responses from information delivered through the Listserv come to individual staff, regional offices, and stakeholders through resource family participation or engagement in their activities. There is currently not a means to determine the participation rate based on information obtained through the Listserv.

RFS staff will continue the practice of 6-month check-ins, following initial licensing for all resource families. The LB leadership team will review and recommend updates to check-in guides, based on input from staff, providers, and the case review process. This information will assist with facilitating engagement and support of resource families at the check-ins. The goal of the check-in process is to assess how providers are doing, elicit information regarding needs and concerns, and assess ongoing compliance with licensing and placement standards. This includes assessing how families are doing by completing training, as well as making recommendations for ongoing training and education, or support to meet a family's needs.

CFSD will continue to review the ongoing use and distribution of resources made available to families in all phases of foster care licensing and foster care. The Resource Parent Handbook (currently in latest revision), the foster parent inquiry and background check pamphlets, and the guide to guardianship are available online, as well as in hard copy (when requested) and are available to the field offices for distribution at Tribal and local community events and FEMs. The guides and pamphlets provide families with information on all phases of the experience families may have, including information about foster care, adoption, and guardianship. Review and recommendations for updates of these materials will be completed using input from RFS and resource families, including the CVMK Board.

CFSD will continue enhancement of the CFSD web pages that provide information to inquiring and current resource families. Regular review and updates will continue to be made as identified through internal review, input from providers, and other stakeholders. The development and changes are limited due to staff capacity, as well as the capacity of the system itself.

- Updated as of June 2025, CFSD has changed from using a link through the AdoptUSKids platform to a revised internal inquiry link <https://dphhs.mt.gov/CFSD/Fosterparent/index> for families inquiring about foster care, which can be accessed via the website. Families can also inquire to obtain information about adopting from foster care. The link directs families to an inquiry form, which is sent directly to the field. CFSD also maintains its 1-866 number for inquiring families.

Statewide CFSD will continue to use multiple styles of media presentations for foster parent recruitment and retention in specific months of April (Child Abuse and Neglect Month), May (Foster Parent Month) and November (Adoption Month), while continuing general recruitment and retention messaging during the remainder of the year. Articles and interviews in local newspapers, on the radio, through podcasts and on social media will feature foster and adoptive families who share their experiences caring for our children, along with RFS and Child Protection Specialist staff.

CFSD will continue to use media programs to circulate information about waiting children statewide (and nationally when appropriate) to increase awareness of the need for permanency and adoption for children when traditional approaches are not adequate. These programs include: A Waiting Child, a monthly television segment featured through local news; the AdoptUSKids Website; WWK and Child Bridge. These programs continue to heighten public awareness of the need for families for children who are older and those who have greater special needs.

CFSD will continue to collaborate on recruitment and retention efforts with other community stakeholders through events co-sponsored by programs such as Wendy's Wonderful Kids, Child Bridge, Missoula Alliance Church, CASA, Promise 686, Child Placing Agencies and the various foster parent support groups across the state, to increase awareness about the need for resource families and the opportunity to support those foster families in their communities.

CFSD will continue the use of its #FosterMT tag line and a Quick Response (QR) code system to make inquiring about foster care easier to access and flexible because the QR code can be scanned and accessed at a time convenient to families. The QR code can be used in both print and digital resources increasing access as well. Staff use postcards and flyers with the QR code at events, in mailings and by posting in local offices and buildings.

LB leadership team will complete ongoing assessments of the recruitment efforts and the viability of various recruitment mechanisms (television, radio, social media, print) and their effectiveness. The Center for Diligent recruitment has indicated a willingness to work with CFSD on their process and that opportunity will be explored. The LB leadership team will continue to participate in the Peer-to-Peer Diligent Recruitment group run through AdoptUsKids.

- Update as of June 2025, LB leadership team discontinued these peer group; however, CFSD continues to make efforts to engage and participate in national discussions regarding recruitment and retention of families. CFSD efforts to explore other engagement efforts will be provided in the APSRs.

RFS staff will continue to practice engaging all individuals directly, who are inquiring about foster care. It is the hope that this practice will increase the number of individuals moving from inquiry to application, as well as help families self-select out of the process if foster care is not the right option for them. RFS staff will continue to encourage families to complete the NTDC self-assessment to gain understanding of their strengths and needs regarding being a foster parent. The self-assessment is also available on the website for families who are not ready to initiate inquiry, as well as for families who are already licensed and want to gauge their current skillset.

