

# NEBRASKA

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DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



Jim Pillen, Governor

## FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT DILIGENT RECRUITMENT PLAN 2025-2029

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Children and Family Services

*Helping People Live Better Lives*

CB expects that a comprehensive recruitment plan will include:

- A description of the characteristics of children for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed;
- Specific strategies to reach out to all parts of the community;
- Diverse methods of disseminating both general information about being a foster/adoptive parent and child-specific information;
- Strategies for assuring that all prospective foster/ adoptive parents have access to agencies that license/approve foster/adoptive parents, including location and hours of services so that the agencies can be accessed by all members of the community;
- Strategies for training staff to work with diverse communities including cultural, racial, and socio-economic variations;
- Strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers;
- Non-discriminatory fee structures; and
- Procedures for a timely search for prospective parents for a child needing an adoptive placement, including the use of exchanges and other interagency efforts, provided that such procedures ensure that placement of a child in an appropriate household is not delayed by the search for a same race or ethnic placement.

Nebraska has focused on prevention services for several years and will continue to do so in order to support families and prevent system involvement, including removal from the home. When removal does occur, CFS aims to match the right, supportive foster home to the child for stable and successful placement. CFS prioritizes relative or kinship foster homes. Data from the state's information system in December 2023 showed that approximately 63% of the youth placed in foster care were placed with a relative or kin. Nebraska's relative and kinship home approval process was approved by ACF on April 1, 2024, increasing the ability to provide additional foster care funding.

If a relative or kinship placement is not available, the child will be placed in a licensed foster home. To become a licensed foster home, applicants must complete pre-service training, complete a foster care licensing application, have background checks completed, a home study, and provide references. Nebraska recognizes that diligent recruitment of foster homes is essential to ensure recruitment will match the ethnic and racial diversity of children in care. Nebraska's *2025-2029 CFSP Items 33-36* provide additional details on the functioning of foster/adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention.

### **Characteristics of Children in Need of Foster and Adoptive Homes**

CFS contracts with Child Placing Agencies (CPA) to diligently recruit families. CFS meets quarterly with CPAs to discuss their progress in recruiting and licensing new foster homes that will meet the unique and individual characteristics of the children and youth in foster care. CFS aims to increase the number of foster families that are diverse in culture, race, and ethnicity across Nebraska within local communities to help children remain at their original school.

CFS has chosen the following populations for targeted diligent recruitment efforts based on case staffings and youth where it has been difficult to secure placement:

- Children/youth who are 12 years old and older;
- Children/youth who have more than five previous placements;
- Children/youth who require placement without other children;
- Children/youth who need higher levels of care;
- Children/youth whose placement has been disrupted; and
- Sibling groups of three or more children.

### **Strategies to Reach All Communities**

CFS contracts with CPAs statewide that cover both urban and rural areas of Nebraska. The CPAs engage local communities about the need for foster and adoptive families and the licensure process. CFS works with CPAs to recruit and retain foster parents and to increase the number of licensed foster homes by monitoring and communicating the needs and the population of children and youth in foster care. CFS holds foster care events across the state to communicate the need for foster parents; swag is offered that reflects the Nebraska foster care information toll-free hotline number.

Collaboratively recruiting and advertising the need for foster and adoptive homes statewide by utilizing social media, outreach, and word of mouth continue to be the most effective means of recruitment in Nebraska.

CFS contracts with the Nebraska Foster and Adoption Parent Association (NFAPA), which provides statewide foster care information. NFAPA manages a toll-free hotline number to answer questions about foster care and adoption and facilitates foster and adoptive support groups and trainings. NFAPA is the contact for individuals interested in information for Adopt US Kids.

CFS partners with Nebraska tribes to provide technical assistance and support with foster home licensure and the relative/kinship standards to ensure state and tribal requirements are met and increase federal IV-E funding for tribal homes.

### **Methods of Sharing Information About Being a Foster/Adoptive Parent and Child-Specific Information**

The DHHS public website has information about the foster care and adoption processes and requirements. CFS utilizes special events and social media to communicate foster and adoption information statewide and locally. Nebraska had a press release and Governor's proclamation for National Foster Care Month. CFS staff attend foster care preservice training in local areas to discuss the benefits and special needs of supporting teenage youth in care. Informational foster family fliers are posted at local libraries and schools to communicate the need for new foster families.

CFS Foster Care Resource Development (FCRD) Supervisors participate in meetings with each contracted CPA in their area to discuss recruitment and retention of foster homes. These meetings and discussions will continue to occur over the next five years. During these meetings, discussion of the need for foster families who can provide care for youth identified above as needing targeted recruitment efforts are discussed. There is a need for extra support for the foster families and supervision for these youth placed in homes.

