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# **GUIDELINES TO SUPPORT THE TRAINING OF FOSTER PARENTS**

PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING QUALITY TRAINING,  
A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK AND A  
TRAINING PATHWAY

By the Working Group on Training for Foster Parents  
in Youth Protection

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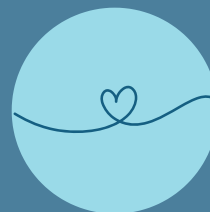
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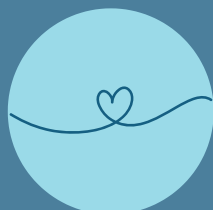
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# INTRODUCTION

**The role of foster parents is essential in our youth protection system. According to the latest report from youth protection directors, nearly a quarter of children who have contact with youth protection will be placed in foster care at some point in their lives.<sup>1</sup> Scientific studies unanimously agree: for foster parents to provide quality support to the children placed in their care, they must receive training tailored to their needs.<sup>2,3</sup>**

According to studies, training foster parents improves their fostering experience, equips them to deal with the needs of fostered children and increases their sense of personal efficacy.<sup>2</sup> It is also associated with better retention and greater placement stability.<sup>3</sup> However, in Quebec, the Special Commission on the Rights of the Child and Youth Protection (CSDEPJ)<sup>4</sup> revealed a consensus among the players involved (staff, managers, foster parents, research teams): foster parent training is insufficient and needs to be improved. A recent study<sup>5</sup> revealed certain issues specific to Quebec, including the absence of pre-accreditation training, significant disparities from one region to another, challenges in getting foster parents involved in training offered, and the lack of a scientific basis to support training plans. In addition, according to the study, many Quebec foster parents do not feel adequately trained and supported when faced with their first placement experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Youth Protection Directors / Regional Directors, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Cooley et al., 2019; D'Amato & Brownlee, 2022; Fowler et al., 2023; Gibbs et al., 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Benesh & Cui, 2017; Fowler et al., 2023; Kaasbøll et al., 2019; Vanderwill et al., 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Special Commission on the Rights of the Child and Youth Protection (CSDEPJ), 2021

<sup>5</sup> Joly, Poirier, Noël, Fortier-Jordan & Louis-Jacques, 2022.



**In the spring of 2023, the Working Group on Introductory Training for Foster Parents in Youth Protection was set up to address these issues. From the outset, the group stressed the importance of training foster parents. Its aim was to develop a unifying project around this training and act in such a way as to reduce disparities between regions. Its richness lies in the diversity of its membership and the willingness of its members to collaborate on the project. It brings together the following:**

- Representatives from five CISSSs and CIUSSSs in Quebec (CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale, CIUSSS de la Mauricie-et-du-Centre-du-Québec, CISSS de Lanaudière and CISSS de la Montérégie-Est).
- Foster parents from the three major representative associations: ADREQ (CSD), FSSS-CSN and FFARIQ.
- Researchers and students with expertise in foster care, foster parenting, trauma-informed approaches and andragogy.

During its first year of operation, the working group set itself the goal of formalizing guidelines to support the implementation of a quality training course for foster parents. This document presents the results of this work in three sections:

- The **first section** outlines the principles that should guide the choice of training methods for foster parents. Eight main principles are presented.
- The **second section** outlines the competency framework for foster parents developed by the working group. It presents what is considered basic knowledge and the four competencies that should guide the training pathway for foster parents.
- The **third section** suggests a three-stage training pathway for foster parents: awareness at the pre-accreditation stage, initial training and advanced training. This section briefly explains how these stages follow one another for each of the three types of foster families: regular, kinship and mixed-bank.

This document provides those involved with training foster parents in youth protection with clear guidelines for developing quality training. It has been drawn up with due respect for the autonomy of local training committees, which can refer to it while continuing to take into account their own regional particularities.

Enjoy the reading!

***Members of the Working Group on Training for Foster Parents in Youth Protection***



## SECTION 1.

# PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING QUALITY TRAINING

To develop a training program that effectively equips foster parents in their role, it is essential to draw on scientific and clinical knowledge of best practices in foster care training.

In light of this knowledge, **EIGHT PRINCIPLES** have been identified as essential.



01. Offer the training based on a shared vision and concerted approach.



02. Draw on best practices and research data.



03. Structure the training as an evolutionary pathway.



04. Maintain a clear boundary between training and assessment areas.



05. Allocate a place for support throughout training



06. Vary the teaching methods to effectively convey theoretical and practical knowledge.



07. Offer flexible and diversified training methods.



08. Support the transfer of new knowledge into practice.

# THE EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF QUALITY TRAINING FOR FOSTER PARENTS IN YOUTH PROTECTION

**These eight principles were developed on the basis of current knowledge<sup>6</sup> and enriched by discussions within the Working Group on Training for Foster Parents in Youth Protection. Each of them is presented in this section.**

## **01. Offer the training based on a shared vision and concerted approach.**

To maximize benefits, the training pathway and content must be based on a shared vision and employ a concerted approach between all relevant stakeholders (CISSS and CIUSSS staff and managers, foster parents, representative associations).



When developing training programs, several studies highlight the importance of cooperation between the parties involved (CISSS and CIUSSS staff and managers, foster parents, representative associations). This cooperation ensures that all stakeholders align on the objectives to be achieved, the skills to be developed and the content to be covered in the training program.<sup>7</sup> Such concerted effort enables the creation of relevant content and selection of training methods that address the needs of foster parents.

Furthermore, collaboratively developed training courses are more likely to align with existing legal and clinical principles, making the content easier to implement in practice and more relevant to foster parents.<sup>8</sup> This cooperation also increases foster parents' sense of recognition regarding the complexity of their role<sup>9</sup> and encourages cooperation and the development of a common language among those involved in foster care.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>7</sup> Gibbs et al., 2022; Israel, Raae & Bjørnstad, 2023; Mallette, Almond & Leonard, 2020; McDermid et al., 2021.

<sup>8</sup> McDermid et al., 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Mallette et al., 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Mallette et al., 2020; Gibbs et al., 2022; McDermid et al., 2021.

This concerted approach should also be reflected in the staff's knowledge of and commitment to the content of the training offered to foster parents. Commitment to the content will have a number of positive effects, such as promoting the transfer of knowledge into practice and encouraging foster parents to take part in training sessions. On this latter point, it is important to work together to invite foster parents to these training courses through personalized contact<sup>11</sup> and to emphasize the benefits of taking the courses in a concrete and realistic way.<sup>12</sup>

The working group has chosen to develop this shared and concerted vision by working on a competency framework for foster parents. This framework is presented in **section 2** of this document.



## 02. Draw on best practices and research data.

The training offered to foster parents should always be based on up-to-date scientific knowledge as well as knowledge developed in practice.

Practices are evolving rapidly in the fields of child development, foster care and adult education (andragogy). It is essential to develop the ongoing reflex of ensuring that the training offered is aligned with the latest knowledge. To achieve this, people with research expertise should be involved in the development of quality training programs so that content and methods can be rigorously selected. This will ensure, among other things, that the methods chosen promote the transfer of knowledge into practice and that the content presented is scientifically validated.

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<sup>11</sup>Joly et al., 2022.

<sup>12</sup>McDermid et al., 2021.

Furthermore, a number of studies have highlighted the need to further develop scientific knowledge about existing training programs and best practices to be replicated.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, it is important to properly document best practices in foster care training both scientifically and clinically. Developing such a culture of assessment and continuous improvement will allow us to target training that has a measurable effect on essential variables, such as the retention of foster parents, their sense of competence, placement stability, and the quality of the emotional bond between foster children and foster parents, among others.

### 03. Structure the training as an evolutionary pathway.

Foster parents need to be trained to meet both the children's needs and their own, which are likely to change over time. Therefore, the training pathway must include distinct, well-defined stages.



Generally speaking, training programs based on best practices are structured in successive stages. According to several studies, the training that occurs at the very beginning of the pathway, referred to in the literature and programs as "pre-placement" or "pre-accreditation" training, is essential to placement preparation.<sup>14</sup> More specifically, this type of training ensures that the foster parent has a sufficient understanding of various topics from the outset, such as child development, attachment relationships, the impact of adversity experienced by foster children, and the challenges likely to arise throughout the placement.

However, we must not lose sight of the fact that this first stage cannot meet all the training needs that arise throughout the practice of foster care.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, it is important to provide a formal continuum of training that follows the course of children's lives and takes into account the evolution of foster families. In other words, it makes sense to organize training and its content according to a timeline that considers factors such as changing needs from childhood to adolescence.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Adkin et al., 2018; Bergström et al. 2020; Cooley et al., 2019; Kaasbøll et al., 2019; Solomon et al., 2016; Strickler et al., 2018.

<sup>14</sup>Adkin et al., 2018; Israel et al., 2023; Shklarski, 2019; Strickler et al., 2018.

<sup>15</sup>Gibbs et al., 2022; Kaasbøll et al., 2019.

<sup>16</sup>Cooley et al., 2019; Fowler et al., 2023.

To promote learning, the various stages of training must be based on coherent theoretical references that remain the same at all stages of the training.<sup>17</sup>

The working group proposes a training pathway for foster parents in Quebec. The key aspects of this pathway and how it applies to each type of foster family are presented in **section 3** of this document.



#### 04. Maintain a clear boundary between training and assessment areas.

Training spaces should enable foster parents to reflect freely on the challenges they face. For this to happen, these spaces must not be used for assessment purposes.

To cope with the challenges of foster care, foster parents need spaces where they can address their fears and vulnerabilities without worrying that this will be used to evaluate the services they provide. In some studies, foster parents have mentioned feeling constantly evaluated, which makes them more reluctant to talk about their difficulties.<sup>18</sup>

In Quebec, recent research has documented a similar phenomenon where service quality control, which plays an important role in the contractual relationship between foster parents and youth protection services, can make foster parents reluctant to open up about their difficulties for fear of reprisals.<sup>19</sup> Thus, it is important to ensure that training spaces remain spaces where foster parents feel comfortable in freely addressing their vulnerabilities. This means that training should never be used as a lever for assessment. Moreover, even if training does help to increase the feeling of

<sup>17</sup> Benesh & Cui, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Rigg, 2015; Nesmith, 2020.

<sup>19</sup> Chateauneuf & Turcotte, 2015; Boyer & Noël, 2018 ; Joly, 2024.

competence,<sup>20</sup> it would not be an effective means of assessing the skills and characteristics of foster parents nor of revealing their problematic beliefs or attitudes.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, training spaces should provide foster parents with the opportunity for self-assessment, a type of evaluation that supports the reflective approach expected of a training program. For example, the pre-accreditation stage should enable prospective foster parents to determine whether they are ready to commit to a foster care project, as some programs propose.<sup>22</sup> Thereafter, throughout their training pathway, foster parents should be given opportunities to assess how far they have come in acquiring the skills they need to fulfill their role. This type of self-assessment could be used to plan a personal training pathway tailored to the needs of the foster parent and the characteristics of the children placed in the parent's care.

## 05. Allocate a place for support throughout training.

The training pathway should enable foster parents to anticipate the challenges they will face and the support they will need to deal with them. Peer support or support from the training team should also be planned within this pathway.



Support for foster parents is essential for foster care to run smoothly,<sup>23</sup> particularly due to the significant needs of foster children, who may have experienced traumas, developmental delays and relational difficulties.<sup>24</sup> In order to be available and ready to respond, foster parents need to be quickly made aware, even before the arrival of the first child in their home, that they will sometimes need support to succeed in their role as a foster parent.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, some authors recommend that training courses include time for foster parents to reflect on the importance of this support and the form it should take.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Adkins et al., 2018; Benesh & Cui, 2016; Fowler et al., 2023; Strickley et al., 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Combs-Orme & Orme (2014) cited by Solomon et al., 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Voir notamment le programme TIPS-MAPP.

<sup>23</sup> Cooley et al., 2019; Fowler et al., 2023; Gibbs et al., 2022; Kaasbøll et al., 2019; Mallette et al., 2020.

<sup>24</sup> Dubois-Comtois et al., 2021; Fratto, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Cooley et al., 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Cooley et al., 2019; Gibbs et al., 2022; Miller et al., 2019.

These moments should help them identify the situations in which they are likely to experience personal and family imbalance as well as self-care strategies and resources they can mobilize during these periods.

However, awareness of this need for support is not enough: concrete support, which can be provided formally or informally, on an individual or group basis, must also be planned as part of the training continuum.<sup>27</sup> With this in mind, formal spaces for dialogue and sharing should be provided as part of the training sessions. Another effective method of providing informal support is to have training sessions co-led by a youth protection worker and an experienced foster parent.<sup>28</sup> This way of delivering training makes foster parents feel more understood.<sup>29</sup> It also has the potential to create mutual support networks between foster parents, which are likely to continue beyond the training sessions.<sup>30</sup>

Obviously, training sessions are not the only time when support for foster parents needs to be articulated. That said, they are a prime opportunity to raise foster parents' awareness of the importance of support within their role and to provide a space where they can develop ties with other foster parents, an important source of informal support.



## **06. Vary the teaching methods to effectively convey theoretical and practical knowledge.**

To encourage foster parents' learning, theoretical and practical knowledge needs to be conveyed through a variety of teaching methods, such as presentations, discussions, clinical vignettes, videos, experience-sharing, etc.

The literature on good training practice stresses the importance of combining theoretical and practical knowledge in all training courses concerning foster care.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Gibbs et al., 2022; Kaasbøll et al., 2019; Mallette et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Benesh & Cui, 2016; Cooley et al., 2019; D'Amato & Brownlee, 2022; Gibbs et al., 2022; Kaasbøll et al., 2019; Mallette et al., 2020.

<sup>29</sup> Mallette et al., 2020.

<sup>30</sup> Mallette et al., 2020.

Theoretical knowledge is essential if foster parents are to develop a body of knowledge to support their fostering practices. It contributes to a better understanding of their role and the needs of the children they foster. As for practical knowledge, it ensures a closer match with the foster parents' own experience and maintains their interest throughout the training.<sup>32</sup> There are several ways in which practical knowledge can be incorporated into training courses:

- The use of testimonials from foster parents is suggested for the sharing of practical knowledge. This can be done through face-to-face testimonials, communities of practice, videos, or the use of clinical vignettes; all methods recognized as being useful for conveying this type of knowledge and making training sessions more dynamic.<sup>33</sup>
- A number of publications also recommend including experienced foster parents on the training team,<sup>34</sup> whose members can act as co-trainers. A facilitator role can also be considered, whereby foster parents are present to provide concrete examples and help participants understand, through their own experience, how the knowledge is applied in everyday life.

In short, the use of these different teaching methods also has the advantage of promoting the creation of links between the experience of foster parents and the training content, thus ensuring better integration of knowledge among these players.

## 07. Offer flexible and diversified training methods.

To facilitate the reconciliation of family life and training, the methods chosen for the training offered to foster parents should be varied and flexible while aiming for a balance between online and in-person sessions.



There are advantages and disadvantages to both in-person and online training. In-person training can take the form of conferences, group discussions, activities, communities of practice and much more.


<sup>31</sup> Benesh et Cui, 2016; Cooley et al., 2019; Solomon et al., 2016.

<sup>32</sup> Mallette et al., 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Fowler et al., 2023; Gibbs et al., 2022; Kaasbøll et al., 2019; Mallette et al., 2020.

<sup>34</sup> D'Amato & Brownlee, 2022; Gibbs et al., 2022; Kaasbøll et al., 2019; Mallette et al., 2020.





They have the advantage of encouraging the sharing of experiences and the creation of an informal support network between foster parents.<sup>35</sup> Online training leans more toward multimedia presentations with quizzes and exercises that help foster parents acquire knowledge. They are beneficial for foster parents who lack the time or for whom attending remote training poses logistical challenges(e.g., geographical distance).<sup>36</sup>

More research is needed to assess the effectiveness of online training for foster parents, especially for their initial training, when parents do not yet have any accumulated experience.<sup>37</sup> What's more, current scientific knowledge does not allow us to distinguish between the benefits and limitations of asynchronous online training (where foster parents log in to their computer alone, at a time of their choosing) and synchronous online training (where a group of foster parents meet to take a training course together). Current thinking in the field of andragogy highlights that, when in-person interaction is not possible (distances too great, major time constraints), synchronous online training could, despite the physical distance, enable participants to establish relationships<sup>38</sup> if the training includes interactive methods such as discussion spaces for group members, team exercises and collaborative work. That said, according to research conducted on foster family training, networking and informal support are particularly favoured in face-to-face activities.

Given the time, transportation and babysitting constraints that foster parents face, training for them will be more effective by combining online, in-person, synchronous and asynchronous methods. By adopting flexible and diversified methods, foster parents will find it easier to organize their schedules without being deprived of the beneficial effects of networking and experience-sharing that in-person training allows. As for the duration of the training, although studies do not specify an ideal target, they do indicate the importance of keeping training short and focused, as long and intensive training courses can be a challenge in terms of resources and time, both for foster parents and youth protection services.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Benesh & Cui, 2016; Mallette et al., 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Benesh & Cui, 2016; Fowler et al., 2023.

<sup>37</sup> Cooley et al., 2019.

<sup>38</sup> Parr, 2019.

<sup>39</sup> Cooley et al., 2019; Fowler et al., 2023; Gibbs et al., 2022; Miller et al., 2019.

Moreover, some studies express reservations about the effectiveness of longer and more intensive training courses.<sup>41</sup>

Based on these research findings, we can hypothesize that dividing training into several sections could facilitate the transfer of learning into practice. However, the literature review did not identify what exactly is meant by "short and focused" training. Therefore, further research is needed to precisely document this aspect.



## **08. Support the transfer of new knowledge into practice.**

Post-training follow-up is essential to ensure that foster parents are able to apply their new skills in their daily lives.

It is essential to remember that learning does not end when the foster parents leave the classroom (or their screen); we need to ensure that knowledge is applied following training.<sup>42</sup> This approach is supported by the literature, which suggests that learning should be seen as a cyclical, iterative process, alternating between experience and training.<sup>43</sup>

On this point, the authors recommend pairing participants with an experienced youth worker, trainer or foster parent who can help them apply new knowledge acquired during training.<sup>44</sup> In addition to facilitating the appropriation of new content, this pairing would build a sense of solidarity and strengthen learning.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Solomon et al., 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Kaminski, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Marrero, 2020; McDermid et al., 2021; Strickley et al., 2018.

<sup>43</sup> Kolb, 2014.

<sup>44</sup> Gibbs et al., 2022.

<sup>45</sup> Miller et al., 2020.



Here are a few examples of the form this type of post-training follow-up could take:

- A meeting could be arranged with the training team a few weeks after the course to discuss how the participants were able to apply the concepts. This is an opportunity to look back at key concepts and lead a discussion with group members.
- A member of the clinical team (assigned to the child's professional follow-up or the foster family's quality control follow-up) could be informed about the training completed by the foster parent. This team member could review with the foster parents what they have learned as part of their follow-up using ready-to-use content.
- For certain broader themes (e.g., trauma-informed approaches, attachment theory), foster parents are given the opportunity to participate in a community of practice where they can be trained and made aware of new content, while exchanging ideas on how to apply it. The community of practice could include just foster parents or bring in youth workers as well, if the aim is to develop a shared vision.



## SECTION 2.

# THE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK: TOWARD A SHARED VISION OF TRAINING

To develop training for foster parents, it is important to draw on recognized principles in andragogy, which focuses on best practices in adult learning and education.<sup>46</sup> In this field, the competency framework is a tool often used to support the development of staff training programs and pathways, particularly in the helping professions.<sup>47</sup>

What is competence? Competence is the ability to deal adequately and effectively with complex situations, drawing on an integrated set of resources that includes knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills.<sup>48</sup> Thus, the competency framework provides an overview of the resources that foster parents require to deal with the complex situations that arise in their role. This makes it possible to establish the desired competency profile for foster parents. It defines the precise outcome to be achieved and the direction to be taken by the training pathway. In other words, at each step of the pathway, foster parents' skills will be developed gradually, "one step at a time."

To design this competency framework, we carried out a review of training programs that have been published or evaluated.<sup>49</sup> This produced a list of the skills, content and themes covered. At the same time, a process was carried out with the working group to validate the skills, content and themes identified. Throughout this process, an effort was made to formalize the list of skills, content and concepts to be learned in a simple, user-friendly form.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Holmes & Preston, 2020.

<sup>47</sup> Bélisle et al., 2023; Poumay, Tardif & Georges, 2017.

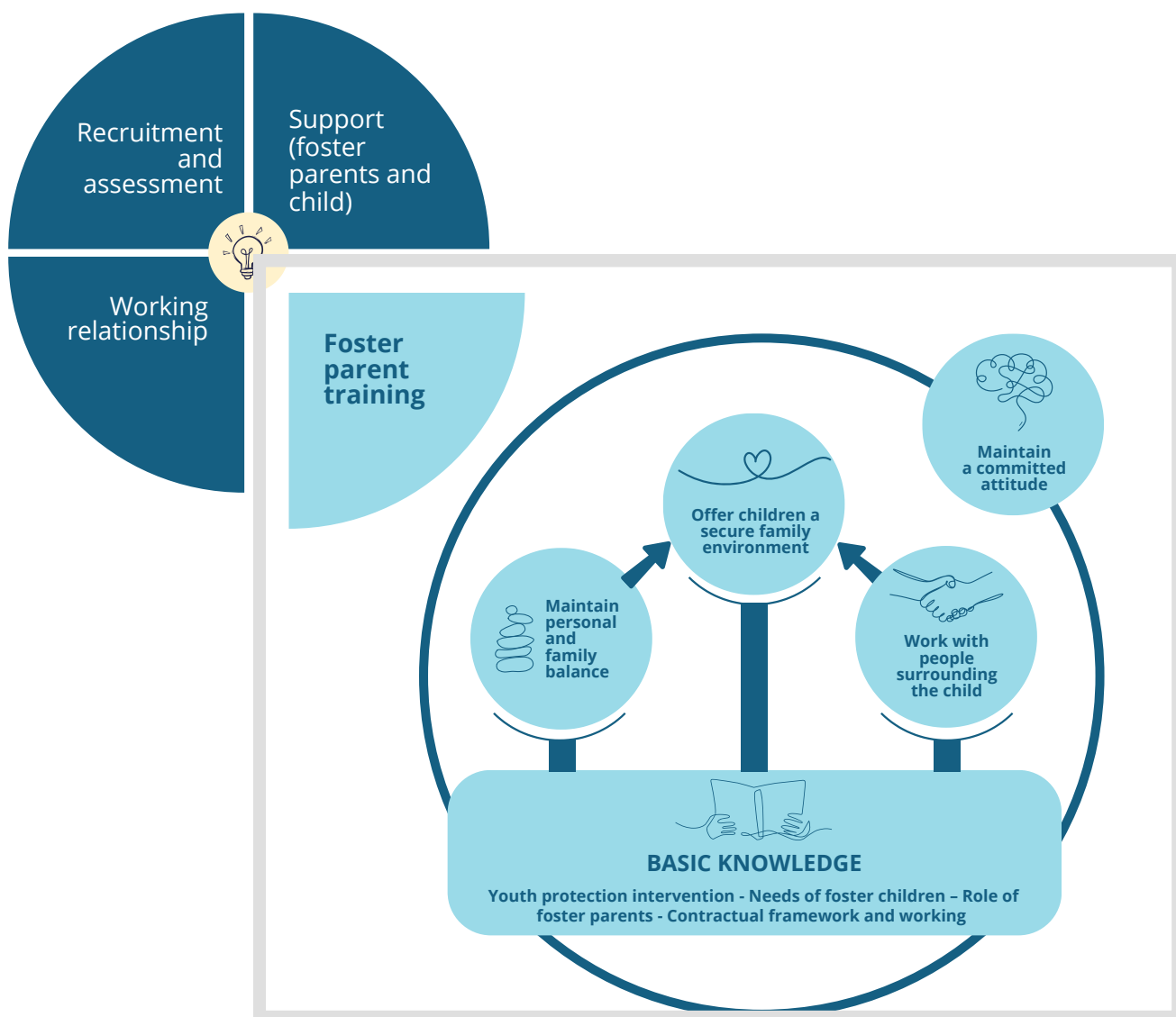
<sup>48</sup> Definition adapted from Poumay & Georges, 2002, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Appendix 3 contains a summary table of the programs consulted

<sup>50</sup> Centre de pédagogie universitaire, 2023.

This section presents the shared vision of training that emerged from this collaborative effort. The **figure** below presents the competency framework. It is made up of four competencies derived from basic knowledge that foster parents need to be aware of before undertaking the work of acquiring these competencies. The circle in the top-left corner symbolizes that training is one of the four essential pillars of quality foster care and that it must be developed along with the other pillars, namely recruitment and assessment, support for the foster parents and child, and the working relationship. Each component of the framework is presented in the following pages.

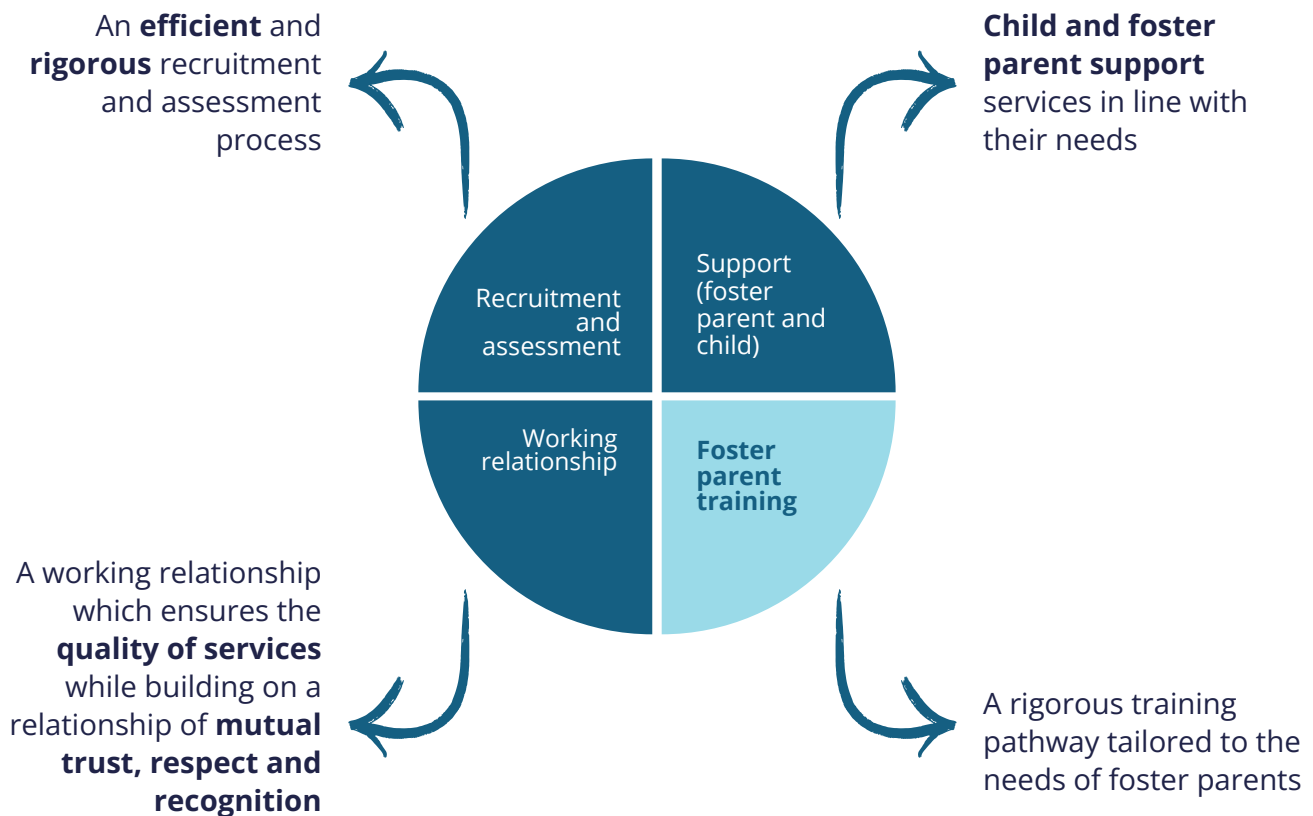
### *The youth protection foster parent competency framework at a glance*



## THE FOUR PILLARS OF FOSTER CARE

Providing foster parents with a training and developmental pathway is essential, but not sufficient. It is necessary to ensure that the other factors recognized as promoting quality services for children in foster care are in place.<sup>51</sup>

The circle below provides important information about the context in which this competency framework is set, namely that **quality foster care is based on four essential and inseparable pillars:**



<sup>51</sup> In Quebec, see Chateaufneuf et al., 2022. See also systematic reviews by D'Amato and Brownlee, 2022; Findley and Praetorius, 2023; Hanlon et al., 2021.

## CLINICAL AND SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS



Training, and more broadly the four pillars of foster care, must be consistent with the most up-to-date knowledge and best practices in the field. This framework aligns with this principle, as it is based on practical knowledge as well as on a review of training programs and scientific literature.

Within the working group, trauma-informed approaches emerged as essential foundations to support the training pathway of foster parents. These approaches are advocated by many of the writings and programs consulted<sup>52</sup> due to the difficulties and life experiences of children placed in foster care.<sup>53</sup>

### What is complex trauma?

In recent years, the concept of complex trauma has become an essential part of our work with vulnerable children. It is defined as follows:

"The set of developmental sequelae related to experiences of traumatic adversity, experienced in prolonged, chronic and multiple ways; most often from a very young age and in interpersonal relationships ." <sup>54</sup>

Children taken into youth protection care by foster parents due to maltreatment have generally been exposed to this type of trauma.

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<sup>52</sup>Voir Konijn et al., 2020; Vanderwill et al., 2021; see also PRIDE, TIPS-MAPP and NTDC programs

<sup>53</sup>Dubois-Comtois et al., 2021; Fratto, 2016.

