



Agency-Specific
Education/Orientation

Agency-Specific Education Services

- Agency orientation
- Application and home study process
- Licensing expectations, roles and responsibilities as a licensed adoptive parent
- Overview of the matching process
- Education on the importance of advocacy and specific advocacy skills for pre-adoptive families
- Discussion and/or activities related to the importance of self-care
- Discussion of concurrent planning and how families can have an ongoing assessment of their capacity to successfully serve as a relative concurrent permanency resource family, if applicable
- Creating a support network and support plan, who will a family go to when they are experiencing challenges
- Discussion of how previous individual and family experiences can impact parenting
- Discussion about resources for families while waiting to be matched

Agency Orientation

OUR MISSION

“To provide a community based continuum of quality care to children and families.”



Agency Orientation



Our Minnesota Locations:

Bemidji (218) 751-0282

Grand Rapids (218) 327-3000

Duluth (218) 733-3000

Agency Orientation

Overview of NHCFS Programs

Bemidji –

- Child Foster Care
- Adoption Services
- In-Home Family Services
- School-based CTSS
- Supervised Visits
- Outpatient Substance Use Disorder Treatment Services
- Outpatient Mental Health Services
- Family Group Decision-Making/Conferencing
- DHS Licensed Residential Programs – Females
 - Mental Health Residential Treatment
 - SEY Program (Sexually Exploited Youth)
- Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (ARMHS)

Grand Rapids –

- Child Foster Care Services
- Adoption Services
- In-Home Family Services
- School Based-CTSS
- Residential Treatment Cottage (Boys and Girls ages 12 and older)
- DOC Licensed Residential Programs – Males
- Outpatient Substance Use Disorder Treatment Services
- Outpatient Mental Health Services
- Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (ARMHS)
- ITASKIN Center
 - Stabilization Unit
 - Secure Unit
 - 35-day evaluations
 - Intensive Residential Program



Duluth –

- Child Foster Care Services
- Adoption Services
- In-home Family Services
- School-Based CTSS
- Outpatient Mental Health Services
- Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (ARMHS)

Agency Orientation

Our Treatment Philosophy

- Through a continuum of care model, North Homes Children & Family Services' (NHCFS) mission is to provide and coordinate services designated to rehabilitate youth within the context of community and family.
- NHCFS programs are designed to serve at-risk children exhibiting emotional and/or behavioral issues in settings that are community based and family centered.

Agency Orientation

Public Private Adoption Initiative (PPAI)

- Started in 1989
 - Objective: Increase the number of adoptions under state guardianship
 - Services of PPAI include: trainings, home studies, placements, post-adoption, child specific recruitment (CSR)
 - 2009 – addition of CSR
 - 2014 – addition of concurrent permanency planning services
- PPAI Goals:
 - Adoption of sibling groups who need to be placed together
 - Children who are over-represented in the population waiting for permanency, such as children of color, or Native American youth
 - Youth ages 12 to 17 who would otherwise age out of the foster care system without an adoption family. Also youth over the age of 18 enrolled in Extended Foster Care.
 - Children and youth who have significant emotional, mental, behavioral and/or medical disabilities who require specialized caregivers.
 - Relative Licensing/Placements

Agency Orientation

Role of NHCFS Licensor and PFC Case Manager

PFC Licensor

- Complete licensing process, including home study assessment and make recommendations to DHS
- Monitor compliance with rules, statutes, and policies associated with child foster care
- Track training hours and ensure providers are meeting requirements
- Issue correction order and make negative action recommendations to DHS
- Coordinate information for licensed home with DHS, NHCFS PFC Case Manager, and placing workers
- Conduct re-licensing and annual licensing inspections of each licensed child foster care home
- Consult with DHS as needed
- Complete licensing investigations anytime a complaint is received for a licensed child foster care home.

