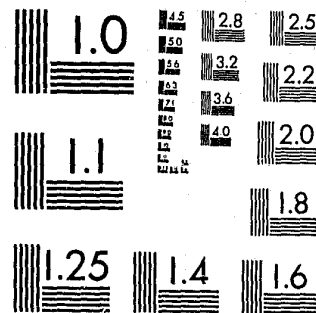


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THE NATIONAL CENTER ON INSTITUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES

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SMALL GROUP MODEL
FOR

SPECIALIZED FOSTER CARE
FOR "HARD TO PLACE" JUVENILE OFFENDERS

BY
KIMBERLY BARNES

MAY 9, 1980

X
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PREPARED FOR: THE NATIONAL CENTER ON INSTITUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES
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MAR 10 1981

ACQUISITIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Specialized Foster Care

As the youth deinstitutionalization movement gains legitimacy and popularity, the concept of specialized foster care is noted with increasing frequency. Many state and local youth service agencies are attempting to utilize foster care models in their deinstitutionalization efforts. Problems have developed in these attempts, causing some people to abandon the idea and others to make patchwork repairs which solve immediate crises. The problems generally arise because a clearly defined and developed system of specialized foster care is absent. Because of its basic similarity to traditional foster care, specialized foster care is generally viewed as a "variation on a theme." This "variation" concept must be abandoned, and a new set of premises, objectives, and methods developed. Traditional foster care is generally defined as temporary substitute family care. The basic assumptions that are made, begin with the accepted societal notions of what a "good" family look like: the key actors, structure, and the goals/objectives of that structure. The second basic notion is that children need the 'ideal family' to grow and mature into useful participants in the society. The necessity of appropriate role models and the support and guidance provided by the 'ideal family' structure is stressed. All of these notions are useful and appropriate when one is dealing with young children, and traditional foster care has proven very successful in meeting the needs of this original target population. The grounding assumptions and identified needs of the target population are appropriate and therefore, successful. The key word that needs addressing in shifting from traditional to specialized foster care

is 'target population.' When developing a specialized foster care program for troubled adolescents and youthful offenders there is a dramatic shift in the identity of the target population. There is also a drastic shift in the needs of that population. Subsequently there must be a similar shift in the basic premises, objectives and methods that are utilized in a specialized foster care program. The failure to substitute a new set of basic assumptions, objectives and methods is responsible for the problems that have developed in most specialized foster care programs. By drastically changing the target population, appropriate foster care becomes an entirely "new song" rather than a "variation on a theme".

Purpose of the Manual

This manual is designed to provide state and local youth service agencies with a structure for developing a specialized foster care program for youth with delinquent and other "acting out" behaviors.

It deals with basic system structures, staffing, initiating a system, recruiting and developing foster parents, the placement process, system maintenance, and monitoring/evaluating the system. The forms and guidelines that are included are intended as demonstration models. The specialized foster care system model that is described may need minor adjustments or modifications to better fit into existing systems and/or to more effectively serve the targeted youth population.

It is hoped that this manual encourages the development of successful specialized foster care programs for youth in your area. It has been created to provide the structure and guidelines necessary for the development of

this under utilized system of resources to meet the needs of a large population of youth. Specialized foster care has been demonstrated to be a viable community based resource for troubled adolescents. It is not intended to be the answer to all of the problems and needs of youth requiring placement. It will, however, be useful for a significant number of those youth.

The specialized foster care systems developed and described in this manual deal with a target population of adolescents (12-18 years old) with delinquent or 'acting out behaviors'. This includes youth who are currently living in institutional settings, recently adjudicated offenders, adolescent sibling groups or individuals with severe 'acting out' behaviors, and youth with potential delinquency problems who are in danger of institutionalization. Appropriate behaviors range from anti-social 'acting out' such as chronic status offenses to serious delinquency problems. Specialized foster care can be utilized in several intervention roles: as a form of prevention, as an alternative to institutionalization, and as after care for institutionalized youth. For troubled adolescents who need placement outside of their natural home, specialized foster care can become the major service resource for an agency. A specialized foster care program has the diverse resources, in the form of foster parents, to provide individualized services which meet the specialized needs of the youth being served.

This specialized foster home model has been designed to describe a means to provide a community based, non-secure placement alternative for juvenile offenders. An agency must make a choice about the type of youth that they want

to provide service for. Juvenile offenders who are delinquent or institutionalized have the least alternatives for community based care of any juveniles in the youth service system. Community based care, and specifically specialized foster and group home care, has been shown to be a viable resource for the hard to place juvenile offender. Every effort should be made to maintain a juvenile in his/her natural home. However, when removal from the home is necessary, specialized foster care provides the opportunity for youth to remain in their own or comparable community.

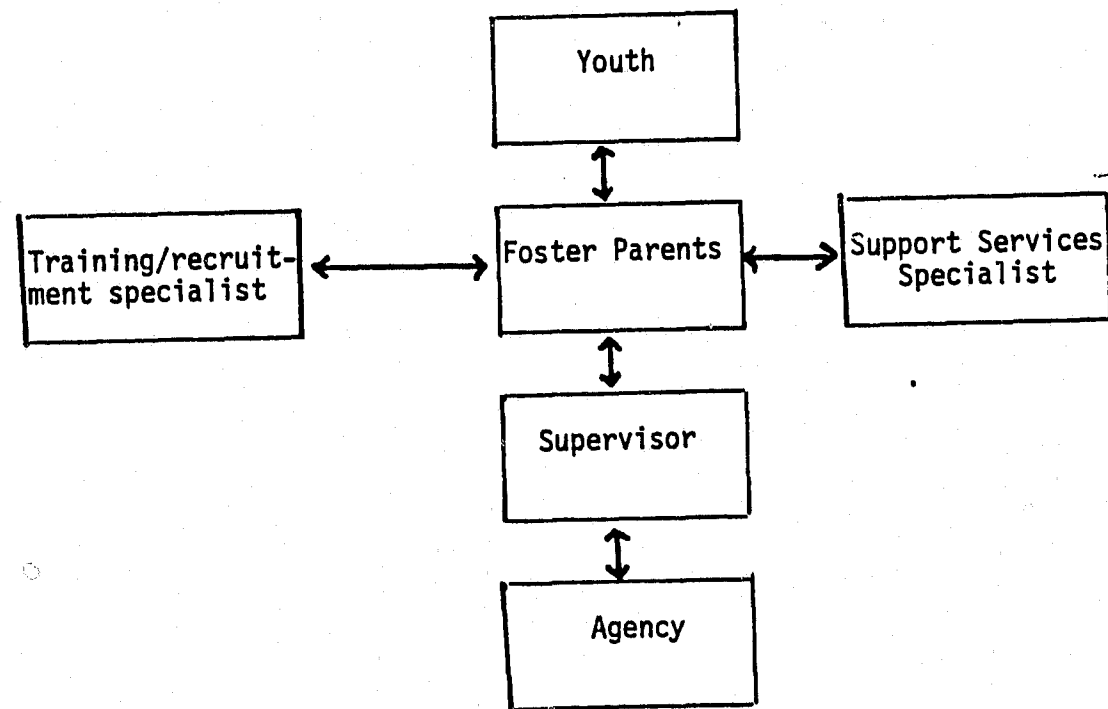
Each agency must choose the focus and direction of their service delivery. If one chooses to provide services for juvenile offenders, this manual should prove of assistance in developing and implementing a viable specialized foster care system to meet your community based placement needs.

This specialized foster home model is designed to provide a basic system framework incorporating the essential components of a viable specialized foster care system. It is flexible and easily adaptable for use in a variety of settings. The system components that are included in the following descriptions are considered essential to the development of a successful system.

Small Group Model

This model bears some structural resemblance to the traditional group home setting. The primary differences between specialized small group foster care and a traditional group home structure need to be noted, to avoid confusion between the two structures. The primary differences concern the number of youth in the foster home; the level of support for the foster parents and youth; and the 'in-house' environment. The specialized group foster homes are designed to

serve no more than four youth at one time. No counseling or therapy component is involved within the home, other than normal interaction between the foster parents and youth. The level of support services and general assistance for the foster parents is fairly low. The responsibilities and roles of the foster parents are substantial. The agency staffing pattern reflects these factors. The following diagram will illustrate the organizational structure of specialized small group foster care.



As you will notice, the above diagram (and all subsequent diagrams) is not in a standard format. The rationale behind this change concerns the primary role of the agency, supervisor, specialists, and foster parents - support. By placing the youth at the top of the diagram, the concept of support and the role of the other actors as support providers is visually apparent. In

a specialized foster care system - this is what support should look like.

The foster parents will have the primary casework responsibilities for youth placed in their home. For this reason the level of skill and training necessary to fulfill the role of foster parent is high. The foster parents need to be salaried personnel, with accountability to the supervising agency; specifically, a supervisor in the specialized foster home program. Because of the large amount of case responsibility, a two parent home is preferred. One of the foster parents must be able to be in the home on a continual basis.

Initial placement referrals will go through the supervising agency directly to the foster parents. It is the responsibility of the agency to insure that the youth has a documented need for placement, necessary case information to facilitate the placement, and program qualifications (i.e. age, geographical catchment area, behavioral standards). Upon receipt of the referral, the foster parents are responsible for all logistics regarding screening the referrals, arranging and conducting interviews with potential youth placements, collecting necessary data, and completing any paperwork required by the agency regarding the placement decision. If a youth is approved for placement in the home, the foster parents and youth develop a written placement plan outlining the placement goals and steps to achieving those goals. Time frames should be included. Upon placement, the foster parents have the responsibility for school enrollment, obtaining any special services for the youth - medical/dental care, psychological counseling, educational/vocational assistance, employment or any other services that are needed by the youth, to implement the placement goals. Foster parents are responsible for the maintenance of up to date case records.

The role of the agency staff is to provide general support and assistance to the foster parents, and minimally to the youth. Two types of agency specialists are needed in this model - recruitment/training specialist and support services specialist. The role of the recruitment/training specialist is rather self evident. This specialist is responsible for the recruiting, and approval of all specialized foster homes in the program. In addition to the initial training of the foster parents, ongoing training in specific areas of concern such as drug abuse, teenage sexuality, youth employment, case planning techniques is a primary responsibility of the recruitment/training specialist. After the initial training period, primary foster parent case responsibilities are transferred to the support services specialist. The support services specialist is there to assist the foster parents in maintaining the placements. This includes general assistance in regards to placement referrals, foster parent support, identifying and accessing community resources, and acting as a moderator when disputes between the foster parents and youth cannot be resolved 'in house'. As foster parents become more comfortable and acclimated to their role, the amount of services provided by the support services specialist should decrease with that particular set of foster parents.

