

# TFCO for Adolescents

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Treatment Foster Care Oregon for Adolescents

## Team Lead Manual

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## Overview of the TFCO Treatment Team

The roles of the treatment team members were developed over time and refined through the experiences of the TFCO program developers. This approach to staffing is considered a key element to the program's success. It enables staff to focus intensively on the needs of the youth and adults involved in treatment, as well as facilitate a consistent approach towards treatment.

### Foster Parents

The foster parents' primary role is to implement the youth's program and encourage and support the youth through the use of a daily behavior management system (i.e., the daily incentive system). Their support of the youth and their ability to stay on top of the day-to-day implementation are cornerstones of the program. They are the eyes and ears of the program and maintain close communication with the Team Lead. They help the Team Lead identify target behaviors and formulate treatment plans. All of this is done while providing a warm and nurturing environment for the youth.

### Youth Therapist

Youth therapists serve as the youth's advocate and support person. They also address the clinical needs in weekly individual therapy sessions. They introduce a problem-solving approach to help the youth adjust to new situations and practice the skills needed to relate successfully to adults and peers. They work with youth to develop appropriate problem solving skills and teach alternatives to problem behavior. Youth therapists work closely with the Team Lead and the rest of the treatment team by helping to identify specific behavior problems and skill deficits.

### Family Therapist

Family therapists work with the youth's family or long-term family to help prepare for the youth's return home. They work with family members to teach effective parenting and communication strategies. They work closely with the Team Lead and the rest of the treatment team to structure home visits for the youth and family, supporting the use of appropriate parenting strategies during those visits.

### Skills Coaches

Skills coaches teach youth prosocial behavior and problem-solving skills through one-on-one interaction and skills practice in the community. They provide information to other treatment team members about youths' behavior in community settings. Skills coaches model and shape behavior by engaging youth in appropriate activities in the community. Their activities are directed by the Team Lead and are based on the interests of the youth and the foster parents' input.

### PDR Caller

The PDR caller telephones the foster parents each weekday to go over a checklist of behaviors called the Parent Daily Report (PDR). They communicate with the Team Lead about the information on the PDR.

### Foster Parent Recruiter

This person is responsible for finding and screening foster parents.

### Foster Parent Trainer

The first group of foster parents is trained by TFC, Inc., staff. Subsequent trainings are conducted by the foster parent trainer and the Team Lead.

The roles of PDR Caller, Foster Parent Recruiter, and Foster Parent Trainer are often combined.

### Referring Agency

Depending on the situation, the referring agency may be mental health, child welfare, the juvenile court, or parole/probation. After referring the youth for placement, the referring agency usually requires periodic updates on the youth's progress. The Team Lead is responsible for interaction with the agency's case supervisor and compliance with the agency's conditions.

### How do foster parents interact with the treatment team?

Because of the number of people involved in the treatment team, it would be overwhelming to foster parents to have to regularly interact with all of the members of the treatment team. The Team Lead is the go-to person for the foster parents – during weekly group meetings and on the telephone, as needed, and is available to the foster parents 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to help with problems. When foster parents encounter a significant problem with the youth, the Team Lead either steps in to handle it for the foster parents or guides them through the situation.

## Overview of the Team Lead's Role

If we think of the treatment team as an orchestra, then Team Lead is the conductor. The conductor leads the musicians, directing the group as a whole and each section individually (strings, woodwinds, etc.) as their parts are highlighted. The conductor needs to understand the capability of each section and how to maximize the individual contribution each section makes to the overall performance. If the separate instruments and sections play their parts masterfully and are integrated together in a skillful manner, the result will be an outstanding performance.

### Manages the Youth's Treatment Plan and Staff

The Team Lead plans and oversees the youth's treatment and supervises the staff involved in implementing the treatment plan as well as decision making and program changes. Their job is to coordinate and integrate information from all parties participating in the treatment (including staff) into the treatment plan, and uses PDR to monitor the youth's daily progress.

Additionally, the Team Lead facilitates positive outcomes for youth and their biological families by providing clear supervision to the treatment team. Each team member's role is clearly defined and there is little overlap of responsibilities. Having a staff member focused on each individual and/or a particular environment ensures that everyone has a voice in the treatment process and prevents any one person from being "caught in the middle."

### Foster Parent Advocate

In addition to supervising the case, the Team Lead also serves as the primary advocate for the foster parents. They work closely with the foster parents, supporting them in the day-to-day implementation of the program, serving as the information "clearinghouse," and filtering and disseminating information to them.

### Role Integration of the Treatment Team

The Team Lead's ability to **integrate or layer** these separate roles to implement a treatment plan is critical to the success of this staffing design.

**Scenario: A youth is argumentative when receiving feedback from the foster parent.**

First layer of staff involvement: The Team Lead adds "following directions without comment" to the youth's point card.

Second layer of staff involvement: The individual therapist works with the youth to practice this skill.

**Scenario: The family therapist encounters resistance from the bio/adoptive family.**

The family therapist gives the bio/adoptive family homework assignments to practice behavior management strategies, and they resist or don't complete the assignments.

Response: The Team Lead assumes an authoritative role and encourages the parents to complete the assignments. Layering or integrating the efforts of the Team Lead and family therapist allows the therapist to be supportive of the parents and puts their relationship in a good position to remain productive.

The Team Lead fills five key roles for the TFCO Team:

### Team Leader

- Supervise and monitor TFCO staff
- Manage intake and referral matching process
- Develop treatment goals
- Crisis management/in the moment “real-time” coaching

### Advocate

- Go-to person for foster parents
- Run foster parent meetings
- Keep foster parent perspective front and center
- On-call and available

### Parent Daily Report Manager

- Use PDR data in the treatment plan
- Supervise PDR caller

### Agency Liaison Service Coordinator

- Works with child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health, schools
- Psychiatrist
- Youth employment or restitution

### Placement and Transition Coordinator

- Pre-placement interview with youth and match youth and families
- Coordinate home visits
- Provide the long-term family with progress reports, review meetings, and plan aftercare

## Foster Parent Advocacy and Support

Foster parents are considered to be professionals who work with the Team Lead to overcome barriers to successful treatment of the youth and essential team members. Foster parents' unique contribution to the team is their front-line experience dealing with the youth day-by-day. They should be encouraged to provide input and make suggestions about the youth's daily program and treatment plan.

Ongoing consultation from the Team Lead to the foster parents is a key to the success of the TFCO model. Foster parent training provides a solid foundation to build on, but it is through ongoing consultation with the Team Lead that foster parents become competent and skilled.

On-the-job training and support is the best way to motivate foster parents to deal with the range of problem behaviors they experience. Without ongoing consultation, it is natural for parents to slip toward nonproductive ways of responding to difficult youth behavior. For example, when a youth is sulking or noncompliant, an adult's natural reaction could include anger and irritability or lecturing. These reactions can set off a chain of events that escalate the youth's problem behavior, which then results in more irritability and anger from the adult.

Without intervention, it is common to get into a negative pattern of exchanging misbehavior and irritation back and forth over time. However, frequent interaction with the Team Lead puts foster parents in a better position to avoid that pattern. The Team Lead helps them use the youth's sulking or noncompliance as an opportunity to teach and reinforce more acceptable behavior — pleasantly following directions. Through frequent contact with the foster parents, the Team Lead can guide them into taking points for sulkiness rather than reacting to it, and redirect them to watching for instances of youth compliance or a pleasant demeanor to reinforce.

### **Don't Take it Personally**

The foster parent makes David his favorite meal. And David proceeds to complain throughout dinner that his mom is a much better cook.

When the foster parent talks about this with the Team Lead, the Team Lead empathizes that it is hard to do something special and have it rejected.

