



Allegheny County Department of Human Services

RFP Response Form

Foster Care Agencies

PROPOSER INFORMATION

Proposer Name: Wesley Family Services (WFS)

Authorized Representative Name & Title: Julie Cawoski, Director of Family and Community Support Programs

Address: 221 Penn Avenue, Wilkinsburg, PA 15221

Telephone: 724 217-8304

Email: [REDACTED]

Website: www.wfspa.org

Legal Status: For-Profit Corp. Nonprofit Corp. Sole Proprietor Partnership

Date Incorporated: 2017

Partners and/or Subcontractors included in this Proposal: N/A

How did you hear about this RFP? *Please be specific.* Received from Allegheny County as a current contracted foster care provider.

REQUIRED CONTACTS

	Name	Phone	Email
Chief Executive Officer	Douglas W. Muetzel	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Contract Processing Contact	Emily Pietrzak	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Chief Information Officer	Larry Trenga	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Chief Financial Officer	Emily Pietrzak	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
MPER Contact*	Emily Pietrzak	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

* [MPER](#) is DHS's provider and contract management system. Please list an administrative contact to update and manage this system for your agency.

BOARD INFORMATION

Provide a list of your board members as an attachment or in the space below.

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See Attachments

Board Chairperson Name & Title: Benjamin Ciocco, Chairperson

Board Chairperson Address: [Redacted]

Board Chairperson Telephone: [Redacted]

Board Chairperson Email: [Redacted]

REFERENCES

Provide the name, affiliation and contact information [include email address and telephone number] for three references who are able to address relevant experience with your organization. *Please do not use employees of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services as references.*

Jordan Joyce
Evidence-based Prevention and Intervention Support – Penn State

[Redacted]

Alyssa Cholodofsky, MPA, CFRE
United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania

[Redacted]

Angela Liddle, MPA
Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance

[Redacted]

PROPOSAL INFORMATION

Date Submitted 2/10/2021

Amount Requested: \$1,920,900 for foster care maintenance cost to serve 100 children; \$25,000 Recruitment and marketing start up; \$518,300 addition costs to serve 40 TFC placements (TFC \$35.50 per diem)

CERTIFICATION

Please check the following before submitting your Proposal, as applicable:

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I have read the standard County terms and conditions for County contracts and the requirements for DHS Cyber Security, EEOC/Non-Discrimination, HIPAA and Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law.

By submitting this Proposal, I certify and represent to the County that all submitted materials are true and accurate, and that I have not offered, conferred or agreed to confer any pecuniary benefit or other thing of value for the receipt of special treatment, advantaged information, recipient's decision, opinion, recommendation, vote or any other exercise of discretion concerning this RFP.

Choose one:

My Proposal contains information that is either a trade secret or confidential proprietary information and I have included a written statement signed by an authorized representative identifying those portions or parts of my Proposal and providing contact information.

OR

My Proposal does not contain information that is either a trade secret or confidential proprietary information.

ATTACHMENTS

Please submit the following attachments with your Response Form. These can be found at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations>.

- MWDBE documents
- Allegheny County Vendor Creation Form
- 3 years of audited financial reports
- W-9
- Organizational Chart
- Implementation Timeline
- Line-item Budget, if desired

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REQUIREMENTS

Please respond to the following. The maximum score a Proposal can receive is **250** points. Your response to this section should not exceed 30 pages.

Organizational Experience and Capacity (30 points)

1. Describe your organization's demonstrated experience working with the following populations: children from birth up to their 21st birthday who are at-risk or involved with the child welfare system; prospective and current Foster Care parents; birth parents; and all other stakeholders in Foster Care (e.g., court system, DHS caseworkers, other provider agencies), or an equivalent. Include how the input of children, Foster Care parents and birth parents have been incorporated into this Proposal.

WFS has been a leader in providing children and family services for over 50 years. The FSWP and WSS merger of 2017 further strengthened WFS array and expertise. For perspective, WFS has served 319 children with FC services since 2017 leading to 41 adoptions creating a trustworthy track record to best face the current challenges. The Director of Placement Services, Annette Gross, began her career as a FC Caseworker and has been the Director for 15 years. Pam Weaver, Vice President of Child, Family and Older Adult Services also has a long history of involvement in foster care service delivery and oversight dating back to 1983. Julie Cawoski, Director of the Family and Community Support Programs has worked in Family Support and Parent Education for over 16 years.

WFS maintains full licensure for Foster Care and Adoption service. WFS also is an approved SWAN Affiliate offering a full range of permanency and post permanency services. We historically and currently serve the target population of children included in this RFP. WFS' foster care and adoption service is accredited by the standards set forth through the Council on Accreditation (COA) which reflect best practices. WFS foster care families benefit from internal referrals to our array of Behavioral Health (BH) supports. Through our Central Access Department, internal referrals for BH services can be expedited. Integrated BH services help to stabilize children with complex needs, support foster parents as treatment agents and reduces the reliance on psychotropic medication to address problematic behaviors.

WFS is also a provider of Family Preservation and Stabilization (In-Home) Services for families involved with CYF and youth involved with Juvenile Probation Services. The program has 25 staff and a 180 average daily census. We offer structural family therapy, case management, and parent education to stabilize and preserve families. We also provide Aggression Replacement Training and Court Competency Restoration Services for the juvenile probation involved youth. Other support services include our Education Assistance Program that provides a laptop to students heading to secondary education services. Finally, for over 35 years we have provided parent education and support programming using evidence- based parenting programs. These services are available to any parent/caregiver in need of support.

WFS has been a provider of the BH/ CYF Community of Practice (CoP) pilot to improve access to and coordination with Administrative Case Management (ACM) and Blended Service Coordination (BSC) for families involved with child welfare. WFS works with the CYF North Regional Office, as well as other system partners, to test changes to processes and policies that may positively impact the referral process and service delivery when CYF-involved children, youth, and their family members are referred to ACM and SC. We are also currently in a pilot project with the Central Regional CYF office and the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work funded through a Ci-Tech grant. The goal of this project is to increase access to our Intensive Family Coaching services for families involved in

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CYF. The project also focuses on increasing collaboration of BH therapists and Caseworkers on shared cases.

In preparing this RFP, the Director of Placement Services met with staff and Resource Parents to review the Concept Paper from CYF regarding foster care services. Parents and staff offered comments, suggestions and ideas that were submitted during the comment period to DHS. Resource Parents felt that they needed more peer support and networking opportunities which led us to create the Peer Mentor program and obtain training in the Parent Café Model. They also indicated that more training would be helpful, especially regarding special needs children. They stated that they miss in person trainings, but they found online trainings and virtual visits to be more convenient. They have found they are able to schedule more frequent visits with this new virtual opportunity, allowing them to develop an organic relationship with the birth parents. This solidified our resolve to continue to build co-parenting skills by empowering Resource Parents to facilitate visitation and develop meaningful relationships. They also provided feedback that our agency has responded well to COVID and their essential needs. Youth were also asked for feedback. In particular, youth expressed a desire for more social opportunities with other foster children. They also shared they felt safe due to WFS safety protocols during COVID. In addition, WFS continues to solicit feedback at regular and ongoing Resource Parent Association meetings continue to address improvements and needed strategies to better support the quality care of our children. Many of these suggestions have been incorporated into our proposal.

2. Describe your organization's demonstrated experience working with communities and populations that are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, culture and SOGIE and reflective of the target population.

In serving over 30,000 individuals in this region, WFS has empowered the most marginalized populations. The reach alone of WFS, has provided experience with a vast array of race, ethnicity, religion and culture. WFS' continuous improvement culture and additional resources to positively impact diversity and inclusion initiatives provides unduplicated experience. However, this past year, with the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent demonstrations, WFS refocused our goals in regards to working with communities and populations that are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, culture and SOGIE and are reflective of the target population.

Historically, WFS encourages collaborations with diverse community entities to network, market programs opportunities, staffing and advocacy. Examples of these groups include the Wilkesburg Chamber of Commerce, Homewood Children's Village, Pittsburgh Public and Clairton School Districts, Head Start, the Allegheny County Taskforce for Minority and Disability Census Recruitment and Mon Valley Providers Council. Working with these organizations has given us connections with community partners for better insight and understanding. Most recently we opened an affordable and accessible housing apartment building in New Kensington, meeting needs of those looking to overcome housing insecurity. WFS continues to provide free mental health trainings in our communities working with agencies such as the Charlie Batch Foundation and the Duquesne City Police Department.

WFS has set a priority of goals to increase our Diversity, Equality & Inclusion (DEI) efforts based upon our mission and core values. We believe that every person has a unique gift that can never be duplicated and transformation can occur by building on that strength or gift. Understanding that every person is valuable guides our empathy to listen and empower their hopes, dreams and aspirations. We commit to excellence by doing what is in the best interest of each person we are privileged to serve. We know that innovation is key to creatively working together to overcome differences while respecting the ideas and

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beliefs of others that may differ from our own. Through combining these four values we find our fifth, inspiration. Inspiration from the strength and resiliency of our consumers and staff working together to provide the right care, delivered the right way and at the right time.

To accomplish the above goals, WFS Board and Leadership made a commitment to allocate resources and to approach changes needed through a continuous quality improvement framework. We understand that to achieve lasting change we need to involve all levels of the organization and evaluate critical processes and procedures against benchmarks and best practice standards. These efforts also require measurement of progress for accountability and inclusion of the perspectives of all stakeholders.

To achieve our commitment, the Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Service (CLAS) standards were formally adopted by WFS in March of 2020. With our approach firmly focused on staff and those we are privileged to serve, we believe the industry standard (the CLAS standards) has provided the guidelines for the fastest and most measurable improvement for a more diverse and inclusive culture at WFS.

The full implementation of the CLAS Standards is being spearheaded by the Allies for Acceptance Advisory Committee, an internal committee of nearly 60 sixty WFS employees passionate to accomplish necessary change within our agency. WFS believes this to be a grassroots approach to achieve measurable targets and goals while engaging with our greatest resources, our staff and individuals we serve. This committee has also been charged with fostering an inclusive community around the LGBTQIA+, racial and multicultural awareness, while continuing to improve current practices. This group is also tasked with reviewing policies, procedures, and marketing materials to ensure there is inclusivity.

SOGIE training is completed by all Allegheny County funded programs serving youth. Recently, through a recommendation of the Allies for Acceptance committee, all staff will complete training about LGBTQIA+ awareness and acceptance by April 2021. In addition, all staff will be required to complete a cultural awareness training each year as part of their professional development. WFS believes this will give our 1000+ employees the opportunity to develop cultural humility.

The Allies for Acceptance, in efforts to meet the CLAS standards, is exploring and vetting translation and interpretation providers to develop a clear process for all employees to access interpretation services quickly and efficiently for the people we serve. It is also investigating translation services to help translate documents for the people we serve.

Furthermore, DEI work is being done throughout the agency at every level from the Board of Directors, to Management Council, to supervisors to program staff and support staff. WFS contracts with Julius Boatwright and Dan Houston, diversity consultants, to help the agency provide trainings, and conduct “courageous” conversations around DEI.

WFS staff also participate in many workgroups throughout the county and the state. We have leadership representation on the Allegheny County Community of Practice Advisory Committee as well as the Teaming and Training, Diversity and Inclusion and the Trauma-Informed workgroups. Many leaders and staff have completed the equity trainings with Joyce James offered by CYF. WFS staff is actively serving on and engaged with the DEI workgroup for the Conference of Allegheny Providers. WFS closely follows the DEI initiatives from RCPA, the Alliance for Strong Families, PCCYFS, FFTA, the Pittsburgh Foundation, the United Way of Southwestern PA and the Forbes Funds and participates in trainings and other learning opportunities. Currently the Director of Family and Community Support Programs is participating in the nine-month training offered by DHS and Yoga Roots on Location.

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3. Provide clear reasoning why your organization feels it is a strong candidate for this opportunity and how Foster Care fits well within your organization's mission.

WFS' mission to empower children, adults, and families by providing transformational care makes us a strong candidate to continue our Foster Care Services. Over the course of 30+ years, WFS has been essential to meeting the needs of thousands of children and families under the support of our Foster Care Services. The agency has invested human and physical resources to meet the needs of those we serve yesterday, today and tomorrow. As a core value, WFS innovation powers us to do better in the way we serve. The agency's resources and size allow for essential change to meet new demands of an ever-changing world. With the amount of expertise throughout our agency we are forerunners in developing solutions that are client focused.

