

I. PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THIS POSITION:

The primary purpose of this position is to provide In Home and Foster Care services for both children and their families; Investigative Assessment services; Intake services, Individual and Family Adjustment services, Interstate Placement services, Adoption Services, LINKS services, and other child welfare services. This position also takes applications and determines eligibility for other services offered by the agency, such as Emergency Assistance services.

II. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. **Investigative Assessments (75%)** This service involves investigating reports of child abuse, neglect and dependency, as well as extensive client and collateral contacts. Work is accomplished substantially in the field. Exacting law and state standards must be followed in the provision of this involuntary service to families. This job duty exposes staff to hazardous environments and high-risk situations, such as domestic violence. Requires extensive, detailed documentation of work. The documentation takes about 50% of the staff time to complete. This staff member is also responsible for obtaining the court orders and the physical removal of children in danger. This position requires the ability to maintain a high and intense activity level. Conducting those activities necessary to determine whether or not allegations of abuse, neglect, or dependency are true, and to evaluate the safety of the child in the home. Giving information, instruction, guidance, and mentoring regarding parenting skills; ongoing determination of the need for placement; referrals to other service providers and evaluation of services provided; and gathering information for case plans. Completion of the investigative assessment includes the use of a shared decision making process to make a case decision, as well as case closure activities.
2. **In Home Services for Children (10%)** This service is provided after there has been a substantiation of child abuse, neglect, and/or dependency and removal of the child is a reasonable possibility in the absence of such services. Worker must monitor, expand and update the Family Services Case Plan to address identified areas of need; provide routine case supervisory activity; maintain contact with the family and others significant to the case; work with the parents on the status of the case and case goals; give information, instruction, guidance and mentor regarding parenting skills; refer to monitoring of service as appropriate, including referrals to clinical treatment; provide ongoing determination of appropriateness of need for out-of-home placement.
3. **Foster Care Services (5%)** The Child Protective Services Investigator will transfer the case to this position after substantiation and entering into the foster care system. Children may come into care through In-Home services, not just Investigations/Assessments. Foster Care services include locating suitable placements, immediate placement responsibilities, on-going supervision, coordinating services of community agencies, and often acting as liaison among the professional community, including courts, schools, health departments, etc. Also includes working with foster parents with regard to licensing/re-licensing and ongoing assistance, training, and supervision. This position provides placement services for children who have been taken into custody due to the termination of parental rights, abuse or neglect situations, voluntary placement by parents, abandonment, or release for adoption. Ensure that foster care placements across state lines are in compliance with interstate compact laws; make monthly home visits to approved placements. Document all activities and provide quarterly reports to the sending state to update status of child (ren).. This service involves conducting home studies for interstate placements, making applications to group homes or other alternative placements, monitoring, providing for visitation between family members, assisting youth from ages 16 - 21 with all phases of training for independent living in preparation for the transition out of substitute care and into the community, management of the transition itself to follow up after the transition is accomplished, participation in regularly scheduled court appearances, and coordination with foster parents, mental health workers, and other professionals. It also requires mandatory review team meetings, which are scheduled regularly and prepared for by the worker. This position provides counseling and treatment services to the child and the child's family or foster family, to remedy personal problems, behavioral problems or home conditions. This includes any counseling to facilitate the child's psycho-social adjustment and to assist the parents or other responsible relatives and caretakers to improve conditions precipitating the need for placement, and to enable the child to return to his own home. This position provides counseling and treatment services as necessary to achieve placement of a child in the home of other relatives, in an adoptive home, or continued foster care. Also this position provides preventive services to the child and family in an effort to prevent foster care placement and maintain the child outside the substitute care system. These services include diagnostic study and evaluation; medical examinations when not otherwise available; facilitating services for appropriate planning and the provision of appropriate foster care services for the child and family. Preparing court reports and testifying in court; consulting with DSS attorney. Documentation detailing every phone call, home visit, office visit, visitation with parents, professional appointments (such as doctor and therapist appointments), and collaterals. Responding to e-mail, voice mail, office phone and agency cell phone. Much duplication of documentation due to the great number of

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forms required for foster care cases. Attend meetings with attorney before court to discuss strategies for advocating DSS position in court. Provide witness list. Before court, numerous consultations with DSS attorney as well as guardian ad litem (GAL), GAL attorney, and parents' attorney, social worker is cross-examined by at least 3 attorneys (GAL attorney and 2 parent attorneys) in what is often a contentious, adversarial and stressful position.