#### Team Lead:

"It's really difficult when you do something special for someone and they're not appreciative. It's probably related to David's loyalty to his mother, not your cooking. But it's not okay to be rude to someone who just made you dinner. How about taking some points for his rude behavior?"

## Intermediary with the Treatment Team

As an intermediary for the foster parents, all information and input from other team members to the foster parents goes through the Team Lead. They are responsible for integrating input from the therapists, skills coach, parole/probation officer, psychiatrist, and foster parents into the youth's treatment plan.

It is common for therapists and foster parents to have conflicting goals and agendas. They may prioritize issues differently based on their unique perspectives. The Team Lead should have the ability to reframe or translate the therapists' suggestions to

make them more acceptable to the foster parents or easier to implement. It may also be necessary to remind the therapists about the everyday concerns of the foster family. The Team Lead works to build a sense of mutual respect between the therapists and foster parents.

### **Guiding the Treatment Team**

The therapist informs the Team Lead that Alice feels that the foster family excludes her from family activities. The therapist wants to encourage the foster family to make a little more effort to include Alice in their family activities.

The Team Lead agrees that Alice does not take part in family activities. In fact, the foster parents have reported that she tends to isolate herself in her room.

**Response:** The Team Lead directs the therapist to work with Alice on role-plays that give Alice practice interacting with new people. The Team Lead also directs the foster parents to give Alice bonus points when she interacts in family activities in a positive way.



Always consider a foster family's schedule when setting up appointments and activities. Therapy sessions, skills coach appointments, etc., should cause as little disruption to the foster family's routine as possible.

## **Intermediary with the Family**

The Team Lead also acts as intermediary between the foster parents and the youth's family, preventing direct contact between the two families. Avoiding contact between the two families may seem counterintuitive, but it prevents the youth from manipulating the adults and keeps loyalty issues from developing or escalating. It will also prevent the youth from having to take sides between the two families.

As an intermediary, the Team Lead must treat individual preferences with respect and impartiality, realizing that information can be distorted or manipulated in exchanges. For example, it is common for youth to give their biological families information that provokes a negative reaction toward the program. Likewise, they might misinform foster parents about events that occurred during a home visit. The Team Lead's job is to clear up any misunderstandings. To do this effectively, a good relationship is needed with all of the parties.

## **Home Visits**

All arrangements for home visits are made through the Team Lead. Visits need to be coordinated with the bio/adoptive family and foster parents and, if required, approved by the referring agency supervisor (e.g., caseworker, parole or probation officer). The Team Lead makes preliminary arrangements and confirms them with all parties. While this may seem complicated, it prevents communication problems and misunderstandings. Pick-up and drop-off for home visits should occur at the program office or a neutral location, thus avoiding the long-term family going to the foster family's home.



## Conducting Foster Parent Meetings

During weekly group meetings with the foster parents, the Team Lead guides implementation of the youth's daily program. Although the Team Lead has been in regular contact with the foster parents throughout the week, the foster parent meeting is an opportunity to:

- Highlight successes
- Organize treatment, and
- Address youth behaviors

Foster parents report on youths' behavior at home and school during the week and on their progress and problems. The Team Lead can use relevant information about youths' behavior from program staff to supplement the foster parent interventions. Based on this information, the point system can be revised accordingly.

### **Coordinating the Youth's Program**

The skills coach reports to the Team Lead that the youth, Tom, lacks basic social skills in the community setting. He says that when clerks or cashiers talk to Tom, he doesn't look at them, and rarely responds verbally.

The foster parent has noticed this too, but reports that in the home setting it has not been targeted.

In the foster parent meeting, the Team Lead asks the foster parents to pay particular attention to generally polite behaviors (making eye contact, saying please and thank you, etc.) and give extra points for being polite at home. The skills coach will work on this with Tom in the community.

## How to Provide Feedback to Foster Parents

As foster parents report on their youth and the events of the week, it is helpful to have a set of questions in mind that, when answered, will provide the information needed to assess progress, give feedback, and make adjustments. Some information will already be available from the PDR, but it will help foster parents learn from each other's experiences if the Team Lead reviews the situation with the group. For each case it is helpful to ask questions that focus on observable behaviors (see examples at the end of this section).

## The Meetings Provide Support for Foster Parents

Another important element of these meetings is that they provide an opportunity for foster parents to support each other. In traditional families, friends and relatives often support each other in their roles as parents. In foster families, friends and relatives do not always understand the motivation for being a foster parent or the special demands of the job. Consequently, foster parents may feel a lack of support from the people around them. At the weekly meeting, foster parents easily relate to each other's experiences. When someone is having a problem with a youth, it is likely that another parent has been through the same thing. This sharing of experiences serves to

normalize their situations and helps them maintain their focus. They learn from each other and can help each other through difficult times.

### **Foster Parents Supporting Each Other**

Foster Parent 1: "Luke says yes when I ask him to do something, but if I don't keep my eye on him he just doesn't do it!"

Foster Parent 2: "Mitch used to do that too. It was very frustrating."

Foster Parent 1: "What did you do about it?"

Foster Parent 2: "When I quit talking to him about it and started taking points that affected his privileges afterwards...he started doing what he was asked! And then, I gave him bonus points when he did it the first time."

### **How to Run a Foster Parent Meeting**

The foster parent meeting is an important part of the TFCO program, and the Team Lead will want to do everything possible to help foster parents feel comfortable when participating. At this meeting, collect point sheets and school cards for each youth and check with foster parents to make sure that scheduled therapy appointments are convenient.

As leader of the meeting, the Team Lead is responsible for maintaining positive group process. To facilitate this:

- KEEP IT FUN!
- Be interested!
- Ask questions to get more information.
- Encourage foster-parent-to-foster-parent support
- Provide support versus teaching
- Follow the meeting structure

### **Foster Parent Meeting Structure**

- Gather information on each youth
- Gather point sheets and school cards from previous week to use in the day's discussion
- Ask questions to clarify and identify behaviors
- Reframe and problem-solve
- Discuss and demonstrate how to use points to address the identified behaviors
- Identify strengths
- Modify the point and level system, as needed
- Support: Is there anything else we can do for you?

## Suggestions for Conducting Foster Parent Meetings

*Based on the experiences of other Team Leads*

- **The meetings should be informal.** Make sure the meeting room is physically comfortable (chairs, temperature, lighting, etc.). Provide snacks and beverages and make access to them convenient. Encourage people to speak freely throughout the meeting. Try to find a comfortable balance that includes a sense of humor.
- **Spend time talking about every case, not just the ones that are problematic.** Avoid falling into the routine of the biggest problem getting the most attention. Not only does this work against the goal of focusing on the positive progress youths are making, it makes the meeting “heavy” and promotes a sense that progress isn’t being made. Only focusing on problems can be demoralizing for foster parents.
- **Discourage unproductive complaining.** There isn’t much time in these meetings to spend “venting.” Refocus someone heading in that direction to what is difficult and how the group can help deal with that difficulty.
- **Avoid confrontations during the meeting.** If there is a problem with the way one of the foster parents is handling something or there is something very sensitive going on, deal with it outside of the group. Use the group time to focus on foster parents’ strengths.
- **Use the experiences of the parents to teach the group what you want them to know.** When you know of a situation where parents successfully handled something difficult, ask them to tell the group about it. Use their experiences as illustrations of successful applications of the program. Not only does this serve to support the parent who has been successful, the other parents will relate better to each other’s experiences rather than hypothetical ones.
- **Acknowledge and reinforce the helpful and supportive contributions foster parents make.** Just as with program youth, it is important to notice and point out what foster parents are doing well and the effort required to work with youth in this program.
- **Be strategic and aware of the amount of time people talk or any unproductive routines that may develop.** If you have a foster parent who takes up more time than others, be thoughtful about when to ask questions and how to redirect back to the main group to include other’s thoughts. The first person to arrive at the meeting does not necessarily have to be the first person to talk. For example, it might be better to use a person who had a successful intervention the previous week to start the conversation off on a positive note.
- **As someone is talking, refer to the point sheets and the PDR for further information and clarification.** This acknowledges the effort put in by the foster parents and validates that this information is important. This also facilitates discussion about how to use the point sheets for feedback to the

youth. (Details about the point sheets and school cards are described in the Point and Level System Manual.)

