

Foster Parent Mentoring Program

Purpose:

Eckerd Community Alternatives (ECA) recognizes that newly licensed foster parents can benefit from hands-on training and support, in addition to pre-service (Professional Parenting) training. ECA also recognizes that currently licensed foster parents are one of the best resources to provide this support as they have experience with the system of care and community. Foster parents often serve as informal mentors for each other; however, ECA would like to formalize this relationship with training and criteria. ECA also wants to recognize and compensate foster parent mentors with a monthly stipend for their services.

Expected Outcomes:

As a result of the Foster Parent Mentoring Program, the following outcomes are anticipated:

- Improved satisfaction (90%) with ECA for all mentee families impacting retention
- Placement stability for mentees
- Improved relationship and understanding of the system of care, including working with biological families

Description of who will be served:

Newly licensed foster parents in the Eckerd Community Alternatives system of Licensed Care or current, existing foster parents recognized as requiring some additional assistance or support.

Process of establishing foster parent mentors from the system of care:

- The contracted Licensing Agencies with Eckerd Community Alternatives will provide the oversight of their foster parents who are either mentoring others or being mentored in collaboration with the Foster Parent Program Director who will have general oversight of the program.
- The Licensing Agencies as well as the Foster Parent Associations will make recommendations of individuals/parents that they think are appropriate to be foster parent mentors.
- Appropriate foster parent mentors are those who do not have open abuse reports or a history of reports with indicators. They will also be active in the system meaning currently have children placed in their home. Mentors will be foster parents who have a desire to assist and support other foster parents. Foster parent mentors will also have been licensed for two years.
- The foster parent, Licensing Agency representative or Foster Parent Association representative will complete and submit the Foster Parent Mentoring Program application to the Foster Parent Program Director.
- The Foster Parent Mentor must attend the Foster Parent Mentoring Training.

- The Foster Parent Mentor must have a positive relationship with their Licensing Agency, the Eckerd Community Alternatives system of care and the Foster Parent Associations.

Foster parent mentor roles:

MENTOR 1

- To provide guidance and support to new foster families, including contact upon placement of new children and help advocate for specific needs
- To assist in dealing with “system” issues through guidance in navigating the system of care and support with school system issues and court-related issues.
- To provide support for existing foster families in crisis, to include situations such as disruptions and abuse investigations
- To assist in developing safety plans
- To assist in finding the appropriate contacts based on need and finding appropriate resources
- To work with the biological parents consistent with the case plan and permanency goal and care management recommendations
- To offer support when a child leaves their home (grief and loss)
- To offer support thorough the adoption process
- Submit monthly activity reports to ECA no later than the 5th of the month
- Monthly stipend of \$300

** Interactions between foster parent mentors and those they are mentoring can be completed via phone, e-mail or personal visits based on level of need.

MENTOR 2:

The Mentor 2 will provide all the above detailed supports and services and will also provide the following:

- Provide Professional Parenting training as a certified co-facilitator, a minimum of once per year
- Provide in-service training to foster parents, CMO's and ECA staff
- Represent foster parent peers on Advisory committees, local and statewide initiatives
- May participate in Child Welfare Pre-Service Training
- Representation on System of Care workgroups, including the Licensure Workgroup and attendance at meetings to include Leadership, Operations and occasional ECA Board meetings
- Monthly stipend of \$400

MENTOR 3 – System of Care Foster Parent Liaison:

The Mentor 3 will provide all the supports and services outlined in the Mentor 1 and 2 positions and will also provide the following:

- Partner with ECA administrative level regarding systemic needs
- Function as Leadership liaison with the local Foster Parent Association
- Triage with Placement Services to ensure the holistic assessment of children and to improve matching and placement stability outcomes

- Attend staffings, including but not limited to Children's Medical Services, to ensure that the foster parent perspective and expertise are represented.
- Attend ECA meetings to include but not limited to: Foster Parent Advisory Board, Leadership, Community Alliance, All Supervisor's Meeting, and Operations.
- The Mentor 3 will function as a paraprofessional and is eligible to work up to 30 hours weekly.

Training for foster parent mentoring program:

- A one day training will be held for all those who have requested to be foster parent mentors and have been determined as appropriate and must be attended prior to mentoring.
- This training will include the following topics:
 1. What is the role of the foster parent mentor?
 2. How to stay objective.
 3. What areas may the mentor be asked to assist with and a brief overview of these. (those listed above)
 4. Where do mentors go for assistance if needed?
 5. How do mentors get assigned families?
 6. Monthly reporting

Overview of foster parent mentoring program:

- Once a mentor has completed the steps above, he or she will be matched with new or existing foster parents who request a mentor.
- The Foster Parent Mentoring Program will be introduced/discussed during the foster parent training so that all new foster parents are aware of this option. It will also be discussed at Foster Parent Association meetings and provided to Licensing Agencies to disperse in order to inform existing foster parents of this option as well as possibly becoming mentors.
- Depending on need, a mentor will stay with their foster parent(s) for 3 to 6 months.
- Each mentor will record phone calls and visits on the Mentor Activity Log to account for the time spent mentoring a family and must provide a minimum of 2 to 15 hours per month.
- When a mentor is utilized in the system of care, he or she will receive a base payment of \$300 or \$400 per month depending on the mentor's assigned level.
- All foster parent mentors utilized during the year will be recognized at the annual Foster Parent Appreciation event.
- At the one year Anniversary, the individual or family who received the mentoring will complete a review form in order to determine further needs of this program. This will be sent to the Foster Parent Program Director for review and if needed, any further action.



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**Eckerd Community Alternatives
Foster Parent Mentoring Program**

Mentoring Application:

Name of Potential Mentor: _____

Address:

Telephone:

Licensing Agency: _____

Individual Completing Form: _____

How long have you been a foster parent in the Eckerd Community Alternative system of Care?

How many children are currently placed in your home and what are their ages?

What is your licensed capacity?

How long have you been with your Licensing Agency and if you have changed agencies, why did this occur?

What do you enjoy most about being a foster parent?

What are your frustrations related to foster care?

Why do you feel that you would be a good mentor for other foster parents?

In what ways do you feel you could support new foster parents or existing foster parents in the system of care?

Are you willing to attend a training for foster parent mentors?

What information would you have found helpful/useful as a new foster parent that a mentor could potentially provide?

Are you Pro Parenting Certified?

Are you a member of the Foster Parent Association (if yes, which one?)

Are you a member of the ECA Foster Parent Advisory Board (or any other organized board/committee)?

Are you willing to facilitate training to other foster parents and ECA staff?

Signature

Date



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**Eckerd Community Alternative
Foster Parent Mentoring Program
Feedback Survey**

Foster Parent Information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Licensing Agency: _____

Mentor Information:

Name of Mentor:

Telephone:

Licensing Agency: _____

How long did you have a foster parent mentor?

Was the program explained to you so that you felt you understood it clearly and why you might request it?

Did your foster parent mentor support and assist you with your questions, issues, needs? If yes, how was this done? If no, how were your needs not met?

Did you feel you had appropriate access to your foster parent mentor? If no, why?

Do you feel this program was beneficial for you?

Did your Mentor discuss and encourage that you partner with the birth family?

What recommendations would you make to improve this program?

Overall, how would you rate your experience with ECA? 1 – 2 – 3 (1 = best)