The youth has the ultimate responsibility for the implementation of placement goals. Input from the youth must be included in the development, modification and monitoring of these goals. The support services specialist serves an 'ombudsman' role for youth in placement; dealing with any complaints or disputes regarding the placement. The foster parents are the primary support system for the youth, and are there to provide the youth with the assistance that he/she needs to achieve the placement/case goals. The support services specialist

and recruitment/training specialist are the primary support and resource system for the foster parents, and are there to provide the foster parent with tools and expertise that they need to assist the youth.

The Youth - Roles and responsibilities

Needless to say, the most important 'actor' in any specialized foster care system is the youth who are being placed in the foster homes. The sole purpose of the specialized foster care system is to provide appropriate placement, and social services to meet the individualized needs of older youth with problems. When discussing the ideas and responsibilities of youth, it is important to keep in focus the age and type of youth who are targeted for program participation - adolescents twelve to eighteen years old, with delinquent or other serious acting out behaviors.

Youth who have reached adolescence have the right and responsibility to actively participate in all stages of the placement process. They can provide invaluable assistance in the identification of needs and the development of a plan to meet those needs. Since the primary responsibility for implementing a case plan rests with the youth, they should have an intimate part in the development of the goals and plans to be implemented. When placement in the specialized foster care program is included in a case plan, the youth needs to be included in the entire placement process. Through their inclusion, youth develop an investment in making the placement and the plan successful. This investment, combined with the youth assisted identification of needs will create a solid foundation for a successful placement. When the social service worker and youth have developed a case plan which includes placement in a specialized foster

care home, the youth should be provided information regarding the program to be utilized. The referring social service worker (if applicable), youth, and specialized foster care worker need to meet to discuss the program and types of available foster homes that may be appropriate for the youth. They need to determine a mutually satisfactory foster home type regarding: degree of structure, nurturing needs, atmosphere, and relationship with foster parent(s). These decisions will be governed by the case goals, degree of maturity/immaturity, level of independence/dependence, and acknowledged problem areas and/or behaviors demonstrated by the youth. Once a type of foster home is determined, the specialized foster home is determined, the supervisor will need to identify possible placements for the youth. This process includes contracting the identified foster homes and discussing the youth's possible placement in the home. If the foster parents are willing to pursue placement, the youth must re-enter the process. Meetings between the youth and perspective foster parents are arranged and conducted by the perspective foster parents. During this placement interview, both the youth and foster parent(s) should ask any questions and express any concerns they have regarding the placement. After this process, either party has the freedom to accept or reject the placement possibility. If it is decided that the home or youth is inappropriate or unacceptable to the other party, the placement process begins again at the point where a potential placement is identified. This sequence continues until an appropriate placement is located. When there does not appear to be an already existing placement for the youth, the youth should be consulted. Perhaps the youth is willing to alter certain expectations or desires which are proving to be a barrier in placement. The youth may also be aware of a relative, friend, or neighbor who

could provide a home for him/her. The extended family of the youth should always be the first consideration for placement, and be actively pursued. Placement suggestions provided by the youth should be actively explored. Once the youth has been placed in a specialized small group foster home, his/her major responsibilities concern maintaining the placement and fulfilling case plan goals. To briefly summarize the youth's roles and responsibilities in specialized foster placement the following list has been assembled:

1. To assist in the identification of personal needs
2. To assist in the development of a written placement plan
3. To assist in the identification of a foster home type
4. To meet with perspective foster parents and openly discuss issues concerning placement in the home
5. To assist the ultimate placement decision
6. To assist in the development of a clear placement plan and performance contract
7. To work on achieving goals developed in the placement plan
8. To participate in any modifications or adjustments in the placement plan and performance contract

Note that the age and abilities of the individual youth will determine the level to which her/his participation is required. It is however, necessary to provide the opportunity for as much participation as reasonably possible.

The individual case plans will need to be reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis. After placement this review process should take place at intervals not exceeding three (3) months. The youth, specialized foster care worker, fos-

ter parents, referral source, and natural parent(s) (if applicable) should be participants in this review process. Goal achievements and progress towards goals should be noted. Alternate goals will need to be developed. When prior stated goals appear unrealistic in the youth's current situation, these should be modified to reflect the new situations. As in any case plan, the case plan needs to reflect realistic, achievable goals, strategies for achieving those goals, and time frames for goal accomplishment.

Natural Parent Relationship

Another area of youth responsibility regards the continuation of the relationship with his/her natural parents. If the case plan includes the youth returning to the natural home, visitation between the natural family and youth is essential. The level of interaction between the youth and natural parents will result from considerations regarding the existing relationship, the time frame on a planned return to the natural home, the expressed desires of the youth and the level of accessibility for visits. Phone and letter contact between the two should be unlimited, unless the phoning is long-distance. If the phoning is long distance, the youth could be limited to one call a week unless unusual circumstances warrant additional calls. Long distance phone calls between the youth and his/her family need to be agency re-imbursable expenses. If the natural family contacts have a negative effect on the youth the contacts should be limited or in some instances (where return is not anticipated or desired) of severe negative responses by the youth, discontinued.

To facilitate the identification and development of an appropriate specialized foster care placement, a great deal of information about the

youth is needed. This information is necessary in the initial youth referral stage. The following list is information required for youth referrals to the specialized foster care program:

- I. 1. Referral agency name, address, phone number and case contact person
2. Date of referral
- II. Written social history of youth including:
 - a. youth's name
 - b. youth's social security number
 - c. agency identification number (if appropriate)
 - d. youth's age/race/sex/date of birth
 - e. agency's legal responsibility for youth
 - f. financial status of youth - i.e.: social security, medical assistance, public assistance
- III. 1. Reason for referral
2. Statement of initial placement goals and projected time-table
- IV. 1. Legal status of youth
2. Legal history of youth - include any juvenile court interventions, and dates
3. Pending legal action regarding youth
- V. 1. Medical history of youth
2. Brief description of the youth's physical, emotional, mental, educational and social development and current status

3. Identification of any notable physical or mental abilities/disabilities of the youth
4. Dates and results of any psychological or developmental tests and the recommendations of the test(s)
5. Describe the youth -- in terms of his/her personality, character, and behaviors
6. Presenting problem areas of youth
7. Youth's school record
8. Youth's previous placement history
9. Family background -- parental descriptions and current situation; sibling description(s) and current situation(s)
10. Youth's relationship with his/her family

The Foster Family -- Roles and Responsibilities

Perhaps the most vital 'key actors' in a specialized foster care delivery system are the foster parents themselves. While staff is essential, one must always bear in mind that even the best staff cannot function without a cluster of foster parents to provide the shelter and nurturing that are necessary for youth in the program.

Within the specialized foster care program structure, the foster parents should have a partnership status with the direct service staff. Inherent in this partnership relationship is a division of roles and responsibilities. By defining those roles and responsibilities in a clear concise manner, the partnership can develop into a close interdependent relationship

progressing toward the same goal providing individualized comprehensive services to troubled adolescents. The primary role of the staff is to support and assist the foster parents. The primary role of the foster parents is to support and assist youth placed in their homes.

Structure

In the specialized small group foster home structure, the foster parents bear the primary direct service and case management responsibility for youth placed in the home. As a result, clear concise definitions of foster parent roles and responsibilities are necessary. It is also important to delineate basic qualifications for foster parent position. Foster parents therefore should be salaried personnel with youth management qualifications similar to other agency staff. Foster homes in this case do have a maximum capacity for four (4) youth. The rationale for this limitation is the assumption that these homes will be utilized for adolescents with delinquent and/or other moderate to severe acting out behaviors. When dealing with this type of youth, the amount of energy, and commitment that is necessary to adequately meet the intense level of need that these youth have, makes the capacity limitation necessary. The structure of support creates three agency staff positions to assist the foster parents. These staff have specific areas of responsibility for this assistance - training and recruitment, resources and support, and administrative supervision. The agency role in this model is clearly the development, maintenance, and support of the foster parents; thus placing virtually all direct service for youth in placement, with the foster parents. For this reason the issues of

job descriptions and job qualifications must be dealt with. The following are suggested guides for the foster parent position:

Job Description - Foster Parent (Small Group).

Responsibilities:

Providing adequate shelter, food, clothing* and other basic needs for youth placed in the home; screening youth referred for placement; arranging and conducting interviews with potential youth placements; collecting necessary data about the youth that is not included in the referral criteria (i.e. school, transcripts, transferring medical records); placement approval; development and implementation of a placement plan for each youth; identification and accessing community resources for use by the youth; maintenance of up to date case records; day-to-day emotional and physical care for the youth; development and maintenance of an 'in-house' structure (i.e. house rules) and the completion of forms as required by the agency.

* Financial responsibility either assumed totally by the agency or through adequately adjusted boarding payments for expense.

Job Qualifications - Foster Parent

1. Two foster parents are preferred in this structure. One of the foster parents should be permitted to have full or part time employment outside the home. If a single foster parent is utilized, outside employment is not permitted. Foster parents should not have more than one natural child residing in the foster home.
2. At least one foster parent should have a BA/BS in the human service field (sociology, social work, psychology, education) and one year of experience in working with youth OR three years experience in working

with youth and two years of college level education OR six years experience in working with youth OR significant life experiences and extraordinary skills in dealing with troubled youth.

