

# WHAT'S REQUIRED/ BEST PRACTICES



Presented by:  
DaJari Patterson, MSW  
Adoption Program Consultant

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Practice Matters: CPA Policy and Practice Conversations



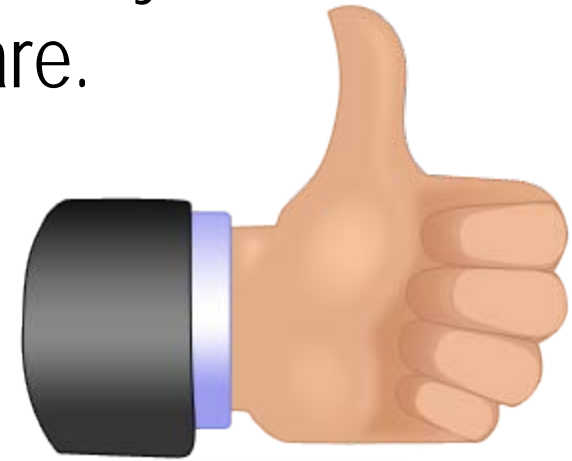
# APPROVAL REQUIREMENTS

Improved foster care provider assessment procedures can help county child welfare agencies take preventive measures to increase the safety and well-being of children they place in foster care.

Johnson, Kristen.

Children's Research Center (National Council on Crime and Delinquency)


2005



# TRENDS IN FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

STANDARD	PRACTICE POINT	KEYS TO WRITING A GOOD NARRATIVE
Motivation	Assists the assessor in ensuring that the prospective family has realistic expectations of what it takes to be a successful partner	<p>Don't be afraid to discuss unrealistic expectations.</p> <p>Talk with both applicants about their individual motivation to ensure that one spouse is not just going along with the other.</p>
Family well-being Childhood  Family of origin	<p>Assists assessor in determining whether or not a prospective family is comfortable with discussing sexuality with a child who may have been sexually abused.</p> <p>Assists assessor in determining applicants feelings and attitudes towards birth family.</p>	<p>The assessor must be comfortable discussing subjects that may have been taboo in their own family of origin.</p> <p>Discuss the differences between how the applicant learned about sex and how they would handle it now.</p> <p>For applicants with an estranged relationship with their own birth family, discuss in detail how they feel about a child in care maintaining contact with their birth family.</p>
History of childhood abuse and neglect	Assists assessor in determining if there are any unresolved issues with the applicant and past abuse/neglect	Discuss the applicant's resolution to any issues of abuse or neglect

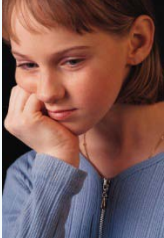

# TRENDS IN FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

STANDARD	PRACTICE POINT	KEYS TO WRITING A GOOD NARRATIVE
CRC/CPS HISTORY	NON-NEGOTIABLE	<p>Discuss all allegations/arrest in full detail            Discuss with the applicant what the lessons learned from this experience.</p>
HEALTH/DISABILITIES  	<p>Ensures that the prospective applicant is physically, emotionally and mentally capable of parenting a child in care.</p>	<p>Review the medical form in its entirety. Discuss any and all medical diagnosis and medications.</p> <p>Discuss the side effects of the medications and discuss the possible effects they may have on their ability to parent a child. Discuss any non-prescription medications and any side effects.</p> <p>Review the stress index and mental health questionnaire (IMPACT) , Discuss high stress levels and the ways the alleviate stress.</p>
Family Interactions Previous relationship	<p>Assists the assessor in determining how the applicant adjusts to accepting children from a previous relationship (not born to them)</p>	<p>Discuss with the “step” parent how they get along with the children, what was the adjustment like. What are their feelings towards the other biological parent.</p>

# TRENDS IN FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

STANDARD	PRACTICE POINT	KEYS TO WRITING A GOOD NARRATIVE
Single parents	Ensure that the applicants support system is adequate	Discuss specifically who they identify as their support system, where are these people in relation to where they reside, what type of assistance are they willing to offer to the applicant.
Infertility	Ensure that any feelings about the inability to conceive are fully resolved	Discuss feelings about infertility with both applicants
Financial situation	Ensure that the applicant's are able to meet their own basic needs and the needs of a child on a reimbursement basis	Review the financial form in its entirety discuss any anomalies.
Observation of home environment  Sleeping Arrangements	Ensure that the home is safe for placement	Fireplace-discuss fireplace tools and screen Trampoline-is there a safety net?  All household members should be in a bedroom. An adult should not give up their room for a placement.
Continuing Education	Identify possible training opportunities early to ensure that foster parents receive the required number of training hours	Go beyond "the applicant knows that they must obtain 20 hours of training beginning 60 days after approval."  Discuss specifically trainings that may be beneficial to them based on the type of child or children they desire.