PFC Case Manager

- Facilitate referrals, and intakes
- Matching activities
- Coordinate and attend collateral meetings with adoptive families
- Coordinate placements with placing worker(s)
- Support families and children during adoption process
- Complete monthly home visits (more as needed)
- Attend IEP meetings, specialized appointments, court hearings, etc.
- Facilitate initial treatment plan/staffing and reviews
- Help foster provider obtain important documents for each child in the home
- Crisis management for providers and youth
- Coordinate with licensor to register adoptive families on the state adoption exchange after home study is approved.

Application and Home Study Process

Typical Steps:

- Attend 16-hour pre-adoption education course
- Complete agency-specific orientation
- Complete licensing process for child foster care
- Licensing agency will register you on the state adoption exchange
- NHCFS will begin matching efforts and present referrals to licensed family
- Home study submitted to county/tribe to show interest from family
- Promotional activities for family throughout the year to promote home study

Licensing Expectations, Roles and Responsibilities as a Licensed Adoptive Parent

- ❑ The licensing process generally takes three to four months to complete once the DHS application is received by the agency.
- ❑ Once the agency-specific education/orientation has been completed, a licensor will schedule a visit and discuss the licensing paperwork and requirements.
- ❑ It is important that all paperwork be completed and returned to the agency in a timely manner as this greatly determines how quickly we can move forward to the next step in the licensing process.
- ❑ A DHS application is only valid for one year. If licensing components are not complete at this time, a new application will need to be completed.

Licensing Expectations, Roles and Responsibilities as a Licensed Adoptive Parent

- During the initial licensing process, applicant(s) will complete various licensing paperwork which is used as part of the home study assessment process. Autobiographies and interviews will be conducted with each applicant as well as all household members over the age of 6. At least three personal references are required, and references will also be requested from all adult children of each applicant regardless where they currently reside.
- Typically, there are three to four home visits throughout the licensing process, and more can be requested by the agency licensor depending on the circumstance.
- The NHCFS licensor will submit a recommendation for each application. If an applicant(s) meets the licensing requirements, their license will be effective from the date of approval. If prospective applicant does not meet licensing requirements, a denial may be recommended to MN DHS. The applicant will receive a letter if a negative action recommendation as submitted.

Licensing Expectations, Roles and Responsibilities as a Licensed Adoptive Parent

- **What are the licensing requirements to provide child foster care?**
 - ▣ Prospective foster parents must be at least 21 years of age.
 - ▣ Prospective foster parents must adhere to Minnesota Rules, parts 2960.3000 to 2960.3340.
 - ▣ Prospective foster parents, as well as all other adults living in the home and all children age 13 and older, must pass an Adam Walsh Background Check conducted by the MN Department of Human Services Background Studies Unit.

Licensing Expectations, Roles and Responsibilities as a Licensed Adoptive Parent

- Personal Motivations, Expectations
 - ▣ Each prospective applicant has a different reason for wanting to become licensed to adopt a child through the foster care system.
 - ▣ Personal experiences impact our attitudes and parenting. It is important to ensure that you are motivated for the right reasons, and that you are taking care of yourself before taking on an additional child who may have experienced trauma, abuse, and/or neglect.

Licensing Expectations, Roles and Responsibilities as a Licensed Adoptive Parent

Provider responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Provide and/or arrange for transportation to all therapy, school, recreation, and educational needs. If you are providing extra out-of-county transporting, you may be reimbursed if you have prior approval.
- Provide necessary counseling. Children's appointments need to be scheduled every two weeks unless otherwise specified. Consult with the therapist on a regular basis as well; your input is extremely important.
- Provide for ongoing clothing needs for all foster children placed in your home.
- When a youth in placement is riding in a vehicle other than your own, you must verify that the person has insurance on that vehicle. Both North Homes Inc. and you may be held liable if there is no insurance on said vehicle.