3. One foster parent needs to be constantly available to work with youth placed in the home.
4. Good communication and interpersonal skills.
5. High level of interest in and commitment to community based care for troubled youth;
6. Knowledge of the community - its resources, attitudes and structure.
7. In a two parent home, the relationship between the two parents must be stable, with open communications between the two. The emotional and physical demands that are placed on individuals by accepting a foster parent position usually produces a strain on the relationship between the husband and wife. This needs to be acknowledged by all parties. The foster parents should then explore some ways in which they plan to deal with that situation.
8. Ability to perform organizational and administrative duties as required by the job.
9. Ability to deal effectively with a variety of people.
10. High degree of caring and concern about troubled youth and a commitment to be a strong advocate for youth placed in the home.
11. Large family money management skills

Personal/professional traits which are helpful - Foster Parent

1. Ability to encourage open communication and trust by being open and

- honest in dealing with others
2. Previous foster care experience
 3. Previous youth work experience
 4. Prior life experiences which contribute to the foster parent's understanding of troubled youth
 5. Creativity - ability to devise innovative solutions to difficult problems
 6. Willingness to take chances - not always opt for the 'safe route'
 7. Supportive family and friends, particularly regarding the role of foster parenting

Staff -- Roles and Responsibilities

The agency staff roles and responsibilities center around providing support for the foster parents and youth who are in placement. They are also responsible for administratively developing and maintaining the specialized foster home system. The agency staff has the major system support role and the following responsibilities:

To the youth --

1. Personal, educational, and vocational counseling
2. Working with the youth to develop a realistic placement plan and performance contract
3. Identification, accessing, and coordination of community resources
4. 24-hour availability for assistance
5. Maintenance of up-to-date, accurate case records

6. Identification and development of appropriate foster homes
7. Acting as an advocate for the youth, and providing any assistance necessary to meet the individual needs of the youth

To the foster parents --

1. Providing information about the specialized foster care program -- the purpose, process, and expectations
2. Approval (licensing) of the home, and assistance in obtaining that approval
3. Appropriate referrals of youth to the home
4. Supervision and support
5. 24-hour accessibility for assistance
6. Adequate monetary compensation (special rates will need to be set)
7. Maintenance of up-to-date, accurate records

To the agency --

1. Development, implementation, and monitoring the specialized foster care system
2. Staff supervision and support
3. Maintenance of up-to-date, accurate records on the youth, foster parents, and staff
4. Developing and maintaining the program's credibility with official community agencies, other community social service agencies, the media, and the community at large
5. Completion of administrative responsibilities as required by the agency

The responsibilities of the staff of the specialized foster home program are more specifically dealt with in the manual section regarding staff structure. Certainly, the responsibilities are many and varied. The overriding issue must remain the staff role of providing the necessary support and assistance to the youth, foster parents and agency to make the specialized foster home program viable and responsive.

Beginning a Specialized Foster Care System

Step I

The first step in developing a specialized foster care system is to identify your target population. This needs to be done in a clear, concise manner to avoid as many future referrals and service conflicts as possible. There will be some 'grey' areas in terms of referral no matter how clearly defined your target population is. Minimally your target population description should include the following:

- 1) Age Range- Both minimum and maximum ages of youth should be specified.
- 2) Geographic catchment area - This is usually determined by the geographic catchment area of the agency. State agencies may want to develop a pilot program in two or three areas of the state. These areas need to be consistent with current service area boundaries of the agency (i.e. region, district, area breakdowns of the state).
- 3) Organizational type of youth served - Is the specialized foster

care program designed to serve any or all of the following organizational types.

- a. recently adjudicated youth
 - b. youth in danger of institutionalization
 - c. youth currently institutionalized
 - d. youth recently released, or scheduled for release from an institutional setting
 - e. youth referred specifically to the program by the courts
 - f. youth referred to the program as a condition of probation
- 4) General placement goal orientation of youth referred - The precipitating factor for requesting placement in the specialized foster care program. What are the general placement expectations for youth placed in the program? Examples include:
- a. return to natural home within one year
 - b. self-sufficiency of the youth
 - c. community based alternative to institutional care
 - d. institutional aftercare
 - e. treatment (medical, psychological, physical)
- 5) General behavioral expectations - What types of behavior are acceptable and unacceptable? What types of minimal personal maintenance standards exist for youth in the program? Issues to be dealt with here include:
- a. mental retardation

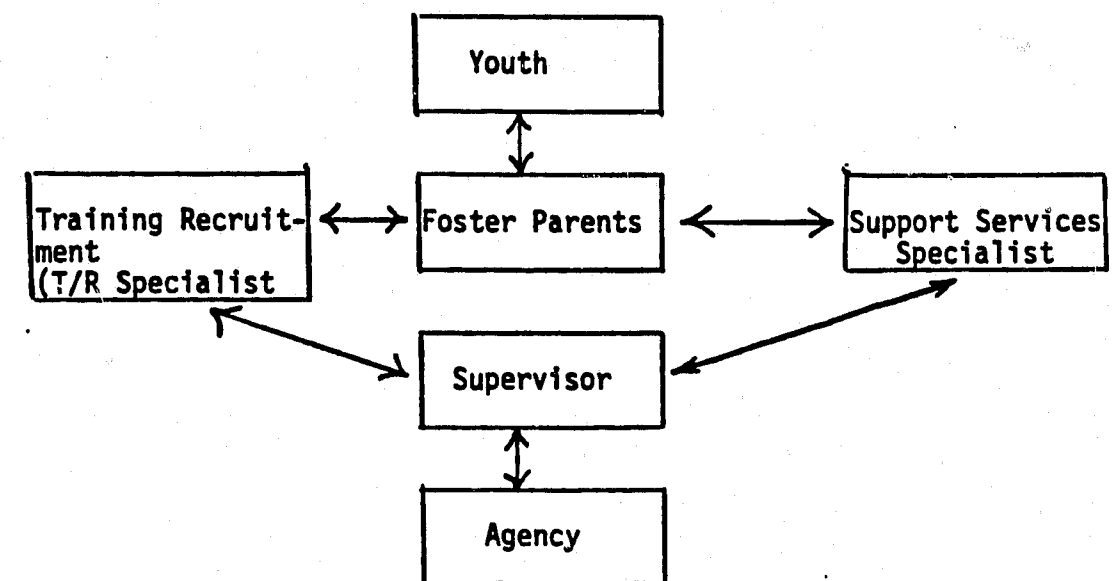
- b. capacity of attending to basic personal needs
 - c. participation in school or training program
 - d. history of violent behaviors
 - e. history of severe self destructive behaviors
 - f. secure emotional problems
- 6) Number of youth to be served - Determine the approximate size of your specialized small group home care program in yearly increments for the first three years of program operation. Program expansions of at least 25% per year (for years 2 and 3) should be anticipated. The three year figure needs to be your current goal for the program's overall size

At this point it seems important to note that specialized small group foster care has been successfully utilized for youth in all of the above mentioned categories; and most combinations of those categories. The specialized small group foster home program needs to be geared towards providing services for moderate to hard to place youth. Specialized foster care permits you to develop resources for youth whose needs are not easy: youth who do not have many, if any, resources available to them. The reason that these five areas of description need to be defined is to provide direction and structure to your specialized foster care program. When first beginning the program, you may want to limit your target population to moderately hard-to-place youth. This includes youth who have juvenile records for property crimes only, youth placed on probation by the court, and non-

institutionalized youth. As you and your specialized foster care program become more secure and experienced, the program needs to be expanded to serve youth with more severe behavioral and delinquency problems; such as juvenile records for crimes against persons and institutionalized youth. The ultimate goal of a specialized foster care program is the development of a diverse system capable of providing community based placements for a wide range of youth.

Step II

The next step in developing a specialized foster care program is the determination of staff size and organizational structure. Also to be considered is the type of staff that is needed, in terms of skill and expertise. A diagram of the model will be included to facilitate this discussion. The number of staff that are needed for the specialized foster care program is primarily determined by the anticipated size of the program. Initial staff should be sufficient to meet the needs of the first year population of the program. As the program is expanded in the second and third years additional staff will be necessary.



The Staffing Structure

As described previously, the major case management responsibilities in specialized small group care rests with the foster parents. The staffing pattern necessarily reflects the level and type of foster parent and staff support services that are necessary for the system's implementation and maintenance. Two distinct types of specialist services are needed.

The training/recruitment (T/R) advocate is basically responsible for foster home recruitment, evaluation, and approval, as well as initial and on-going foster parent training. One T/R specialist is needed for every thirty (30) foster homes anticipated for the system (maximum youth population of 120).

If the foster homes are distributed over a wide geographic area, consideration should be given to utilizing the services of two T/R specialists.

The basic responsibility of the support services specialist is to provide the foster parent(s) with the support and resources needed to maintain the placements. This includes a variety of activities such as developing foster parent groups, assistance in the identification and accessing of community resources and mediating disputes between the foster parents and youth. Regular weekly contact with the foster parents is necessary. The support services specialist would also assist foster parents in identifying special ongoing training needs and facilitating their development with the T/R specialist. The caseload of the support services specialist should not exceed fifteen (15) specialized foster homes. This number may appear a bit large; however, a great deal of the work of the support services specialist can be performed once and serve all of the foster homes. An example of this

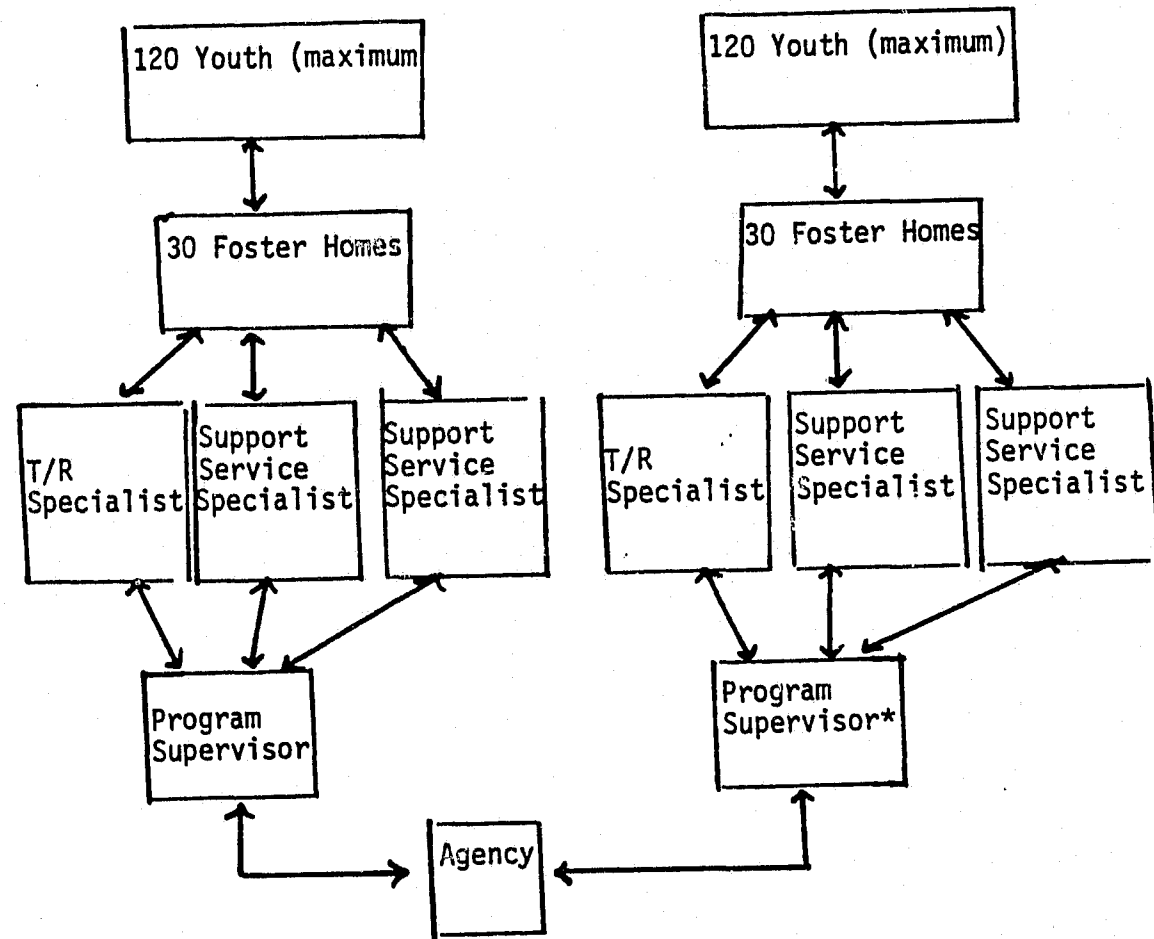
is the identification and development of community resources.