# TRENDS IN FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

STANDARDS	PRACTICE POINT	KEYS TO WRITING A GOOD NARRATIVE
<p>Verifications/Observations</p>	<p>Ensure that all verifications are current</p> <p>Send CPS and CRC results early in the process to avoid delays in approval or denial</p>	<p>Check the expiration dates of car insurance and driver's license</p> <p>Check all smoke detectors/carbon monoxide detectors</p> <p>CPS checks completed by State office staff only</p>
<p>Desired Placement</p>  	<p>Ensure that the family has the protective capacity to meet the needs of the child desired</p>	<p>Associate the applicants parental capacity (strength) with child's needs.</p> <p>Discuss any special training or skills to parent a child with the identified characteristics. Be behaviorally specific.</p>
<p>References</p>	<p>Gather other's opinions and recommendations about the applicants ability to parent a child in care</p>	<p>Summarize the references within the narrative.</p> <p>References should be completed by friends, family members or colleagues who are aware of the applicants relationship with others and children in particular.</p> <p>ALL county offices and CPA's must provide a reference for a previous family in a timely manner. If you experience any difficulty in obtaining the reference, please contact OPM or the Permanency Unit for assistance.</p>



# TRENDS IN FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

STANDARD	PRACTICE POINT	KEYS TO WRITING A GOOD NARRATIVE
Approval		<p>The following statement must be on each home study: "The (name of family) meet the Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services' Minimum Standards for Resource Parents. The applicants were evaluated and found to be in compliance with the standards. Included are copies of all verification and attachments."</p>

## Other Quality Assurance Issues:

- If a family states something directly, the statement should be in quotations.
- Complete spell and grammar checks prior to approving.
- Ensure that all forms are completed in their entirety. You may use the DFCS standard forms or a comparable form.

# Additional Tips For Writing a Good Narrative

- Use words that give an exact meaning. Avoid general terms like "stable", "nice", "good parents."
- Eliminate unnecessary words. Get straight to the important points.
- Do not use slang, lingo or local jargon
- Give complete information



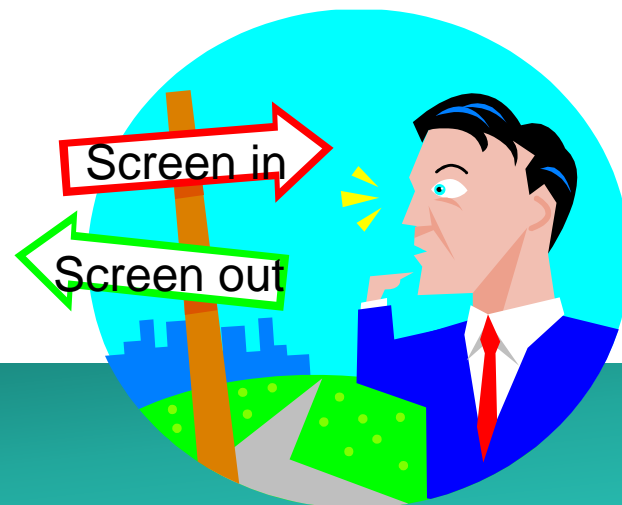
# DECISION MAKING

Everyone who writes studies and approves families must answer two fundamental questions:

- Do I begin an assessment with the underlying belief that I need to screen out families, uncovering secrets or misconceptions that might make me reluctant to place a child in their home?

OR

- Do I begin an assessment with the belief that I need to screen in families who show potential and interest by determining what support, training, or resources they would need to successfully care for a child?



# DECISION MAKING

- Collecting information and discussing it with the family is not making an assessment. An assessment answers the “So what?” question. As you gather information you must constantly ask and answer the following questions:
  - What do I know?
  - How is this information useful for assessing this family for the specific child/youth the family is seeking to have placed in their home?
  - What more do I still need to know?
  - Why do I need to know this?
  - What do I recommend be done, based on the information that I have?

Each section of information gathered for the Family Assessment should be assessed to ensure that you have collected sufficient information to document whether the family meets the basic, legal requirements to become a foster parent in Georgia and with your agency. You should also collect enough information to ensure that the family can meet the needs of the specific child/youth they seek to have placed.

# DECISION MAKING

- In addition, the following elements should be the focus of your decision making:
  - What is their capacity to keep the child/youth safe?
  - What is their individual and collective understanding of the child/youth's future or anticipated needs, and their willingness to commit to meeting those needs while the child is in their care?
  - Which interventions with the child/youth and family are necessary to ensure that the placement with this family would be a success?
  - Given what you know about this family, do you recommend that the family be approved to foster the specific child/youth they desire?



Adapted from Epstein, N.B. Bishop,, D.S., Lewis, S. (1978). The McMaster of Family Functioning. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 4(4). 19-31

# DECISION MAKING

- Remember, it's ok to say No (or not right now) to a prospective applicant. Consider the needs of the counties you serve and the needs of your agency. Maybe they can assist in other ways.

Respite



Childcare during trainings

Volunteer in the office

Volunteer at recruitment events

# DECISION MAKING

Let's look at one agency's decision to approve/deny a foster parent.

Warning: This clip contains adult language. Viewer discretion is advised.....

# THE PORK FACTOR

