



CLARK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY SERVICES

Foster Parent Champion Program

Making Caregivers' Lives Easier

DFSFPC@ClarkCountyNV.gov (702) 455-1149

Thank you for your interest in learning more about the Clark County Department of Family Services Foster Parent Champion Program. We have seen a positive impact in our child welfare system from the work that has been accomplished by this team and we are happy to share our success, processes and our challenges with you.

On the disc provided, you will find a variety of items that we have used to help move the program forward. These represent a living document, in that they are constantly changing to meet the ongoing needs of our Department and the families in our community. As is common with the child welfare system, it seems that we learn something new every day! Our team adapts the best parts of what we learn and puts them into our daily practices.

If you have any questions about the program or would like to provide us with some feedback or suggestions on areas where we can improve, please feel free to contact us either via email or at the phone numbers below:

Shannon Rooney
Clark County Department of Family Services
Special Projects Unit Supervisor
SRooney@ClarkCountyNV.gov
(702) 455-7416

Brenda Herbstman
Clark County Department of Family Services
Special Projects Unit Senior Family Services Specialist
HerbstmB@ClarkCountyNV.gov
(702) 455-4647





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1. Foster Parent Champion Positions

The Foster Parent Champion Program was originally staffed by volunteers and was not a funded program. It was part of a Federal PIP, but did not have funding at that time. Recommendations from the Quality Parenting Initiative Workgroups furthered the development of this program and Departmental funding solidified the sustainability of the Foster Parent Champion Program. As the program matured and developed, several staffing patterns emerged. The most successful has been the utilization of currently licensed caregivers that have at least twelve months of fostering experience. Each caregiver works approximately 20 hours per week and is paid through the Department based on the number of hours worked. As each caregiver has multiple children in their home, it is essential that flexibility is offered to them in regards to scheduling work hours and allowing for adjustments in schedules as they learn of court dates, home inspections and other expectations of licensed caregivers.

Each current Foster Parent Champion went through a rigorous evaluation process prior to being offered a position within the unit. The hiring process was as follows:

- a. Position announcement was published in the *Caregiver Courier*, a monthly newsletter for foster parents, and an email was sent out to all licensed caregivers. Applicants were asked to submit logistical information about their foster care experience and respond to scenarios.
- b. All applicants were evaluated regarding their experience as a quality foster parent including length of time and number of children they had cared for, any investigations they had, any previous disruptions, and their interactions with Department staff. In some instances, additional questions were sent to licensing workers and case managers for recommendations on applicants.
- c. Top applicants were selected to interview.
- d. Selection was made based on the strength of the applicant along with their area of expertise and experience.
- e. Upon hiring, each Champion was provided with approximately two full weeks of classroom training as well as on-the-job training. Confidentiality and ethical behavior was a big part of the discussions on the first day of training. The Champions have full access to the SACWIS system and understand the importance of confidentiality and maintaining their dual role as a staff person and a foster parent. Clear boundaries were discussed and set regarding interactions with their own personal case managers and managing case loads of personal friends.



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2. Procedures Manual

It is imperative that all Champions share common philosophies about foster care and that their goals align with the Department's beliefs. A Procedures Manual was developed so that each member of the Champion team can send a consistent message about the work they do to caregivers, case managers and community partners. Procedures can be amended at any time, depending on changes within the Department and these amendments are discussed at weekly unit meetings. Additionally, when new tasks are assigned to the Foster Parent Champion Program, a systematic approach is taken to ensure that tasks are completed in a timely manner and that tasks are prioritized accordingly.

Documentation of the efforts being done and the communication between Champions and caregivers or case managers is extremely important and needs to be completed in a timely manner. For this reason, several templates are part of the Procedures Manual so that Champions have a template of the different communications that they can customize. The utilization of the templates allows for additional consistency and brand messaging. The Champions also have found that templates save them the time needed to recreate documents from scratch.

3. Presentations to Case Managers and other Departmental Staff

Once the Champion Program was up and running, it was important to begin explaining what the Program mission and goals were, as well as how case managers could request assistance for their caregivers. During these presentations, the limitations of the Foster Parent Champion Program were shared so that case managers are sending appropriate referrals to the Program and directing their efforts for other issues to the correct resource.

4. Opportunities for Improvement

As the Foster Parent Champion Program matures, there are benchmarks that have been set to measure the success of the program. These include stabilization of placements, reduction in disruptions, retention of quality caregivers, a reduction in complaints and an increase in positive communication between case managers and caregivers. We are in the early stages of data collection in these areas. The Foster Parent Champion Feedback Survey and the Closed Homes Survey are two tools being used for data collection. Quality Parenting Initiative Workgroups are also in the development stage of 360 Evaluations where caregivers will have the opportunity to provide feedback on case managers and case managers will have the opportunity to provide feedback on caregivers. Children in care will also have the opportunity to provide feedback on the caregivers.