**Considerations for Prospective Families**

**Designed for Child Placing Agencies and Professionals**

A collaborative group representing youth, parents, community-based and county organizations developed this list of considerations to align recruitment, foster parent training, and placement matching with the current needs through clear expectations and intentional stories. This information is freely available and shareable.

**Points for Communication**

* Exploratory (examples: foster care websites, Binti, MNAdopt, informational sessions)
* Application process
* Initial training
* Continuing education & ongoing foster parent support
* Transitions (planned or unplanned)

**1. Helping Families Understand the Agency’s Current Needs**

* Provide clear communication of current fostering needs of your agency. This includes what messages you plan to reinforce throughout your work with families. Examples may be:
  + *Thank you for your interest in becoming a foster parent. We prioritize applications to serve children ages 6 and older, especially teens.  Our primary goal is for children to return to their parents/guardians, and our foster families are important to this process. When you are caring for a child in foster care, we expect you to be in relationship with their family, including:*
* *Being a mentor*
* *Supporting them to successfully reunify; and*
* *Building meaningful relationships to support child/ren and parents remaining together.*

*Our responsibility as a licensing agency is to provide training and walk alongside you as a partner to create these new relationships. We look forward to sharing more about how we do this together in our informational session. For more information regarding foster care while you wait for an informational meeting, please explore these resources: insert resources.*

* *We do not have a foster to adopt program. If adoption is your primary focus, please see the following list of adoption agencies in Minnesota. Most children will return to the care of their parents or transition to relatives; only in situations where this is not possible will foster parents be considered as a possible adoptive resource. Therefore, families that are hoping to adopt are often best served by working with a private agency that focuses on adoption.* [*https://www.mnadopt.org/resources/private-agencies/*](https://www.mnadopt.org/resources/private-agencies/)
* *We are in need of families who provide respite care. Respite care can be beneficial for children and families as it allows caregivers to step away from caregiving responsibilities and take a break. Respite is typically planned in advance for short periods of time, such as one weekend per month. Even a short break can help contribute to a long lasting, healthy foster experience.*
* *Our community has additional ways to support children and families involved in foster care. These include: insert examples.*
* Begin the groundwork of their role. Share a little of what expectations your agency will have. Examples may include:
* Foster Parents can offer emotional support, encouragement, modeling and child development learnings to parents. There is a wide range of how individuals and systems assist (or deter) foster parents to support parents. Our commitment is providing the necessary resources so prospective families feel prepared to support children and their families.
* The child’s family is a resource for a foster family’s ability to provide the best care for the child. Parenting together offers the foster family more support to celebrate the child’s milestones and eases transitions. Learn more about relationship building through these resources: [Birth and Foster Parent Partnership (BFPP) | CTF Alliance](https://ctfalliance.org/partnering-with-parents/bfpp/)
* Families helping families. Give examples of how relationships can look and tangible tools (pictures, texts, attending school activities together, shared parenting). We believe there is always a way to find safe communication with families.

**2. Families Acquiring Information before Licensing**

* [Podcasts - MN Adopt](https://www.mnadopt.org/about/podcasts/) Podcasts are filled with valuable resources for prospective and current adoptive and foster families, as well as professionals.  They are created to meet a foster family’s busy schedule (less than 25 minutes) and packed with information to help navigate the complexities and needs of foster care and adoption.
* [Home - Minnesota Kinship Navigation (mnkinship.org)](https://mnkinship.org/) This tool offers free, unlimited access to information and answers to some of the most frequently asked questions for kinship caregivers.
* Foster Parents are a support for families, not a substitute. [Birth Parent/Foster Parent Relationships to Support Family Reunification - Child Welfare Information Gateway](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.childwelfare.gov%2Ftopics%2Fpermanency%2Freunification%2Fparents%2Freunification%2F&data=04%7C01%7CKRickord%40stdavidscenter.org%7C9c22edcc3d144a390fad08d993f3554b%7C8a1dec1812f14b35a64da6de2bb8494a%7C0%7C0%7C637703495613787276%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=WbutckfQe1fEcWSDnIxeVvD%2BQESDWZnwTvDs51%2B7rls%3D&reserved=0)
* QPI Principles & Practices (Infographic and agreements) [Priorities — QPI - MN (qpimn.org)](https://www.qpimn.org/our-priorities)
* Offer connection to a current foster parent if the prospective family is interested.

**3. Learning from Lived Experience Individuals**

Make sure to indicate this as part of the overall process. The following are possible resources. *Learning from youth and families is valuable as you begin your journey of fostering. We hold a collective priority of understanding & respecting of child and family’s culture.*

* Youth
* QPI-MN Youth Brochures [Youth — QPI - MN (qpimn.org)](https://www.qpimn.org/youth)
* Testimonials
* Birth Parents
* “A letter to a future foster parent” from a birth parent
* [Upstream Stories: Foster - The Reel Hope Project](https://www.thereelhopeproject.org/upstream-stories-foster/)
* Foster / Kin / Resource Families
* Q & A with foster families as part of the informational process before licensing.
* Invite current foster families to join as a partner in informational meetings and training. Sharing in this manner can have a positive experience of opening dialogue around differences caring for someone else’s children.
* [Upstream Stories: Foster - The Reel Hope Project](https://www.thereelhopeproject.org/upstream-stories-foster/)

**4. Licensing Process**

There are several items that can set a foundation of understanding and collaboration during the licensing process. Here are just a few to get you started.

* Department of Human Services Practice Guides: Using Relatives and alternative child care arrangements
* [Supporting Collaborative Birth and Foster Parent Relationships in Child Welfare (CW 360º 2022) – Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare (umn.edu)](https://cascw.umn.edu/portfolio-items/supporting-collaborative-birth-and-foster-parent-relationships-in-child-welfare-cw-360o-2022/)
* Matrix of Birth and Foster Parent Strategies [Birth and Foster Parent Partnership (BFPP) | CTF Alliance](https://ctfalliance.org/partnering-with-parents/bfpp/#:~:text=The%20Birth%20and%20Foster%20Parent%20Partnership%20%28BFPP%29%20is,of%20the%20number%20of%20youth%20in%20foster%20care.)
* Initial (comfort) Call [Comfort Call Resources — QPI - MN (qpimn.org)](https://www.qpimn.org/new-page)
* Sibling Bill of Rights [Bulletin 18-68-15 Foster Care Sibling Bill of Rights (weebly.com)](https://umaictraining.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/2/7/122750856/foster_care_children_bill_of_rights.pdf#:~:text=The%202018%20Minnesota%20legislative%20session%20established%20a%20Foster,are%20the%20longest%20meaningful%20connection%20s%20in%20life.) Effective August 1, 2018, child welfare agency staff shall provide a copy of the attached Sibling Bill of Rights Commissioner’s Form to children at the time they enter foster care, and to adult siblings of a child entering foster care, when known, and to their foster care provider. The form should be signed by the child, caseworker, and foster care provider. This should also be documented in a case note in the Social Service Information System (SSIS).
* QPI Principles & Practices (infographic and agreements)

**Other Strategies for Success**

* Offer information in multiple different formats. Consider print materials, digital, emails, social media or communication platforms such as Facebook.
* Location options – in-person or virtual.