## Questions to Ask During the Foster Parent Meeting

- **What went well this week?** What things seemed to motivate the youth to do well? What were the youth's positive behaviors? Did the youth have any special accomplishments? How did the foster parent reinforce the things that went well?
- **What behaviors came up this week?** What were the antecedents, what was going on before the behavior occurred? Are there things we can change in the events leading up to the behavior to prevent it from occurring again? What was the foster parent's response to the behavior? Do we need to follow up on this behavior or is it resolved?
- **Are things coming up in the next week that will pose a challenge to the youth?** What can we do to help him be successful with this challenge? Are there any situations coming up in the next week that we anticipate will be problematic? What can we do to prevent them?
- **Are any positive events anticipated this coming week? Is the youth about to reach any milestones?** What can we do to reinforce these events?

### Asking the Right Questions

**This:** *"Was he able to stay focused on homework?"*

**Not This:** *"What ADHD symptoms did you notice this week?"*

**This:** TL: *"What problems came up this week?"*

FP: *"He was really out of it this weekend."*

TL: *"What does he do when he is out of it?"*

TL: *"He just wasn't his usual spunky self. He seemed distracted, he didn't do his chore without being reminded three times, didn't finish his read and study without me prompting him several times, and was rude at dinner."*

TL: *"Was there anything unusual that occurred during the week, say at school or in his routines at home?" etc...*

**Not This:** TL: *"What problems came up this week?"*

FP: *"He was really out of it this weekend."*

TL: *"Oh, what did you do about that?" etc...*

## Questions for the Team Lead to Consider After the Meeting

- **How stressful are the youth's behaviors to the foster parents?** Would respite be useful at this time? Are there ways we can be more empathetic and supportive?
- **Are family visits fitting into the foster parents' schedule?**
- **Do the foster parents need help with any logistical arrangements or obstacles?** Home visits, appointments, phone calls, etc.

## On-Call Response and Crisis Intervention

The Team Lead is available to foster parents 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for on-call consultation and crisis intervention.

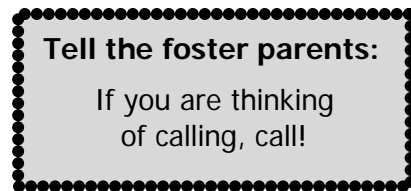
### When to Call

Foster parents should be encouraged to call anytime they have a question or concern about how to respond to a situation or want to confirm that they are on the right track. They should call to verify information coming directly from their youth (new appointment with skills coach, etc.), and they should call whenever something unexpected or troubling comes up.

Stress to the foster parents that they don't need to wait until a crisis develops to call the Team Lead. It's preferable to address smaller questions that, if left unattended, could result in larger concerns.

**Calling early before the youth's behavior escalates results in fewer crisis calls.**

Coach the foster parents to consider where the youth is when they make this call and to pick a time and place where the youth isn't listening. The youth also may call the Team Lead at any time and is encouraged to call if he is having a problem with the program.



### How to Deliver the News to the Youth

Depending on the action the Team Lead decides to take, it may be best for the Team Lead to talk directly to the youth and deliver unpopular decisions. During tense or crisis situations it is strategically good for foster parents to give the youth good news, and leave it to the Team Lead to give the youth anything they might perceive as bad news. This protects the foster parents' role as one of helping the youth succeed in the program. It can undermine them to be viewed as the "bad guy," so the Team Lead can deliver bad news and take responsibility for those decisions.

### Handling a Crisis Call

Because the nature of these calls varies so much, the Team Lead has to be prepared for just about anything. However, most of these calls will be about what action to take in response to the youth's problem behavior. In those situations, before advising the foster parents, find out:

- **What is happening now?**
  - Where is the youth now? (Does the foster parent have privacy?)
  - What are the youth's behaviors?
- **What does the foster parent want the youth to do?**
  - Does the foster parent want the Team Lead to intervene with the youth, such as set a limit over the phone?
  - Does the foster parent want advice on how to proceed?
- **Is this a situation where the Team Lead needs to go to the home or call the police?**



The goal of the call is to de-escalate the situation, not to solve the underlying problem.

If you have the foster parent on the phone, identify what can be done in the next 10 to 30 minutes to de-escalate the situation and leave them feeling supported. If you have the youth on the phone, avoid asking what happened. Instead, orient the youth toward calming down and focusing on the future. Distract and redirect the youth rather than engage in problem solving.

#### Keep Calls Short and Sweet

When the Team Lead receives a call, it is important to keep the duration of the call short, while supporting the foster parent. We want to understand what the foster parents want to have happen in their home in the moment. Problem solving takes time, and it is best to do this when people are less emotional (i.e., not during the call).

When the youth calls and the Team Lead needs to set a limit or give the youth bad news, it is best to do this quickly and in a matter of fact way before the youth has time to become reactive. Often, youth are expecting the Team Lead to lecture them about their problem behavior, and when the Team Lead does NOT do this, they are more likely to go with the direction they are given (see example below). Keeping calls short and sweet helps the foster parents and the youth move forward.

Problem solving can take place later on, such as in an hour, the next day, or in the next foster parent meeting. It can also be helpful to the foster parent to have the Team Lead debrief the situation later without the goal of solving the problem, just listening to the foster parent's thoughts and concerns.

## **Crisis Call Scenario**

### **Keep it short and sweet**

Foster Parent: *"I'm upset because Beth is in her room screaming and calling me names. I told her that she had to do her chore and her homework, and she couldn't watch TV until those were done. And she never does those things, she is always thinking that she can do whatever she wants."*

Team Lead: *"Do you think it would be helpful for me to talk to her?"*

Foster Parent: *"Yes, and I want you to tell her to do what she is supposed to do because she can't live here if she doesn't do what I tell her to do!"*

Team Lead: *"I think tonight I would like to get her to go to bed so things can calm down and you can have a pleasant night. Then we can talk tomorrow about handling the bigger problems."*

Foster Parent: *"Ok, but I can't live like this anymore."*

Team Lead: *"Tomorrow let's come up with a plan so we can deal with Beth's behavior."*

(Youth gets on the phone)

Team Lead: *"Hi Beth."*

Youth: *"They are always yelling at me, I can't live here anymore."*

Team Lead: *"Sounds like this has been a hard day. Would it be helpful for you to talk to your therapist tomorrow? I'll give her a call and let her know. Right now I would like you to go to bed, and I will call back in 20 minutes just to make sure you are in bed and hopefully you will be sound asleep. Bye."*

Youth: *"Yeah, I'd like to talk to my therapist tomorrow."*

**Total length of call: 8 minutes.**

Team Lead: (calls the foster parent back in 20 minutes) *"Hi, I just wanted to check back to make sure Beth is doing what I asked her to do, has she gone to bed?"*

Foster Parent: *"She is in bed and things are quiet here. I'm still annoyed though."*

Team Lead: *"Ok, is there a time tomorrow when we can get together to come up with a plan? It sounds like we need to figure out a way to get Beth to do her chore and homework without all this drama that ruins your evening."*

Foster Parent: (laughs) *"Yes, that would be nice! I can come by on my lunch hour."*

Team Lead: *"Great, see you then."*

## Treatment Team Leader

The Team Lead is responsible for organizing all aspects of the treatment, including setting treatment goals and defining interventions that address those goals. To do this effectively, a high level of information exchange needs to occur among team members. Team members should communicate through informal conversation, telephone, and e-mail so that no new information is presented to the Team Lead at the weekly clinical meeting.