With the years of dedicated service to provide transformational care for those with the most complex needs, WFS is currently seen as a community leader in multiple systems of service. Members of our leadership team serve on many community taskforces, boards and committees to further the work of caring for children, adults, and families by advocating and influencing system change and reform. Our CEO is a member of the Allegheny County Children's Cabinet and he is a member of the CCBH Board of Directors. Many leaders within the agency belong to provider associations that support child and family - serving agencies such as RCPA, the Alliance for Strong Families, and FFTA. Agency resources are utilized to keep up with best practices and to influence the development of public policies as well as to support services for children and families.

In addition to the agency's foster care services, WFS offers many other child and family support services. We provide Neighborhood Family Counseling in three family centers, Family Preservation and Stabilization Services, parent education and support, and education assistance for young people pursuing post-secondary education.

WFS BH services include Intensive Family Coaching (the only regional provider) and a top county provider of Parent Child Interactive Therapy for parents/caregivers of children under the age of 7 that are exhibiting externalizing behaviors. Both programs have been accessed and utilized successfully by families involved in both the CYF and BH services. Family Based Mental Health teams provide services across Allegheny County to families when a child has a diagnosis that impacts the family system. WFS also has Intensive Behavioral Health Services (IBHS) that include Behavioral Consultants, Mobile Therapists, and Behavioral Health Technicians that provide individualized treatment in the homes, schools and communities children and adolescents with a BH diagnosis and/or Autism. For children with an Autism diagnosis, WFS offers the WonderKids Social Skills program. Our renowned Creative Arts program, which has been featured in the media for its unique services for those with challenges, can be accessed with CYF activity funds like camps or sport activities. We also offer Psychological Services including diagnostic evaluations as well as neuropsychological evaluations.

The vast array of child and family behavioral health, education, family preservation and coordination of care services available at WFS creates a large system of support and many levels of care options for those we are privileged to serve. In conclusion, WFS' expertise is distinctive in Allegheny County, providing unique resources for the Foster Care program.

High quality Foster Care Services are an integral part of and top priority for the agency. The Foster Care Program is supported by our Research, Quality and Compliance Management and Organizational Advancement divisions. The agency continues to raise money to augment our Foster Care program to provide additional improvements, recognition events, and holiday gifts. We secured a grant from the RK Mellon Foundation to help the children in our care and the resource families during the COVID 19

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Pandemic. With those funds we helped with technology, internet access, groceries, cleaning supplies, gifts for graduating students and extra activities for the families while they have been sheltering in place.

Throughout COVID 19, the agency has kept the safety and health of our children, parents, resource parents and staff at the forefront. Safety and cleaning protocols were enacted and continue to be followed each day so that we could continue to offer families the opportunities for in-person visits at our Penn Avenue site. We also continued to meet all licensing requirements with regards to ensuring the safety of the children entrusted to our care. Additionally, we have continued to move prospective resource parents through the certification process.

The recent \$200,000 re-model of the Penn Avenue location solidified our commitment to Foster Care Services including the creation of five spacious and welcoming family visitation rooms. Resources have been consistently provided to maintain and continuously upgrade these spaces. Just recently, a board led fundraising campaign provided over \$10,000 to purchase updated furnishings including new leather couches and chairs that are easy to clean, sanitize and maintain for the visitation rooms. WFS pursued and won a Systems of Care Grant in 2019 to re-create the waiting area to be more family friendly. Improvements were made with input from a curated focus group and facilitated by Aurelia Carter (Family Support Specialist) and Donni Black (Youth Voice Specialist) especially in regards to the main lobby area, which unfortunately, due to COVID restrictions have not yet been fully implemented.

4. Provide the number of homes and total bed capacity you anticipate being able to maintain at any given time. Be specific about the number of homes you anticipate being best equipped to care for different child demographics and other characteristics (e.g., infants, teenagers, Therapeutic Foster Care, LGBTQIA+ individuals).

Over the past three years the WFS Foster Care Program has maintained an average daily census of 75 children in care. Our goal for 2021-2022 is to reach an average daily census of 100 children in our care and this would be a 25% growth rate. We realize this is an ambitious growth rate. To ensure the daily census goal is a success, we have retooled our recruitment, retention, and support strategies for our resource families. Also, in order to meet the needs of so many additional children, WFS plans to increase program staffing significantly.

WFS has consistently demonstrated the ability to recruit families willing to care for children with complex needs, sibling groups and teens and will continue to use proven and innovative methods to increase our numbers. Due to the data stated in the RFP, we felt it necessary to refocus our efforts to serve the children who need us most. Of course, we will attempt to care for every child that needs a home and our ratios may fluctuate as needs in the community change. WFS plans to make a concerted effort to find nurturing homes for children between the ages of 6 and 14 years old. In reviewing the data from July 2019 to December 2020, the age of the children we serve reflects that 46% are less than 6 years, 35% are between the ages of 6 and 13 years, 13% are between 14 and 17 years and 6% are 18+ years. Our targets for growth include serving more children between the ages of 6 and 14 years. Of our projected 100 children per day we expect the ratio to reflect 45% children less than 6 years, 40% children ages 6 to 14 years and 15% 14+ years.

Our goal includes expanding Therapeutic Foster Care services to 35-40 children. Over the last fiscal year, WFS has cared for 25 children who meet the RFP definition of Therapeutic Foster Care. These children have presented with complex behavioral health or medical needs. We have already begun training all families as potential homes for Therapeutic Foster Care. Despite our efforts to train all resource parents to provide TFC, we acknowledge that a percentage of the families will not be able to provide this level of care based on individual family dynamics.

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During the past two fiscal years (2018/2019 and 2019/2020), we provided care for 24 and 30 sibling groups consecutively and for the first six month of 2020/2021 we have had 10 sibling groups in care. In 2018/2019, we provided care for 16 teens, and in 2019/2020, we served 33 teens. Currently this fiscal year we have served 16 teens. We also consistently accept children considered to be at Therapeutic Foster Care level. In 2018/2019, we served 22 children considered Therapeutic Foster Care level, and in 2019/2020, 25 children were in our care at this level. This fiscal year, 19 children at this level have been in our care.

We also have been successful in recruiting resource homes for LGBTQIA+ individuals. Some of the families themselves identify as LGBTQIA+ (currently, 6% of our homes). All resource parents receive training to be open and supportive to LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Promoting Placement Stability (60 points)

5. Describe your plan for *recruitment* of diverse, culturally humble Foster Care families who will provide high-quality and trauma-informed care and safety for children. Please include:
 - a. Specifics about which populations you will target.
 - b. The strategies you will use to ensure your Foster Care families are diverse and culturally humble.
 - c. The recruitment staffing strategy, specific roles and number of staff involved in the recruitment of Foster Care families.
 - d. The specific recruitment strategies you will use for Emergency Placement Homes, Respite Homes and Emergency Respite Homes.
 - e. How you will incorporate a “customer service” approach.
 - f. How you include matching events and preplacement visits in your approach.

a. WFS recruitment practices have always been inclusive, however we have increased these practices to be inclusive of all races, religions, ethnicities, cultures, those identifying as LGBTQIA+, intergenerational families, single and blended families. To recruit new families, WFS focuses on the neighborhoods and communities that our children are coming from each year using data from the county. As part of trauma-informed practice, ideally, we want children to stay in the neighborhoods and schools where they already live. Research shows that less school and routine disruption is better for the children in foster care. Therefore historically, we focus recruitment where our existing referrals reside such as in the East Hills. Utilizing peer to peer recruitment strategies, WFS supports and encourages existing and past resource families to recruit new resource parents. As the population of those we serve changes, WFS is currently increasing efforts to recruit Latinx families.

In conjunction with the CLAS standards, the WFS marketing team consistently reviews all agency materials to promote diversity and inclusion. We have installed Google Translation on all our agency cell phones and on our webpage. Recently, WFS has translated essential agency documents into Spanish and continues to focus efforts on securing methods for translation to meet the needs of potential new foster family recruits.

We have demonstrated the ability to have families of different races, ethnicities, and cultures to care for children while maintaining the child’s racial and ethnic identity and culture in a foster home setting. However, most of our children are maintained in families with the race, ethnicity, or culture they identify with. We have improved this over the past three years: In 2018/2019 we had three white children placed in a foster home of color, and 10 children of color placed in white foster homes. In 2019/2020 WFS had seven white children placed in a foster home of color, and six children of color

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placed in a white foster home. This current fiscal year, WFS has three white children placed in foster homes of color while five children of color are living in a white foster home.

Of our resource families providing care this past year 35% are African American, 62% are white, 3% are of another race, 0% are Hispanic, 6 % identify as LGBTQIA+, 45% are single parents and 12% are intergenerational families. Over the past eighteen months, the demographics of children we serve are 43% African American, 37% white and 20% other race.

An additional focus is to recruit alumni from the Foster Care System. These potential resource parents enter the certification process with a profound and unique understanding of the trauma experienced by children in the child welfare system. They can share their stories with the other foster parents and even the teens in care. This resource definitely leads to cultural humility within the program.

Building on the methods we learned from the Allegheny County Teen Foster Care Recruitment program, we have strengthened WFS' use of social media and online methods of recruitment. A dedicated website for WFS foster care (www.fostercare.wfspa.org) is a great resource for individuals wanting to learn more about becoming a potential resource family. We average 7 contacts per month from the site. The website provides information about the WFS program, the approval process, and provides testimonials from our foster families, and success stories related to foster parenting. WFS also uses our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/WesleyFamilyServices) to feature information about foster care and the need for foster parents. We also use the main WFS website (www.WFSPA.org) and Twitter (twitter.com/wesleyfspa) to highlight recruitment.

b. WFS and specifically the Foster Care Program are committed to recruiting a diverse staff that reflects the diversity of the people we are privileged to serve. This commitment will allow us to recruit Resource Parents that reflect the diversity of the children they care for. The current demographics of our Resource Parents will also help us to continue to recruit diverse families. Our Community Connections Manager assists with the advancement of diversity and inclusion initiatives of the agency to effectively advance WFS' mission. We also invite the people we serve to join our agency's advisory Committee called Allies for Acceptance to help us do this DEI work.

Every prospective foster parent enters pre-service training which introduces the concept of cultural humility. They are introduced to the children and their birth families and encouraged to honor the culture, race, religion, traditions, ethnicity and sexual identity, orientation and expression. There is also reflection on their potential trauma and loss. The trainings are led in the spirit of creating a safe environment where courageous conversations can occur. Resource parents are introduced to the WFS values of transformation, empathy, excellence, innovation, and inspiration which are designed to focus on furthering the growth of a safe environment. The opportunity to watch testimonial videos from children, youth and families involved in foster care, allows potential resource parents to reflect and process which then leads to humility. Our biases, as well as those the resource parent may encounter from family, friends, and society are explored and identified and they are trained on best practices to identify these biases and protect the children in their care.

c. The WFS Foster Care Program begins each year with a strategic recruitment plan. The plan outlines our goals and the action steps are then assigned to various program staff, as part of their work plans for the year. The plan is developed from budget discussions with finance, outcome discussions with our Quality Department, and marketing strategies from Organizational Advancement. The plan is reviewed and adjusted during the service line's Quality Circle each quarter. We also consult our county monitor to help us develop this plan.

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In the current WFS Foster Care program, we have two full-time Resource Family Recruiters. They are responsible for following up on all prospective applicants. They work with current families to schedule events or to brainstorm about outreach opportunities. A new position, Community Connections Manager (CCM), was created and filled to help all the programs in the Family and Community Support Program service line. Their responsibilities include identifying opportunities to present WFS programs and services to external stakeholders, funders, referral sources, potential volunteers and resource parents and people who use our programs and services. They will also work closely with the recruiters and the WFS Resource Parent Association.

The recruiters are assigned to the new resource parent as their “case manager” throughout the approval process. Each recruiter is responsible for maintaining close contact with the families through the approval process. The recruiters conduct interviews with the resource parent applicants and all their household members, including their other children in the home. They complete a monthly tracking log of all families to monitor the approval process and gather all documentation needed for certification including the Family Approval Document and the Home Safety Checks.

Agency resource families are paid to participate in recruitment activities as well. The families and staff are encouraged to identify and participate in recruitment opportunities. The families are also encouraged to host “meet and greets” or “Foster – aware” activities within their neighborhoods and circles of friends.

d. From the very beginning of our interaction with families interested in fostering children, we discuss the need for emergency homes and respite homes. We recruit concurrently for emergency and respite homes through the same recruitment activities as general resource parent recruitment efforts. We clearly explain the critical nature of emergency placements – the children and their families are in immediate crisis and a temporary placement must be found for the child to avoid retraumatizing them with moving them from place to place each day or putting them in a congregate care placement. We stress the importance of the “safety net” they can provide for children while tying it back to the original motivation to become a resource family – caring for children in times of need. We also intend to recruit designated emergency placement and emergency respite homes.