Licensing Expectations, Roles and Responsibilities as a Licensed Adoptive Parent

- Home Safety
- Must provide children with a safe and healthy home environment as determined by completion of the DHS Home Safety Checklist. If any of the following apply, an inspection by a State Fire Marshal Inspector is required prior to licensure:
 - Home being licensed to care for a capacity of four or more youth
 - A living space in the basement (split-level home do not apply)
 - Mobile home
 - Wood burning stove
 - Other reasonable cause as determined by the agency licensor (for example, questionable window sizes, current construction/remodeling in the home, etc.)

We will assist you with requesting this inspection. Please note that should a fire inspection be warranted, it is expected that any identified concerns or violations be corrected prior to having foster children in the home.

Other Licensing Information

- ❑ Prospective foster parents must comply with the training requirements of the state and NHCFS.
- ❑ Must follow the rules, policies, and guidelines outlined in the North Homes Professional Foster Care Provider Manual.
- ❑ A minimum of three references will be collected on each foster family. If a prospective foster parent is or has been licensed for child foster care by another agency, a reference will be obtained from that agency. Please note that the licensing agency may grant a variance for this for relative applicants.
- ❑ Prospective foster parents must be healthy enough to care for high-needs, at-risk youth, as evidenced by a hand-written physical health statement (included on DHS Individual Fact Sheet). Additional medical and/or mental health information may be requested as part of the assessment process. A release of information will be requested for the individual.
- ❑ DHS requires that applicants and caregivers be free from chemical health problems for at least two years as evidenced by a hand-written chemical health statement (included on DHS Individual Fact Sheet).
- ❑ Applicants who have experienced major life changing events, such as the birth of a child, getting married, or the death of a close relative, are generally advised to wait at least one year after the event to pursue becoming a licensed foster care provider; this is to ensure that the individual has adjusted to life's new circumstances.

Overview of Matching Process

- ❑ Once you have an approved home study, you will begin learning more specifics about children in need of adoptive families. You and your adoption case manager will have developed a plan on what this will look like.
- ❑ Communicating closely with your case manager on a regular basis will be key during this process. They will be able to provide you additional insight, guidance, support and coordinate getting additional information on any identified child/sibling group you are interested in learning about.
- ❑ Matching with a child can take months, or, in some cases, years. Variability in timeframes is due to the important task of determining the right fit for all involved. Remain engaged in the matching process in order to move the process along and help your worker get a better understanding of the children your family feels prepared to parent.
- ❑ During this time, it will be important for you to gather, read and understand all of the information available regarding any child or sibling group you are considering parenting. This may include speaking with other professionals and care providers who have spent time with the child(ren). Gathering of information and evaluating the potential fit of the match will take some time and is a crucial necessary step before meeting the child(ren). Your adoption worker will assist you throughout this process.

Overview of Matching Process

- How do children we are matching with get into the system?
- Children are placed in foster care for many different reasons. Sometimes the parents are unable to care for youth, or sometimes a youths needs are higher than the parent is capable of parenting. Typically, children have experienced trauma, abuse, and/or neglect.
- Termination of parental rights (TPR) – when the parental rights of a parent(s) have been terminated and the county/tribe is relieved of reunification efforts for the child/children. A child is legally free for adoption.
- Transfer of legal custody – parental rights are not terminated, however permanency is established through a transfer of permanent legal and physical custody of a child.

Overview of Matching Process

Types of Placements

Concurrent Placements

- A child is placed in a licensed child foster care home for the purpose of child foster care. Visitation and reunification may continue until the county is relieved of this. If permanency is on the horizon, a placing worker may decide to place the child/children in a concurrent placement.
- In the event that the child cannot return to the legal guardian, the foster provider may be given the opportunity to complete a transfer of legal custody or adopt the child once a termination of parental rights has taken place.

Adoptive Placement

- When a child is placed in a home for the purpose of adoption, the parental rights of the child have already been terminated and the child is legally free for adoption.
- Please note that until an adoption is finalized, there are always legal risks. For example, a relative may step forward and declare that they want to be a permanency option for a child(ren).