The role of the program supervisor is key in the coordination and implementation of the specialized small group foster care system. The responsibilities of the program supervisor include staff support and supervision, initial "screening in"* of youth referred for placement, administrative responsibilities to the agency and administrative liaison with official community agencies such as courts, police, school systems, community services and media. The caseload of the program supervisor is limited to one T/R specialist and two support service specialists. Therefore, one program supervisor is needed for every thirty (30) specialized foster homes. When the specialized foster home system is designed to utilize the services of 90 or more foster homes, a program director is needed. One program director is necessary whenever the system requires three to five program supervisors (90-150 foster homes). The role of the program director would include supervision and support of program supervision staff, program policy and development, program budget, and program monitoring/evaluation.

* "Screening in" -This term is used throughout the manual to distinguish the intended process from what is generally referred to as screening. "Screening in" involves screening youth for placement to assure that they are difficult enough to be placed in the program. Youth who are not hard to place, should be served by other existing programs designed to deal with less difficult youth.

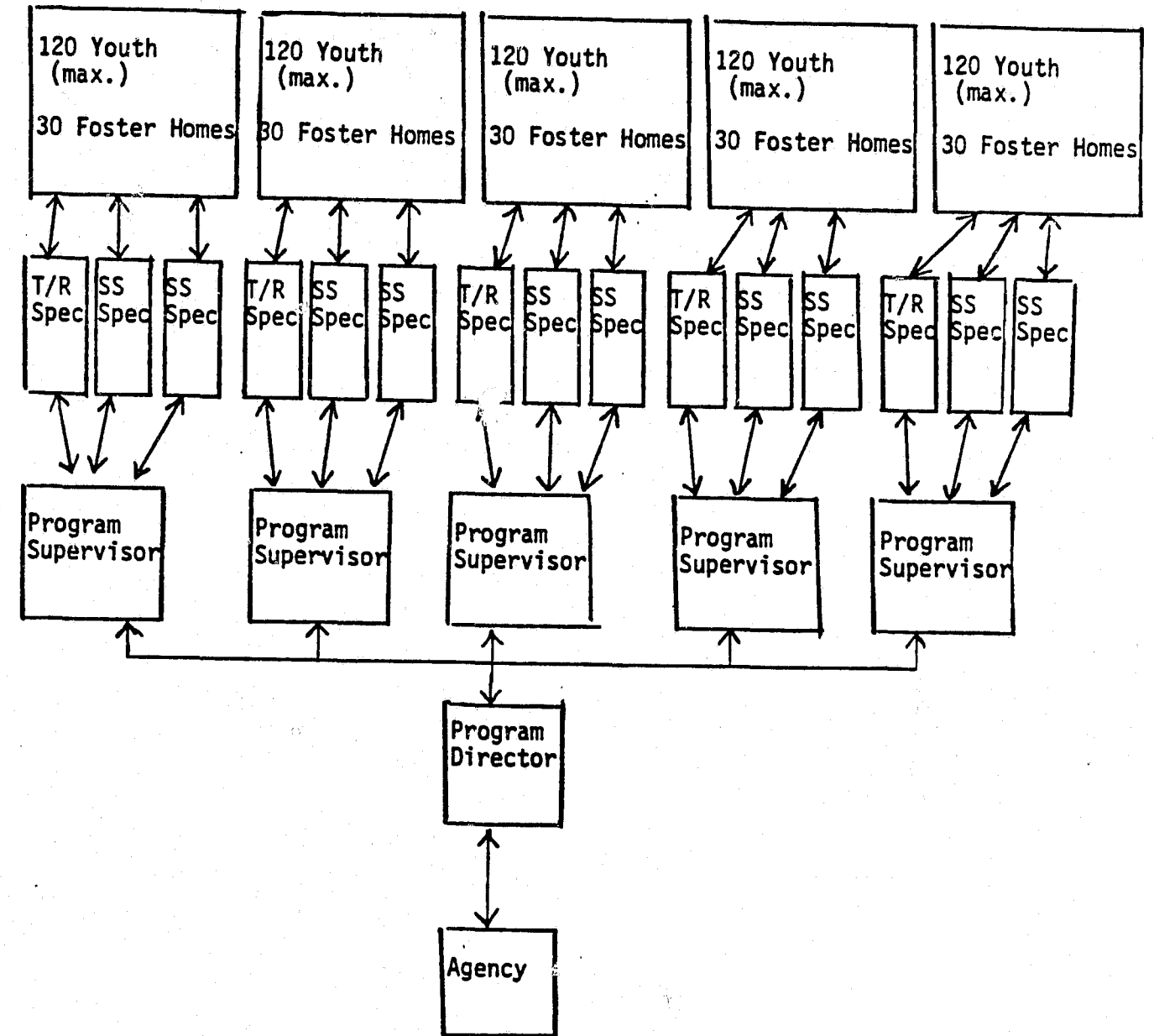
The following diagrams should serve to clarify the staffing patterns for the small group foster home model system:

1. For system utilizing 15-60 foster homes - serving up to 240 youth



* Only one program supervisor is needed if program utilizes 15-30 foster homes

2. For system utilizing over 60 (maximum 150) foster homes - serving up to 600 youth.



In a small specialized foster home system utilizing less than fifteen (15) homes and serving less than forty-five (45) youth, it is possible to combine the staff positions of the program supervisor and the training/recruitment advocate. Additionally, if the system is designed to serve less than thirty (30) youth only one support services advocate will be necessary.

In designing the specialized foster care system avoid the tendency to develop a program that overextends the agency's needs and/or current capabilities. Remember that building a specialized foster care system is a gradual process. Three years should be allowed to reach the maximum capabilities of the system. The first year of operations is the foundation of the system and the most critical stage of development. Utilize a realistic, yet conservative estimate of your target population size for the first year of operations. In succeeding years the program site can be expanded to accommodate a larger number of youth, and hopefully different types of youth.

The next staffing issue to be dealt with concerns the levels of skill and expertise that are needed in the positions of training/recruitment advocate, support services advocate, program supervisor and program director. This process involves the development of clear, accurate job descriptions for each staff position, and outlining basic qualifications and qualities for those positions. The following are suggested job descriptions, job qualifications and personal/professional traits for each staff position in the model.

Job Description - Training/Recruitment (T/R Specialist)

Responsibilities

Foster home recruitment; evaluation of potential foster parents; ap-

proval/licensing of foster parents; development and implementation of initial training of foster parents; development and implementation of regularly scheduled ongoing training of foster parents; yearly review and evaluation of foster parents; termination of approved foster parents; completion of all licensing forms as required by the agency; maintenance of up to date files on active foster homes.

Job Qualifications - Training/Recruitment (T/R Specialist)

1. B.A./B.S. in human services field (social work, sociology, psychology, education) OR four years of experience in foster care services and two years of college
2. Good verbal/communications skills
3. Experience or knowledge regarding the needs of adolescent youth and foster care situations
4. Previous training experience
5. Good research and writing skills
6. Evidence of a high level of interest in and commitment to community based care for troubled youth

Personal/Professional Traits which are helpful - T/R Specialist

The training/recruitment specialist is the first program person that potential foster parents will come into contact with. In that role, the impression that the T/R Specialist leaves with people can "make or break" the program. One must never forget that without foster parents there can be no specialized foster care program. For this reason the following personal/professional traits for the T/R Specialist are very important to con-

sider.

1. Pleasing, outgoing personality - a person who enjoys communicating and being with people - not overbearing.
2. Pleasant presentation of self-good dress and grooming habits - able to dress appropriate to the situation.
3. Understanding of the special needs of youth and able to communicate those needs to non-professionals in clear understandable manner.
4. Ability to translate technical information into easily understood language.
5. Ability to organize and develop training materials and sessions.
6. Willingness to work some nights and weekends to provide training sessions at times convenient for foster parents.

Job Description - Support Services Specialist

Responsibilities:

To provide the support, resources, and assistance needed by foster parents to maintain youth placed in their homes and reach placement goals of youth through a variety of activities including: the development and facilitation of foster parent support groups, individual counseling/assistance to foster parents; and maintenance of an up to date community resource file including the identification, access process, and contract person for various community services for youth such as: medical, psychological and dental services; educational, employment, and vocational services; specialized programs regarding drug abuse, alcohol abuse, sexuality; recreational programs; and

any other services that can be utilized to meet the needs of youth in placement; mediating disputes between youth and foster parents when it is not possible to handle "in-house"; weekly contact with foster parents; assisting foster parents with the identification of additional training needs and facilitating the development of that training with the T/R Specialist; maintenance of files and records as required by the agency.