Our intake coordinators continue to check in with approved families on a weekly basis so that we are aware of any issues of availability. We encourage families that are no longer able to take permanent placements to provide respite or emergency care. Also, as part of our practice, WFS has secured capacity waivers from PA DHS to secure emergency foster homes for children. When a waiver is secured, we increase our contact in the foster home to at least weekly.

We also talk about respite care, which is available to all resource families. We stress that respite is a shared support amongst resource families. We normalize this concept as part of the responsibility of being a foster parent with WFS. To make this level of care more attractive for our families and to let them know we value their assistance and commitment, we intend to provide a higher per diem rate for emergency/respite homes.

Also, WFS requires our foster families to identify a backup caregiver. Once they have identified this caregiver, we meet with the individual to review polices and secure clearances. This also helps acquaint the backup caregivers with foster and respite care. This acts as another recruitment tool because some backup caregivers become approved respite foster homes.

e. Customer service has been incorporated into WFS practices. WFS treats each person with respect and dignity and provides continuous support. It means being transparent and telling the truth, being clear with our expectations, being available with tangible support in times of need, soliciting continuous

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feedback, quickly providing answers to questions, giving as much notice as possible regarding appointments and visits, providing access to consistent staff and providing the means to access support from other resource parents.

Customer Service begins in the inquiry process through answering questions and providing insight in a strength-based and transparent manner. The recruiter's job is to assist the family throughout the approval process. In continuing our Customer Service commitment, we have strengthened our process of orienting resource parents to our program by having all staff members that interact with our families and children attend the pre-service training to introduce themselves, describe their roll, and answer questions. Staff are committed to returning calls, text messages and emails as quickly as possible.

We provide all families with 24/7/365 crisis support. Crisis Support is critical for both the resource family and for the children entrusted to our care. All foster families are provided the on-call number to be directly connected with program staff during non-business hours. Senior staff are on-call and will provide telephone or in-person support during a crisis. The resource family is provided three points of contact: their Resource Family Support Coordinator (RFSC), their Foster Care Coordinator, and the corresponding supervisor.

The RFSC role is a new position at WFS which will allow a family to build a relationship with one consistent contact. In developing this role, WFS solicited feedback from the families that a consistent person would improve our practices. The RFSC supports the resource parent by providing education, guidance, and a safe space. They work with the family to develop a support plan which is an outline of action steps to resolve issues or concerns. Once the plan is in place the RFSC will "walk with" the family to help them achieve their goals. The RFSC encourages connections to other resource parents.

In this proposal we have increased our staff number so that caseloads will be more manageable and therefore foster families will have more access to their time and thus support. We have refined staff responsibilities so that there are now two Therapeutic Coordinators to assist families with children with behavioral health concerns. We have also added Case Aide Positions to help with transportation, visits and appointments. We value our families and their suggestions for improvement. We will continue to solicit feedback annually through our Perception of Care Surveys conducted at their yearly re-certification, but we welcome it at any time.

f. WFS consistently participates in matching events sponsored by SWAN and other foster care agencies. The expectation is that the Intake Coordinators, our RFSC, and our SWAN workers will attend these matching events. While attending these events, the Intake Coordinators and the RFSCs share information about our available families who meet the needs of the child being presented. The Intake Worker along with the SWAN worker will then review all the information on available families to "screen in" as potential resources for children needing a home.

The intake coordinators are responsible for reviewing foster home availability daily and updating the information with WFS referral sources. For Allegheny County this means updating the Placement Resources portal. (Please note, we recently created a second Intake Coordinator position to help manage the number of families and updates in the required platforms). As part of the update, information is also gathered regarding the families' ability to provide emergency/respite care.

The Intake Coordinator interviews each child to learn their likes and dislikes and personality. They take into consideration what a child shares with them: i.e. preference to pets, the family's location or family's constellation, to make the best match. The Intake Coordinator lets the child be heard and talk about previous placements. They also consider past traumas: i.e. sexual abuse, issues with younger children, or trouble accepting authority. This essential information allows for successfully matching a

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child to a family. WFS Intake Coordinators work diligently to personalize and arrange preplacement visits (virtually or in-person) between the children in residential settings and the families that could be a potential match.

WFS also uses this information from the children who were interviewed as part of pre-service training. Trainers share the child's characteristics, experiences, and behaviors throughout our group or in one on one training without identifying the child. This allows applicants to become familiar with the children we serve.

Additionally, we have a process in place to work with families who are hesitant in accepting placements. The Intake Coordinator along with the recruiter will work strategically with the family, to overcome what the family identifies as their barriers. The staff works with the family to suggest supports and resources to overcome those barriers.

6. Describe specific efforts you will take and approaches you will use to *retain* foster parents, including Foster Care parents who have Emergency Placement Homes, Respite Homes and/or Emergency Respite Homes. Include how support will be available to Foster Care parents 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Retention has been a focus of the program for over ten years. We continue to listen to feedback from our foster families and believe offering around the clock support, incentives, and unique networking and training opportunities are key to improving retention. This feedback identified that our pre-service training is comprehensive and prepares recruits for their new role and builds confidence and understanding of the expectations. Since our pre-service and ongoing training is seen as a strength, we have added more programs, opportunities, peer support and more opportunities for feedback and added a new position to focus on supporting the resource family. We encourage our families that are not currently accepting a long-term placement to be available for emergency/respite care by providing them a special per diem for the respite period and other incentives. We specifically plan to recruit designated emergency placement and emergency respite families as well.

WFS has interwoven the experience level of our foster families into our peer mentoring. Our families average five years, but the range extends to 27 years of experience in the foster parent role. Our ongoing training (in-person and virtual) incorporates a peer networking activity which allows the experienced foster parents to share their experiences. Our peer mentoring has expanded to include one-on-one support from an experienced foster parent to a newer foster parent. The positive feedback has allowed us to compile a list of willing and experienced foster families for the program. This includes experienced families who have secured permanency or reached capacity for their home. We do provide a monetary incentive for the families offering mentorship.

Experienced foster parents and peer mentors help to co-facilitate our pre-service and ongoing training opportunities for foster parents. Resource Parents with identified skills and experience working with different ages and behaviors of children are invited share their expertise.

Quality parent/caregiver education, multiple support programs, socialization opportunities and peer mentoring are the cornerstones of retention of foster parents. Coupled with good communication tools such as the WFS Resource Parent Newsletter, the Facebook page, and the website lead to engagement and connection with the program staff and the other resource parents. Other supportive networking efforts include, the Be Strong Parent Café, and ParentWISE Family Fun Nights and trainings with over 35 years of experience and resources. ParentWISE is a parent education and support program, offering Wisdom, Insight, Support and Encouragement.

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Research has also shown that families who feel supported are more likely to continue being a resource parent. WFS offers support and crisis management to our families 24/7/365 through the after-hours on-call provided by leadership. Our new Resource Family Support Coordinators (RFSC) will also meet with the foster families to provide guidance and emotional support to the foster parent as they are navigating the foster care and CYF systems. The RFSC will help the foster family access community-based resources and additional support offered by WFS, like the activity fund or transportation incentive. The RFSC will ensure the foster families are well informed and have access to recommended trainings. We believe if a family feels well supported, not only will they continue being a resource parent but they will expand their parameters as to whom they feel comfortable caring for in their home.

WFS offers a monetary incentive for years of service for foster families. WFS recognize Resource Parents' years of service annually. WFS also honors the Resource Family of the Year, the Teen Foster Family of the Year, and the Collaboration Award designee. Each award winner receives a plaque and a membership to the PA State Resource Parent Association.

7. Please describe a plan for facilitating peer supports for Foster Care parents. This may include strategies, a specific model (such as the Mockingbird Model) or informal mechanisms, and be based on common challenges, geography or something else.
 - a. Where you see fit, include innovative solutions that have arisen as a result of COVID-19 (e.g., videoconferencing, virtual visits).

WFS realizes that to retain and recruit quality resource families, we must provide multiple opportunities for support. Strong backing from staff is crucial but resource parenting is so unique and complicated that peer support is also very valuable. Peer support is offered in a variety of ways at WFS. Due to COVID, much of our interaction and support has moved to telephone, email and virtual platforms. We have had good participation with these methods because no one must drive or use public transportation to participate. Foster families often have such busy lives and to attend a meeting or education opportunity via a computer in their own home has been appealing to them.

Certified foster families automatically become members of the WFS Resource Parent Association. The association provides an opportunity for our resource families to have open and transparent communication with the program leadership team and with each other. These meetings are currently held virtually due to COVID but will return to in-person once the pandemic is over. However, WFS continues to offer the virtual option to our parents as well. Input from the foster families guide the meeting agenda, and discussion topics may include review of the program's procedures and policies, upcoming changes in practice, issues of concern, quality improvement initiatives, social activities, or new resources. With the change to virtual meetings, we have expanded the use of the association's group email to send out various information. The members use the email to share community-based resources, especially around virtual learning. Program foster parents who are teachers were able to provide valuable tips to the group and on an as needed basis were reaching out individually to foster parents needing additional support. Over the holidays, the email list has been used to share family recipes. Foster families shared a memory they associated with their shared recipe. COVID resulted in the agency resource parents connecting with and supporting one another in various new and creative ways.

WFS offers peer mentoring for resource parents. The peer mentoring program includes a monetary incentive for experienced resource parents to provide peer mentoring on a one-on-one basis or co-facilitate in a training forum. To optimize the experience, we match families needing support with a family in the same geographical area, same age range of children or same presenting area of need. This RFP will allow WFS to supplement this and match every newly approved family with an experienced foster family. Each new foster family will have at least three contacts with their matched peer mentor.

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WFS has always provided a forum for peer networking/socializing as outlined in the Mockingbird model. Due to COVID, the in-person networking opportunities have been limited but normally the peer networking forums consist of the families sharing a meal and time to talk. We also provide childcare so the parents can focus on developing relationships. The meal allows families to get acquainted with one another. These gatherings create informal matchings among the attendees on top of their assigned peer mentors. Families making natural connections that continue to flourish over time without any formal program intervention.

WFS has incorporated a new evidence-based program to support our Foster Parents. The Be Strong Parent Café Model is based on the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors-Resilience: Parent Resilience, Relationships: Positive Social Connections, Support: Concrete Support in Times of Need, Knowledge: Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, and Communication: Social and Emotional Competence. It is our goal to develop our team of eight to at least twelve and then continue to grow over time and have enough parent/ caregiver leaders on our team so that it becomes parent led and agency supported. Much like the family constellation gatherings in the Mockingbird model, the Parent Café can be used as a monthly event for the adult caregivers to build connections and support. Using Parent Café, we will be able to bring resource parents together from neighboring communities to create partnerships with families in proximity. Additionally, bringing birth parents and resource parents into such an emotionally and physically safe space as the café would allow the opportunity for building more positive relationships and connections, developing a sense of empathy and understanding for the other's role, and strengthening the family overall. Exploring the challenges and successes of raising a family will cultivate a pathway for birth parents and resource parents to come together in a way that brings more stability, security, and safety for the child.

Another opportunity for peer interaction is the ParentWISE Program Family Fun Nights on Zoom. Currently this is geared to families with children ages 10-14 but we are developing Family Fun Nights for younger and older children. Once a month, we can hold an hour-long online session where families can join an opportunity for comradery and support. Family Fun Nights allow parents to connect with each other, but we also see the connections that began to form between the youth, leading them to feel less emotionally isolated and more positive about themselves and their interactions with each other. In the Mockingbird model we see that families come together to bond, develop relationships, and support one another in the fun and relaxing environment of one of the constellation family's homes. With many session activities already established, the Family Fun Night is ready to be set into place with our resource families as an online option until we can be together in person.

WFS offers in-service training throughout the year affording resource families another opportunity to meet and support one another. With the integration of the ParentWISE Program into our Resource Parent training program, we have been able to offer many more training workshops and parenting series to our resource parents and other providers through the AC training collaborative. For over 35 years, the ParentWISE Program has been providing parent education and support to Westmoreland and Allegheny Counties. The ParentWISE program provides a variety of evidence-based curricula: Incredible Years (IY), Triple P, and Strengthening Families Program (SFP). The curricula are strength-based, trauma-informed, and promote positive and developmentally appropriate strategies.

Through our wide range of programming we are able to offer parents and caregivers of any age child resources to improve their knowledge of positive parenting strategies, gain peer support, create more stable and nurturing homes, connect with community supports, and develop their own leadership skills whether in their family or community. Often both resource and birth parents attend classes together. Exploring the challenges and successes of raising a family will cultivate a pathway for birth parents and resource parents to come together in a way that brings more stability, security, and safety for the child.