CFSD will continue to focus on ways to enhance recruitment of families who can serve Native American youth.

- LB staff will continue to engage with Tribal Social Service agencies, as well as members of the Urban Indian communities (such as the Urban Indian Health programs in 4 of the 6 regions in Montana), to identify placement resources for Native American youth in care. The ongoing efforts will ensure regular and specific contact with Tribal licensing staff through individual visits to Tribal social services agencies by LB staff. LB staff in region III (South Central Montana) and in region V (Western Montana) will continue to have regular contact with members of the ICWA court staff in those areas.

- RFS staff will support the development of training specific to meeting the need for cultural connections and understanding of Native American youth placed in non-native homes, while continuing to work to increase the likelihood children are placed in ICWA compliant homes. Because ICWA compliance includes placement with kin (whether they are Tribal members or not) the work to identify kin resources will also support the goal of meeting these standards. Cultural competency training will continue to be included in the required online curriculum, Keeping Children Safe (KCS CORE) that all families complete in their first year of licensure. CFSD will continue to provide training opportunities and identify support and resources for families parenting youth from these communities.

CFSD will continue to focus on ways to enhance recruitment of families who can serve children with serious emotional disturbances, and those previously directed to congregate care. CFSD will continue to support trainings that support providers to establish environments that supports the individualized child's needs placed in in their home. This also includes that providers will help facilitate the child's access to age or developmentally appropriate resources, services, and activities that support their health and well-being.

CFSD will continue the use of the NTDC self-assessment tool and SAFE compatibility guide for inquiring and currently licensed families to help them self-assess their capacity to provide foster care, as well as meet the needs of these specific children.

CFSD will continue to use the comprehensive request for criminal background checks that allows for the use of results for emergency placement with kinship providers, as well as approval for foster care and guardianship/adoption for kin and foster care and adoption for non-relative caregivers. CFSD will continue the use of livescan and card scan machines to increase timeliness for receipt of background checks, which can further improve timeliness to licensure. CFSD will complete ongoing assessment of the location of card scan machines to identify areas that would be best served by those machines (areas with high rates of hand/ink printed cards).

- As of June of 2025, CFSD has a card scan machine in each region.

CFSD will continue the contract with licensed CPAs to assist CFSD in completing non-relative home studies to decrease timelines to licensure and increase the number of non-relative placement options available. This process allows for CPA to complete SAFE studies used by CFSD for non-kinship families while CFSD maintains responsibility for the family for licensure and placement. Efforts to streamline and better manage the process through more targeted communication and tracking will be enhanced to eliminate barriers to continuing the process and completion of studies. The increase in the number of non-relative homes supports the need for placement of children who have no available kin options and increases potential permanency options and potentially decreases disruptions.

CFSD will continue collaboration with the CPA to allow permanency for children who are placed with therapeutically licensed families. Regular contact will continue between LB staff and CPA staff. LB staff will continue to collaborate with CPA to provide the adoption and guardianship assessment process for the one CPA who is not also licensed as an adoption agency. This allows children, when appropriate, to remain with therapeutically trained and supported families to achieve permanency.

CFSD will continue the process that allows CFSD licensed kinship resource families to apply to become licensed for the placement of non-relative children, using the SAFE update process. This also includes for CFSD and CPA licensed families to transfer licenses between programs, using the same SAFE update process. This ability to transfer within CPA and CFSD programs is based on ensuring that families have the level of support necessary to maintain a child in their home. This ability to move to a higher level of care while not having to move from their foster home, decreases the possibility of disruption, which in turn decreases timelines to permanency.

CFSD will also maintain the review of the children in care for twelve months or longer in each region. This review identifies barriers to permanency and provides an opportunity to identify potential permanency planning opportunities. The review process is facilitated by RFSS in quarterly timeframes. The LB chief will also continue quarterly meetings with the Permanency Planning Specialists and Child Welfare Manager (CWM)s to review children with no identified permanency option and review follow-up options regarding referrals to programs focused on recruiting permanency options (Child Bridge, WWK, Adopt US Kids).

The LB chief will also continue quarterly meetings with WWK national teams and Child Bridge staff to review current children on their referral caseload, as well as discuss challenges or concerns regarding referrals and communication and efforts toward permanency.