Job Qualifications - Support Services Specialist

1. B.A./B.S. in human services or community development area (social work, sociology, psychology, community organization, education) OR two years of college and two years experience working with youth or in community organization OR five years experience in community organization.
2. Excellent knowledge of the community; its resources, attitudes and structure
3. Good organizational skills
4. Good resource development skills
5. Good communication skills
6. Some general counseling experience
7. Experience in developing and working with groups

Personal/professional traits which are helpful - support services specialist

1. Creativity, imagination, resourcefulness
2. Supportive personality
3. Ability to communicate with a variety of people
4. Persistence - does not 'give up' easily

5. Evidence of a strong interest in and commitment to community based care for troubled youth

Job Description - Program Supervisor

Responsibilities:

Staff support and supervision of T/R specialist and support services specialist(s); hiring of specialists; initial "screening in" of youth referred to program; referral of youth to appropriate foster parents; administrative supervision of foster parents; administrative liaison with official community agencies such as police, courts, probation, school systems, community services, and media; liaison between program and agency "at large", review and administrative approval of foster parents, monitoring/tracking of youth in the program; program budget*; program development*; maintenance of files and records as required by the agency; completion of forms as required by the agency.

* Only if program is not large enough to require a program director

Job Qualifications - Program Supervisor

1. B.A./B.S. in human services field (sociology, psychology, social work, education) and four (4) years experience in working with youth and/or foster homes OR masters degree in a human services field and two (2) years of experience in working with youth and foster care
2. Knowledge of Agency structure

3. Good supervisory and staff support skills
4. Evidence of high level of interest in and commitment to community based care for troubled youth
5. Understanding of how communities function
6. Good organizational skills

Personal/professional traits which are helpful - Program Supervisor

1. Intimate knowledge of the formal and informal structures of the agency
2. Prior direct service experience with troubled youth, preferably non-institutional
3. Solid reputation and respect within the agency
4. Established positive contacts with community resources and official agencies (courts, police, probation)
5. Previous administrative and supervisory experience

Job description - Program Director

Responsibilities:

Program planning and development; supervision and support of program supervisor staff; hiring and evaluation of program supervisor staff; grant/proposal writing for specialized foster care program; agency/regional/state tracking of youth in the program; liaison between the program and the overall agency; development and dissemination of overall program policies; planning and management

Job Qualifications - Program Director

1. Masters degree in human services field (sociology, social work,

psychology, education) or public administration or BS/BA with five (5) years experience in the youth service field with at least two (2) years administrative experience

2. Intimate knowledge of the agency's structure, program, and policies
3. Demonstrated administrative and supervisory skills
4. Evidence of a high level of interest in and commitment to community-based care for troubled youth
5. Understanding of program fiscal support systems (Title XX, purchase of service, setting rates, etc.)

Personal/professional traits which are helpful - Program Director

1. At least two (2) years of working in the agency administering a foster care program
2. The respect and support of the agency's top administrators
3. Ability to deal with both long and short range decision making and planning
4. Prior direct service experience with youth

Step III

Foster Home Recruitment

The recruitment of appropriate and successful foster parents is a critical issue in developing a solid specialized foster care program. The most commonly asked question regarding specialized foster care for troubled youth is 'where do I find foster parents?'. Good, quality foster parents

are 'out there'. One of the biggest myths perpetrated in the social service system is that there are few potential foster parents. Most communities are full of potential foster parents. They must be reached. It is the task of recruitment to make them aware that they can be foster parents and that they have something valuable to offer troubled youth. Foster parenting is a rewarding life experience.

The recruitment of foster parents is a multi-step process. The first step in the process is for the agency to develop a clearly defined target population of youth to be served by the program. That will define the types of foster parents that will need to be recruited. Once that step has been completed, you are ready to begin active foster parent recruitment. There are many public misconceptions about the requirements and responsibilities of foster parenting. Most people think that foster parents need to be 'solid middle class' traditional families. That is not the case.

Demystification

The first step in active recruitment is the demystification of foster parenting. This demystification process needs to take place in three major areas:

1. Through the use of media (t.v., radio, newspapers)
2. Through public speaking to community civic groups, church groups, college classes and other formalized groups of people
3. Through word-of-mouth by talking with co-workers, friends and current 'regular' foster parents

Recruitment Activities

When communicating about foster parenting it is helpful to present real situations in which foster parenting is needed. It is often difficult for people to grasp the realities of the situation when vague, abstract ideas are presented. Stress must be placed on the fact that these are real, live youth, with real, live problems and needs - and that individuals receiving your communication are the resource needed to assist those youth. This approach should be utilized in all areas of communication-media, public speaking, and personal contact.

The "Blitz"

When beginning a specialized foster care program, a public relations 'blitz' should be developed. This 'blitz' needs to be well planned and coordinated. A standardized presentation should be developed that includes:

1. The demystification of foster parenting -- Most people have a great deal of misinformation about foster parenting. Time and energy must be spent letting people know about the wide variety of foster home types, and the variety of skills and experience that foster parents can have. One needs to create a new public image of who foster parents are- breaking the stereotype of the nice, two parent, middle class foster home. This demystification process must be an integral part of any foster parent recruitment.
2. Narratives about program youth -- Identify four or five youth who are being considered for the specialized foster care program.

Develop a capsulized narrative about who those youth are, why they need a specialized foster home, what kinds of needs the youth have, and the probable placement goals. This will help clarify the agency's need and provide the public with a real life situation to deal with.

3. How to become foster parents - Develop a clear, detailed narrative about the steps involved in becoming a foster parent. If at all possible include realistic time lines for the process- from beginning to end. Be sure to include information about who to contact to begin the process.

This presentation will then need to be communicated to the public in a variety of ways.

The Media

TV and Radio

The media is perhaps the best means of relaying information to the general public. Talk with radio and television stations that serve the targeted communities. If there are any local 'talk' shows on those stations, ask to be on them. Some local news shows have a segment of time in each broadcast to talk about community events, ask them to focus on specialized foster care in one or several of these segments. All radio and television stations are required to provide a percentage of their commercial air time to free public service announcements - prepare a one minute or 30 second recruitment message and ask them to use it. If

you are limited to a 30 second spot, create a 'catchy' sales pitch to spark people's interest.

Creativity is the key. In Kentucky specialized foster homes were recruited through newspaper, radio and television ads stating "Are you crazy enough to care for one of our kids?" Needless to say, people called the phone number that followed to find out what was going on!

In preparing and developing your media campaign, you should consider utilizing the services of a public relations firm, or a person who is a public relations professional. These services could be either contractual or donated. Many times the public relations employees of radio and television stations where you are asking for media time can offer valuable assistance.

Newspapers

The other media area to work closely with is newspapers. Talk to the head of the city news staff or the managing editor of the newspaper. Provide a written presentation and ask them to write an article about the specialized foster care program. The article can utilize the information in your written presentation by itself, or in conjunction with an interview with program staff and/or youth. Request that a picture accompany the article and be prepared to provide that picture. Preferably the picture will be of youth and not just a program staff person.

Signs and Billboards

Stores and businesses in the community often have highly visible signs

that can accommodate messages. Instead of 'congratulations Jim and Ann' talk to the proprietors and have the sign say 'show you care -- be a foster parent -- call 123-4567' or some other message encouraging foster parenting. Another recruitment activity concerns billboards and/or road signs. If there are any empty or unused billboards or road signs in the area, find out who owns the sign (the company name is usually at the bottom of the sign). Talk with the company and ask them to put up a message or billboard about foster parenting. In most cases, if the agency sponsoring the specialized foster care program is a not-for-profit agency, the advertisement company can donate the cost of the space and cost of putting the sign up as a charitable deduction on their taxes. The persuasive argument to use is that the unused space is not doing anything positive for the company and that as a charitable contribution, not only will they be helping young people -- there will be some benefit for the company in terms of tax advantages. Who knows, you might even recruit a foster parent out of your negotiations with the company.

Pamphlets, newsletters, etc.

Standard foster parent recruitment strategies need to be utilized in this initial campaign. The development and wide dissemination of brochures, pamphlets, fact sheets and posters should supplement any recruitment campaign. Contacting community agencies such as schools, block clubs, church groups, social service agencies, foster parent groups, and political action groups and asking their assistance can also prove helpful. Newspaper supplements are generally expensive, but often worth the cost. Direct mailing

campaigns have limited success, but are occasionally worth pursuing. Enlist the support and assistance of large employers in the community. If they have a company newsletter, ask them to include an article on specialized foster parenting. Request the inclusion of a program pamphlet or fact sheet in the employee pay envelopes.

Public Speaking

The next area to concentrate on is public speaking. Identify and contact any formalized group in the community. Most of these groups are looking for meeting topics and speakers. Offer your services to speak at their meetings. Prepare a simple one page write-up of the program and have that sent out with any regular mailings that the group sends to members prior to the meeting, and have it available at the meeting. The person representing the program needs to be enthusiastic and informative. Enthusiasm is contagious. Utilize all three areas of the presentation you have developed (demystification of foster parenting, narrative about several youth needing foster homes, information about how to become a foster parent). After the presentation, talk to as many individuals on a one-to-one basis as possible. If they express an interest, take their name and phone number or arrange a time to talk with them later. These contacts also will often lead to other contacts. The responsibility and initiative for contacting interested people who hear your presentation should rest with the program speaker, not the interested people. Follow up on those contacts the next working day.

Word of Mouth

The agency staff should be encouraged to talk about the specialized

foster care program. Naturally, to do this they must be provided with sufficient information about the program -- its purpose, goals, and needs. Informal communications with other friends, current 'regular' foster parents and community people can be a good resource for recruiting foster parents.

Follow-up should be immediate

As your campaign becomes implemented you will be getting responses and inquiries regarding foster parenting. The next issue concerns how those inquiries are handled. It is vitally important that the program staff provide an immediate response to those inquiries.

Interested individuals should be contacted within 24 hours to 48 hours after they have expressed interest. If the interest is expressed by phone, phone calls should be returned the same day if at all possible. The agency's initial response to inquiries is a crucial point in the recruitment process. Many people who inquire about foster care are unsure and undecided about it, and the agency's response can be the deciding factor. The initial response should begin with an expression of appreciation for their interest in foster parenting. Any basic question that the caller may have should be answered in a clear, direct manner.

The Initial Interview

The final step is to arrange to visit the person and explain the specialized foster care program to all the members of the household. It is important that the initial interview take place in the home of the potential foster parents. By doing so, the agency shows an extra effort and assumes the

responsibility and initiative of getting to interview. The purpose of this initial interview is to convey information. Time should be spent describing the program and the types of youth that will be placed, and answering questions that the potential foster parents may have about the programs.

This interview should take place as soon as possible after the initial inquiry, and no more than two weeks after the inquiry. Because one or both parents will probably be employed, the staff person conducting the initial interview must be willing to work evenings and weekends to accommodate the potential foster parents. You should also ask that any children residing in the home be present at the interview. These children need to feel a part of the process and may have some important questions about how foster care will affect them, which haven't occurred to their parents.

The foster parent recruitment packet

Since the purpose of this initial interview is to provide information, a potential foster parents packet needs to be developed. This packet should include the following information:

1. A one to two page description of the specialized foster care program, emphasizing what you expect to help the youth accomplish
2. A written description of the responsibilities of a foster parent, and the agency's responsibilities to the foster parent
3. The basic qualifications (licensing/approval criteria) for becoming a foster parent
4. A description and explanation of the application procedures
5. A structural chart of the program, and written description of how the program is set up

6. A separate sheet providing the organization's name, address, phone number, and a contact person
7. Any application forms that need to be completed by the foster parent
8. Copies of pertinent short articles on youth in trouble and/or specialized foster care

If at all possible have these items put together in a brightly colored portfolio or packet. Materials that are given to foster parents in loose form tend to get scattered and lost by both program staff and potential foster parents. This packet should be provided to potential foster parents at the initial interview. The interview needs to include an explanation and joint examination of the information packet.

At the interview's conclusion the potential foster parents should have sufficient information on which to make a decision about becoming foster parents. They must not be pressured into making a final decision at that time. If they care to offer you their decision, fine, if not ask them to think about it, discuss it, and review the information in the packet. Ask them to call you when they have decided, or if they have any additional questions.

If you have not heard from the potential foster parents within one week after the initial interview, call them to check on the status of their decision. If they have decided not to become foster parents, thank them for their time and interest. Also mention that if they know of any friends or relatives who might be interested, to please contact them or provide you with their name and phone number to initiate the contact. If they need more time to

consider their decision, give it to them. Arrange another day to call them, yet try not to pressure. If a sudden family crisis has developed which prevents them from being able to assume foster parent responsibilities at this time, keep a record of the contact and administratively arrange to re-contact them in three to six months.

If they want to pursue foster parenting, have them complete the application forms in their packet and return them to the agency. Also arrange the first application interview with the family/person.

Step IV

The Application Process for Foster Parents

The application process for foster parent licensing/approval should be clearly defined by the agency, to facilitate a smooth process for both staff and potential foster parents. Potential foster parents will feel more at ease with the process when they understand the steps involved and the rationale for those steps. As previously noted, this information should be included in the information packet provided potential foster parents during the initial interview. After the initial interview and a decision to pursue foster parenting, the application/approval process begins. Suggested forms to be utilized in this process are included in the appendix.

The Initial Interview

An initial screening interview needs to be scheduled within two weeks of the decision to pursue foster parent approval. This is important because it demonstrates the interest of the agency/program in having the people as foster

parents. It also acts to reinforce and increase the interest and motivation of the potential foster parent(s). The initial screening interview should begin to explore the personalities and characteristics of the potential foster family members.

The agency interviewer should begin collecting information about the household members for completion about the foster family profile forms (see forms section). These profiles include information regarding family background, childhood, physical characteristics, education, relationships, employment, and general attitudes. Foster family profiles need to be completed for each member of the household. The collection of this information, and discussions that evolve from the information-sharing process will begin to provide a picture of who the potential foster parents are. Do not try to complete this picture in one interview. No one can expect to get to know one, two, three or sometimes four or five individuals in just one interview. Remember that the foster parent application/approval process is just that -- a process; and that this is only the first step.

The Second Interview

The second interview should consist of the completion and clarification of any information needed for the foster family profiles and a focus on the physical setting of the home. The second interview should take place within a two week period following the initial screening interview. The focus on the physical setting includes not only the home or apartment itself, but also the surrounding neighborhood/community. The home/apartment should be examined to see if it meets minimal licensing requirements (see licensing section). If

changes need to be made, such as acquiring an additional bed or other furniture, discuss these anticipated problem areas with the foster parents. Offer your assistance in helping them meet the requirements. Develop some plan of action with the foster parents in meeting the requirements, or discuss alternative methods of dealing with the situation. In terms of the neighborhood/community, talk with the potential foster parents about school locations, churches in the area, and recreational resources in the area. Try to ascertain their feeling and attitudes about the neighborhood -- its positive and negative aspects. After the interview take a leisurely drive or walk through the neighborhood to get your own sense of it. This information will need to be recorded on the Home and Community Profile form.

The Temporary Approval Interview

The temporary approval interview is primarily to explore the foster parenting experience. It is at this interview that the interviewer and the potential foster parents need to discuss the types of youth that are suitable for placement in the home. A realistic assessment needs to be made of the strengths and weaknesses of the foster parent(s), the amount of time and energy that they are willing and able to provide, and their tolerance level for specific types of behaviors. This process should be a mutual sharing of information and experiences between the interviewer and the potential foster parent(s). Common problem areas such as house rules, discipline, and expectations should be explored. Mutual agreements about what types of youth are appropriate for placement in the home. The following issues need to be resolved in this interview:

Type of youth: age, sex, behaviors, problem areas, independence/dependence levels, youth needs, and general placement goals (independent living, return to family, etc.).

The third interview is also the time to collect any incomplete data, make sure that any necessary paperwork is complete, or make arrangements for its completion (i.e., medical forms, reference letters, etc.) When the third interview successfully concludes the foster parents should be given temporary approval. The final step in obtaining full approval/licensing is the completion of a training course designed for new foster parents.

Discontinuance

If during the application/approval process either the interviewer or potential foster parents decide that they do not wish to continue the process, the process should stop. If the decision is on the part of the interviewer, he/she should discuss the decision with the potential foster parents. This discussion needs to directly address the concerns of the interviewer and permit the potential foster parents the opportunity to correct misinformation, propose solutions, or otherwise justify their continuing the approval process. Every effort to resolve areas of conflict or concern should be made by the interviewer. If no satisfactory resolution can be reached, the process should cease at this point. The interviewer must document his/her reasons for requesting termination of the application and efforts made to resolve the areas of concern/conflict. This documentation needs to be placed in the potential foster family file, along with any other completed documents. The foster parents should receive copies of that documentation upon request.

If the potential foster family wishes to terminate the application/approval process, the interviewer should discuss their reasons and attempt to resolve the areas of concern/conflict to mutual satisfaction. This termination process must be documented through the same process as agency-initiated terminations.

Suggested Foster Family Forms

Several forms have been devised as suggested models and are included as an appendix at the end of this manual. They can be modified or adjusted to meet specific agency needs. However, it is felt that the information requested on the forms is important in the foster parent application/approval process and should be included on any forms that are utilized in a specialized foster care program. Notes at the top of each form describe how and when the forms should be utilized.

Step V

Foster Home Licensing/Approval Regulations

The following are suggested minimal standards for specialized foster home licensing/approval regarding placement facilities for adolescent foster children. When dealing with the foster home licensing regulations, please note that there are minimum standards. In approving/licensing a specialized foster home one must keep in mind the prior emphasis on reaching out for foster parents. The focus should be on helping people to become foster parents -- not on eliminating people from eligibility.

I. Foster care applicant(s) must be:

1. Minimum legal adult age (usually 18 years) or older.
2. A resident of the community and/or general geographic area for at least six (6) months prior to application.
3. Able to demonstrate a stable life situation -- through employment, student status, relationships in the community, family ties, current roles and responsibilities in life.
4. Willing to actively participate in the foster parent application and training processes.
5. Willing to accept the roles and responsibilities as defined for this model in "rules and responsibilities" in regards to both the youth being placed and agency intervention.
6. Able to demonstrate an understanding of and ability to perform the above-mentioned roles and responsibilities.
7. Financially stable and able to adequately support his/her/their style of living.

II. Foster home must be:

1. In a primarily residential area of the community.
2. In good physical upkeep (maintenance) regarding the structure, interior, and grounds.
3. Of sufficient size to comfortably accommodate the number of persons residing in the household (including stated foster child capacity).
4. Adequately furnished in terms of furnished bathrooms, hot/cold running water, ventilation, heat, cooking and food storage capabilities.
5. Adequately furnished in terms of household items including: sufficient bed space to accommodate persons residing in home (foster child must have own bed, dresser, and space for personal items); furniture to eat on; living room (leisure space) furniture.
6. Free of rodents and other pests.
7. Free of fire hazards.

8. Serviced by an operational fire department.
9. Within reasonably accessible distance to schools, recreation, churches, medical facilities and other community resources.
10. Maintained in a reasonable manner in terms of housekeeping and cleanliness.

If for some reason the potential foster home/applicant cannot meet these minimal standards, yet special circumstances encourage approval of the home (i.e. special skills/abilities of the foster parent, prior positive relationship with the child) exceptions to the minimal standards can be made. Exceptions must be documented in terms of the minimal standard(s) not met, the rationale for the exception and the benefits for the youth in making the exception. Under special circumstances, homes not meeting the minimal requirements may be approved for placement of a specific youth. Exceptions must be approved by the supervisor of the specialized foster care program. Foster parents approved under this exception clause need to be made aware of this status and the reason and consequences (conditional approval) of the status. This should be acknowledged in writing to the foster parents).

Step VI

Foster Parent Training -- Initial

All foster parents should be provided adequate foster parent training. Because of the amount of data/information involved in a foster parent training process, a series of training sessions can best facilitate the process. There are a number of excellent foster parent training programs available to be utilized by agencies. A publication entitled Foster Parenting produced by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention -- Law Enforcement Assistance Administration in December of 1978 provides some materials outlining (five) 5 of the most widely-utilized foster training programs that are available. None of these training programs is specifically geared towards specialized foster care for either adolescents or juvenile offenders. Each program has useful material, but none adequately addresses all the needs of

foster parent training for specialized foster care for hard-to-place juvenile offenders. These package training programs should be closely examined and evaluated to determine if they are appropriate for your program's training needs. You may wish to hire a consultant to assist in the development of your initial training program.

The following is a minimal list of training areas to be covered in a specialized foster care initial training program.

1. Explanation of the agency structure, policies and goals.
2. Explanation of the specialized foster care program -- its structure, policies and goals.
3. Explanation of any administrative duties required by the agency from foster parents; this should include vouchering procedures, completion of forms, maintenance of records and any other administrative necessities required by the agency.
4. The placement process -- what are the responsibilities of the youth, agency overall, individual agency staff, and foster parents.
5. Legal responsibilities of the foster parent(s) and agency.
6. What to do when a youth is first placed in the home -- the importance of identifying behavior expectations (clearing dishes off the table, putting clothes away, where to put dirty clothes, etc.) house rules and normal daily routine.
7. How to cope with 'normal' placement problem areas -- the youth's adjustment period, the 'honeymoon' period, testing and building a relationship.

8. What constitutes an emergency and who to contact.
9. The role of the youth's natural family and how to deal with it.
10. Normal behavioral expectations for troubled adolescents. How to cope effectively with teenagers.
11. Discipline methods.
12. Developing clear house rules and behavioral expectations.
13. Placement termination.
14. Setting realistic placement goals.
15. Relationships between the foster parent(s)' natural children and the foster child -- homegrown vs. handpicked.
16. Dealing with friends and relatives about having a child placed in your home.
17. On-site visits to juvenile court, local detention facility (or jail if applicable), and the nearest juvenile institution (if institutionalized youth are being placed in the home).
18. Large family budgeting and money management

Foster Parent Training -- Ongoing -- Foster parents need the support and specialized information that is provided with an ongoing, regular foster parent training program. These training sessions should be minimally held on a bi-monthly basis. The specialized nature of the sessions should enable the sessions to be held on a weeknight and should limit the time of the sessions to two (2) to three (3) hours. The following are suggestions for subjects to be addressed in an ongoing specialized foster parent training program.

teenage sexuality
drug abuse
alcohol abuse
school problems

peer relation problems
criminal behavior
the juvenile justice system
resources in the community
working towards independent living for a youth

Step VII

Maintaining the Specialized Foster Care System

Once fifty percent (50%) of the specialized foster homes needed for the program's first year of operation have been identified, recruited and trained, you can begin placing youth in the homes. Waiting until this number of homes are ready will help to alleviate tendencies regarding inappropriate placements and overloading existing foster homes for quick program implementation. When the specialized foster home program has reached this stage of development, the maintenance of the program becomes an important issue. Some of the issues involved in program maintenance include foster parent support, staff support, continued recruitment, positive interactions with the community, and program expansion. Each of these issues warrants special attention.

Foster Parent Support

As noted previously, foster parents are a vital component in a specialized foster care system. After foster parents are identified, recruited, and trained, it is important to keep the foster parents active in the program. Each placement in the foster home provides invaluable experience and knowledge. As foster parents become more experienced, they will expand their abilities to positively deal with tougher and more complex youth problems.

Experienced foster parents, committed to providing care for troubled youth, are a commodity that is difficult to replace. The agency must provide

a variety of supportive services to foster parents, in order to maintain them in the program. Several methods of support are available, and decisions regarding the utilization of particular methods should depend upon individual foster parent needs. Generally a combination of two or three methods has good results.

Individual Support

The most common method of foster parent support is individual contact and counseling. This involves building a close relationship with individual foster parents and providing 'sounding board' and counseling (when appropriate) services within the framework of that relationship. The counseling should have the capacity to range from personal and/or marriage problems to assistance in obtaining schooling or vocational training. If the agency is unable to provide this type of support, it should minimally assist the foster parent(s) in locating appropriate resources, and hopefully assist in meeting the cost of these services.

Formalized Groups

The second method of foster parent support is the development of a formalized foster parent group. If a Foster Parent Association is already operating in the area, a special sub-group for specialized foster parents can be rather easily 'attached' to the Association structure. The formalized foster parent group generally functions in an advisory capacity to the agency in regards to program policies and direction. The group also creates a mutual support and 'brain storming' forum for foster parents. Foster parents can assist each other in developing strategies and techniques to handle various

situations that occur in providing foster care for troubled youth. The voice of experience is very often the best teacher. The sharing of experiences between foster parents will provide a commonality of situations and a learning experience as well as emotional support. This formalized group also provides the agency with a ready-made opportunity for ongoing training sessions.

Informal Groups

Foster parent groups can also be brought together on an informal basis. Foster parents residing in the same neighborhood or small community (i.e., within reasonably close proximity) can get together on a regular basis for recreationally based activities. These activities can include 'pot luck' dinners, group trips, team sports and rap sessions. Informal groupings facilitate the development of close personal relationships between both foster parents and youth. The commonality of experience may be the first level of communications. However, repeated contact will generally facilitate some close personal relationships. Mutual support and assistance will naturally evolve out of these relationships.

Training Groups

The last major method of providing support for specialized foster parents is regular ongoing training sessions. Not only will the foster parents be provided with additional information and/or skills, experience-sharing is almost certain to occur when several foster parents get together. Both of

these activities will provide support for the foster parents.

Special Help

For foster parents in a specialized small group foster home program, a special type of support is necessary. Because of the high level of responsibility placed with the foster parents, support becomes a vital issue. Foster parents should be provided regular days and weekends away from the foster home and the youth. The agency will need to provide relief foster parents to assume the routine foster home functions during these 'time-outs' for foster parents.

Staff Support

The second maintenance issue concerns staff support. The program line staff (advocates) must receive sufficient agency and personal/professional support to prevent worker "burn out". Past experience with this type of program has shown that specialists will sometimes need to work evenings and weekends. Youth and foster parent crises rarely conform to a Monday through Friday, nine to five schedule. Changes in specialist work times and/or work days seldom prevent the necessity of working non-scheduled hours or days. It also creates supervision and monitoring problems for the agency. The most workable solution appears to be the provision of worker compensation time at a rate of 1.5 to 1 (hours compensated to hours worked) for work required outside of the regular agency work schedule. Included in this compensation schedule is a stipulation that the compensation time be 'taken' between the time the compensated work was done and the following pay period. If a specialist is constantly unable to take his/her compensation time off because of work demands, his/her case loads should be examined and probably lowered. This compensation solution can be

applicable to any specialized foster care staff, unless expressly prohibited by the agency regulations.

Normal staff support functions such as adequate supervision, personal/professional agency support, training, and regular job performance evaluations need to be present in the program structure. The emotional and physical strain that can result to specialists working in a specialized foster care program for troubled youth may increase the rate and possibility of 'burn-out'. Like foster parents, experienced specialized foster care specialists are hard to replace.

Ongoing Foster Home Recruitment

Ongoing foster home recruitment is an ongoing process essential to the maintenance of a successful program. It must be continued throughout the life of the specialized foster care program. To the training and recruitment specialist, it will seem neverending.

It is much better to have a surplus of specialized foster homes, than a lack of them. In addition, foster parents will decide at various times that they do not wish to continue to provide services for youth. The key to a growing, vital program is continued foster home recruitment. This recruitment should include the activities outlined in the manual section on recruitment, but a less intense and co-ordinated level. Occasional media events and public speaking engagements should occur on an on-going basis. Developing and implementing a once a year or bi-yearly recruitment campaign should be included in the on-going recruitment process. These annual or bi-annual campaigns need to

follow the format of the initial foster home recruitment effort.

Community Support

Various members of the community may have negative attitudes about a specialized foster care program for youth with delinquent or other acting out behavior. Generally these negative attitudes evolve from feelings of insecurity, fear of the unknown, lack of control and/or somehow viewing the program as personally threatening. The best way to successfully deal with these attitudes is to directly involve the community in the program from the point of initial development on. Provide the community with adequate information about the program, thus providing the space for understanding, co-operation and support. Pay particular attention to involving the police, court, probation, schools, and community utilized social service agencies in the program planning and development process.

Develop a solid support base for the program before implementation. Identify the advantages for the youth and the community of a specialized foster home program. Foster parents need to be provided support and assistance in dealing with neighbors who are concerned about the type youth being placed in the foster home.

Foster parents and youth should make extra efforts to demonstrate the positive aspects of the foster home situation to neighbors, particularly when the foster home is just beginning. This can be done in a variety of ways including inviting the neighbors over to see the house and meet the youth,

helping to fix-up or clean up the neighborhood, and offering specific assistance to neighbors in need. Word-of-mouth spreads quickly through a community, and positive interactions with two or three neighbors can give the foster parents, youth, and program a firm community support base.

Expanding the Program

The final program maintenance issue deals with program expansion. As stated in the manual section on "Beginning a specialized foster home system" the first year of program operations should be developed to provide 50% of the total program capacity goal. The second year should expand to provide at least 75% of that capacity goal; and by the end of the third year of program operations 100% of the program's capacity goal should be reached. This gradual program expansion encourages a controlled program growth pattern that permits smooth program operations and minor program modification. There are two major expansion methods, each of which can be utilized separately or in conjunction with the other. One type of program expansion involves expanding the target population to include youth with different types of behaviors. As the staff and foster parents acquire experience with the program they will develop new and more highly developed skills regarding troubled youth. These abilities and skills will permit the expansion of the program to serve youth with more complex needs and/or more difficult behaviors. The program needs to utilize these assets by expanding the target population to include more difficult youth. The second area of possible expansion is geographic. After program success has been achieved in one community or area, the agency should consider initiating similar programs

in other geographic areas. If the administering agency provides statewide service to youth, the program might begin as a pilot program in three or four sites, expanding to new sites on a regular basis each year.

Step VIII

Monitoring and Evaluating the Specialized Foster Care System

The final issue for consideration is the monitoring and evaluation of the specialized foster care system. System monitoring and evaluation is an important aspect of the system that needs to be developed at the onset of implementing a specialized foster care program. It is through the monitoring/evaluation process that the system becomes accountable, both to the agency administering the program and to the youth being served by the program.

The monitoring aspect involves the tracking of youth in the program. It needs to involve not only what youth have utilized the program but also the youth's progress in the program. The following information needs to be included in a program monitoring system:

I. Youth Information:

age, race, sex, type of behaviors, legal status, previous placement history, placement goals.

II. Program Access Information:

referral source, type of referral, and time between referral and placement.

III. Process Information:

length of stay in placement, multiple placements, placement goal achievement/non-achievement, and case review tracking.

IV. Community Utilization Information:

types of community resources utilized, number of resources utilized per youth, type of resources utilized related to youth behavior types.

V. Foster Home Information:

type of foster homes in system, recruitment method utilized related to foster home type (if possible), length of tenure at foster home, tracking of the number of initial and ongoing training session - attendance, average amount of training received by foster homes, and reasons for terminating foster home status.