The clinical meeting is the primary setting for reviewing cases and planning interventions.

### Additional Supervision

This can be provided to treatment staff outside of the clinical meeting, as needed, through drop-in, telephone, or e-mail communication. For example, regular weekly supervision should be provided to new staff to ensure adherence to the TFCO model. This can include review of session videotapes and intervention ideas.

### Oversee Foster Parent Recruitment

When recruitment is underway, the Team Lead should check in with the Recruiter each week to review the recruitment forms and progress. We've found that it's important that the Recruiter understands the strengths of the model, and feels supported by the team.

1. **Advertising activities of the past week (include details):**
2. **Advertising plans for the coming week (include details):**
3. **Foster home development tables:**

Inquiries			
Last Name	Date called	How did they hear about the program?	Initial Screening Impressions
<i>Mr. Evans</i>	<i>3/4/14</i>	<i>Bulletin in High St Church</i>	<i>Good candidate. Mr. E's sister in home will also need screening. Will need help w/supervision planning</i>

Screening & Training						
Last Name	Date application sent	Date app returned	Home visit	Background Check	Date TFCO Training Completed	Date other Training Completed
<i>Mr. Evans</i>	<i>3/4/14</i>	<i>3/18 – gave reminder calls 3/10 &amp; 3/13 &amp; sent a thank you note</i>	<i>3/21 – all ok</i>	<i>In process</i>	<i>Will join April training</i>	<i>TBD</i>



Summary Grid							
Last name	Travel Time to Agency	Family (Couple or Single)	Employment/ Supervision Plan	Age & Gender of Children in the home	Pets	FP Experience Y/N, # of Yrs	Notes
<i>Mr. Evans</i>	<i>45 min</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Store manager</i>	<i>None, his adult sister in home</i>		<i>0</i>	<i>Work hours are long 1-2 days/wk, working on supervision plan, may include sister and another relative</i>
<i>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Francisco</i>	<i>45 min</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>Mr. – Electrician Mrs. – part-time sales clerk Supervision plan = Cousin lives in neighborhood &amp; is trained</i>	<i>9 year old boy</i>	<i>Fish</i>	<i>0</i>	

## Leading Clinical Meetings

The Team Lead guides the clinical meeting with therapists, skills coaches, PDR callers, and other clinical or psychiatric consultants. The focus is on determining and refining the youth's treatment plan and on integrating the team's activities to accomplish the goals of that plan.

- Review each case during the meeting.
  - It's important that all cases are reviewed every week. As in the foster parent meetings, highlight what is going well with cases and to focus on problem areas.
  - Efficient teams can complete a case review in 10 to 15 minutes.
  - More time will be spent on cases that are particularly difficult or complicated or on cases in which there is disagreement or confusion about the treatment plan.
- For each case, the Team Lead should give an update on the youth's situation
  - Team members working on the case give updates on their activities.
  - Just as in the foster parent meetings, don't confront anyone during the meeting. If there is a problem with the way a team member is handling something or there is something very sensitive going on, deal with it outside of the meeting. **Use the group time to focus on the cases.**

Case Discussions should include:

- **Brief update from the Team Lead with PDR and point and level information.** Review the youth's point and level system, foster parent report on how the placement is progressing, school behavior, and notes from the previous meeting on the goals for that week (3-4 minutes). Be sure to include the foster parent's perspective on the how the placement is progressing.
- **Brief update from the family therapist about the family interventions.** Present the content of the last session and plans for the next session (2-3 minutes).
- **Brief update from the individual therapist about interventions with the youth.** Present the content of the last session and plans for the next session (2-3 minutes).
- **Brief update from the skills coach about activities with the youth.** Present the content of the last session and plans for the next session (2-3 minutes).
- **Planning the intervention(s) for the next week.** Identify what will be done by all members of the treatment team to address the treatment goals.



Spend as much time planning for success as reviewing problems.

When a case is particularly problematic, it is easy to spend a lot of time reviewing the problems. Be sure the balance does not become tipped toward reacting to isolated incidents rather than focusing on coordinating efforts of the team to support the youth's behavioral change. Always include time to talk about positive aspects of the case and how everyone can facilitate progress toward the goal.

As leader of the meeting, the Team Lead sets the tone and controls the time spent on each case.

- Acknowledge and take time to reinforce positive efforts of team members and encourage them to support each other.
- Follow up on situations that were previously significant problems but that have been resolved.
- Team members will not always be in agreement about specific activities on a case or what direction to take with a case. In the end, it is the Team Lead's decision. Focusing the discussion on the overall goals and on the relation the pros and cons of the various approaches have to the goals can help resolve differences.

## Case Update during the Clinical Meeting

Team Lead: "Let's talk about Mary. She has made lots of progress on earning points in the foster home and on school attendance; however, she is still getting one or more 'poors' per day at school, and it is the same problem behavior that is getting in her way at home where she is rude and defiant with adults. My concern is that she still ends up on Level 1 more than once a week, and, as you see on her PDR, she argues each day and that is stressful to the foster parent. Her foster parent is making an effort to notice and give her bonus points when she is polite and follows directions. James, why don't you update us on what happened in the family session?"

Family Therapist: "I met with Mary's mom and reviewed point cards from the last home visit. I reinforced her for taking a few points for arguing, and also for giving bonus points for being pleasant with the family. She is doing a great job of writing positive notes on the point card. She reported that although things are stressful at home with financial concerns, she is ready to start planning joint family sessions. We will start that in the next session."

Individual Therapist: "Last week the plan for my session was to practice responding to adults in a positive way, even when she doesn't feel like it. We had fun, we role-played and she did a great job when she was the teacher and I was rude, then we changed and I was the teacher and I reinforced her for hearing "no" and being pleasant."

Team Lead: "Since she is still losing points for the defiant rude behavior at school and at home, maybe we should come up with something she would like to earn for 5 days of no 'poors' on her school card."

Individual Therapist: "She would like that. I know she is interested in getting her nails done."

Skills Coach: "Yeah, she does like to do that girly stuff! This week we went to a few gyms to get information about hours and cost because she is really interested in having a place to work out. She was complaining about school and how her teachers are unfair and pick on her."

Team Lead: "What did you do when she was complaining?"

Skills Coach: "I turned up the radio and talked about my dog. She loves my dog so it was easy to redirect her."

Team Lead: "Great! I'd like you to continue to work with her to get more information about after school activities. I'll check with the foster parents to see if they are ok with adding "getting nails done" for 5 no-poor school days. It sounds like everyone has a good plan for the next week." (to the skills coach) Could you take her to have that done if she earns it?"

## Questions the Team Lead considers when planning interventions

- **What accomplishments or progress have the youth, foster parents, or biological parents made since the last report?** What were the circumstances around that progress? What motivated the change that might be used again? Was the progress reinforced?
- **What problems were encountered in the last week?** What were the circumstances around those problems? What can be changed in the circumstances to avoid the problems in the future? How was the problem handled? Is follow-up necessary?
- **Are any situations coming up that might be problematic for the youth, foster parents, or biological parents?** What can be done in advance to avoid the problem?
- **Are any situations anticipated that may be challenging or that may be an opportunity for someone to make a significant step forward?** How can we set it up so that the challenge is met successfully? What can we do in advance to support the positive steps forward?
- **Are the needs and concerns of the youth, biological/adoptive parents, and foster parents being heard and considered?**
- **What are the short- and long-term goals for this youth and family?**
- **Who is doing what to achieve these goals?** Is everyone clear about their roles and activities related to this case?

## Managing the Parent Daily Report (PDR)

### What is the PDR?

The Parent Daily Report (PDR) is a critical part of the treatment program. It is the tool the Team Lead uses to monitor and assess a youth's progress with the daily behaviors the program aims to impact.

Each day the Team Lead reviews each youth's PDR. This allows for a daily response to the progress and problems that are occurring.

The PDR was developed as a means to gather daily information about both overt and covert events that occur in the home. The PDR methodology has been tested in a variety of settings and has been shown to be a reliable way to measure behavior. One can see how asking a foster parent about specific behaviors that occurred in the last 24 hours provides more accurate information than a general impression of how the youth did over the last week.

### How the PDR is used in TFCO

In TFCO, PDR information provides a snapshot of the youth's adjustment and is used to guide the treatment plan.

- PDRs are reviewed each week at the clinical meetings.
- Behaviors that have been problematic over the last week can be used as a starting point for case discussion.
- PDR provides information about foster parent responses to problem behaviors so the Team Lead can determine their effectiveness and make adjustments if necessary.

### Using Long-Term Data

By looking at PDR information over several weeks, the Team Lead can gain insight into the overall effectiveness of the treatment plan by determining which behaviors have been impacted. The treatment plan can then be tailored to specifically address behaviors that have not. For example, perhaps the long-term PDR data show that the number of times the foster parent indicates that the youth has been irresponsible decreased, but the number of times the youth talks back remained stable. The Team Lead can work with the rest of the team to build more incentives and consequences for changing the back-talk behavior into the youth's point and level system.

PDR data can be used to monitor cycles or patterns of behavior over time. For example, it is common for foster parents to say that their youth behaves more negatively after specific events, such as home visits. By looking at PDR after home visits, the Team Lead can determine to what extent this occurs and can anticipate and plan accordingly. Consulting psychiatrists can use PDR to track whether medication prescribed for behavioral or emotional difficulties is impacting the youth's behavior.

## Supervising the PDR Caller

It's important to observe the PDR Caller to make sure that they are going through the full list of behaviors. When talking with an experienced foster parent, there may be a tendency to simply ask "Were there any behaviors?" without going through the full list. While this may seem efficient, it doesn't ensure accurate reporting of the youth's daily behavior and the foster parent's stress level. These calls are short because the PDR callers are not advising foster parents on how to manage these behaviors, they are gathering information about the behaviors. If there is a concern about the behavior, the PDR caller would suggest that the foster parent contact the Team Lead. PDR callers can also contact the Team Lead if they have a concern.

## How the PDR is Collected

PDR callers contact the foster family each weekday to collect data about the last 24 hours. On Mondays the caller also collects data about Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

The main function of PDR is to provide detailed information about the youth's behavior; however, this daily contact with the foster parents can be beneficial in other ways.

- PDR calls enhance communication between Team Leads and foster parents. The PDR caller may learn about difficulties the foster parent is having and may encourage her to call the Team Lead. Or, the PDR caller may alert the Team Lead, who can then make direct contact with the foster parent. This can facilitate the working relationship between the foster parents and Team Lead and allow them to deal with problems when they are small, especially in the beginning phases of a placement. Sometimes it can take time for foster parents to feel comfortable calling for guidance on what they think is a small issue.
- The manner in which the PDR caller makes the calls can also reinforce that foster parents are important members of the treatment team. Strong interpersonal skills on the part of the PDR caller go a long way toward making foster parents feel valued and appreciated.

### **Skills of An Effective PDR Caller**

- Schedule the calls at the foster parents' convenience. There can be many demands on their time, so be flexible and accommodating.
- Be prepared and punctual.
- Be warm, friendly, and interested in what they are saying.
- Follow through. If the foster parents indicate that they would like to talk to the Team Lead, make sure that message is delivered.

## Agency Liaison & Service Coordination

### Working with Schools

Typically, the youth is enrolled in a school in the foster parents' home district. There are exceptions, such as when a youth needs to be in a school with a special program. In most cases, the youth will change schools at the time of placement. Although changing schools can be disruptive, it is a good idea for youths to make a fresh start when placed in foster care, rather than continue in a situation where typically they had severe problems. Foster parents may have already established a good relationship with the local school when their own youth or other foster youth attended there. This is something to consider when hiring foster parents. If foster parents have a poor relationship with staff at the local school, it can interfere with the youth's chance for success at that school.

### Meeting with School Staff

Prior to enrolling the youth in a new school, the Team Lead and the foster parents should meet with a key contact person on the school staff to present an overview of the program. The staff member will vary by school; it may be a principal, vice-principal, or counselor. Remember to provide the school with only the information that is allowed by law or by HIPAA regulations.

### Provide an Overview of TFCO

Give a verbal overview of the program to the school staff person. Leave a written copy of this overview and encourage that person to share it with the youth's teachers. Provide background on the overall objectives of TFCO and its key features (i.e., the youth will be living with well-trained and supported foster parents, a therapist will be working with the youth, etc.). Provide information on how youth are placed in the program (referred by the child welfare, juvenile justice, or mental health systems), and explain that the program has success working with youth in these situations. The more that school staff members understand the goals and features of the program, the more likely they are to be supportive and helpful in implementing it.

### Describe the Program's Support

Describe how the program can offer support to the school. Schools are often wary about enrolling youth with severe behavior problems. Often, a youth is simply "dumped" into the school system with little support to help with behavior problems. It will help facilitate the youth's successful transition into a new school if the staff is clear from the beginning that TFCO is dedicated to the youth's success at school and will support school staff. Explain that as a condition of being in this program, the youth is expected to attend school and complete assignments, and that those activities are monitored closely by the foster parents and program staff. In addition, stress that TFCO staff will provide back-up or crisis intervention. Assure school staff that someone from the program will pick up the youth from school if he becomes disruptive, is suspended or expelled, or whenever it becomes necessary for him to leave school. Finally, make sure it is clear that program staff will be available to school personnel for additional support,

meetings, and consultation, as needed. Encourage school staff to call the Team Lead anytime they have a problem or concern about the youth.

## Present the School Card

Explain that the school card is how TFCO parents will get daily information about the youth's attendance, behavior in class, homework completion, missing assignments, and tests. Explain that it is the student's responsibility to have the teachers fill out the card every day and bring it home where points are then added or subtracted from the youth's daily program, depending on information provided by the teachers. The card should be quick and easy for teachers to complete, so see if it needs to be modified to accommodate the youth's schedule or school program.

Also explain that the Team Lead and foster parents have developed strategies to deal with problems that arise while using the school card. It is also good to explain how the youth's performance at school will affect his level of privileges at home. Ask school staff what other problems they anticipate and discuss solutions with them. Often, school staff members will indicate that teachers may be reluctant to fill out the card each day. Assure them that the Team Lead will work with teachers individually about their concerns or reluctance, and that the school staff person will not be responsible for teachers' cooperation. Ask the contact person to distribute the program overview and school cards to each teacher and encourage them to call the Team Lead if they have questions or concerns about using the card.

**School Card Forgery**  
To address students' attempts to forge school cards or falsify information, the Team Lead collects sample signatures from teachers to authenticate those on the cards, foster parents regularly verify information on the card, and a significant consequence is given for falsifying information.



It is important to get off to a good start with the school. Keep this initial meeting focused on the positive aspects of the program and the potential for youth success. Thoroughly address school staff concerns and follow up with more information, if necessary.