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WFS partners with external supports for peer support as well. We refer families caring for teens to AFN because of the supports they offer from experienced teen foster parents. We also encourage our foster parents to attend the trainings offered through the DHS Training Collaborative and to attend various support groups based on specific needs to the child's behavior, mental health diagnosis or medical condition. The support group referrals also enhance the work being offered through therapeutic foster care.

8. Describe your process and timeline for Foster Care Home approval. If your anticipated timeline will routinely take more than three months for approval from receipt of application, please explain.

The approval process is designed to allow a family to gain approval within 45 days. We had the privilege of working with consultant Michael Sanders to help us formalize our recruitment and approval processes. Essential components of the process are the timely assignment of the applicant to a recruiter, open scheduled pre-service training series held once every other month, regular contact with the applicants and individual tracking of all applicants in the approval process. Our approval process is a concurrent and not a linear process. This allows the applicant to work on several things at one time. Applicants are provided information about WFS, the foster care program and the approval process. The applicant also receives the application, information for applying for clearances, the link to the PA Mandated Reporter Training, and the physical forms. From this initial connection a recruiter is assigned to the applicant. Applicants receive the pre-service training schedule with the recruiter following up to discuss attendance. The recruiter is responsible for seeing (in-person or virtually) all prospective resource parents within 10 days of contact. This begins the interview and home study process. The recruiter schedules follow up interviews to gather needed information for the Family Approval Document. As part the pre-service training, prospective family's complete homework assignments to determine how they will internalize the topics being taught in class, and this information is also used to inform the profile. Concurrently, the recruiter is tracking clearances, physicals and gathering references and other documentation needed for the approval process. During the weekly contact with the applicant the information outstanding is reviewed with the family. Once all the documentation is secured the written profile is reviewed with the applicant(s) and signed.

Please note: on average, most applicants take 90 days to complete the process. The process is owned by the applicant and guided by the program. Recruiters are responsible for guiding and helping families to overcome barriers as many families experience a delay in the process related to securing physicals or clearances, or with references returning their feedback.

To help expedite the process, WFS offers pre-service training multiple times throughout the year and provides rolling admission, permitting individuals to start the pre-service training immediately. Staff are available to complete missed classes.

WFS pre-service training introduces the potential resource parent to the matching foster care resource team. The intake coordinators become familiar with incoming families through participation in the training series and through discussions of incoming families with the recruiters. This allows the intake coordinator to begin matching incoming families who will soon be approved. This has proven successful in securing homes for foster children at the time of approval or shortly following approval of the applicant.

Promoting Well-Being (65 points)

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9. Provide a detailed pre -service and ongoing training plan for Foster Care parents that emphasizes cultural humility and includes all required and relevant topic areas.

WFS offers our pre-service training series once every other month. The series covers an array of topics totaling 32 hours of training and all families must obtain First Aid/CPR certification, complete AFFIRM training and complete the PA Mandated Reporter Training as part of the pre-service requirements.

Our manualized training has 12 sessions and is designed to provide information needed to parent children with a trauma history, to teach successful engagement between birth/foster parent, and to promote understanding of differing perspectives including a sense of cultural humility.

- The series begins with “Orientation” which provides an overview of WFS as an organization, the WFS foster care program and staff positions, the foster home approval process, birth parent engagement requirements, foster parent expectations including the willingness to provide necessary transportation, and an overview of the training series.
- Session 2 “Who are the Children?” provides information about the children entering foster care. Activities and discussion are directed to help applicants understand the importance of maintaining siblings together and loss incurred when separated; to understand a teen’s placement journey and the impact of that journey on a teen’s sense of self; and the importance of affirming youth sexual and gender identity and expression and the particular risk factors of the LGBTQIA+ foster youth.
- Session 3 “Who are the Parents?” helps the prospective foster parent to understand how their perspectives may differ from the foster child and/or birth parents’ expectations. Feedback from applicants has been this is one of the most insightful sessions of the series. This segment ends with cultural awareness and humility as it relates to race, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, and sexual orientation, identity, and expression.
- Session 4 “Understanding the Process” provides information on the how foster care placements are made and the roles of WFS, the county and the courts.
- Session 5 “Grief and Loss” focuses on the losses a child and their birth parent experience during the placement process.
- Session 6 “Child Development” providing information on typical childhood development and milestones. We discuss organic reasons for developmental delays and the various diagnoses a child may come with to their home.
- Session 7 “The Effects of Abuse and Neglect” WFS staff help potential resource families to process the impacts of maltreatment on physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development.
- Session 8 “Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)” provides information on human trafficking and sexual exploitation of children.
- Session 9 “Attachment” explains how healthy attachment is formed and what happens when attachment is disrupted, both the immediate and long-term effects.
- Session 10 “Parenting” provides information on parenting techniques to successfully parent a child with a trauma and loss history.
- Session 11 “Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard”, uses the curriculum offered by the state with the applicants. Throughout this session we discuss ways to involve the birth parent in decision making.
- Session 12 “Crisis Management” includes information on identifying triggers and motivators. We review the effectiveness of identifying behavioral cues to prevent a crisis. De-escalation techniques are taught and the crisis support of WFS 24/7/365 is explained.

Trauma-Informed Care training is required by all WFS resource families to prepare them to care for a child that may present with challenging behaviors following placement. WFS also offers a trauma-based foster parenting series, *Finding Healing through Connections* by Loryn Smith. The twenty-part series is offered twice a year to the foster families. Additional training for Therapeutic Foster Care

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homes includes sessions on mental health, therapeutic supports/interventions, medication management and documentation.

WFS families are expected to complete 20 hours of training annually. Each year, foster families receive a training log that outlines the number of required hours and recommended trainings to be completed. WFS offers 30 hours of in-service training internally to WFS families. Other opportunities are available through the DHS Training Collaborative and other providers. The Resource Family Support Coordinator (RFSC) helps the families create their training plan.

Ongoing trainings are offered in a group setting once every other month. Each training segment offers two hours of training and is designed to facilitate discussion among the foster families. This allows peer mentoring as the experienced families can share their experiences. We also offer training through the Resource Parent Association. The training topics are reflective of what is going on in the community. These discussions have been on racial inequity and how to parent a child realizing those inequities, virtual learning, and fostering children during the pandemic. The agency utilizes a Resource Parent Newsletter as a form of ongoing communication which contains a written training on different topics that can be completed for 1 hour of training credit.

Additionally, WFS shares information via the Resource Parent Association group email about external trainings offered by individual agencies or through the DHS Training Collaborative. Our ParentWISE program offers at least twice monthly trainings for the DHS Training Collaborative. The Parent and Community Educators have reported that these workshops engage resource parents from many agencies in a supportive and safe environment allowing resource parents to learn from one another.

10. Describe your plan to facilitate co-parenting between birth parents and Foster Care parents, including how you will connect these people as early on as possible after a new placement is established.

WFS is accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA). COA standards expect that services to birth parents include resource families maintaining contact with parents to share information about the children and to support the parents in maintaining involvement with their children. The plan for foster care is devoted to that philosophy. The process of connecting birth families and resource families not only helps the child with transitioning but helps the resource family gain a better understanding of the child's family of origin and the issues they have encountered. Developing a sense of partnership between parent and resource parent, along with extended family, caseworkers and service providers, aids in the development of service plans that are focused on parent empowerment, family strengths, respect, and support. Shared investment and engagement in case planning helps to ensure commitment to the permanency planning, safety, and well-being of the children.

WFS proposes to assist in the sharing of information and strategies using the Parent Café Model and hosting trainings attended by both resource and birth parents. COA standards recommend that training includes knowledge and skills to understand all aspects of child development, to provide nurturing and attachment, appropriate supervision and expectations regarding managing the children's behavior, how to meet any special needs of the child and how to maintain a safe home environment. In addition to using resource parents and extended family as mentors, parents are also helped with building strong and healthy support networks by connecting them to culturally relevant services such as child care, housing resources, benefits, concrete needs, vocational and educational assistance, transportation services and medical care. Referrals can also be made for mental health, substance abuse and intimate partner violence services.

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The discussion of co-parenting with the birth parent begins in the pre-service trainings with prospective resource families. The resource families are provided information pertaining to permanency goals. Most children in foster care have a primary permanency goal of reunification with a concurrent goal of placement with relatives. In talking about permanency goals, the resource family is provided with information and expectations relative to their role in supporting family connections. The pre-service training also helps the resource parent gain an understanding of the birth parent's legal parental rights including their rights to participate in decision making regarding their child. Resource parents learn skills to support shared decision making. The pre-service training stresses the importance of documenting and sharing a child's milestones with the birth family. With technology, sharing developmental milestones and successes happens easily and often in real time.

WFS has implemented the Bridging the Gap process which are the first meetings after placement between the birth family and the resource family. A Bridging the Gap meeting is held within 72 hours of the placement of the child. The meeting is facilitated by WFS Foster Care staff. Staff will conduct a second Bridging the Gap meeting within ten days of the first meeting. The purpose of these meetings is to assure the birth parent that their child is safe and to assure the child that their parent is safe too. This meeting gives the birth parent an opportunity to tell the person who is caring for their child about their child's likes, dislikes, routines, methods to soothe them, cultures and traditions that are important to the child and the birth family. They work out schedules for appointments and future visits. They also start their relationship of co-parenting the child with a sense of dignity, respect and understanding. The WFS staff are specially trained to facilitate this meeting and use reflective listening, mediation, and engagement skills to ensure success.

Another opportunity to strengthen co-parenting is at the Individualized Service Plan (ISP) meeting held within 20 days of the placement. WFS ISP meetings use the practice of conferencing and teaming. The ISP Coordinator hosts the meeting with the birth parent, the resource parent, and other members of the placement team. This allows everyone at the table to have an equal voice in developing the goals and action steps to work towards reunification of the birth family. The action steps include items for both foster parents and birth parents; with each action step designed to support one another in the child's life. One consistent expectation outlined in the ISP is that the foster parent will share information with the birth parent on an ongoing basis. The RFSC will encourage and support the resource parent to meet that goal. Resource parents are provided the telephone number of birth parents once this information is known. As a program, we encourage the open exchange of information. Most of our resource families feel comfortable calling and introducing themselves and sharing information without the assistance of the Bridging the Gap personnel. This has helped to increase family connections outside of family visitation when permissible to include telephone contact.

Through our co-parenting techniques, we have discovered when birth and foster parents are open to the experience there is increased collaboration between the two set of parents. Through pre-service training, resource parents gain empathy for the birth parent and are more inclined to include them in important experiences. They are also more receptive to supervising the parent's contact with the child because they have a relationship focused on the child's best interests. Co-parenting often leads to the resource family continuing to be a support to the birth family upon reunification.

The parenting series offered by the WFS ParentWISE Program also offer opportunities for resource parents and birth parents to add the same tools to their parenting toolboxes and thus work together to provide consistent parenting in both homes. This provides another avenue to understanding, empathy and support of one another. The ParentWISE Program provides trainings for birth and foster parents to attend together. The program has experience in conducting co-parenting classes and activities. They have held the contract with Westmoreland County Family Court for eight years to provide the court-mandated class, "Children Hurt In Loss and Divorce (C.H.I.L.D.)." This class is designed to

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encourage parents going through separation or divorce to find ways to protect the children involved. This class promotes empathy, effective communication, effective problem solving, self-regulation, and self-care. These co-parenting strategies are easily applied to birth and resource parents in helping them build better relationships and will be offered through in-service training.

11. Provide a detailed plan for establishing and sustaining Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) homes.

Please include:

- a. The standards of the specific model you intend to use and why you chose it.
- b. How you will implement the model, including specifics about the development and use of treatment plans at the client level.
- c. How your organizational capacity and infrastructure will be able meet all model standards and train and support Foster Care parents.
- d. Your proposed process and timeline to establish between 30% and 50% of your Foster Care homes as TFC settings.

As an accredited Council on Accreditation (COA) organization, we abide to their standards regarding Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC). Children with complex needs, whether physical, developmental, emotional, or behavioral can benefit from the structured environment of a therapeutic home setting that emphasizes well-being, maintaining family connections and integrating with community supports and services. To deliver the service, WFS uses a team approach that includes collaboration amongst the program staff, caseworkers, treatment foster parents, family members, school personnel and any other specialized service providers. Individualized treatment plans are developed that identify strategies to help with the child's adjustment to the treatment home. These build on the child's strengths to address the needs that prompted the placement and identified during assessment. Treatment teams review the plans monthly to evaluate progress. In addition to the provision of treatment services within the home, WFS staff coordinate and ensure any specialized services needed such as rehabilitative, therapeutic, medical, support or social skills groups are provided. Linking with other service providers can enhance the services to meet the needs of the youth. We have had great success working with AFN, PAAR and The Children's Institute.