Extensive travel is required for home visits, court appearances for children involved with juvenile court, treatment team meetings, meeting with teachers and other school personnel. Not unusual for this to take 1 to 2 days of travel; for example, if a child is placed in Asheville, Charlotte, etc. Many specialized services are located in the western part of the state.

Foster home licensing recruits potential foster parents through community outreach in schools, churches, etc. and conducts mandatory foster parent training classes. Uses Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting curriculum as required by the state. After the training, licenses foster parents according to NC DSS guidelines. Provides for or arranges for 20 hours of in-service training per licensure period. Provides quarterly supervision for foster parents and responds to on-going foster parent needs. Relicenses foster parents every 2 years. Arranges for contracted services to help with licensing duties.

4. **LINKS Services** This service provides access to special funding to meet special educational, emotional needs for children who are 13-21 years of age.
5. **Interstate Foster Care Services for Children** This service includes receiving requests from other jurisdictions or other states to conduct home studies, usually for the purpose of placing a child into our jurisdiction, who is in the custody of another jurisdiction. The home study involves going to the home, talking with the individuals involved in the possible placement, such as parents or other relatives, and assessing the situation to see that it is an appropriate environment for the child in question. This includes assessing the emotional, mental, medical, educational, and social functioning of the family in question. Reports and recommendations are sent through the appropriate Interstate channels. If the placement is approved, then this worker will provide supervision of the placement and periodic reports as requested through the Interstate Compact. This includes evaluation of homes in NC for the placement of children from other states who are in DSS custody. Procedures are dictated by the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children. If placement is approved, worker provides monthly supervision and quarterly updates to the sending county.
6. **Adoption Services** This services involves social casework and other diagnostic and treatment services to prepare the child and prospective parents for placement; casework services to the child and adoptive parents to support and maintain the supervision and reports to the court; casework counseling and court related services in independent placements and in adoptions by stepparents and relatives as required by statute; and casework services to facilitate interstate and intercountry adoptions including those activities required to bring such interstate planning and placements into compliance with the interstate compact on the placement of children; and the provision of post-adoption services including, but not limited to, casework services designed to support the achievement of long range adjustment between the child and members of the adoptive family and to assist the adoptee to gain understanding of his biological heritage to the extent allowed by law. At its option, the county may provide payment of costs incidental to preplacement and placement visits as a resource to facilitate the provision of adoption services, and payment of the cost of legal services to facilitate legal adoption of a child.
7. **Intake/On Call, Emergency Assistance (5%)** All staff performs intake on a rotating basis, approximately every 11<sup>th</sup> workday. Includes receiving referrals, making collateral contacts, checking records, opening cases, and documentation, determine eligibility for Emergency Assistance, assess crisis situations for referrals to outside agencies for assistance, and perform on-call duty approximately once every eleven weeks. At this time worker is on call 24 hours a day for a 7-day period.
8. **Other Child Welfare Services and General Administration (5%)** will be provided by this position as needed in conjunction with In Home, Foster Care Services, Adoption Services, and Intake Services. In Home services usually involves counseling to enable the client to recognize and cope with problems and conflicts with regard to home management, family life, consumer affairs, alcoholism, drug abuse, mental and emotional disorders, school related problems, etc. May be required to participate in other programs the agency may administer, such as Operation Santa Claus, Parenting Classes for parents of foster children, and performing other duties as required.

This includes staff meetings, completing daysheets, monthly reports, training workshops provided by the State, public speaking engagements, time spent waiting in court, time spent waiting for clients in medical appointments or therapy appointments, annual leave time, etc. The number of contacts, legal and documentation requirements, and risk assessment tools are strictly detailed in the Children Services Standards for Service Delivery. These standards, which are extensive,

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must be adhered to in all Children Services cases. This documentation generally requires about 50% of the worker's time, but is actually coded to direct services, such as foster care. This position is responsible for keeping up with billing for monthly foster care payments, clothing allowance, transportation expenses, vendor payments, special needs payments, and professional fees.