## Working with Child Welfare Workers, Mental Health Workers, or Parole/ Probation Staff

Involvement of the caseworker or probation officer is important to the success of the program. Assuming that these individuals make decisions about the welfare of the youth in placement and consequences for illegal behavior, it is essential to coordinate with them on the youth's treatment plan.

When first starting the TFCO program, it is recommended that the program director and Team Leads meet with workers prior to placing a youth in the program. Since the program will be new, the workers will naturally have concerns about the program's ability to deal with youth who exhibit problem behaviors. Workers should be encouraged to clarify their priorities and express their concerns. Establishing some initial operating assumptions that both the program staff and workers agree on will go a long way



toward getting the TFCO program off to a good start. It is important to follow the requirements and documentation set by the referring agency. As the TFCO program works together with referring agencies, over time they will develop a good working partnership.

A good starting point would be to agree on the following questions:

- **What role will the program and the worker take relative to one another in their interactions with the youth and his family?**

The role played by the worker in treatment can range from routine monthly check-ins with the youth to monitor progress and reinforce program rules, to a more active partnership where the worker assists with problem situations. Workers have a lot to offer the TFCO program. Explore and articulate ways that they can be active partners in the youth's treatment. Establish regular communication mechanisms: How often will Team Leads and workers meet in person? Talk on the phone? How will PDR data and other information be shared and used?

- **What are the types and severity of consequences that can be imposed by the program for major rule breaking or legal infractions?**

The program uses point deductions and privilege removal as consequences to routinely address typical problems, such as defiance, being late or unsupervised, drug and alcohol use, minor law infractions, and suspension or expulsion from school. With the agreement of the worker, the program can also use work chores and community service for more severe behavior problems. Explaining these consequences allows the worker to understand how the program deals with these kinds of infractions.

- **How often and in what setting will contacts take place with the youth, the biological or adoptive parents, and the worker?**

In order to keep the foster parents and therapists informed, try to get an understanding about how often and under what circumstances the worker will meet with the youth and the family.

## Working with Other Agencies or Individuals

The Team Lead may act as a liaison with other agencies or individuals. In some jurisdictions, this includes regular communication with the juvenile judge or referee. It is essential that the Team Lead establish a collaborative relationship with these individuals. A written description of the program (who is served, overall structure and philosophy of the program, and who to contact) should be provided to the judges followed by a phone call with a request for a personal meeting. At that meeting, the program director and Team Lead can answer questions about the program and clarify other issues that are likely to come up, such as when the judge would like program staff to appear in court, etc.

The Team Lead may need to establish contact with other professionals who regularly interact with the youth, including employers, coaches, psychiatrists, other treatment agents, or any community member who has regular contact and influence over the youth. They should be integrated into the treatment plan in whatever manner is appropriate. For example, if the youth is a member of an athletic team, the coach should be aware of the parameters in which the youth may participate. The Team Lead may require the youth to achieve certain academic criteria to participate, or stipulate that there is to be no unsupervised time during practices, or that a card similar to the school card will be used. In these situations, the Team Lead needs to initiate contact and facilitate inclusion of the community member in the treatment plan.

## Placement and Transition Coordination

### Pre-Placement Interview

The Team Lead conducts a pre-placement interview with the youth. The purpose of this interview is to gather information about the youths' strengths, interests, and point of view, and introduce them to the point and level system. Asking youth about their interests and recent experiences helps the Team Lead match the youth to a foster family and identify concerns. Weaving neutral questions with more clinical or direct questions will help create a relaxed interaction with the youth (i.e., asking about pets the youth likes then asking whether the youth has ever harmed an animal). It is helpful to be positive about the youth, to point out strengths that you hear in the conversation, and predict the youth's success in the program.

Below are a list of questions that should be woven together to build rapport and set a relaxed tone for the meeting. Remember:

- ✓ Start with the most neutral or fun questions.
- ✓ Open-ended questions will invite more conversation than yes/no answers.
- ✓ When asking risk assessment questions, the Team Lead should be brief and use a neutral affect.
- ✓ Talk about the benefits and privileges of the point and level system before talking about program limits to engage the youth in the positive aspects of treatment.
- ✓ Let youth know that the points give them credit for things that adults may forget and allows them to earn privileges.
- ✓ Emphasize how youth earn bonus points for making an effort to do things that may be difficult for them (e.g., getting up on time).

### Neutral Questions:

- Interests: What do you like to do for fun? What kind of movies, books, video games, activities do you like? Do you like the outdoors? Do you like to go shopping? What sports do you like? Have you played on a team? Do you like to swim? What are you interested in learning (dance, jewelry making, photography, cooking, horseback riding, etc.)?
- Family: Who's in your family? Who do you get along with?
- Pets: Do you have any pets? What kinds? How many? What are their names? What breeds are they (or what do they look like)?
- School: How do you do in school? What is your favorite class (*and why*)? What is your least favorite class? What is easiest for you in school? What do you like best? When was the last time you had a good time in school?

**Risk Assessment Questions** (Including the last time the youth engaged in the behavior. With risk assessment questions, the context matters.)

- Have you hurt yourself? How long ago was that?
- Which drugs/alcohol have you tried? How often?
- Have you ever hurt an animal?
- Have you ever been in a fight? With whom?

**Introduce the Point and Level System:**

- Assess youths' reading level by having them read the first part of the point and level information.
- Level 1 lasts approximately 3 weeks (2100 pts). You get one call to family and written letters are okay. You buy your privileges every night while on Level 1.
- The difference between Levels 1 and 2: Level 2 equals more privileges. You buy your privileges weekly instead of daily.
- Review each behavior on the chart and explain to the youth what that means, give examples (e.g., you could earn points for accepting feedback well, or you could lose points for arguing).
- Ask the youth what part of the point and level system might be the hardest. Explain bonus points and how the point and level system is intended to notice what the youth does well each day and give feedback about negative behavior.
- Review some privileges in the program (e.g., later bedtime, TV time, activity time—with permission, etc.).

**Program Expectations/Rules Specific to the Program:**

- Drug tests
- Room searches, backpack and locker searches
- Account for time at school and work via a school or work card
- Music and clothing rules
- Receipts for money spent

### Risk Assessment With a Positive Tone

Team Lead: "Hi David, I'm \_\_\_\_\_, it's nice to meet you."

Youth: "Hi."

Team Lead: "Today I'm going to ask you some questions about you and what is going on with you, answer any questions you have about the program, and explain how the program works."

Youth: "Ok."

Team Lead: "Do you know why you are being referred to this program?"

Youth: "I'm having a hard time at home."

Team Lead: "So who lives at your house?"

Youth: "My mom, step-dad, and little brother."

Team Lead: "How old is your little brother?"

Youth: "He's three."

Team Lead: "Oh, three year olds are so cute! Is he fun to hang out with or does he get into all of your stuff."

Youth: "Yeah, he gets into my stuff, but it's ok. He cries a lot."

Team Lead: "Do you usually get along with little kids or do they annoy you?"

Youth: "I usually get along with them."

Team Lead: "Do you have any pets at your house?"

Youth: "We have three dogs and we used to have a rat but it got out."

Team Lead: "I love dogs, what kind of dogs do you have?"

Youth: "We have a Pit Bull, Chihuahua, and a mutt."

Team Lead: "Is the Chihuahua the one in charge?"

Youth: "Well, he thinks he is!"

Team Lead: "Sounds like you have a lot of experience with animals. Have you ever hurt an animal?"

Youth: "No!"

Team Lead: "Let's talk about school. What grade are you in right now."

Youth: "I'm supposed to be in the 10th grade, but I didn't really go to school last year so I don't have enough credits."