CPAs provide information about foster and adoptive parenting by utilizing social media, websites, advertising, networking, and special events to communicate Nebraska's current foster care and adoption landscape. Some examples include newsletters, radio advertisements, billboards, TV commercials, informational booths at community fairs, speaking at local colleges and other community organizations, and informational packets to new inquiries who are interested in learning about foster care.

CPAs also focus on foster home retention efforts by holding events such as annual foster family picnics, special appreciation events like Foster Parent Night Out at the local YMCA, informational nights, and open houses with family activities. CPAs also provide specialized conferences, expert panels, and training topics to increase foster parents' knowledge of children's medical needs, trauma, and crisis management while fostering. They are also reaching out to potential foster homes through social media.

Once a child is identified as needing a foster home placement, child-specific information is shared via the common referral process that DHHS submits to all possible CPAs when placement is needed for a home.

### **Access to Agencies for Prospective Foster/Adoptive Parents**

When CFS places a child or youth in a foster family home, a list of the current contracted CPAs is provided. FCRD staff also contact the family to discuss their choice of working with a particular agency. All foster homes are assigned individualized staff for specialized support. Each CFS service area has multiple CPAs who support foster families statewide.

CFS contracts with the Nebraska Foster and Adoption Parent Association (NFAPA) to manage a toll-free number for individuals who are looking for foster care and adoption information. NFAPA provides foster care and adoption packets that include all contracted Child Placing Agencies that are providing services statewide. When a foster home is connected with a CPA, the agency will provide support during the placement of a foster child in their home. Agencies have 24/7 access available to help in times of emergencies or crisis. NFAPA also works with and mentors foster families and answers inquiries through Adopt US Kids.

CFS plans to enhance its public DHHS website and increase social media awareness to provide Nebraskans with CPAs' contact information.

### **Staff Training for Working with Diverse Communities**

CFS is family-driven, recognizes Nebraska's diversity, and understands the importance of working effectively with families and respecting their culture, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. CFS new worker training learning modules encompass diversity, equity, and inclusion to support staff in working respectfully and successfully with children, youth, families, and communities.

Designated CFS staff will also attend the Full Circle Conference on October 24, 2024. The conference has keynote speakers with unique backgrounds ranging from foster care to adoption. Insights are offered from experts familiar with the challenges and needs of families created through adoption, guardianship, foster care and kinship care. This provides education on relevant, quality, and diverse resources for families with a focus on race, identity, and adoption.

### **Strategies for Linguistic Barriers**

CFS utilizes a language interpreter phone line and other approved interpreters to alleviate linguistic barriers. CFS employs some bilingual staff who are fluent in Spanish; several CPAs also have bilingual Spanish-speaking staff.

### **Fee Structure**

CFS consistently compensates all relatives, kinship, and licensed foster homes by utilizing the Nebraska Caregiver Responsibility (NCR) tool. The NCR was developed in 2014 with three levels: essential, enhanced, and intensive. The NCR was updated in 2022 with two higher levels, intensive plus and specialized, to help meet the needs of children in foster care. All relative, kinship, and licensed homes are compensated, based on the use of this assessment tool, which is based on the age of the child and documents what the foster parent is doing in order to meet the needs of that child. The daily rates for foster care effective July 1, 2024:

<u>Service Name</u>		<u>Service Code</u>	<u>Rates</u>
Out of Home Maintenance			Daily
Essential	Age 0-5 Years	4880	\$26.10
	Age 6-11 Years		\$30.01
	Age 12-18 Years		\$32.61
Enhanced	Age 0-5 Years	4880	\$35.86
	Age 6-11 Years		\$39.78
	Age 12-18 Years		\$42.39
Intensive	Age 0-5 Years	4880	\$45.65
	Age 6-11 Years		\$49.58
	Age 12-18 Years		\$52.18
Intensive Plus	Age 0-5 Years	1539	\$72.36
	Age 6-11 Years		\$77.60
	Age 12-18 Years		\$80.42
Specialized	Age 0-5 Years	7757	\$100.12
	Age 6-11 Years		\$106.30
	Age 12-18 Years		\$108.77

### **Timely Search for Prospective Adoption Placement**

Nebraska utilizes the following resources for the timely search for prospective parents for a child needing an adoptive placement:

- Contract with the Nebraska Heart Gallery to post information about children available for adoption on their website exchange.
- Wendy's Wonderful Kids assists with recruitment and locating timely permanency for children.
- An internal Family Finding team locates relatives that can provide permanency to foster children.