Overview of Matching Process

- The NHCFS Case Manager receives referrals from county social worker, tribal case managers, child specific recruiters, and probation offices.
- The Case Manager will review the files of current foster families to select the homes that would be a good match. The foster families are contacted and the following information about the child is relayed (we share all information we have received)
- Once NHCFS receives a referral, the Case Manager discusses the information with the licensed provider, shares information from the referral, and the providers makes a decision on whether or not they are interested in the referral.
- The foster provider will assess whether or not the child might be a good fit for their home and family. It is important to give your response to your case manager in a timely manner.
- For adoptive placements, the home study is submitted to the placing worker to show interest in the prospective placement. Placing workers decide which families they would like to pursue as a potential adoptive match for the child. A collateral visit may take place at this point.
- Once a child is matched or placed in the home, NHCFS will facilitate an intake meeting. At the time of intake, a short staffing will be conducted with all parties present to make sure that everything is clear in regards to the immediate needs of the child. Within 30 days, a formal staffing will be held to develop the child's treatment plan and specific goals. Staffings are then held every 3 months (or more often as needed).

Importance of Advocacy

- ❑ "Advocacy" can mean many things, but in general, it refers to taking action. Advocacy simply involves speaking and acting on behalf of yourself or others.
- ❑ Listed below are some of the most important advocacy skills.
 - Be organized. To be an effective advocate, you need to be organized.
 - Know the facts. Being a good advocate means knowing the facts.
 - Identify the problem.
 - Identify key decision makers.
 - Use a respectful and assertive communication style.
 - Get support when needed.**

Importance of Self-Care

- ❑ Self-care is important for your physical health as well as your mind, soul and, let's face it, your overall health. Without self-care, your relationships with others can suffer tremendously.
- ❑ Self-care is important, but some people think it's selfish or inconsiderate. We know self-care actually makes you more effective and energetic. When you avoid things that make you feel physically and mentally well, you deplete your confidence and self-esteem. Self-care is important to maintain a healthy relationship with yourself. It produces positive feelings, which improves confidence and self-esteem too.
- ❑ Self-care is important for your family and friends too. They learn from you, so setting functional boundaries to take care of yourself shows them that they too need to put themselves first and not overextend or overwork. Unhealthy relationships come about when you don't take time for your needs.

Concurrent Permanency Planning (Relative/Kinship Care)

What is concurrent permanency planning?

It is the process of permanency plan development for children who are placed out of the home of their parents. The social services agency actively works on two plans simultaneously: 1) making reasonable efforts for returning the child a family member and 2) identify an alternative permanency plan. The goals of concurrent permanency planning are to:

- achieve early permanency for children;
- decrease children's length of stay in foster care and reduce the number of moves children experiences; and identify families who will work towards reunification and serve as permanent resources for children.

The social service agencies are required to follow established guidelines and protocols for concurrent planning, including relevant factors such as:

- age of the child and duration of out-of-home placement;
- prognosis for successful reunification with parents;
- availability of relatives and other concerned individuals to provide support or a permanent placement for the child; and special needs of the child and other factors affecting the child's best interests. Involvement of parents and full disclosure of their rights and responsibilities; goals of concurrent planning; support services available for families; permanency options; and the consequences of not complying with case plans.

**Please see additional resource titled, TPLPC Power Point

Creating a Support Network and Support Plan

- ❑ MN Adopt
- ❑ North American Council for Adoptable Children (NACAC)
<https://www.nacac.org/connect/support-for-minnesota-adoptive-families/>
- ❑ Adoption Support Network (ASN) group on Facebook allows parents to share concerns and successes, and offer support and advice to one another.
Search *Facebook* for the group “Adoption Support Network (Minnesota)”
- ❑ Post-Adoption Services
- ❑ Support Groups
- ❑ Crisis Services, offered through North Homes, PPAI agencies AND your County of residence
- ❑ Therapy
- ❑ Outpatient to Inpatient
- ❑ Children Therapeutic Services & Supports (CTSS)
- ❑ Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech
- ❑ School Support
- ❑ Self-care