The team approach is used in several areas in this agency. Social worker in this position is a member of the foster care review team. As case manager for foster care cases, the worker periodically presents cases for review by the team, which consists of agency personnel, mental health professionals, guardians ad litem, school personnel, and foster parents. The team approach is also used in approval and disapproval of adoptive applicants and in the placing of children in adoptive homes.

The number of active cases will be up to 10 families for assessments, including all the different services involved. A foster care case might be open as long as three or four years or a family planning case might be open just a few weeks or in home up to 15 children for foster care.

This position has the responsibility of being substitute payee for certain recipients of public assistance, to assure that the monthly payment is used to meet the needs of the family. This position will have responsibility for submitting bills, applying for Social Security or SSI for foster children and the worker must maintain complete and accurate records when the agency is guardian or payee, for accountability purposes.

Responsibilities in court matters include preparing for and attending court hearings, preparing reports relative to history and treatment for scheduled reviews, and testifying to conditions, progress made, and custody recommendations. May have responsibility of interviewing sexual abuse cases for the local sheriff's department, and then testifying in court. Worker will become a member of multi-disciplinary team. This position will be responsible for getting court reviews into court in a timely manner. This means that our agency attorney will need to be contacted well in advance of the court date, so that it can be scheduled in a timely manner. The worker will be responsible for contacting and preparing witnesses, as well as letting the attorney know what witnesses need to be subpoenaed. Worker is also to prepare court reports, make contact with the guardian ad litem, attend court, and testify at hearings. Must review court orders for accuracy.

The worker will have access to manuals provided by the Department of Human and Human Services, as well as the Social Services and Related Laws and Statutes book, which is compiled laws for easy reference. Other reference materials include the Services Information System manual to assist in coding client information for data entry. The Worker Safety Policy is reviewed and adhered to as well.

Work is performed independently with regular supervision through one-on-one conferences with the supervisor on an as-needed basis. Particularly difficult cases are staffed with the supervisor and entire foster care staff. Assessments are staffed weekly within the unit. Legal advice is sought from agency attorney. Mandatory training is provided. This position requires 72 hours of Pre-Service training and approximately 10 additional days of training within the first year. Every year thereafter and additional 24 hours of training is required.

The Services Program operates under the General Statutes of North Carolina with procedures specified in the Family Services Manual.

Contact may be made with public agencies, private agencies, churches, law enforcement, clubs and organizations, health professionals, and general public.

Work is reviewed by Services Supervisor and regional services representative on an ongoing basis. Judicial reviews enforce self-review and evaluation.

**CONSEQUENCE OF ERROR:** paybacks by the county to state and/or federal government if services are coded incorrectly. Harm may come to children and families if children are returned prematurely to their parents.. This position affects the life of all children that enter the foster care system and drastically changes the whole dynamic of families due to DSS and court intervention. Worker decides when to recommend the return of children to their family of origin or to relatives. Also decides when to proceed with termination of parental rights and consequently adoption of the child involved. These are dramatic, life changing events in the life of a child. Ultimately, the courts make this decision, but worker's recommendation carry a heavy weight in court proceedings.

This worker counsels, supervises and provides services to children from birth to age 18. Family members may be of any age

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group, as may the members of a foster family or adoptive family.

Foster Care parents are usually of average intelligence and have a sincere desire to be of help. They are patient, caring people, with minimum needs.

Clients receiving other services can also exhibit a wide variety of problems and characteristics such as emotional, environmental and behavioral problems

Referrals are usually received by telephone from other professionals, such as medical providers, school personnel, law enforcement, court systems, or other human service personnel. Referrals are also received from concerned citizens, neighbors, relatives, and sometimes from parents or the victim himself. Referrals may also come from other social work staff and the Services Supervisor.

Position will also perform duties as assigned by the County Manager or his designees during a State of Emergency or other disaster. Will also perform other duties as requested by agency director.