Under COA standards, therapeutic foster care parents should have proven experience as resource parents or specialized training in TFC and have 3 non-relative references. WFS provides the specialized training to all incoming applicants, recognizing that they will not be matched as an active participant in the therapeutic intervention until it is determined they have the skills needed. Therapeutic foster parents are responsible for implementing treatment strategies in the home by helping the child understand treatment goals, documenting behaviors and progress.

Therapeutic foster parents receive continuous support which includes ongoing training and weekly contact with the assigned staff, with in person contact at a minimum of every two weeks. On call crisis intervention is available 24/7/365. Additional support is available through respite plans that are developed.

Discharge planning is also an integral part of services from the beginning. It is the intent of the program to support the child's transition to home or next planned placement by providing treatment recommendations, sharing appointment information, and developing aftercare plans.

The TFC model is derived from different models and will replicate the licensed CRR host home model of care we delivered in the past. This format eliminates the restriction imposed by most blueprint models. It creates flexibility in delivering different therapeutic services to best meet a child's needs. The model has a logic model infused with principles of evidence-based programs to help guide service deliver and collect outlines for our TFC program. The TFC model goals are to stabilize behaviors,

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increase coping skills and reduce reliance of psychotropic medication for behavioral management. Reduction is defined as decreased in medications prescribed, decrease in dosage or frequency of administration.

The program will have two master level therapists. Each child will be assigned to a foster care coordinator to complete the case management related to foster care. The family will have the support from the Resource Family Support Coordinator (RFSC). On an as needed basis, a case aid will be made available to help provide daytime respite. The therapist will be assigned to completed assessments and therapy to the children entering the TFC program. The therapist will outline behavioral goals and mental health interventions and will participate in the ISP meetings. The therapist will take the lead in providing input into the behavior and mental health domains in the service plan.

The therapist meets with the child within 48 hours of placement. The therapist develops a crisis plan with the child within 10 days of placement and reviews and updates the plan every 30 days. The plan is shared with the foster parents, other systems, and the on-call consultants. The therapist provides weekly individual therapy to the child.

The WFS therapist also works with the RFSC to identify child specific training on the child's mental health diagnose and parenting strategies derived from www.aacap.org. The RFSC also provides training on any psychotropic medication and the medication side effects. Additionally, the RFSC supports the foster parent in learning to reward positive behaviors while reducing negative attention seeking behaviors with the child.

Children with complex behaviors can be challenging so it is important to offer respite to parents. Respite is offered in two forms. The first is providing daytime respite on a set weekly interval which provides a break to the TFC family and child. The child engages in a planned activity with the case aide. The activity can relate to achieving a therapeutic action step through modeling or participate in a reward. Rewards are great to help support behavioral change. The second is overnight respites which may be part of the child's treatment plan for children presenting with extreme behaviors. When overnight respites are part of the treatment plan, WFS will utilize the same respite home for the child each time and this creates consistency in parenting and in the treatment implementation.

Please note: when additional therapy needs to be provided, the therapist works with the MCO to secure a referral for Family Based Mental Health Services (FBMHS) or another level of care. Until those referred behavioral health services are in place, the therapist will continue to provide therapeutic interventions. FBMHS could provide additional support to the resource and birth family including crisis prevention and intervention with 24/7/365 on-call service, and individual and family therapy.

Like regular foster care, families providing TFC will be part of the Resource Parent Association and will be matched with a peer mentor. They will also be encouraged to participate in Parent Café, Family Fun Nights, and all training workshops of relevance. They will connect with AFN and their support programs as well.

As all incoming prospective resource parents will be trained to eventually provide the high level of TFC. However, the reality is that not every foster family will be appropriate to provide TFC. Historically, children with complex behaviors have successfully been cared for, matched with our families, and supported by WFS, therefore a phase in time is not needed. In fiscal year 2018/2019 we provided TFC level of care to 22 children. In 2019/2020 we provided this level of care to 25 children and this fiscal year we have provided this level of care to 19 children. We currently match challenging children outside of the specialized TFC. As part of the matching process we share information about the child's behaviors and therapeutic needs. Once the child is successfully placed, the program can help

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the family to adjust to the increased level of care. The resource parent and child are provided with additional supports offered by the program to stabilize behaviors, increase coping skills, and move to a reduction in medication to control behaviors. The therapeutic resource parent is paid a higher per diem as this requires a larger investment of time. Experience shows that families may encounter challenging behaviors, increased crises, and spend more time as an active participant in the therapeutic interventions. Therefore, we must compensate them for this higher level of care. We plan to have 30% to 50 % of our Foster Care homes as TFC settings within 18 months.

12. Describe your plan to ensure timely completion of assessments for children in Foster Care through staff training, supervision and quality assurance.

Timely completion of assessments has been challenging due in part to our recording process. Currently, we need to duplicate entries in both our internal health record, Credible, and the county's record of care, KIDS, as well as maintaining an extensive paper file. WFS is working to interface between the two systems of record in order to avoid manual duplicate entry in the same way our Family Preservation and Stabilization Program operates.

WFS has implemented the following process to ensure documentation is done in a timely manner. At the time of placement, all children receive an Intake Assessment. These assessments are completed and entered into WFS' Credible system within the first 10 days of placement. Within 30 days of placement, if the child is school age, they will receive an Educational Screen, which is entered into the KIDS system. If the child is not school aged, the child is referred to AFIT for a developmental assessment and tracking.

WFS have made a change to our process to ensure to complete the CANS assessment within the first 30 days of placement. We are using the ISP meeting completed at the 20th day of placement as the trigger to complete the CANS. A dedicated position, the Therapeutic Coordinator (TC), is responsible for completing the initial CANS following the ISP meeting. The TC is a therapist trained to administer the CANS as well as available to provide brief therapeutic interventions for children in need of that service through our Therapeutic Foster Care Program. The CANS will be updated once every 90 days and will coincide with the ISP Reviews. All CANS will be entered into KIDS each time they are completed. The foster care manager will be responsible for ensuring that the CANS are completed at the required intervals and then entered into the KIDS system.

WFS completes the ISP following the concepts of teaming and conferencing. A dedicated staff, the ISP Coordinator schedules and hosts the ISP meetings. The forum allows open feedback from the child, the birth parent, the resource parent and all the professionals that are part of the placement team. The ISPs are reviewed and updated every 90 days. The ISPs are entered into the KIDS system within 30 days of the meetings. The foster care manager will ensure that the ISPs are entered into KIDS.

Educational screens are completed at the time of the child's initial placement. The screens are updated every February and August regardless of the initial screen date. The educational screens are completed and documented in KIDS by the Foster Care Coordinators. The supervisor of the Foster Care Coordinators will be responsible for tracking their compliance.

WFS completes an out of home safety assessment upon the child's placement into the foster home. This initial contact is entered into KIDS as the 24-hour contact. Every 90 days thereafter, a risk assessment is completed on each foster care case. These are internal assessments that are completed and monitored by the case supervisor for compliance.

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An Independent Living Screen is completed with each youth ages 14 and older. The screen provides a plan for the youth, the foster parent, and the Foster Care Coordinator to work on in developing life skills that will serve the youth when they move to independent living. The IL screens help to guide the independent living domain of the ISP. We use the IL screen to refer our transitional young adults to Life Set offered through Pressley Ridge. The screen will provide the Life Set program an overview of the young adult's skill acquisition and needs. The IL screens are updated once every 90 days.

All staff are trained in the program processes, assessments, and documentation requirements as part of the program orientation. This orientation is completed by the Foster Care Manager. Updates and reviews of the assessments are shared with staff during team meetings and case staffing. Individually, the assessments, documentation compliance and all other processes are reviewed during regularly scheduled supervision.

Each Supervisor is responsible for completing case reviews once a quarter. The case review ensures the record is current and in compliance; devising an improvement plan when needed. Systemic issues are moved to the foster care manager or director to address at a program level rather than an individual basis.

As part of the WFS Quality Plan, there are many points at which our processes, data collection, case records and compliance to regulations and contract specifications are monitored. The Research, Quality and Compliance Department (RQCD) oversees Risk Management and HIPAA Privacy, Compliance and Safety, Data Analytics and Research, Administrative and Policy Support and Centralized Medical Records. RQCD assists the Foster Care Program in completing random reviews, data analysis, distribution and analysis of external stakeholders and customer satisfaction surveys. RQCD also assists in constructing a process map that increases our efficiency and ensures we are meeting all the timetables for our contracts.

In the Family and Community Support Programs Division, we have created a new position called the Integration Manager (IM). The IM is responsible for assisting the Division Director to fully integrate services while assuring compliance with rules, regulations, policies and procedures of the agency, contractors, funders, and accrediting entities. The IM oversees program operations to assure quality, fidelity, and efficiency to maximize revenue and productivity. The role requires an understanding of all services and programs within the division. The IM assists with the clinical integrity of treatment and service delivery to effectively serve the children, resource and birth families and provide transformational care. This position also oversees staff that ensure processes for data entry, billing, case record reviews, audit and licensing reviews. The IM gives additional support to the foster care program to ensure that we are providing the information to DHS in a timely manner.

Building a High-Quality and Consistent System (15 points)

13. Describe your organization's plan to regularly collect feedback from Foster Care children, parents and families and how you will incorporate it into your Foster Care program and ensure continuous quality improvements. Please include:
- a. How you will collect feedback from children in Foster Care and use it to inform your practice.
 - b. How you will get Foster Care family input to evaluate what supports are needed, and how this feedback will inform changes to practices.

WFS' mission is to empower children, adults, and families by providing transformational care. Transformational care cannot be provided without the input and direction of the people we serve. Therefore, it is critical for WFS Foster Care to ensure we receive ongoing feedback. Feedback from

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those we are privileged to serve is crucial for continuous quality improvement. We must be intentional about soliciting opinions, suggestions, and areas of challenge in order to empowered to advocate for what they need and want.

We have the opportunity to interact with the children we serve frequently. During the visits with the children, we gather “point in time” feedback. For example, during COVID, children were asked about what they needed to feel safe during visits. They expressed that for the in-person visits they wanted everyone to wear masks and have the opportunity to wash hands and use hand sanitizers. All this feedback helped us to enforce the agency established safety protocols. The children also provide a lot of input into their ISPs. This feedback has helped us identify the social needs of the children we serve. We have offered social skill building activities and groups with youth based on this feedback. We have held groups for older youth to talk about peer relationships and interactions. We have connected WFS youth with Youth Support Partners to have further peer support and increased social opportunities.

WFS has incorporated many avenues to collect input and feedback. The program utilizes the WFS Resource Parent Association for feedback regarding the WFS Foster Care program. The Association has three main purposes: 1. to provide feedback to the program to help inform procedures, policies, and practices, 2. to identify training and support needs of the foster parents, and 3. to help with outreach and growth of the program. Each time we consider making a program policy or process change, we vet it with the Association to receive their input and ideas. The creation of the RFSC position was the result of the Association members’ feedback to help us improve practice. They also suggested an activity fee, which is now used to reimburse resource parents for enrolling a child in a community-based activity. The Association also helps the program to flesh out existing practices to strengthen or improve the practice. For example, we collectively worked to improve our processes to assist the resource parents in collecting the transportation reimbursement assistance from the program. The Association recommended that childcare be part of any in-person trainings at the agency and we now provide childcare for all children in the family at those trainings. The resource families report that all the children benefit from this socialization.

We gather feedback from the applicants as they go through the pre-service training series. The feedback helps us develop our presenters and our presentations. Each prospective resource parent completes a brief questionnaire after each pre-service session. We have gathered great information from these questionnaires, and they have helped us to improve our training practices.

Each year at annual certification, the foster families are asked to provide feedback related to service delivery. We have used this feedback to identify training gaps and to address barriers related to transportation.

The ParentWISE Program collects a satisfaction survey at the completion of every parenting series and after each workshop. This feedback has indicated that most participants have found the training informative, the presenters and the presentation have been engaging and they have helped the program to address gaps in content or in clarity. This has been particularly valuable when the training has been virtual.

Collecting input and feedback from birth parents has been more challenging. Often, they are feeling overwhelmed by or skeptical of the systems of CYF and foster care. It takes more time to develop a trusting relationship and many times a birth parent doesn’t feel safe to provide feedback to the foster care team. It is our responsibility to create a safe environment for birth parents, to treat them with dignity and to empower them to do the things they need to do to reunify with their child. It is also our responsibility to keep their children safe in our care and to let them know we are doing that. With the help of our Research, Quality and Compliance Department, we have developed a special Customer

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Satisfaction Survey. WFS also encourage them to complete suggestion cards at our office and inform them about our comment section on our website. Finally, they can file complaints anonymously through the Ethics Point link on our website.

Recently, we have worked with our Research, Quality and Compliance Department to create three Customer Satisfaction Surveys that can be completed via Survey Monkey. We now have a separate and relevant satisfaction survey for the children, the birth parents, and the resource parents to complete. These surveys will be completed after each ISP meeting. In the past, we had difficulty getting paper surveys back from these three groups of consumers. The program leadership added the survey completion to the ISP process because everyone is usually in attendance and we can offer them the technology to complete the survey while they are with us. These surveys will be received and compiled by our Quality Department and presented at our quality Circle Meetings each quarter. We look forward to having a robust customer satisfaction report to share along with our semi-annual report to CYF.

14. Describe your process and plan for tracking, entering and reporting data in a timely and accurate manner. Be specific about which staff will be required to perform the data entry, how they will be supervised, monitored and supported and where data entry fits into the overall business process.

WFS recognizes the importance of accurate and timely reporting of data. WFS has been challenge in this data collection due in part to our recording process. Currently, we need to duplicate entries in both our internal health record, Credible, and the county's record of care, KIDS, as well as maintaining an extensive paper file. WFS is working to interface between the two systems of record in order to avoid manual duplicate entry in the same way our Family Preservation and Stabilization Program operates. We have also struggled due to insufficient infrastructure. Knowing that capacity has been an issue for timely data entry it is important for WFS as we respond to this RFP to ensure we have built capacity and put processes in place to address timely data entry.

At the time of placement, Family Profiles are entered into the KIDS system by the Intake Coordinators (IC). As part of the Family Profile approval process, MPER is updated under the Facility Section to ensure timely assignment of the Facility in the KIDS system when a child enters placement through WFS.

ISPs will be entered into the KIDS system within 10 days of the initial ISP meeting and any subsequent meetings. The ISP Coordinators are responsible for hosting the ISP meeting and creating the ISP Document. This position will be responsible to enter the plans and ISP reviews with the assistance of the case aides within 10 days of the meeting.

The CANS assessments are completed and entered into the KIDS system within 30 days of a child's placement entry and updated once every 90 days. We recently moved ownership of this process to the Therapeutic Coordinators.

Contact Summaries will be entered into the KIDS system and the Credible System by the Foster Care Coordinators, the Resource Family Support Coordinators, the Case Aides, the ISP Coordinators, and the Therapeutic Coordinators. Encounter forms will be signed by the foster parent and any child over seven years old after each visit to the resource home. We will strive to meet the timeframes set out in the DHS Contract Specification Manual.

Family Visitation entries and notes are entered in both systems. A process we have instituted is to match Encounter Form Dates and signatures to what is entered in KIDS. If they are missing, the Program Support Assistant can enter them into the system.

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Monthly progress reports for each child in our care are entered into KIDS by the Foster Care Coordinators. Monthly reports will be reviewed during regular supervision with the Foster Care Coordinators. This will also be monitored through our internal Case Record Reviews completed quarterly.

The Manager of Foster Care and the Director of Placement Services will ensure that a daily update is entered into the Foster Care Home Status System. The Foster Care Recruiters and the Director of Placement Services will update and submit the Home Pipeline Report monthly. The Manager of Foster Care and the Director of Placement Services will be responsible to submit the monthly statistical report to DHS by the fifth of every month via email. Semiannual reports will be compiled by program leadership, the Manager of Integration and the Quality Department and emailed to the Contract Monitor and CYF leadership upon completion.

All required documentation is reviewed by leadership to ensure that the data is accurate and timely. The process is reviewed in individual supervisions and monitored quarterly.

Staffing and Staff Training (40 points)

15. Attach an organizational chart that reflects the positions, including responsibilities and current or desired qualifications, of all staff members involved with all components of operating Foster Care. The attachment is not included in the page count.

[See Attachment: WFS FC Organization Chart](#)

16. Describe your plan and strategy for recruiting any additional staff needed for Foster Care, or how current staff meets all needs, including the staff who will support TFC homes. Describe past successes using this strategy.

WFS is fully committed to the Career Pathing Model and will interview current staff that are interested in any of the positions. We will also give preference to any candidate from other Foster Care agencies that might be closing their program. We will also give preference to candidates who were formerly in foster care. Some of our positions do not require a degree while others need a bachelor's or master's level and some require licensure. In the agency's structure of human resources, there is a recruiting team whose members are assigned to programs. Our Recruiter is very aware of our plans for expansion and we have begun to expand our previous methods. We are now using Zip Recruiter, Indeed, Vibrant Pittsburgh, the Courier, and various Affinity Group Job Boards. We are offering incentives to current staff to help with recruitment since this has proven to be a successful strategy throughout the agency.

17. Provide a detailed staff training plan that emphasizes cultural humility and ensures that staff are trained in relevant topic areas, including the changes you will make to the existing training program to meet requirements.

WFS provides continuous trainings to staff that emphasizes cultural humility and ensure that staff are trained in relevant areas such as trauma-informed care. The trainings focus on the way that trauma is recognized and how it impacts a client, and staff, and the integration of knowledge about trauma in policies and practices and resisting re-traumatization of clients. WFS works from a strength-based view and a desire to foster resiliency in consumers and staff in trauma.

All foster care staff are required to complete 40 hours of training each year. Most trainings are completed through a robust online training management system called RELIAS which maintains a transcript of courses completed. Staff may take outside trainings or county sponsored trainings to complete their requirements. Proof of the external trainings is entered into RELIAS, so each employee has a complete transcript. The internal web-based Relias Training system includes a calendar of the

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trainings. The Relias system offers additional ‘elective’ trainings that staff are permitted to take. Supervisors can also assign specific trainings outside the standard training plans as well if needed.

Upon hire, all Foster Care staff take: AFSA, Child Welfare Hearings, SOGIE, CSEC, Reasonable and Prudent Parenting, Conferencing and Teaming, KIDS, Credible, Case documentation, Trauma-Informed Care, Cultural Awareness, Cultural Diversity, Safety in the Community, Professional Ethics, Waste Fraud and Abuse, Defensive Driving, Active Shooter Training, Workplace Violence, Conflict Management, Approaches to Suicide Prevention, Effective Communication, and Safety in the Field.

Annually, Foster Care staff are required to take additional training including Mandated Reporter Training, a Cultural Humility elective, Crisis Management, Bloodborne Pathogens, Indian Child Welfare Act, Medication Management for Children, De-escalating Hostile Situations, and Infection Control.

Trainings for those staff in specialty positions and involved with Therapeutic Foster Care include Effective Engagement and Treatment Planning. Leadership must also complete training in Reflective Supervision, Basic Essential Supervisory, Budget and Financial, and Bulletin Updates Trainings as well as other electives.

18. Describe your plan for hiring racially and culturally diverse staff.

WFS is committed to recruiting, hiring and retaining a culturally diverse staff. A sub-committee of Allies for Acceptance was formed to address Recruitment, Retainment and Promotion of a more diverse workforce. Through recommendations of this committee, the agency is partnering with Vibrant Pittsburgh and The Pittsburgh Courier to advertise positions and serve on their many DEI workgroups. We reach out to professional groups that focus on diverse populations. We are connecting with Affinity groups on college campuses. We are advertising on diverse platforms, attending virtual job fairs, and incentivizing current staff to refer people in their personal networks.

To meet the goals of increasing our number of Resource Parents and our number of children we can place, WFS will have to recruit and hire staff. WFS will take this opportunity to recruit staff that reflect the gender identity, race, culture, religion, ethnicity of the children and people we serve in support of the agency’s strategic plan and goals for DEI.

WFS realizes we need to reach out into the communities we serve to attract a more diverse workforce, volunteer base and customer base. As part of a pilot project, The Family and Community Support Programs Division created a new leadership position, the Community Connections Manager (CCM). The CCM is responsible for assisting the Division Director to develop and manage relationships to advance the scope and diversity of the division with funders, grant makers, contractors, partners, collaborators, staff, volunteers and consumers. The Community Connections Manager will develop and deliver compelling presentations that tell the story of WFS family and community support programs to inspire participation, commitment, and advocacy. The Community Connections Manager assists with the advancement of diversity and inclusion initiatives of the division and the Agency to effectively advance WFS’ mission.

Organizational Capacity and Implementation Challenges (30 points)

19. Complete the following chart of services your organization currently provides in contract with DHS and/or other PA counties. You may add additional lines to the chart, as needed. See Attachments: WFS program description 2020-21 and FY20-21 OCYF 2yr approval rate sheet

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Service Name	Service Description	Contracting Entity	Contract Amount	Start Date of Contract
Counseling Services	Counseling in 3 Family Centers	AC FCS	\$30,000	7/1/2020
FBMHS	Family Based MH Services	AC HSBG-MH	\$194,938	7/1/2020
In-Home	In Home Services (CYF/JPO)	AC CYF	\$2,370,291	7/1/2020
Anger Management	Aggression Replacement Training	AC CYF	\$28,000	7/1/2020
FEP	FEP & Stepped Care Model Pilot	OBH	\$240,000	7/1/2020
Housing Support Services	Housing Support Services	OBH	\$410,902	7/1/2020
Social Rehab Services	Social Rehab Services/ Drop-In-Services	OBH	\$562,849	7/1/2020
Foster Care	AC Foster Care	AC CYF	Per Diem (See attached Rate Sheet)	7/1/2020
Foster Care	WC Foster Care	WCCB	Per Diem	7/1/2020
Foster Care	Greene County FC	GC CYF	Per Diem	11/1/2020
Foster Care	Washington County FC	WC CYF	Per Diem	7/1/2020
Foster Care	Fayette County FC	FC CYF	Per Diem	7/1/2020
Foster Care	Schuylkill County FC	SC CYF	Per Diem	7/1/2020
Service Coordination	Care Management	Aging	\$2,338,984	7/1/2020
Independent Community Services	Apprise Tele center, Apprise Program, Information and Referral	Aging	\$137,407	7/1/2020
Counseling Services	Batterers Intervention Program	Out and Prev	\$214,000	7/1/2020
Training and Education	Foster Parent Training	CYF	\$1500.	7/1/2020
Rehabilitation	Psychiatric Rehab	HSBG-MH	\$102,914	7/1/2020
Service Coordination	Targeted Case management	HSBG-MH	\$109,889	7/1/2020
Training and Education	Provider Staff Training	CYF	\$25,000	7/1/2020
Family Foster Care	Special Expenses for young people served	CYF	\$100,000	7/1/2020
Service Coordination	Administrative Management	OBH	\$318,205	7/1/2020

20. Describe the challenges that your organization has experienced in the past and/or that you anticipate with fulfilling the Foster Care Scope of Services, as described in the RFP, and how you will mitigate those challenges.

There are several challenges that WFS faces in fulfilling the Foster Care scope of services. These include staffing and sufficient numbers of resource families, especially during the current COVID pandemic.

For the past 5 years, WFS has struggled with capacity because the infrastructure needed additional staff and resources. We have had difficulty hiring because of COVID and our ability to pay competitive

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wages. With the opportunity of this RFP, we are planning for growth, but we are also planning for sustainability.

Attracting new resource families, especially due to COVID has also been difficult. There aren't as many traditional opportunities to network and people are more apprehensive to open their homes. In addition, while it is a goal and positive that we are able to place children in adoptive homes, this creates a need for additional resource families.

Another area of challenge is to get our data, reports, notes, and contacts into two databases in a timely fashion. Data needs to be in the KIDS system for the county review and it needs to be in our Credible system so WFS can prepare the invoices required by the county. WFS has not been consistent in collecting documentable feedback data.

The plan to mitigate these challenges includes offering additional and more frequent surveys, and increasing staff resources and retention efforts. Adding key positions will provide better support to the children and resource families. The additional positions will increase our agility and speed in matching children to resource families, and will add capacity to our therapeutic component and ISP process. Hiring another supervisor will ensure that all staff receive reflective and administrative supervision. These new positions will also build capacity for recruitment and improve our quality processes. WFS has leveraged resources for parent education and support services through our ParentWISE Program. To increase retention, WFS has created a career pathing plan. And through this proposal, WFS plans to increase salaries to be competitive. Finally, the data entry process will be better defined, including assigning clear responsibilities and tracking documentation including resource family feedback. WFS must continue collaboration with the Allegheny County systems team to resolve double entry issues.

21. Provide a plan for implementation that clearly identifies your organization's strengths and challenges to implementing the Scope of Services, including the changes your organization will need to make (in terms of staffing, training, structure, Board of Directors, etc.) to deliver the services described. Attach a timeline for implementation that includes benchmarks and anticipated completion dates, clearly showing what can be in place by July 2021 and what will require more time to implement. The attachment is not included in the page count.
[See Attachment: WFS Implementation Timeline](#)

Financial Management and Budget (10 points, not included in page count)

22. Provide a detailed line-item budget that reflects a realistic estimate of the costs associated with implementing and sustaining Foster Care, including the suggested Maintenance Rate for TFC homes for the selected model and whether that amount varies based on the age of the child in care. You may provide the line-item budget as an attachment (e.g., Excel file) or in the space below.
[See Attachments: WFS FC Maintenance Business Plan without TFC and WFS FC TFC Business Plan](#)
23. Provide a budget narrative that clearly explains and justifies all line items in the proposed budget.