Creating a Support Network and Support Plan

Why Individuals/Families Contact the MN ADOPT HELP Program

1.855.670.4357 or 612.746.5137 www.mnadopt.org

- Family is experiencing emotional and/or behavioral challenges (e.g. strong emotions exhibited by child/teen (i.e. angry, sad, withdrawn, acting out, rejecting parents, child rejecting their racial background, increasing defiance); school challenges; peer relationship concerns; attachment considerations (i.e. not connecting with parents/others or indiscriminate social interacting); deliberate self-harm; aggression...etc.
- Seeking assistance and guidance regarding getting the right supports at home and/or school to assist with child's needs
- Seeking support/education/resources on transracial adoption issues (e.g. talking about race/adoption, building cultural connections for their child and family, education on the potential impact of transracial adoption on their child(ren) throughout the lifespan...etc.)
- Seeking support on how to recognize and talk to child/teen on a variety of topics related to adoption at different stages/ages
- Seeking support on navigating open adoption relationships
- Parental-focused support (therapeutic, peer connections and community services/systems navigation)
- When parent(s) feel like they are isolated and misunderstood ("nobody gets it.")

Creating a Support Network and Support Plan

- ❑ North Homes provides personalized case management in every home with monthly face to face visits
- ❑ On call 24/7 support by Case Managers and Mental Health Professionals
- ❑ Extensive and ongoing trainings on topics including, but not limited to, mental health, behavioral health, physical health, development, education, social skills, cultural needs and chemical health
- ❑ Strength based individualized plans and goals for each child that are developed by the treatment team, which may include biological parents, family members, Social Workers, Tribal Workers, Probation Officers, Guardian Ad Litem, Therapists, and other stakeholders to the child's wellbeing.

Creating a Support Network and Support Plan

When to call your case manager (On Call) Immediately

- ❑ When a child goes on run
- ❑ If a child goes to the ER or has a serious injury
- ❑ Anytime law enforcement is contacted
- ❑ When a child is having a crisis and you need support
- ❑ When a child is suicidal
- ❑ When a child is under the influence of alcohol and/or chemicals
- ❑ When a child experiences a disruption in a home visit

Non-Emergency Times to Contact Your Case Manager

- ❑ A child is having a difficult time following rules
- ❑ A child is having behaviors that did not result in serious injury
- ❑ A child had a difficult time returning from a home visit
- ❑ A child got into a verbal altercation with another child
- ❑ When you plan to travel out of state
- ❑ When is our next staffing?

Creating a Support Network and Support Plan

- ❑ Quarterly staffings with the entire treatment team to give the child and family support through teamwork and to monitor and evaluate the progress on the family's goals
- ❑ North Homes provides a full continuum of support services to offer a family that may include; individual and family therapy, In-Home CTSS and MHBA Services, Outpatient chemical dependency services, Stabilization Shelter, Adoption Program, Family Group Conferencing services, Residential Treatment, and a 35-day evaluation program
- ❑ Case Managers collaborate and make referrals to community resources to ensure a child has a strong and appropriate network of care
- ❑ Full access to North Homes trainings, workshops and libraries

How Previous Individual and Family Experiences Impact Parenting

You may find you need to change your parenting skills.

- ❑ Strategies to Harness Connection
 - Acknowledge a child's feelings DON'T INVALIDATE
 - Truly listen
 - Think about the reason for the behavior not the behavior itself
 - Team the problem "talk about we"
 - Learning can occur later once regulated
- ❑ Strategies to Understand a Child From Their Perspective
 - Avoid focusing on behaviors instead focus on how to improve relationship with that child
 - Remember behaviors typically occur for 3 reasons that impact a child's sense of welfare (survival);
 - Behaviors typically occur for 3 reasons that impact a child's sense of welfare (survival);
 - Fear, Stress, or Overwhelmed
- ❑ Strategies to Reduce Defiance
 - Pre-teach youth and discuss change in advance
 - Utilize visual schedules
 - Allow child to make choices when appropriate
 - Engage in child directed activities
 - Set Boundaries
- ❑ Use your own personal experiences, good and bad, to share with a child.

