



## Proposed Model for Therapeutic Foster Care Services in California

**Summary:**

- Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) is a service in which primary interventions, with the children or youth in or at risk of foster care, are delivered in foster family-based settings in which 1 or 2 children or youth live with and are supervised by specially trained foster parents, supported by a team of professional and paraprofessional service providers. Primary interventions with targeted permanent caregivers are delivered in the caregiver family's home and community.

**Definition of TFC:**

- Individualized foster family-based child welfare and specialty mental health interventions with a child or youth, and with a targeted "permanent caregiver,"
- Aimed at stabilizing, or ameliorating the youth's behavioral/emotional disorder, and addressing the unmet needs that give rise to those challenges, and
- Simultaneously preparing the permanent caregiver to provide for the child in his/her home and to access needed services and support for the child, youth, and caregiver family in the community.

**Target population:**

- Children or youth in the foster care system, or at risk of placement in foster care, with significant emotional/behavioral disorders,
- For whom intervention in a structured foster family setting in the community is both safe and has a high likelihood of success, and
- For whom intervention in their current family or community setting, or in a residential setting is unsafe, ineffective, or in some other way contra-indicated.

**Therapeutic Foster Parent Characteristics:**

- TFC foster parents are specially trained foster caregivers and mental health interventionists who must meet specified competencies.
- TFC foster parents receive compensation reflective of their roles as both caregivers and skilled interventionists; daily supportive contact; supervision; and planned respite.

**Desired outcomes:**

Children and youth successfully exiting TFC should, at the minimum:

- Return to or enter into a lifelong relationship with a permanent caregiver;
- Transition to or remain in a school setting that meets his/her educational and emotional needs;
- Function in a manner that is safe to self and others and is not a threat to the community, or exit to an environment in which the child or youth's behavioral/emotional disorder can be safely and effectively addressed.
- Be provided with appropriate services and support in the community to assure that the child or youth's needs can be met ongoing.

Upon the youth's exit, permanent caregivers should:

- Possess the skills and, either, be receiving or be able to access the support, services or resources necessary to effectively assure the safety of the young person and meet his or her needs on an ongoing basis.

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**Services to be provided:**

TFC has two foci of interventions: the child or youth, and the child or youth's permanent caregiver.

- **Environmentally-based interventions:** Child or youth-focused interventions, delivered primarily by specially trained therapeutic foster parents designed to establish a safe and structured living situation.
- **Intensive treatment interventions:** Child or youth-focused interventions, provided by specially trained mental health interventionists, designed to treat each youth's mental health condition to improve functioning and enhance development. These individualized services are an important part of facilitating the rapid movement of children and youth toward connection or reconnection with appropriate and natural home, school and community ecologies.  
Intensive treatment interventions may include but are not limited to individual therapy, group therapy, individual and group rehabilitation, day treatment intensive, day rehabilitation, medication support, crisis intervention, Therapeutic Behavioral Services and substance abuse treatment as needed by the child or youth.
- **Parallel, pre-discharge community-based interventions:** Permanent caregiver-focused interventions designed to simultaneously help people in the child or youth's family, school and community ecology prepare for the young person's return.
- **Follow-up, post-discharge support and services:** Provided as needed to the child or youth and permanent caregiver family to insure the stability and success of the connection or reconnection with home, school and community after the young person has been discharged from TFC.

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**Decision-making**

- Decision-making regarding utilization of and discharge from TFC, and at key points in the intervention, should be made by a child and family team; that is a team of individuals that reflects the perspectives of the child, the caregiver, the parents, the community and professionals working with the child and caregiver.
- Decision-making should utilize a strengths-based comprehensive plan that includes desired outcomes.

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**Duration of services:**

- 3-12 months based on determination of individual need by decision-making team.

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**Funding:**

- TFC should be a comprehensive foster family-based intervention that includes both child welfare and specialty mental health services and funding, as well as other services and funding as needed.

