

Center for Excellence in Foster Family Development

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) and the Maryland Department of Human Services/ Social Services Administration (DHS/SSA)

Period: June 1, 2021 - Sept 30, 2023

BACKGROUND

In September 2019, the federal Children's Bureau awarded the DHS/SSA funding for the National Center for Excellence in Foster Family Development (CfE). The purpose of the CfE is **to engage, prepare, and support resource parents to support timely reunification, permanency, & family-based placements**. An intentional focus is placed on the overrepresentation of youth who are Black and Indigenous served in the foster care system and, in particular, in congregate care settings, which the CfE will aim to address through strategies that focus on authentic family engagement and that recruit and retain foster families that are from the same neighborhoods as the families being served.

The CfE aims to improve the well-being of children and families impacted by the child welfare system by **reducing lengths of stay in foster care and unnecessary congregate care placements, decreasing the rate of re-entry into foster care, and increasing reunification and exits to permanency**.

The CfE will implement a model program for the selection, development and support of resource families that will work in close collaboration with birth families to preserve and nurture critical parent-child relationships and support reunification. Resource families participating in the program will be prepared and supported in providing enhanced reunification and stability supports to biological families as well as enhanced stability and well-being supports to children transitioning out of congregate care.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this MOU is to establish the roles of DHS/SSA and the five CfE LDSS Center for Excellence sites. LDSS will implement the CfE components of the grant and DHS/SSA will provide technical assistance (TA) and resources to support LDSS with implementation of the CfE, its goals, objectives, and commitments as outlined in the Cooperative Agreement with the Children's Bureau ([Attachment 1](#)).

MOU TASKS, BENCHMARKS & TIMELINES

Local Department of Social Services

TASK 1: LDSS will install, implement and disseminate core CfE Model components (see CfE Cooperative Agreement).

Benchmark and Timeline:

- A. Complete installation plan per CfE timeline, as provided at each implementation meeting.
- B. Begin implementation per CfE timeline, as provided at each implementation meeting.
- C. Update implementation plans per CfE timeline, as provided at each implementation meeting.
- D. Develop and implement dissemination & sustainability plans per CfE timeline, as provided at each implementation meeting.

TASK 2: LDSS will provide necessary staffing and support for installation and implementation of the CfE model, including staff to support identification and referral of resource parents. LDSS staff will participate in training to be prepared to deliver evidence-based interventions which are a part of Task 1 and are explained in CfE Model FAQ (Attachment 2).

- A. Identify Resource Parent Trainer to participate in all CfE Resource Parent pre-requisite training.
- B. Identify staff to participate in all KEEP/ KEEP SAFE (resource parent training) and/or PTC-R (biological parent training) facilitator classroom training and observe and support a minimum of one group per model (see CfE Model FAQ).
- C. Identify a Project Lead and other project support staff to support local Implementation Team and overall implementation.

TASK 3: LDSS will establish an Implementation Team responsible for effective implementation and learning at CfE sites. The team is responsible for the effective use of TA and evaluation support provided by the University of Maryland. This includes participating in monthly TA calls and attending all Quality Improvement Collaborative (QIC) learning sessions provided by the University of Maryland.

Benchmark and Timeline:

- A. Establish and maintain an Implementation Team that includes a diverse group of stakeholders and LDSS leadership.
- B. Implementation Team participate in monthly recurring TA calls established within 1 week of execution of this agreement.
- C. The Implementation Team participates in Quality Improvement Collaborative learning sessions that occur bi-monthly in the first year of implementation and quarterly in subsequent years.

TASK 4: LDSS will collect all necessary data for continuous quality improvement and evaluation.

Benchmarks and Timeline:

- A. Identify Data Manager with 20% dedicated FTE schedule to support data collection and reporting activities. 2 SSA/FFDCE-22-001

- B. Collaborate with CfE Evaluator, Institute for Innovation and Implementation Team, University of Maryland, School of Social Work to develop an evaluation plan per CfE timeline as provided at the implementation meeting.
- C. Establish data sharing agreements with Institute for Innovation an Implementation Team, University of Maryland, School of Social Work.

TASK 5: Collaborate with DHS/SSA to support recruitment of resource parents; review, evaluate and modify policies as needed and other materials for resource parent recruitment, retention and support; implementation of CfE model.

- A. Identify LDSS leadership to participate in the CfE Advisory Team. The CfE Advisory Team’s role is to support ongoing implementation and evaluation. Advisory team meetings will occur per CfE timeline, as provided at each implementation meeting.
- B. Participate in all implementation and related activities of the CfE.
- C. Identify needed updates to practices, procedures and policies to support CfE goals. Lead implementation of those changes, as possible.

Maryland Department of Human Services/Social Services Administration (DHS/SSA)

TASK 1: Provide TA to LDSS to achieve tasks outlined in this MOU.

Benchmark and Timeline:

- A. Establish and maintain identified technical support to be provided through monthly recurring TA calls and the Quality Improvement Collaborative learning sessions and webinars immediately upon execution of this agreement.

TASK 2: Provide financial resources to LDSS to achieve tasks outlined in this MOU. All financial requests must first be approved by the DHS- SSA Steering Committee.

TASK 3: Contract to provide necessary capacity building (TA, training and coaching) for core model components outlined in LDSS Task 1.

- A. Maintain and fund contracts to provide technical assistance, particularly QIC per CfE timeline, as provided at each implementation meeting.
- B. Procure contracts to provide TOT for requisite training per CfE timeline, as provided at each implementation meeting.
- C. Procure contracts to provide interventions per CfE timeline, as provided at each implementation meeting.

TASK 4: Contract to provide quality assurance reporting and evaluation of core model components.

TASK 5: Draft evaluation plans per CfE timeline, as provided at the implementation meeting. 3 SSA/FFDCE-22-001

TASK 6: Maintain Institutional Review Board and DHS Research Board approval per CfE timeline, as provided at the implementation meeting.

TASK 7: Provide additional support to DSS to implement CfE, including develop a marketing campaign to support recruitment of resource parents; review, evaluate and modify policies as needed policies and other materials for resource parent recruitment, retention and support.

A. Develop and launch marketing campaigns per CfE timeline, as provided at each implementation meeting.

B. Review, evaluate and modify policies as needed policies and other materials for resource parent recruitment, retention and support.

Timelines outlined above are subject to change upon the mutual written agreement.

Signature of Authorized LDSS Representative:

Date:

Signature of Authorized DHS/SSA Representative:

Date: