

SOCIAL WORKER INVESTIGATIVE/ASSESSMENT & TREATMENT
(Children Services – Foster Care)

I. PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THIS POSITION:

The social worker in this position provides several services: Foster Care and Adoption Services for both children and parents; In Home services; Investigation Assessment services; and Individual & Family Adjustment services. This position also takes applications and determines eligibility for other services offered by the agency, such as Health Support, and Emergency Assistance services.

II. A. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Foster Care & Adoption Services (40%) include case management responsibility. 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. Adoption services require the worker to recruit, study, and select adoptive homes for children cleared for placement. Applicant's assets and liabilities are evaluated in order to determine their capacity to become adoptive parents. This service includes independent adoptions, stepparent and relative adoptions, as well as interstate and inter-county adoptions. Adoption services can also be geared toward the child who has been cleared for and approved for adoption. In these instances, suitable adoptive families are located for such a child. Also includes Adoption Assistance.

Investigative Assessments (5%) involve 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.

In Home Services (50%) for children involve development of family service case plan to alleviate problems identified during Child Protective Service investigation.

Intake, Individual & Family Adjustment Services, Health Support, Emergency Assistance, and other services (5%) will be provided by this position as needed in conjunction with Foster Care Services, Adoption Services, and Intake Services.

IFA 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. Health support is provided by means of physical and emotional evaluations. All staff performs intake, determine eligibility for Emergency 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.

2. This worker counsels, supervises and provides services to children from birth to age 18. Family members may be of any age group, as may the members of a foster family or adoptive family.

Foster Care parents and court approved family and caretakers are caring people who will need good support to maintain foster care placements.

Adoption Services: Worker in this position must be capable of dealing with clients who exhibit a wide variety of characteristics. Among them may be emotional, environmental, behavioral, and socio-economic problems.

Clients receiving other services can also exhibit a wide variety of problems and characteristics such as emotional, environmental, behavioral problems, substance abuse, mental health and victims or perpetrators of domestic violence.

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3. 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.

B. MAJOR ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Intake Services - On a rotating basis, every 10th workday. Includes receiving referrals, making collateral contacts, checking records, opening cases, and documentation. Also includes processing of Emergency Assistance applications, and after hours call duty.

Foster Care and Adoption services – 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. This service involves locating placements, 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. Adoption Services include the recruitment, study, and selection of adoptive homes. This involves home studies and evaluations of families to determine potential placements. This Social Worker, in some ways, serves as a substitute parent for the foster children in his or her caseload. All major decisions regarding children in custody are made by this worker, with supervision. Strict and extensive case record keeping is required for all children services cases. Detailed descriptions of contacts with child(ren), family and other professionals must be maintained.

Investigative Assessments involve 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.

In Home Services – Involves developing family service case plans to alleviate problems identified during the substantiated child protective services investigation.

General Administration – This includes staff meetings, completing day sheets, 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, must be adhered to in all Children Services cases. This documentation generally requires about 50% of the worker's time.

Other Activities - This worker is responsible for regularly scheduled on-call duty on a 24-hour basis including holidays and weekends, for coverage, on a rotating basis with other workers in the agency. May be required to participate in other programs the agency may administer, such as (a) Operation Santa Claus, (b) Parenting Classes for parents of foster children, (c) will perform other duties as required.

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.

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1. Foster Care & Adoption: This service includes placement responsibilities. For children that have to be removed from their homes and placed in emergency foster care in order to assure their safety and well being,. This almost always involves obtaining petitions, locating a placement, consulting with the supervisor, and satisfying legal, physical and emotional needs of everyone involved. This has to be done in a very short period of time, and requires worker to be able to function effectively under stress, and make precise, independent decisions. Direct responsibility for foster care and adoption includes planning, organizing, and monitoring placements, coordinating services of community agencies for clients, and developing effective community relationships. The worker also acts as liaison among the professional community, including courts, guardians ad litem, schools, etc. Teaching disciplining techniques and dealing with mal-adaptive behavior, and sometimes physical disabilities, is often worker's responsibility in helping foster parents to deal with children. Performs social casework and other diagnostic and treatment services to prepare a child and prospective parents for placement, to support and maintain the placement and to facilitate legal consummation of the adoption, including supervision and reports to the court. Position provides services to facilitate interstate and intercounty adoptions in compliance with the Interstate Compact on Placement of Children. Position will also counsel adoptive parents in general parenting skills and disciplinary techniques. Position will attend training sessions in order to keep abreast of current changes and developments in the law or DSS policy.

Investigative Assessment: This service includes the following. 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.

Individual & Family Adjustment Services, Transportation, Health Support, Emergency Assistance, Intake and other services as needed: These services will be provided by this position as needed in conjunction with Foster Care Services, Adoption Services, and Intake Services. IFA 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. Transportation is usually in conjunction with health support, visitation, and meeting educational needs. Health support is provided by means of physical and emotional evaluations. All staff performs intake, determine eligibility for Emergency 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.

In Home Services for Children: 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 activities; 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 DSS-provided clinical treatment; provide ongoing determination of appropriateness of need for out-of-home placement; ensure that foster care placements across state lines are in compliance with interstate compact laws; document In Home service activities.

Performs duties as assigned by the County Manager or his designees during a State of Emergency or other disaster. Also perform other duties as requested by agency Director.

3. 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.

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4. 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.
5. 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.

Work is performed independently with supervision through one-on-one conferences with the supervisor on an as-needed basis. 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.

III. OTHER WORK CHARACTERISTICS

- A. The Social Services Building is located in a rural area, and is housed in a 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, cell phone, video equipment, personal computer/terminal, printer, fax machine, telephone, camera, 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.
- 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 case plans, adoption summaries, home studies, lessons for training foster parents, safety plans, etc.

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- 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 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 eight 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.
- J. Staff is required to have 16 hours of related training per year. Also, certain pre-service training is required.

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. Clients will be from varying socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds.

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.

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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.

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

B. MINIMUM EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE:

Master's degree from an accredited school of social work and one year of social work experience; or a Bachelor's degree from an accredited school of social work and two years of social work or counseling experience; or Master's degree in a counseling field and two years of social work or counseling experience; or a four-year degree in a human services field or related curriculum and three years of social work or counseling experience; or graduation from a four-year college or university and four years of experience in rehabilitation counseling, pastoral counseling or a related human service field providing experience in the techniques of casework, group work or community organization; or an equivalent combination of training and experience.

One year of work experience can be credited for completion of the social work collaborative.