### III. OTHER WORK CHARACTERISTICS

- A. The Social Services Building is located in a rural area, and is housed in a comfortable building which has adequate space for all work activities. All furnishings and equipment are in excellent condition.
- B. Worker utilizes copy machine, dictation equipment, calculator, camera, personal computer/terminal, printer, fax machine, telephone, and county vehicle.
- C. Exactness and accuracy are essential when performing administrative duties. These include calculating amounts to be paid to vendors and to foster parents and to group homes. Worker must also complete day sheets accurately. These require a service code, an ID number, and number of minutes spent on the given service. This information has financial significance and errors may be costly. Worker must account for 480 minutes per day and is tasked with choosing the correct program for reimbursement for state and federal funds.
- D. Physical effort is needed on occasion, when placing or moving children in foster care. Position sometimes has to transport the children and all their personal belongings, which might include stereos, toys, and sports equipment as well as the child's clothing.
- E. Close visual attention is required in copying figures onto day sheets and other data entry forms. It is also required to observe body language and non-verbal communication during the monitoring and counseling process. Worker must be alert both physically and mentally in order to make an appropriate assessment of the family dynamics.
- F. Intense mental concentration is required in preparing adoption summaries, home studies, lessons for training foster parents, etc. Court reports are lengthy and require particularly intense mental concentration and must be totally accurate as they are submitted as evidence in the disposition phase of court hearings.
- G. The worker is required in some instances to safeguard other persons. This is especially true when it is necessary to remove children from their homes in order to prevent the re-occurrence of physical abuse or extreme neglect, which could be physically harmful. The worker is often faced with dealing with irate clients and vicious dogs, and at times may have to request assistance from law enforcement personnel to perform these duties. It is also essential to see that anyone in the worker's car uses seat belts and those children are placed in safety seats.
- H. Office hours are from 8:00 to 5:00, with an hour break for lunch. There is no rotation of shifts. Position also requires after-hours and weekend call duty once every twelve weeks. The worker must be available during this week on a 24-hour basis. After hours and weekend calls are handled through the Sheriff's Department and the worker must carry a cell phone during this period of duty.
- I. These duties as described have been in effect since the beginning of employment. Position will also perform duties as assigned by the County Manager or his designees during a State of Emergency or other disaster

IV. A. KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ABILITIES, EDUCATION, & EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

The worker must have the following:

Considerable knowledge of social work principles, techniques, and practices, and their application to specific case work and community problems.

Considerable knowledge of governmental and private organizations and community resources.

Considerable knowledge of North Carolina laws, regulations, and Social Services policies, which govern the program.

Considerable knowledge of behavioral and socio-economic problems and their treatment.

Knowledge of the methods and principles of casework.

Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with supervisors, administrative superiors, members of caseload and their families, and civic, medical, social and religious organizations.

Ability to express ideas clearly and concisely, and to plan and execute work effectively.

Ability to relate in a positive or appropriate relationship under adverse conditions.

Ability to recognize primary behavioral dysfunction of individuals and groups.

Ability to make a basic social assessment and service plan.

Ability to conduct a comprehensive social study or treatment plan within protective services.

Skill in listening to others with understanding and purpose.

Skill in soliciting information and assembling relevant facts.

Skill in observing and interpreting verbal and non-verbal behavior, and in using knowledge of personality theory and diagnostic methods.

Skill in engaging clients in efforts to resolve their own problems, and in gaining trust.

Skill in creating innovative solutions to clients' needs.

Ability to take full responsibility for protective services cases and act professionally on worker's own judgment.

Willingness to participate in unit staff meetings and to consider input from other staff members.

B. MINIMUM EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE:

Minimum Training and Experience Requirements - Master's degree in social work from an accredited school of social work; Bachelor's degree in social work from an accredited school of social work and completion of the Child Welfare Collaborative (Child Welfare positions only); Bachelor's degree in social work from an accredited school of social work and one year directly related experience; Master's degree in a human services field and one year of directly related experience; Bachelor's degree in a human services field from an accredited college or university and two years directly related experience; Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university and three years of directly related experience.