CFSD RFS staff will continue to collaborate with Tribal licensing staff on approvals for resource families for adoption and guardianship when Tribal programs do not have the ability to do so (due to Tribal codes or policies). RFS staff will also continue to collaborate with the IV-E unit staff to provide technical assistance to Tribal staff on the Montana Family Safety Information System (MFSIS) and Child Adult Protective System (CAPS) and will do the same when the new Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) is developed.

The completion of CFSDs CCWIS will create greater opportunity for data gathering regarding the reason for individual inquiries, data regarding the children in care, and other information that will be beneficial in developing ongoing recruitment plans.

## **PROVIDER TRAINING**

CFSD will maintain their current licensing training process outlined below for kinship and non-relative caregivers, using the new/revised curriculum.

CFSD will also continue efforts to identify other training opportunities for resource families and identify new or creative ways to share the information about the availability of the training beyond the current use of the Listserv and email notices directly from staff. Two regions are developing newsletters to use in engaging and informing resource families. Staff will assess the response to the newsletters and use that information to consider expanding to other regions.

### **Initial Training for Resource Families**

All families are encouraged at inquiry or application to complete the NTDC self-assessment at the beginning of their foster care learning journey. The NTDC Self-Assessment survey provides prospective foster, kinship or adoptive parents with the opportunity to learn more about themselves while considering the characteristics and competencies that are important when parenting children who have experienced trauma, separation, and loss. The self-assessment is not reviewed by the RFS but is a tool to assist families in determining if foster care, adoption or kinship care is right for them. The use of the self-assessment came as part of the engagement with the NTDC system and the efforts to help families understand the role of resource families in the child welfare system.

### **Keeping Children Safe (KCS) Training**

All resource parents (youth foster, kinship, adoptive) wanting to be licensed are required to complete eight hours of initial virtual training, designed to adequately support and prepare resource families to meet the needs of children in their care; aligning with CFSD's primary goals of safety, wellbeing and permanency. Families cannot move forward in the licensing process without completion of the initial training. There is not a set time frame to complete the training, but paperwork completed for licensing is only valid for a twelve-month period, so at a minimum, training must be completed within twelve months of applying and before a full license can be issued. The initial KCS training (eight-hour pre-service training) consists of:

1. KCS is live virtual training presented by the RFS staff (who also complete the licensing home studies and support the licensed resource families). KCS is provided three times per month on varying days and has the opportunity for additional scheduling to meet the needs of families who have applied, or those kinship families with placements.
2. KCS is based on the NTDC, who used research and input from experts, families who have experience with fostering or adopting children, and former foster and adoptive youth. The topics chosen to focus on are the understanding of trauma and the development of trauma-informed parenting skills, as well as the development of understanding of fostering, reunification and the legal system. CFSD began using the new curriculum in October of 2023. The update came because of input from field staff, families, and the RFS requesting a greater focus on trauma and the importance of reunification and the role of resource families in the child welfare system.
3. KCS is the continuation of the learning process (started with the self-assessment) for resource families. CFSD's intention is to ensure that resource families have a foundational understanding of trauma and its impact on the children they will be caring for. The training also prepares the framework for families to understand the child welfare system, including the key principle that reunification is a priority of child welfare and CFSD.

4. KCS training is a standardized and structured framework of best practices in caring for children who have experienced abuse or neglect. This training includes an orientation to resource parenting and content on child abuse and neglect; the impact of abuse on development; attachment, grief, and loss; discipline and stress management; licensing and medical policies; adoption and permanency; reasonable and prudent parenting; and special considerations related to culture with a focus on American Indian children and families' rights (Indian Child Welfare Act). KCS training encompasses the following:
  - a. Understand your roles and responsibilities of resource parenting.
  - b. Assess the impact parenting may have on your family.
  - c. Understand CFSD's role and responsibility in keeping children safe.
  - d. Begin to understand the impact trauma has on children/trauma-informed parenting.
  - e. Understand the foster home licensing process.

Information regarding ongoing training opportunities, as listed in a sub-section below, are provided to each family completing KCS, including links to [parentingmontana.org](http://parentingmontana.org), University of Montana Center for Children Families and Workforce Development (UM-CCFWD) and the CFSD site which lists a myriad of other training resources. In addition, CFSD continues to share ongoing training opportunities through the resource parent Listserv, or individual emails through their assigned RFS, that are based on resources locally, statewide, and nationally.