WFS is submitting 2 detailed line-item budgets. Both budgets reflect the costs to increase, implement and sustain the foster care program and the second includes detailed additional costs to implement TFC services. Please note we are requesting an additional \$25,000 start up for a strong recruitment and marketing campaign for resource parents.

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Budget Narrative for Foster Care Maintenance Costs

Total Salaries and Benefits: In order to build capacity to care for an average of 100 children per day, WFS intends to increase both our line staff and supervisory staff. In total, WFS will have 4.5 FTE Resource Family Support Coordinators, 7 FTE Foster Care Coordinators, 6 FTE Case Aides, 1.50 FTE ISP Coordinators, 0.5 FTE Therapeutic Coordinators, 2 FTE Intake Coordinators and 2 FTE Resource Family Recruiters. Program Supervisory support will include 2 FTE Supervisors, 0.5 FTE of the Manager and 0.25 FTE of the Director of Placement Services. Program Support includes 0.8 FTE of the Program Assistant. This budget reflects a fully staffed program for 100 children in care. Employee Benefits include items such as Health Insurance, Payroll Taxes, Disability, Life, 401K employer match, and an Employee Assistance Program. The benefit rate for WFS is 26% of salaries and is included accordingly.

Total Travel Expense: Travel Expense includes reimbursement of mileage, parking and tolls for all staff assigned to the program.

Total Staff Recruitment: In order to recruit a more diverse workforce, WFS purchases advertising services from Vibrant Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Courier, Zip Recruiter, Indeed and other platforms that can reach a strong pool of diverse applicants. Recruitment costs also include background checks, physicals and drug screens for new employees.

Total Resource Parent Recruitment and Retention: To meet the projected increase in children placed in care, WFS must increase recruitment efforts. WFS has included costs for digital advertising including social media platforms, advertising in traditional media markets, and for participating in and hosting engaging virtual and community events. Retention costs include incentives for existing resource families. Also included are costs for parent/family clearances, training (both pre-service and in-service), peer mentoring incentives, support activities such as the Parent Café and the Resource Parent Association, and engagement opportunities.

Total Program Costs: This line includes the costs to ensure WFS offers quality and life enriching activities and recreational opportunities to the children in our care. Program Costs also include mileage reimbursements to resource parents so that they can provide the extra transportation that a child in care needs for visitation, appointments, hearings, etc. This line item also includes clothing allotments for children and supplies for the program (PPE, cleaning, visitation room supplies, paper, etc.)

Total Communications: Communication expenses include cell phones, landlines for staff, internet/Wi-Fi, Zoom licenses, printing costs, postage, domain costs for the website, translation of documents into other languages, etc.

Total Occupancy/Equipment: This line includes the occupancy costs of the WFS offices at 221 Penn Ave, Wilksburg (rent, utilities, building insurance, maintenance and repairs, cleaning, and the upkeep of our 5 visitation rooms including furniture and goods replacement). It also includes the purchase and maintenance of small equipment such as laptop and desk top computers for staff.

Total Transportation: Transportation costs cover the leases, insurance, maintenance, repairs, and fuel costs for the program's vehicles. It also covers the costs of car seat replacements.

Total Other Expense: Other expense includes allocations of general and professional liability insurance and supervisory and support costs, insurance for resource parents, memberships to FFTA and other trade organizations and depreciation.

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Management & General: This expense represents 15% of total direct expense to cover agency administrative costs (Finance, IT, HR, Research, Quality and Compliance, records management, etc.)

Budget Narrative for Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) Costs

Total Salaries and Benefits: In order to build capacity to care for an average of 35-40 children per day in Therapeutic Foster Care, WFS intends to increase both our line staff and supervisory staff. In the Therapeutic Foster Care Program, we will have 1.5 FTE Therapeutic Coordinators, 0.50 FTE ISP Coordinators, 0.50 FTE of the Manager and 0.25 FTE of the Director of Placement Services. Program Support includes 0.2 FTE of the Program Assistant. This budget reflects a fully staffed TFC Program to serve 35-40 children per day. Employee Benefits include items such as Health Insurance, Payroll Taxes, Disability, Life, 401K employer match, and an Employee Assistance Program. The benefit rate for WFS is 26% of salaries and is included accordingly.

Total Travel Expense: Travel Expense includes reimbursement of mileage, parking and tolls for all staff assigned to the program doing in-home therapy and crisis management.

Total Staff Recruitment: In order to recruit a more diverse workforce, WFS purchases advertising services from Vibrant Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Courier, Zip Recruiter, Indeed and other platforms that can reach a strong pool of diverse applicants. Recruitment costs also include background checks, physicals and drug screens for new employees.

Total Program Costs: Program costs include special activities and services for the children in TFC. Activities will focus on coping skills development, emotion management, and therapeutic opportunities, such as play groups and socialization groups for older children. This line includes a \$15 per day additional payment to the resource family as an incentive to care for the more challenging children. Also included in this line item are additional training costs, supports, and respite care incentives for families providing TFC. Costs for installation of safety mechanisms, Fire Safety Inspections of the homes and tablets to facilitate therapeutic interventions are also included.

Total Communications: Included in Communications expense are cell phones, internet/Wi-Fi, Zoom licenses, printing costs, etc.

Total Other Expense: Other expense includes allocations of general and professional liability insurance and supervisory and support costs, insurance for resource parents, memberships to FFTA and other trade organizations and depreciation.

Management & General: This expense represents 15% of total direct expense to cover agency administrative costs (Finance, IT, HR, Research, Quality and Compliance, records management, etc.)
Maintenance Rate for TFC homes: The suggested maintenance rate for TFC homes, based upon 40 kids, is \$35.50 per day.

Wesley Family Services

Foster Care TFC RFP

	Expenses
1.5 FTE Foster Care Coordinator II/Therapist	\$ 66,500
.5 FTE Foster Care Coordinator II/ISP	\$ 16,600
2 PRN Case Aids	\$ 1,200
.2 FTE Program Assistant	\$ 3,400
Management (.25 FTE Director/.50 FTE Manager)	\$ 48,800
Total Salaries and Benefits	\$ 175,300
Total Travel Expense	\$ 7,000
Total Staff Recruitment	\$ 1,800
Total Program Costs	\$ 229,500
Total Communications	\$ 2,400
Total Other Expense	\$ 35,200
Direct Expense	\$ 451,200

M&G	\$ 67,100
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Total Expenses	\$ 518,300
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of Kid Days (Based on 40 Kids) 14,600

Rate **35.50**

Wesley Family Services

Foster Care RFP w/o TFC

	EXPENSES
4.5 FTE Family Support Coordinators	\$ 164,600
7 FTE Foster Care Coordinators	\$ 232,400
1.5 FTE Foster Care Coordinator II/ISP	\$ 66,000
.5 FTE Foster Care Coordinator II/Therapist	\$ 17,100
2 FTE Intake Coordinator - Placement	\$ 86,200
.8 FTE Program Assistant	\$ 26,500
2 FTE Resource Family Recruiter	\$ 75,600
6 PRN Case Aids	\$ 71,100
1 FTE Supervisor - Foster Care Coordinators	\$ 42,800
1 FTE Supervisor - Resource Family	\$ 42,800
Management - Manager(.5 FTE) and Director (.25 FTE)	\$ 47,600
Total Salaries and Benefits	\$ 1,099,600
Total Travel Expense	\$ 36,900
Total Staff Recruitment	\$ 4,100
Total Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention	\$ 19,200
Total Program Costs	\$ 23,400
Total Communications	\$ 28,600
Total Occupancy/Equipment	\$ 122,900
Total Transportation	\$ 15,400
Total Other Expense	\$ 246,800
Direct Expense	\$ 1,596,900
Management and General Expense	\$ 324,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 1,920,900

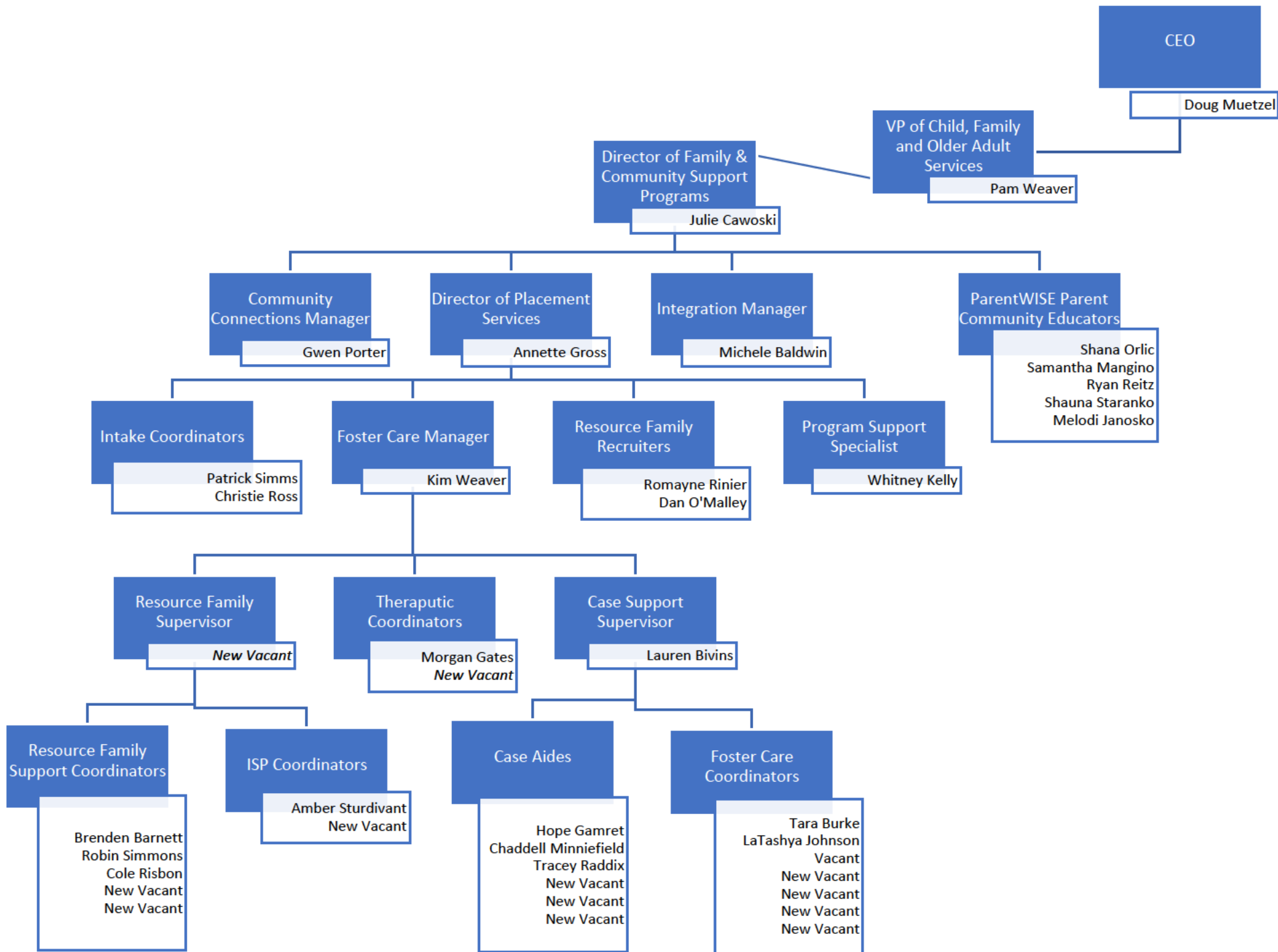
Please note, this does not include \$25K in recruitment ramp up costs. The above budget reflects the maintenance cost.
Recruitment Ramp Up Costs:

\$12,000 – Digital Media Marketing

\$4,000 – Virtual events and promotions of the events

\$4,000 – Community Engagement for recruitment – Virtual and in person

\$5,000 – Video production to create recruitment videos to use with all recruitment efforts