<sup>54</sup>Ford and Courtois, 2013.



As a result, organizations providing protection services must make the necessary efforts to become "trauma-informed." More specifically, a **trauma-informed organization**:



In addition to these criteria, trauma-informed organizations recognize the importance of supporting people who act as caregivers or try to help those who have experienced trauma.<sup>56</sup>

So, organizations need to make an effort to meet these criteria. One way of doing so is to ensure that those working with children are trained in the subject. Content on complex trauma and its consequences as well as the best practices to be put in place should therefore be included in a competency framework for foster parents.

## The ARC framework to promote a common language

With regard to the principles underlying quality training for foster parents, the first part of this document addressed the importance of providing training whose content is specific and applicable to their practice.<sup>57</sup> It is also important that the proposed pathway is based on theoretical references that remain the same at all stages of the training.<sup>58</sup> Ideally, these references should be consistent with the language used in the relationship with the clinical team supporting the foster care.

<sup>55</sup> Milot, T., Lemieux, R., Berthelot, N. & Collin-Vézina, D., 2018.

<sup>56</sup> SAMHSA, 2023.

<sup>57</sup> Benesh & Cui, 2017.

<sup>58</sup> Benesh & Cui, 2017.

In line with these principles, we chose to develop our competency framework based on the Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC) framework.<sup>59</sup> This model is utilized more widely in clinical settings and by foster parents in Quebec, providing concrete levers for putting trauma-focused approaches into practice.

The ARC framework is aimed at children and adolescents with a complex trauma profile, and at their caregivers. It is designed to develop resilience through three areas recognized as essential for reducing symptoms related to complex trauma:

- 1) Secure attachment
- 2) Emotional regulation
- 3) The learning of developmental skills

According to ARC, the recovery of children and young people exposed to traumatic events takes place through caring relationships and shared moments with adults.<sup>60</sup> In the context of foster care, the foster parent plays a key role in this process.

The ARC framework comprises eight intervention targets supported by three initial strategies, all designed to achieve better trauma integration. The targets are organized into a three-story “house” (Attachment, Regulation and Competency) built on a foundation.

The foundation (engagement, education, routines and rhythms) and attachment-related targets (caregiver affect management, attunement, effective response) are the responsibility of adults and care systems. Thus, much of the children's progress will initially depend on the efforts and willingness of those surrounding them to provide the necessary conditions for them to settle down and rebuild their lives.<sup>61</sup> The competency framework presented in the next section is consistent with trauma-informed approaches and the principles underlying the ARC framework.

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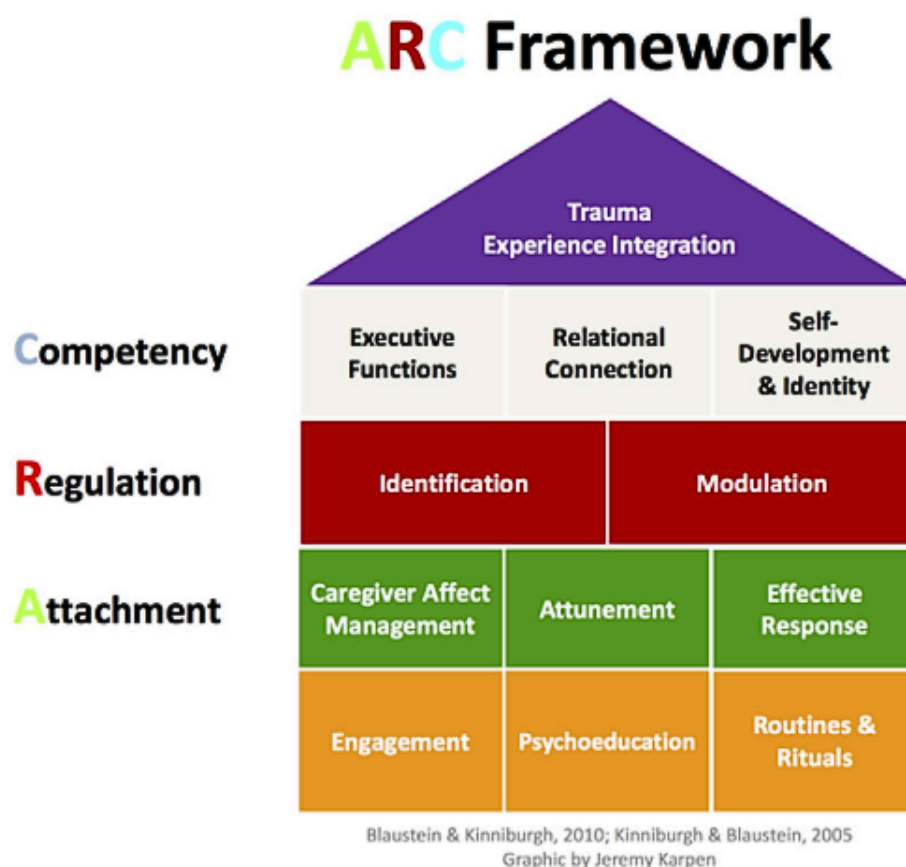
<sup>59</sup> Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2019. In Quebec, support groups for foster parents inspired by the ARC model have been developed by Brunet, Rouleau et al., 2022.