Team Lead: "When you were in school, what did you like?"

Youth: "Hanging out with my friends at lunch."

Team Lead: "Are there any subjects that you liked?"

Youth: "I used to like reading, but school is so boring now."

Team Lead: "What do you do for fun? Do you like sports?"

Youth: "I did track a few years ago, and I like to play basketball."

Team Lead: "Did you do cross country? It always impresses me that people can run so far for so long."

Youth: "No, I was a sprinter."

Team Lead: "Oh, so you're fast! Do you like swimming?"

Youth: "Yeah."

Team Lead: "Good, so you can keep your head above water!"

The Team Lead would continue weaving neutral and risk assessment questions together and then move on to introducing the program.

### **Introducing the Point and Level System**

Team Lead: "Let me tell you a little bit about the program and the point and level system. Have you been anywhere where they use a point and level system?"

Youth: "Yeah, I was in a group home before this."

Team Lead: "Great, well this may seem familiar to you. In this program there are three levels and all kids come in on Level 1. I'll show you what Level 1 looks like. On Level 1 you are going to earn points for things that kids do every day, for a lot of kids they would do these things anyway and then people only notice what they did wrong, has that ever happened to you?"

Youth: "Yeah."

Team Lead: "In this program, we want to make sure we notice the positive things that kids do all day. The first thing here is getting up on time, you would earn points every day for getting up on time, which is probably something you have done before. What is the next thing on here?"

Youth: (reads from the point card) "Morning clean-up."

Team Lead: "You are a good reader. So, throughout the day you will earn points for doing things like this, and you will also lose points. So, if you didn't get up on time you would lose a few points. When you look at this point sheet, what do you think will be difficult for you?"

Youth: "Carrying the dumb school card."

Team Lead: "Yeah, that's hard sometimes. But so many kids carry them now that it may not be as hard as it seems. And, we give you lots of points for carrying it."

After reviewing the point and level system, the Team Lead would review the privileges and rules specific to the program, answer any questions the youth may have, and predict the youth's success in the program.

## **Matching Youth and Families**

There is no science to matching a youth to a family that will ensure a successful outcome, but there are parameters to consider that may impact the likelihood of success. While reviewing available information about the family and youth, the Team Lead should consider:

- Family Composition  
What are the ages and genders of the youth in the family? How would this youth "fit" in the family relative to the other youth? Would the youth be the oldest? Youngest? How many years apart in age are the youth? Does placing the youth in this configuration have the potential to negatively impact any family member in a serious way?
- Family Demographics  
Are the youth and family demographic backgrounds compatible? Are there issues to consider about ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc., with this

placement? Are there any socio-economic factors that may create issues with this placement?

- Health and Safety  
Does the youth's problem behavior present a safety issue in this home? For example, it would not be safe to place a sexual offending teenager in a home with young children. Likewise, consideration for the safety of others should be made when placing youth with a history of physically violent behavior. Does this youth have any health issues that need to be considered? What is this family's capacity to deal with those issues?
- School  
What school would the youth attend if placed with this family? Does this student need special services? Are they available in this school district?
- Family Habits  
What are the family's routines? Do they like to travel? What are the family's interests or hobbies? Does the youth have any common interests? Are there any household routines that would be particularly troublesome for the youth or that need special consideration? Does the youth have any health issues that would be aggravated by this placement (e.g., allergies to pets). Who are the friends or relatives that regularly visit the family? Are any of them likely to have a problem with the youth or impede the chances for a positive outcome for him?

A Team Lead's first review should be on the obvious health and safety aspects of a potential match. Beyond the obvious, a successful match often comes down to a thorough review of the information available on the family and youth and sound clinical judgment.

## Foster Parent Agreement

Prior to making a placement, foster parents sign a written agreement that describes the specific services they are expected to provide, the terms of compensation to them, and insurance and liability issues. Everything in the agreement should have been covered verbally at some point in the foster parents' recruitment, screening, or training, so that by the time the agreement is to be signed none of the stipulations come as a surprise. An example of an agreement is included in the appendix of the Foster Parent Recruitment Manual.

In the agreement, foster parents are identified as the key agents of support and change for the youth. They agree to provide full-time care and supervision and to implement and monitor the treatment plan. They agree to cooperate with ongoing supervision, attend weekly meetings with program staff, and complete the daily PDR call. The agreement also stipulates requirements for the youth's overnight absences from the foster home and procedures for arranging visits between the youth and the youth's parent(s) and relatives. The program agrees to provide the foster parents with support, assistance, supervision, and training throughout the placement. Also included in the agreement are terms of the compensation the foster parents will receive and procedures

for reimbursement. The foster parents agree to provide adequate insurance and acknowledge that the program cannot be held liable for any loss, damage, or injury resulting from placement of a youth in their home. The term of the agreement begins when the youth is placed in the home and ends when the placement is terminated.

## Preparing the Foster Parents for the Placement

To facilitate a smooth transition, it is important that the prospective foster parents be fully informed about the youth **before** final placement is made.

At placement, the foster parents' focus should be on settling the youth into their home and getting him off to a good start in the program, not on trying to figure out what experiences the youth has had. The Team Lead will want to prevent a situation where the foster parents are learning about the youth's history directly from him. Not only does this focus everyone's attention on problems in the past (instead of success in the future), the information may or may not be accurate.

## Provide the Youth's Full History

The more the foster parents know about the youth, the more prepared and confident they will feel. They review the entire case file plus any other information, including impressions from interviews or observations the Team Lead has made during interactions with the youth. They are given time to digest the information and arrange to either meet or talk on the phone about their impressions. The Team Lead should encourage them to ask questions and express concerns, and should deal with them in an open, straightforward manner. Depending on how complex the issues are, it may take more than one conversation to address the issues before the foster parents decide if they are willing to work with the youth. Issues of confidentiality must be stressed at this point. Care must be taken to assure that the foster parents completely understand that all of the information shared with them is strictly confidential.

## Policy on Pre-Placement Visits

Sometimes caseworkers or foster parents suggest a pre-placement visit with the youth in the foster home. While this may seem like a good idea, TFCO does not typically include a pre-placement visit for the reasons listed below.

- There is no evidence that such visits help either the youth or the parents determine whether they can work together. Typically, everyone is on their "best behavior" and little is learned in such a short visit beyond an initial impression.
- If the foster family decides not to accept the placement based on impressions formed during the visit, the youth is set up for rejection. A youth who has been rejected by one or more foster families is not in a good position to succeed when finally placed.

If your system includes a pre-placement visit, knowing these potential pitfalls can help protect against problems.



## Preparing the Youth for the Placement

Facing placement outside of the family home can be traumatic for youth. Life is about to change dramatically and they have little control over the process. To minimize anxiety and increase cooperation, it is important to prepare the youth for the placement. The Team Lead's task is to make the transition as smooth as possible and to encourage acceptance of the program and its goals.

### Meet with the Youth

Prior to placement, the Team Lead meets with the youth to present the TFCO program. During the meeting, the Team Lead should try to create an upbeat atmosphere. It is important to give the youth a clear and realistic picture of what the program will expect. The youth should know that the program won't always be easy, but is assured that they can be successful.

### Introduce the Point and Level System

The Team Lead should introduce the point and level system as a plan that will help the youth be successful in the program. Present the system as a way to make it easier to stay on track and a way for adults to notice when things are going well. Show the youth an example of a Level 1 chart, going through each behavior and the deadline. Ask the youth which parts will be most difficult to comply with and give positive feedback for identifying potential problem areas.