Foster Care implementation timeline							
	March-June 21	July- Sept 21	October -Dec 21	January-March 22	April-June 22	July-Sept 22	Oct-Dec 22
Census Goals (<i>children in care without any transfer from other agency</i>)	73 based on current census expectations	75	80	83	88	90	100
Resource Parent Growth Goals: Total goal to increase foster family homes to a total of 83-87 families; this will include the replacement of families that may leave during this 18 months period	67 families	Recruit 8 new families and certify 4 new families	Recruit 8 new families and certify 4 new families	Recruit 8 new families and certify 4 new families	Recruit 8 new families and certify 4 new families	Recruit 8 new families and certify 4 new families	Recruit 8 new families and certify 4 new families
Staffing							
Strengths: Have experienced staff in place; Tier positioning/ career paths which promotes retention	Review and complete revisions to interview template to ensure evaluation of cultural competence and humility	Supervisors and Manager are trained to use the new interview template and review the agency hiring and on-boarding process.					
	Meet with HR and Allies for Acceptance AdHOC Committee about Recruitment, Retention and Promotion DEI goals and strategies. Review digital and print recruitment advertisements to ensure DEI goals. Select platforms to use.	Begin advertising and monitor responses from new platforms. Work closely with HR Recruiter and marketing team.	➔				
	Revise position descriptions and complete restructure of pay scales	All current staff have reviewed and signed new job descriptions. New pay scale structure begins.	Action completed. Apply to new staff as needed.	➔			
Weakness/Gap: Competitive salaries; Effective employee recruitment tools	Review new structure and responsibilities with all current staff	Ensure staff are clear on the new chain of command and what their performance targets are for FY 21/22	Solicit staff feedback to identify any challenges with new work flow. Monthly supervisions to review performance objectives.	Monthly supervisions to review performance objectives. Six month staff evaluations completed	Monthly supervisions to review performance objectives.	Monthly supervisions to review performance objectives. Annual staff evaluations completed	Monthly supervisions to review performance objectives.
	Fill existing staff vacancies and Set dates for addition of new positions to allow for staff onboarding in line with program growth.	Hire 1 additional RFSC and 1FCC, Hire 1 Supervisor	Hire additional ISP Coordinator and 1 Case Aide	Hire 1 RFSC and 1FCC and 1 case Aide	Hire 1 FCC and 1 case aide	Hire 1 FCC	
Resource Parent Recruitment							
Strengths: Have pre-service classes scheduled for March and June; Process allows for applicants to be certified within 90 days	Prioritize existing families in the approval pipeline. Convey to RP that completion in 90 days is the expectation.	Review pipeline families monthly. Review expectations with families.	➔				
	Establish timeline and monthly goals for Community Connections Manager and Recruiters	Establish goals for certifying families and monitor monthly.	Review numbers of recruits and certified families each month in supervision.	➔			
	Identify supports needed to handle a possible influx of transferring families	Set goals with staff to acclimate and certify transferred families. Create support cohorts for new families. Identify respite providers for each family. Develop training plans for each new family.	Focus group held with transferred families is convened by director and staff. Concerns and challenges are heard and addressed.	Check in with transferred Families and report on any changes that occurred due to the focus group held.	Continue to communicate with and support transferred families	➔	

Weakness/Gap: Need more infrastructure to allow for continuous recruitment and certifying of families; Capacity to handle transferring families with foster children	Discussions with current families and staff to relay the focus on recruitment	Hold "Brainstorming" session at Resource Parent Association Meeting to identify possible community events to attend.	Provide resource parents with content to use on their FaceBook, Instagram, LinkedIn or Pinterest pages to talk about WFS Foster Care and being a resource parent.	Identify families to star in agency videos. Ask families to provide content for Foster Care Awareness Month articles. Staff plans events to honor resource parents.	Special events and activities for Foster Care Awareness Month	Plan calendar of events for new FY	Plan and hold Foster Family Holiday event
	Internal WFS communication tools created to inform current resource parents and all WFS staff of FP recruitment incentives.	Introduce the tools of "Meet and Greet" and "Foster Aware" to Resource Parents to help them recruit new families.	Create a calendar for social events for the FY. Get buy in and commitment by offering support from staff and resources. Host 2 "Meet and Greets"	Host 4 "Meet and Greet" events	Host 4 "Meet and Greet" events. Plan calendar of Meet and Greets for new FY.	Host 4 Meet and Greets.	Host 2 "Meet & Greet" events
	Determine Schedule for Pre-service Trainings	August Pre-Service Training	October Pre-Service Training	February Pre-Service Training	April and June Pre-Service Trainings	August 2022 Pre-service Training	October Pre-Service Training
Marketing							
Strengths: Have an organization marketing team; Have recruitment platforms: website, Facebook	Program Leadership, OA marketing team, and Community Connections Manager review all print and virtual materials, update and refresh materials to reflect the people we serve.	Develop new print and virtual materials. Outline media venues as well. Begin to translate materials.	Continue to review and revise materials to meet recruitment initiatives and awareness				
	Develop plan for recording video testimonials and other marketing pieces	Implement plan for video recordings					
	Develop content for agency use & for Resource Parents to use on their FB, Instagram, Linked In, Twitter and Pinterest. Solicit feedback from external stakeholders and consumers on new materials.	Ceate content to be used for "Foster Friday" social media posts and agency resource newsletters					
Weakness/Gap: Lack adequate funding for a comprehensive recruitment and marketing plan	Work with OA to develop timed marketing plan	Confirm Marketing strategies with AC OCYF and secure outside funding resources necessary					
	Community Connections Manager, program leadership and Resource Parent Recruiters work with OA to develop timed marketing plan	Develop year long marketing/ outreach plan	Establish matrix to measure results (increased inquiries, hits on website etc.)	Review 6 months of new marketing to address gaps	Develop new marketing plan for 21/22		
	Create a calendar of awareness campaigns that support foster care; MAY - Foster Care Awareness month activities	Car seat safety and Fire safety months for children in care	Holiday gift drive for children in care. National Adoption Day	"I have a dream"	Foster Parent Appreciation, Cinco De Mayo and Graduation recognition for HS Seniors	Summer Fun and Back to school	Holiday gift drive for children in care. National Adoption Day
Funding							
Strengths: Crosswalk with organizational budget process RFP budget completed on part of program; Have an approved IVE budget; Current rates have allowed us to get to a break even net	Schedule meetings with DHS to develop rate			Schedule meetings with DHS to review current rate			
	Incorporate RFP rates and per diem into organization budget	MPER rollover, WFS Monthly Revenue/Expenses Forecasting meetings		Budget development for FY 22/23	Budget Approved for FY 22/23	MPER rollover	
	Update IVE packet as needed and resubmit in April 2021				Update IVE packet as needed and resubmit in April		

Weakness/Gap: Short window for budget adjustments; uncertain of new rates	Provide notice to foster parents in any increase in per diems for FY 21/22						
	Work with OA to develop a fundraising plan to cover additional costs if necessary.	Implement plan	6 month review of fundraising plan		Annual review of fundraising plan. Establish new plan for 22/23		6 month review of fundraising plan
Consumer Input for CQI and program development							
Strengths: Venue for ongoing foster parent feedback; Recently developed survey questions for foster, birth and children	Host meeting with staff to introduce the new customer feedback surveys for youth, birth parents and resource parents and discuss completing surveys at each ISP meeting.	Collect feedback from staff and consumers about any barriers effecting response rate			Annual review of customer feedback surveys and review of any new barriers to collecting response		
Weakness/Gap: Lack venues for ongoing birth parent and child feedback; Low response rate on surveys	Implement survey format beginning in April at ISP Meetings	Surveys completed at every ISP meeting					
	Regular feedback from Resource Parent Association's Monthly Meetings		Convene focus group of youth		Convene Focus group for Birth Parents		
OUTCOMES							
Strengths: Have an existing Logic model for FC Currently required to document many of the same process measures for AC OCYF; Double entry of data given different systems used for quality indicators Credible vs KIDS	Logic Model Developed for TFC and refined for FC	Key Staff Trained in Data Collection Process	Data Collection monitored by program leadership and Integration Manager	Data Collection monitored by program leadership and Integration Manager	Data Collection monitored by program leadership and Integration Manager	Data Collection monitored by program leadership and Integration Manager	Data Collection monitored by program leadership and Integration Manager
	Data Analysis: Define data sources and operationalize with staff and RDQC Staff	Internal Case record review tool Developed to assess adherence to contract requirements	Complete Quarterly Case Record Reviews according to tool				
Weakness/Gap: Need to develop Logic model for TFC ; Need more consistent tracking methods available in Credible that can interface with KIDS	Leadership, Integration Manager and Quality Department to meet to decide what data is to be reviewed at Quarterly Quality Circles	Data incorporated into quarterly quality circle meetings					
	Review Current format of Semi-Annual Outcome Report and monthly reports to CYF and amend if decided	Semi annual outcome report for 20/21 completed. Monthly Reports completed.	Monthly Reports completed.	Semi annual outcome report for 20/21 completed. Monthly Reports completed.	Monthly Reports completed.	Semi annual outcome report for 20/21 completed. Monthly Reports completed.	Monthly Reports completed.
TFC Development							
Strengths: Experienced in providing this level of care; Array of internal services to support TFC; After hour support is in place; All families trained as TFC	Every child in care has CANS completed	Hire additional staff needed: 1- Therapeutic Coordinator and 2 Case Aides	New Therapeutic Coordinator is fully trained in CANS tool				
	Foster Care Manager reviews current TFC placements and families	Review of RP Training matierals with AC DHS for TFC and revise if necessary	Develop matrix based on trends and outputs to forecast future needs	Continue to review and revise			
	Program leadership develops program expectations for TFC	Communication with staff regarding expectations for TFC in the new FY.	Communication with Resource Parents regarding expectations for TFC in the new FY.	Begin targeted discussions with identified families. Training plans developed for TFC families.	Continue discussions with families.		
Weakness: Lack consistency in the assessment process to determine eligibility for youth	Staff review all families and determine which ones could be enlisted to do TFC. Develop individual plans to move towards a TFC placement in those homes	Specialized Trainings offered monthly	Finding Healing through Connections by Loryn Smith. Trauma Training Program (20 sessions)		Finding Healing through Connections by Loryn Smith. Trauma Training Program (20 sessions)		
	TFC Program Leadership works with CYF to determine what what will be measured for Outcomes	Establish additional assessment and outcome measures for population served with our Quality Department	Continue assessments and review				

	Therapeutic Coordinator establishes relationships with BH Services and understands how the referral process works	Establish linkages and collaboration agreements with any BH services that will be working with the program	Continue to build relationships and collaborate with BH services				
Use of Peers/Resource Parent Support							
Strengths: Moving from informal to formal process; Identified EB model Assigned ownership of the process; Association meeting scheduled for April and June; Ongoing training scheduled and mechanism to share topics and dates in place	Identify potential Peer Mentors and create peer mentor agreements	On Board Peer Mentors with training in EB Model. Certification and Assignment of Peer Mentors to families. Support begins.	Leadership completes "work withs" with new mentors to ensure quality	Leadership checks in with Peer Mentors monthly for support and to ensure quality	New Peers Recruited and Trained		
	Establish Training plans for Peer Mentors	Implement Training Plans and Peer activities.	Peer Networking/Support Event				
	Incentive pay process identified and policies created	Peer Mentors informed of Incentive Process	Continue Implement Incentive Process				
Weakness/Gap: EB model certification in process; Tracking mechanism for peers	Training and meeting Calendar Developed for 21/22, Resource Parent Association Meeting, training, Newsletter	Resource Parent Association Meeting, training, Newsletter			Calendar developed for 22/23		
	Parent Café schedule developed for 21/22	Parent Café's held	Parent Café's held	Parent Café's held	Parent Café's held. Schedule developed for 22/23	Parent Café's held	
Census							
Strengths: Average of 73 children in care; Intake aligned with certification process; Positive relationships with intake and matching; Current listing of available families; Matching practice promote 1 child/1 family model	Establish monthly intake placement goals	Communicate goals to all staff and resource families. Review and adjust to monthly goal.			Internal program scorecard update and revisions for growth	Communicate goals to all staff and resource families	
	Have conversations with families with no placement or who have refused placement to remove barriers	Families make decisions to accept placements, offer respite or emergency only, provide peer mentoring or close	Review family list each month and have conversations regarding accepting children				
	Recruit and establish emergency placement/respite homes and incentives for families	Communicate incentive plan to all families for respite/ emergency placements	Consistently recruit to establish respite and emergency homes				
Weakness/Gap: Need to increase census by 25%; Increase utilization of families with no placements (presently less than 3%); Increase emergency placement acceptance	Clarify the responsibility of placement availability tool	Use data from the placement availability tool to inform decisions					
	Establish clear connection and new crosswalks between Intake and recruitment and placement	Put new practice into place and evaluate monthly					
	Introduce staff to "one child one family" practice	Support staff and families to implement this practice	Advocate with CYF Staff to understand our attempts to practice "one child one family"	Review anecdotal outcomes and feedback from families, children and staff.		Review outcome data from new practice.	