### **Core – Keeping Children Safe Training (Core-KCS)**

Once families complete their initial KCS training, they are then referred to complete Core-KCS training, which must be completed within their first year for their license to be renewed, unless an exception is granted. The additional Core-KCS training (ten-hours self-paced e-learning training) consists of the following:

1. The Core-KCS online training modules allow learners to complete work on their own schedule, within a certain time frame. The training seeks to improve self-efficacy (self-belief), knowledge, and skills of resource parents to provide developmentally and culturally appropriate care that addresses the safety, permanency, and well-being needs of children placed in their care.
2. The Core-KCS training was developed in collaboration with the UM-CCFWD and is hosted on their e-learning site (previously Moodle, now Canvas). The curriculum builds on the information presented in the initial KCS training and is self-paced online learning. UM-CCFWD maintains the site, collaborates with CFSD on the curriculum, and provides all technical assistance for the training platform. In 2022, the online model was significantly revamped to include updated training content and voices of individuals with lived experiences (current and past resource families and youth who aged out of foster care), including the members of the CVMC.
3. Core-KCS training encompasses:
  - a. Positive Discipline
  - b. Trauma
  - c. Child and Youth Development
  - d. Grief and Loss
  - e. Culture
  - f. Legal Process
  - g. Reasonable and Prudent Parenting

### **Exceptions to KCS or Core-KCS Training**

KCS is required to be completed prior to licensure and Core-KCS is required to be completed within the first year of licensure, before renewal can be approved. An exception to the requirement to complete either of these can be granted to waive training requirements. Over the past three years, there have been nine exceptions to the training requirement. The exception process is initiated at the field level and based on assessment of the family's understanding of child welfare and trauma, parenting experience, and other factors RFSs feel impact the request for exception. The family's RFS completes a written request on the exception form and submits it to the supervisor. Supervisors review the information and then approve or deny, completing the exception form. The exception is noted in provider case notes and documented in their home study.

Training exceptions have been used on a limited basis in Montana, as there are very few families, including kinship, that understand the trauma that children experience, or have experience parenting a child in the child welfare system. Even though kinship families are often experienced in parenting children, they are not often experienced parenting children with the level of trauma displayed by children in foster care. Training exceptions have been granted for the initial KCS, CORE KCS, and CLF.

## **Annual Ongoing Training for Resource Families**

Resource families are required to complete fifteen hours of training to be approved for renewal after the first year (which requires completion of CORE KCS). RFS staff review training needs and completion at each of the six-month check-ins that begin as soon as a family is licensed. This “check-in” supports connecting families with training appropriate to their needs and the children in the home, as well as identifies barriers or delays in the family completing training in the required timeframe. All families report their ongoing training on their renewal application, and the hours and information are reviewed by the RFS and supervisor prior to approval of their renewal.

Annual training can be in the form of workshops, self-study courses, audio or video cassettes, books, web training or any other means by which the resource parent has the opportunity to gain further understanding of the issues of child maltreatment, placement and permanency or developing understanding of the needs of children placed in the home and the best methods to meet those needs and also includes participation in therapy or services for the child. Resource parents may claim hour for hour for any training they participated in, except for reading books. Resource parents may claim between one and four hours of training per book depending on subject and size.

Training must be approved by the department and may include training on the following topics:

- a. Separation and Grieving
- b. Loss and Attachment
- c. Alternatives To Physical Discipline and an Explanation of the Department's Policy on Physical Discipline
- d. Positive Parenting Techniques
- e. The Department's and Foster Parents' Roles and Responsibilities
- f. Biological Family Rights and Responsibilities
- g. How and Why Children Come into Foster Care
- h. Types and Behaviors of Children in Foster Care
- i. Placement Process
- j. Confidentiality
- k. Sexual Abuse
- l. Drugs and Alcohol
- m. Interpersonal Communications
- n. Foster Parent Insurance
- o. Other Topics Approved by the Department

An exception to the required fifteen hours of annual training must be in writing and approved prior to a license being renewed. If the foster parents fail to obtain the required training hours, the license will be restricted to the care of the children in the home at the time until such time as the required training hours have been successfully completed; or (b) If there are no children in the foster home, the license will be deemed automatically suspended from accepting placement until such time as the required training hours have been successfully completed. Families are notified at the time of renewal if they are restricted to the children currently in their home or restricted from accepting placement.