Program evaluation is usually a difficult task in specialized foster care programs. Most of the difficulty lies in definitions of program success. The justifications for the continuance and/or expansion of a program is generally dependent upon program evaluation results. The following is a list of suggested criteria for the evaluation of a specialized foster care program:

1. Behavior changes in youth served - Note that this is not limited to the absence or presence of negative behaviors. Degrees of improved behavior need to be treated as progress and indications of program success.
2. Stability of Placements - Length of placement and multiple program placements of youth are primary considerations.
3. Achieving Case Objectives - Are case planning objectives being met, are they being met within established time lines, are care reviews operating to update and re-assess case objectives, keeping them appropriate to the youth's situation.
4. Decrease in Institutional Population - Is the number of youths being accepted/referred for institutional placement decreasing, are youth in institutional placements being transferred out of the institutions more quickly, are the average length of institutional placements decreasing.
5. Criminal Behavior Recidivism - Are youth currently in the program decreasing their juvenile justice system involvement,

do youth who have been in the program return to/begin involvement in criminal activities. Self reports and juvenile justice system records need to be utilized in this program follow-up process. Frequency and seriousness of the offense(s) need to be taken into account.

The evaluation process also functions to identify program strengths and weaknesses, and facilitate the development of strategies to improve the program. There is no service system that cannot use modifications or adjustments to improve the services provided youth. Youth and community needs are constantly changing. A successful service program must also remain fluid and respond to these changing needs. 'Reality checks' need to be incorporated into the ongoing operational process of the system. Some of the issues that need to be addressed are:

1. What types of youth are being served; is that really the type that needs the service, is there a youth type which could better utilize the service (maximizing service capabilities), are homes being developed to handle the most difficult, hard to place youth in the system.
2. What types of foster homes are generally successful with what types of youth/behavior problems (to improve placement process, to assist in the elimination of inappropriate placements, and to decrease multiple placement rate.)
3. Are the training sessions responsive to the current needs of foster parents and youth.
4. Is maximum use being made of community resources.

"In House" forms regarding the foster parent application process. The following forms are to be utilized by the agency interviewer for the foster family file

FOSTER CARE INQUIRY

Date _____

Worker Name _____

Name of Inquiry _____

Address of Inquiry _____

Phone Number _____

Type of inquiry _____

Where did they hear about foster care? _____

Action taken on inquiry? _____

FOSTER PARENT APPLICATION

Initial application form to be completed by the potential foster parents and included in the 'potential foster parent' packet.

FOSTER PARENT APPLICATION

Name of Household Members	Date of Birth	Age	Sex	Relationship in Household

Education	Occupation/or school grade	Religious affiliation

What languages are spoken in the home? _____

Are you or any household members active in any community groups or activities? (Who, activity) _____

How did you hear about foster parenting? _____

Why do you want to become foster parent(s)? _____

Had you had any previous experience in providing care for another person's child? (describe) _____

Do you or other members of the household have any interests, hobbies and/or activities that you engage in regularly and enjoy? (describe) _____

Directions for reaching your home: _____

Personal References: (name, address, phone) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

FOSTER PARENT PROFILE

Foster Parent Profile to be completed by the interviewer and potential foster parent(s) through information sharing in first screening interview.

Foster Parent Profile:

Name: _____

I. Physical description and general health

Height _____ Weight _____ Hair Color _____

Eye Color _____ Age _____

How would you describe your current general health? Good _____ Fair _____ Poor _____

II. Family Background: (where were you raised; who were you raised by; what were your parents like; do you have brothers and sisters; were you the eldest, middle, youngest child; what were your brothers and sisters like; what is your current relationship(s) with your family; how do you feel about your family upbringing).

III. Childhood: (which of your parents were you closest to; how were you disciplined; what activities did you enjoy most; what age in your childhood did you enjoy most and why).

IV. Adolescent years (12-18) (How did you relate to peers; what problems gave you the most anxiety; did you pursue any hobbies or interests; what did you enjoy most about being a teenager; what did you enjoy least; how do you now feel about your teen years)

V. Education (how did you feel about school; what did you enjoy most about school; what did you enjoy least).

VI. Employment: (places of past employments; jobs you liked or disliked; where you currently work; hours of employment; what kind of work do you do; what do you enjoy about the job; what do you dislike about the job; do you have career goals - what are they).

VII. Present marriage (if applicable) (date of marriage; why did you choose your spouse for marriage; what do you admire most about your spouse; what if anything would you change about your spouse or marriage).

VIII. Previous marriages (if applicable)

Do you have any children by any previous marriage? Yes ___ No ___

(If yes, where do they live and with whom) _____

If they do not live with you, do you see them, keep in touch with them, and/or support them (describe) _____

What do you feel was the reason for the divorce (if applicable)? _____

How is your present marriage different (if applicable)? _____

YOUTHS PROFILE

Youth's Profile -- to be completed by the interviewer and potential foster family child (if possible) or the potential foster parent(s) through information sharing in the first screening interview.

Youth's Profile

Name: _____

I. Physical Description and Health: Height ___ Weight ___ Hair Color ___

Eye Color ___ Age ___

How would you describe your current general health? Good ___ Fair ___ Poor ___

II. Personality

What words would you use to describe yourself? (for example: outgoing, shy, active, stubborn, patient, happy, sad, etc.).

What family members do you feel closest to?

How do you get along with other children in the family (if applicable)?

III. Academic Performance:

How do you feel about school? _____

What do you enjoy most about school? _____

What do you enjoy least about school? _____

IV. Peer Relationships:

Do you think you make friends easily? Yes ___ No ___ Sometimes ___

Do you have a lot of friends _____ few friends _____ a few good friends _____?

Are your friends usually the same age as you _____ older _____ younger _____?

How would you describe your relationships with friends? Do you think you are cooperative, bossy, a follower, a leader, helpful, concerned? Do you think you have problems with sharing your time and possessions with friends?

V. Activities and Responsibilities

What activities do you enjoy most? _____

Do you have any jobs or responsibilities around the house yes ___ no ___

If yes, what are they? _____

Do you usually handle them or do you need to be reminded a lot?

VI. Foster Care:

How do you feel about having a foster child come to live in your home?

How do you feel you could help a youth who comes to live in your home?

What kind of problems do you think might happen if another youth came to live in your home?

If a fifteen-year-old boy named Mark came to live with you next week, what would you want to know about him?

HOME AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Home and Community Profile -- to be completed by the interviewer and potential foster parent(s) during information sharing in the second screening interview.

Applicant Name(s): _____

Address: _____

I. 1. Description of the home/apartment: number of rooms: living rooms ___; dining room ___ kitchen ___ recreation room ___ bathroom ___ other (describe) _____

2. How would you describe the atmosphere of the home (example -- warm, formal, comfortable, lived-in, friendly) _____

3. Do the members of the household appear to enjoy the home? _____

4. How would you describe the housekeeping standards? _____

5. How would you describe the upkeep (maintenance) of the home? _____

6. Is there a yard or other outside activity space? (describe) _____

7. Are there any household pets? (number, type, and names, if any) _____

8. Describe the room where the foster children will sleep! Will this room be shared with other children; who? _____

II. Description of neighborhood/community

1. Describe the community setting of the home? (urban, suburban, rural, etc) _____

2. What kinds of people generally live in the neighborhood? (families, single persons, students, retired persons, mixture, ethnic etc.) _____

3. What community resources are within walking distance to the home? (Stores, schools, shopping, churches, recreation, etc.) _____

4. What public transportation is available in the neighborhood? _____

5. What community resources would be easily assessable to a youth by public transportation or easy driving time? _____

6. What are the closest medical facilities to the home? _____

7. What school district is the home in? _____

FOSTER FAMILY MEDICAL FORM

Medical Form to be completed on each household member by their 'family' physician and included in the potential foster parent packet.

Foster Family Medical Form

Applicant name: _____

How would you describe the general physical health of the above-named applicant? _____

Do you know of any reason that the above-named applicant should not be considered as a foster parent for an adolescent child? _____

All foster parent applicants are required to have a chest x-ray or TB skin test within the last 12 months to check for the presence of tuberculosis.

Test date _____

Test results _____

Physician's signature

date

FOSTER CARE APPLICATION CONTACT SHEET

Worker Name _____

Applicant Name _____

Applicant Address _____

Applicant Phone _____

Date of initial inquiry _____

Date of initial interview _____

Results of initial interview _____

Applicant received information packet? yes ___ no ___

Date of first screening interview _____

General impression of applicant(s) _____

Date of second screening interview _____

Date of final screening interview: _____

Results of final interview - applicant _____

Accepted ___ Rejected ___

Termination of application process: (if applicable)

Date _____

Terminated at request of: _____

Attach documentation regarding termination. Include the date of termination; person initiating termination; reasons for termination; efforts to resolve areas of conflict and/or concern.

Foster Care Application Check list

All items must be completed and in the foster parent(s) file before final home approval can be given

Name of Foster Parent(s) _____

Date of Approval _____

- ___ Initial application _____
- ___ foster parent profile: _____ (name)
- ___ foster parent profile: _____ (name)
- ___ Child's profile: _____ (name)
- ___ Child's profile: _____ (name)
- ___ Child's profile: _____ (name)
- ___ Other profiles: _____ (name)
- ___ Home and community profile _____
- ___ Medical forms: Name _____

___ Reference letters from _____ (name)

_____ (name)

___ Home evaluation _____
___ assessment of appropriate youth _____

The foster home evaluation - to be written by the agency interviewer after interviews are completed, and prior to final approval of the foster home.

THE FOSTER HOME EVALUATION

Name of foster home _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Date of evaluation _____

Worker completing the evaluation _____

The following areas are to be discussed and evaluated for strengths and weakness in the foster home.

I. Describe the foster family (all household members) in terms of personality; outstanding characteristics; physical attributes; relationships within the household, and outside activities.

II. Describe the foster family home, and include information regarding the following physical set-up, room where foster children will be sleeping, general condition of the home.

III. Describe the community/neighborhood where the home is located including general type of community, transportation, and resources.

IV. Describe the financial situation of the foster parent(s). Are they (he/she) financially secure? Do they live within their means?

V. Describe the foster family's reaction to foster care particularly address motivations, expectations and attitudes.

VI. Describe any particular noteworthy strengths that you see in the foster family.

VII. Describe any anticipated problem areas or areas of concern regarding the placement of youth in the home.

VIII. Recommendation and evaluation of the foster home. State rationale for approval or disapproval. Note any considerations regarding foster home approval.

END