Assure the youth that during weekly meetings with the therapist there will be plenty of opportunities to talk about how to handle these issues and other problems that may come up. It is important to be clear that the youth will not be expected to be perfect: when mistakes are made, there will be consequences and when the youth is successful, privileges will be earned. Briefly explain that the points earned in this program are used to "buy" privileges and show examples of privileges that can be bought on Level 1. Explain that after a period of success on Level 1, the youth can move to Levels 2 and 3 where more free time and privileges are available. It isn't necessary to go through the point and level system in a lot of detail at this time, as that will happen with the youth and foster parents together when the youth is placed. What is important at this time is for the youth to understand that to be in this program, it is necessary to abide by the basic ground rules and the point and level system.

Sometimes, after this explanation a youth will conclude that she either can't make it in this type of program or is not willing to give it a try. Ask the youth to think about possible problems she would have in the program and arrange to talk again in a week or two. In the meantime, make sure the worker, or whoever is responsible for placement, is aware of this outcome and ask the worker to discuss other placement options with the youth. Often, a youth will agree to participate after understanding that returning home isn't an option until an out-of-home placement occurs.

If the youth agrees to participate, the Team Lead can then try to relieve anxiety about the upcoming placement. Provide information about who is in the family, where they

live, and what hobbies or interests they have. Be brief and upbeat about the family and positive about the youth's ability to succeed there. Give the youth time to ask questions and address them thoroughly.

## Preparing the Biological/Adoptive Family for the Placement

Prior to placement, the Team Lead talks with the parents or relatives to start building a positive working relationship.

First, the Team Lead should describe the general goals of the program:

- Reduce their youth's negative behavior, have him make better choices, have him do well in school, keep him from getting in trouble
- Increase their youth's positive behavior, be more compliant, be more engaged in positive activities
- Minimize the contact their youth has with peers who may be a bad influence
- Make their home environment one where their youth can continue making progress when he returns home

Find out about the parents goals:

- Ask the parents what they want to see their youth accomplish; what are their goals?
- Ask what they think will be major barriers.
- Ask what they think their youth's strengths are.

Explain the basic structure of the program:

- The program's relationship to child welfare or the court
- The program's relationship to the school: The youth will attend school and progress and behavior at school will be closely monitored.
- The components of treatment: The youth and the family will attend therapy sessions.
- The point and level system: A brief explanation of the point and level system should be included so the family is aware of how their youth's behavior will be managed in the foster home.
- The experience, training, and supervision of the foster parents with whom their youth will be placed.

Throughout this meeting, the Team Lead should encourage the family to ask questions, which will help engage them in the program and show that their input is welcome. The Team Lead should stress that their youth's success will largely depend on how well the TFCO staff can collaborate to help change his patterns of behavior.

It is common at this point for family members to express discouragement and that they have tried everything and nothing seems to be working. The Team Lead should assume a non-blaming attitude and convey interest in the parents' opinion about their youth's problems. Not only does this encourage a working relationship with the family, it adds information on the history of the youth's problems, their efforts at changing his behavior, and family stressors.

At the end of the meeting, obtain consent for the parents' and their youth's participation. Though this may not be technically required, it helps build rapport and trust with the parents. Let them know that the family therapist will contact them to schedule their first session.

## Initial Placement Meeting

We recommend holding the placement meeting where the foster parent weekly meetings and the youth therapy sessions will be held. It is a neutral "third-party" setting where everyone will regularly come for help in making this placement succeed. Keep the atmosphere upbeat and positive.

**Review the point and level system.** The Team Lead, the foster parents, and the youth go over the point and level system in detail. This emphasizes that the adults are in agreement about how the system works. Go over Level 1 and communicate the points that have already been earned that day. The Team Lead will take at least one point for something silly, like having an untucked shirt, to give the youth the experience of having points taken when behaviors are small.

- Make sure everyone knows how to reach the Team Lead and encourage them to call anytime they have questions or problems. Suggest posting the Team Lead's phone number where it can be easily found (refrigerator, bulletin board, etc.).
- Look over the youth's possessions and determine if there are any immediate needs (clothing, medical or dental supplies, etc.).
- To minimize confusion, explain the role of each staff member.
- Send them home with lots of encouragement about how you think this is going to be a really good place for the youth to be.

### **Setting the Tone of the Placement Meeting**

Team Lead: "Let's make sure that we give you the points you have already earned today. You got up so you got your 'get up on time' points because here you are, you earned morning clean up and you have a great attitude so you have your attitude and maturity points. You look like the kind of kid who will try to be perfect, is that true for you?"

Youth: "Yes."

Team Lead: "Ok, well this program isn't about being perfect. Everyone loses some points, and it's just our way of reminding you. So I'm going to take a couple of points so you realize it's not that big of a deal. Let's see...I'm going to take two points for your shoes being untied."

Youth: (Laughs.) "Are you kidding?"

Team Lead: "No, you are going to lose points each day, and you are going to earn points each day. So now you know how it works! Here is my number where you can always reach me and call anytime—I'd like you to call me today or this evening to let me know how you are doing. So, I guess you guys are off to go to lunch and unpack your things, have a great day!"

The Team Lead should talk to the foster parents daily for the first few days of the placement. The Team Lead needs to keep well informed so that the meeting with the parents and youth can stay focused on the positive aspects of how things are going and getting off to a good start. An initial "honeymoon" period at the beginning of the placement is very common, which provides a good time to reinforce the youth's positive initial adjustment.

## Working with Your Site Consultant

When consultation calls begin, the Team Lead and the consultant will arrange a regular time and day for weekly calls. The first few calls will help the Team Lead review referrals, assist in matching the youth to foster homes, and making the first placement. The initial calls can also assist the Team Lead in removing any remaining barriers to a successful placement.

### PDR and Call Guides

Once the first youth is placed, the calls will use the PDR data and information from the Team Lead about how the program is functioning. To prepare for the calls, the Team Lead will complete a Call Guide form to be sent to the consultant at least one day before the call. The Team Lead is expected to review PDR daily and prior to the call, as well. The Team Lead and the consultant will look at PDR information and the Call Guide when discussing each youth.

### Videos

It is important that current videos of the foster parent and clinical meetings are sent to your consultant each week so they can be reviewed prior to the call. This allows the consultant to provide individualized consultation. Meetings should be recorded beginning with the first placement.

### Site Visits

In addition to the calls, consultation services will typically include site visits and reviews. A visit by the consultant to your program location gives the Team Lead and team members hands on support and assistance. Several weeks before the site visit, the Team Lead and consultant will create a plan for the activities during the visit. Typically, the consultant attends a foster parent and clinical meeting, which may require rescheduling to accommodate the visit.

### Site Reviews

Reviews are an opportunity to provide your agency with feedback about how the program is progressing toward fidelity measures. There are three parts to the review include an Implementation Review completed by the consultant, a video review of recent program meetings completed by an independent reviewer, and a summary letter. These reviews give agencies an idea of where meetings stand in relation to the certification standard in this area. The reviews also give programs an opportunity to respond to barriers in the short term and see progress over time.

## Appendix

[Insert Agency Name]

### Authorization for Audiovisual Recording

Client Name:

Date of Birth:

I (we) authorize [insert agency name] to use audiovisual recordings made of me (us) and of my (family), for the purpose of:

Please initial each authorized activity below:

1. Supervision and case coordination \_\_\_\_\_
2. Use in Treatment \_\_\_\_\_
3. Research \_\_\_\_\_
4. Teaching professionals \_\_\_\_\_

Upon written notice I (we) may have all of the audiovisual recordings erased and/or restrict their use to one or more of the above stated purposes.

I (we) understand that all audiovisual recordings are available for viewing by me (us).

This release must be signed by all family members 18 years old or over who will be involved in treatment.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