RFS staff follow up with families who have not completed the required training to provide opportunities, information and support to successfully achieve the requirement. They monitor and engage with the family until the training hour requirements are met. Resource families' annual training completion is documented in CSFDs Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).

There is no current data by region or otherwise that pertains to the number of families that have not completed their training in the required timeframe due to limitations of the current data system.

## **Adoption Permanency Training - Creating a Lifelong Family (CLF) Training**

Resource families who are moving to adoption are additionally required to complete six hours of permanency training through CFSD's "Creating a Lifelong Family" training. CFSD recently updated the curriculum for this module and used curricula developed by the Harmony Family Center's Adoption Support and Preservation Program in collaboration with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services. The curriculum integrates components from the NTDC adoption training, focusing on trauma and permanency.

- Motivations and expectations in the adoption and guardianship process
- Common fears and concerns of adoptive and guardianship parents
- Understanding yourself in the adoptive and guardianship process

- Understanding common triggers for parents and children
- Attachment and attunement for the adopted or guardianship child
- Understanding a child's trauma and survival behaviors
- Significance of Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Impact of trauma and neglect on brain development
- Attachment parenting
- Avoiding ruptures in the attachment relationship
- Enhancing family communication skills
- Increasing family fun and internal support

Resource families' CLF training completion is documented by CFSD staff using the current Case Management system. CLF training hours can be counted toward a family's renewal training requirements.

Completion of the CLF curriculum is required before approval will be granted for an adoption to finalize, unless an exception has been granted – there is not a specific timeframe beyond that. All licensed families are referred to CLF and can complete it even if they are not preparing to finalize an adoption, but the timeframe requirement is specific to finalizing an adoption for mandatory completion.

The Licensing Bureau Chief verifies the completion of the CLF curriculum through review of the data management system training record for families (approval by the RFS and RFSS are sent via alerts to the LBC). After the training is verified, a written approval is created that is included in the adoption packet submitted for finalization.

## Ongoing Resources and Training Opportunities for Resource Families

### Parenting Montana

In 2021, Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) Addictive and Mental Health Disorders Division (AMHDD) also created a specific learning page for resource families on their Parenting Montana website: [Parenting Montana Hyperlink](#). The information on the Parenting Montana site was derived from their 2019 survey responses of resource families. While the site provides educational topics for parents of all demographics, they also specifically added the following sections for resource families:

1. Deciding to Become a Foster Parent
2. Preparing for a Child in Foster Care
3. The First Twenty-four hours, Week, and Six Weeks of a Child in Foster Care Joining Your Family

### CFSD Lunch and Learn

In 2024, CFSD provided the Lunch and Learn agency-directed training. The topics were based on information provided on resource family renewal applications and from a survey completed through the CVMC. The training was provided in a lunch period format, and all were virtual with many having an in-person option. Notice was provided through the *Foster Care Parent Listserv* as well as individual notices from their assigned RFS. Notices were also sent to Tribal and therapeutic licensing staff.

- As of June 2025, Lunch and Learn trainings were dissolved due to the low participation, and feedback provided to CFSD outlined in the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Round 4 Statewide Assessment submitted to CB in June of 2025.

### Additional Training Topics

Trainings are made available to resource families across Montana via the *Foster Care Parent Listserv*. Families are added by their workers when they are licensed and can unsubscribe or request to be removed as they choose. The system allows tracking of the number of emails sent and the data regarding the number of times the email was opened. The trainings applicable to SFYs will be provided in the APSR reports each year.

## **Child Placing Agency Training Requirements (Initial and Ongoing)**

CFSD licenses CPA who oversee Therapeutic Foster Care Providers (TFC-P). CFSD also license CPAs who oversee adoption placements. Each CPA license is renewed annually.

- TFC-P are licensed through CPAs who are approved by CFSD Licensing Bureau. When a CPA is also licensed to complete adoption placements, their licenses are approved by both the Licensing Bureau, and the CPA Licensing Program Manager.