How Previous Individual and Family Experiences Impact Parenting

Do's

- Understand the child is seeking regulation
- Get at or below the level of the child
- Focus on the relationship “time in” not “time out”
- Offer a healthy outlet
- Stay regulated to help the child regulate
- Reassure safety in words and actions
 - Step back and give space in the moment
 - Be aware of non verbal communication
 - Validate feelings and allow venting without judgement
 - Reassure “I can keep us both safe”
- BE PRESENT with the youth

Don'ts

- Force eye contact when a child is under stress as it will overwhelm the child's stress response system (fight/flight behavior, motor eyes or dissociate)
- Stand over the child
- Judge
- Make threats
- Say : I am here to help” NOT “How can I help”
- “Looks like you may need help”
- NOT “Why haven't you gotten this done”
- “You seem scared/angry/sad NOT “What is the matter”
- “My job is to help you learn and keep you safe” NOT “That's the rule”

How Previous Individual and Family Experiences Impact Parenting

Video:

Dan Siegel - "Being" Versus "Doing" With Your Child
(8:30 Minutes)

<https://youtu.be/PGUEDtGSwW4>

Every Kid is ONE Caring Adult Away...." Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZBdZEG7PSI>

- Impact of Adoption on Adopted Persons
- Parenting After Trauma Understanding Your Children's Needs
- Mental Health Fact Sheets

How Previous Individual and Family Experiences Impact Parenting

Suggested Readings:

The Whole Brain Child By Daniel Siegel

Parenting from the Inside Out by Daniel Siegel

Attachment Focused Parenting by Daniel Hughes

Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief by Pauline Boss

The Secrets of Successful Adoptive Parenting: Practical Advice and Strategies to Help with Emotional and Behavioral Challenges by Sophie Ashton

The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma by Bessel van der Kolk

Beyond Consequences, Logic, and Control: A Love-Based Approach to Helping Attachment-Challenged Children with Severe Behaviors by Heather Forbes

Parenting the Hurt Child by Gregory Keck & Regina Kupecky

Resources for Families Waiting to be Matched

- Since the matching phase often takes time, this period is a perfect opportunity to seek out, and engage with, additional supportive and educational resources. Examples include: MN ADOPT; Supportive Programs, Education Program, HELP Program, Support Groups.
- Ask for a mentor or to connect with other adoptive families. Either through North Homes, support groups or online, connecting with other families can be extremely beneficial. You will be able to learn more about their process and experiences while expanding your support network.
- Remain Active During Your Matching Process. Visit the State Adoption Exchange (Meet the Kids) on the MN ADOPT web site. Attend matching events hosted by counties and agencies. Become active in local support groups
- Attend trainings in person or online. Continue to educate yourself by attending workshops and learning more about the needs of children in care.
- Do respite! Seriously consider exploring being a respite care provider for other adoptive families so you can expand your understanding/experiences providing care to a child(ren).

Resources for Families Waiting to be Matched

- ❑ Use knowledge gained from ongoing education to evaluate your matching preferences to best find a strong fit between you and your future child.
- ❑ Suggested Readings:
 - ❑ *The Secrets of Successful Adoptive Parenting: Practical Advice and Strategies to Help with Emotional and Behavioral Challenges* by Sophie Ashton
 - ❑ *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* by Bessel van der Kolk
 - ❑ *Beyond Consequences, Logic, and Control: A Love-Based Approach to Helping Attachment Challenged Children with Severe Behaviors* by Heather Forbes
 - ❑ *In their Own Voices: Transracial Adoptees Tell Their Stories* by Rhonda M. Roorda
 - ❑ *In Their Parents' Voice: Reflections on Raising Transracial Adoptees* by Rhonda M. Roorda