### **CPA - TFC-P**

TFC-P families' initial application and renewal packets are completed by the approved CPAs licensing staff, reviewed by the CPAs licensing program managers and supervisors, and then submitted to CFSD to request a license be approved. CFSD Licensing Bureau is responsible for all submissions for TFC-P licensing. An assigned RFSS reviews the list and verifies the attached documentation before issuing the license, which includes the initial training hours. The packets contain the same checklists used by CFSD RFS staff, listing the required licensing documents for initial and renewal of a license.

Each year thereafter, TFC-P must complete a total of thirty hours of annual training, including a minimum of fifteen hours of training directly related to: the special needs of youth with emotional disturbances receiving treatment for their emotional disturbance in a treatment family environment, and the use of nonphysical methods of controlling youth to assure the safety and protection of the youth and others.

- Each TFC-P in a two-parent foster home must complete at least five hours of training directly related to special needs of youth in therapeutic care and nonphysical methods of controlling behavior or specialized treatment training to offer therapeutic foster care in their home.

### **CPA – Adoptions Placement**

CFSD CPA Licensing Program Manager is responsible for all submissions for Adoption Placement CPA licensing. The CPA Licensing Program Manager reviews the application, verifies the attached documentation before issuing the license, which includes the initial training hours.

The CPAs have their own curriculum for training, which complies with the administrative rules regarding training.

For renewals, the CPA Licensing Program Manager for CFSD review personnel records, and a percentage of foster home records and treatment service records for youth, per ARM. The renewal includes paper and electronic record reviews and staff interviews.

## **Youth Congregate Care Facility Training Requirements**

In Montana, the DPHHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) is responsible for licensing all 'facilities' that foster youth may be placed in (shelter, group, Qualified Residential Program (QRTP) / Therapeutic Group Home (TGH), and Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTF).

During 2021, the OIG partnered with CFSD to ensure that their standardized procedures for licensing would meet Title IV-E requirements for QRTP placements in Montana. CFSD refers to these QRTP licensed placements as TGH.

Licensed facilities, in addition to the application for licensure, are required to provide the OIG health statements, release of information, staff rosters, and staff background checks (including fingerprints).

All staff hired in licensed facilities are required to complete a minimum of twenty-four hours of initial Orientation Training. Orientation Training shall be completed and documented before the hired staff person may count in the "youth to awake staff" ratio as specified below:

- Youth Care Facility, ARM 37.97.141 [ARM 37.97.141 Hyperlink](#)
- Therapeutic Group Home, ARM 37.97.903 [ARM 37.97.903 Hyperlink](#).

The Orientation Training consists of the following minimum requirements per ARM 37.97.142 [ARM 37.97.142 Hyperlink](#):

- Overview of the Youth Care Facility policies, procedures, organization, and services.
- Mandatory child abuse reporting laws.
- Behavioral management techniques.
- Fire safety, including emergency evacuation routes.
- Confidentiality.
- Suicide prevention.
- Emergency medical procedures.
- Report writing, including the development and maintenance of logs and journals.
- Youth rights, as outlined in ARM 37.97.159 [ARM 37.97.159 Hyperlink](#).
- Hours required for on-the-job training.
- Trauma Informed Care - *required of PRTF, QRTP and TGH staff only.*

In addition, all 'direct care staff' within six months of hire are required to complete the following certification training in which the facilities must be maintained, and update training courses and certificates as required:

- Use of de-escalation training and methods of managing youth as described in the provider's policies and ARM 37.97.172 [ARM 37.97.172 Hyperlink](#).
- First Aid and CPR certification

In addition to the initial training, all licensed facility staff are required to complete annually a minimum of twenty hours of ongoing training to improve proficiency in their knowledge and skills, as appropriate, for the level of care they are providing.

The training required addresses the skills and knowledge needed by staff to carry out their duties in caring for all youth placed in a licensed facility, regardless of parental custody. The OIG ensures Initial Orientation Training, 'Direct Care Staff Six-Month Training,' and Annual Ongoing Training are met and tracked for all staff at each licensed facility by conducting a mandatory annual survey that reviews if mandatory records for a certain percentage of youth are available, staffing ratios, and employee files, staff training that includes certain hours and topics required for orientation and additional hours of ongoing training, as well as facility quality and maintenance. In addition to the survey, a training record review is completed with human resources, and feedback is gathered through staff interviews. OIG reported to CFSD that all training has been accounted for and tracked, and all current licensed facilities are in compliance with licensing standards and training requirements for their staff.