<sup>60</sup> Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2019.

<sup>61</sup> Collin-Vézina et al., 2018.

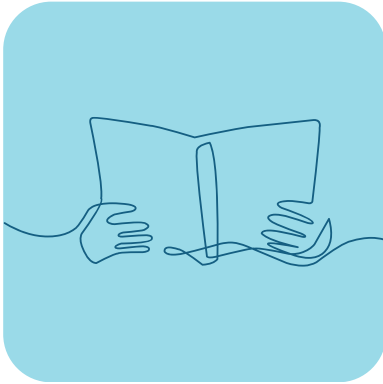
The figure<sup>62</sup> below illustrates the ARC framework. To find out more about the intervention targets, a description of each ARC domain is provided in Appendix 1 along with specific examples applied to the field of foster care.

*The foundation and intervention targets of the ARC framework*



<sup>62</sup>Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2019

## BASIC KNOWLEDGE



To develop the skills needed to carry out their role, foster parents need to acquire certain basic knowledge. This content should be presented prior to accreditation, mainly at the information session and during the assessment process. This knowledge has two functions: 1) to enable prospective parents to make an informed decision regarding their foster care application and 2) to provide a solid foundation for the acquisition of the four competencies at the core of the foster parents' role.

At this stage, the content provided is simply intended to raise awareness among prospective foster parents. Concepts should be skimmed over to avoid weighing down the assessment process while being made sufficiently explicit to allow them to confirm their interest in becoming a foster family.



### Clinical and scientific foundation

Raising awareness at the pre-accreditation stage is an important component of the vast majority of foster parent training programs around the world. Scientific literature confirms that it is essential, as it enables applicants to feel better prepared and effectively evaluate whether this project is right for them.<sup>63</sup>

With a clearer understanding of the foster parent's role, youth protection considerations, the pathway of children in foster care and the impact of this pathway on them, foster parent applicants will be able to assess whether they are suited for this project. By being better informed, there is a greater chance that the first placement experiences will be positive, thus avoiding painful disruptions for both the child and foster parent. Therefore, consistent with the core principles of the ARC framework, the acquisition of basic knowledge will focus on the education and engagement of the applicant, essential foundations for a trauma-informed approach.

<sup>63</sup>See the meta-analyses by D'Amato et Brownlee, 2022; Findley & Praetorius, 2023.

<sup>64</sup>Vanderwill et al., 2021.

## **Key themes and content**

### **YOUTH PROTECTION INTERVENTION**

- The main stages of the youth protection intervention process (receipt of reports, assessment, referral, application of measures)
- Reasons for youth protection intervention
- Reasons for placement

### **PERMANENCY PLANNING AND FAMILY OF ORIGIN**

- Outline of the concept of permanency planning for the child
- The relationship with the family of origin during placement
- The purpose of contacts between the children and their family of origin

### **THE ROLE OF THE FOSTER PARENT**

- Types of foster families (regular, kinship, mixed-bank)
- The different "fostering projects" and the motivations of foster parents
- The rewards and challenges of being a foster parent
- The foster parent's practical experience at every stage of the placement

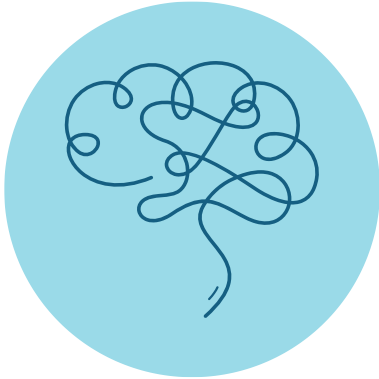
### **THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN CARE**

- The life trajectory of foster children (e.g., maltreatment, neglected needs, relational breakdowns)
- The potential impact of this trajectory on the development and functioning of foster children (e.g., developmental delays, emotional and behavioural regulation difficulties, insecure attachment, etc.)
- Foster care as an opportunity to resume a positive developmental trajectory
- Introduction to the notions of complex trauma and attachment

### **THE CONTRACTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LABOUR RELATIONS**

- The main principles of the intermediate resources (IRs) and family-type resources (FTRs) framework
- The contractual relationship with and services expected (classification tool) from the foster parent
- The stakeholders involved in the placement and their main roles
- The foster parent's role on the clinical team

# MAINTAINING A COMMITTED ATTITUDE



This competency refers to the foster parents' emotional commitment to their relationship with the child. It also relates to their motivation to persevere in their role and to adapt when faced with challenges. It is a transversal skill, meaning that this attitude permeates every other aspect of the competency framework.



## Clinical and scientific foundations

Reflexivity, perseverance and the ability to question oneself emerge as essential components of the foster parent's role in the scientific literature<sup>65</sup> and in training programs implemented elsewhere in the world. These qualities are deemed necessary because of the many challenges foster parents face in their relationship with their foster child and in their role in general. These qualities are at the heart of this competency.

A committed attitude is also part of the foundation of the ARC framework, as the foster parent will need to demonstrate perseverance, curiosity and openness to explore new ways of meeting the singular needs of each child. Persevering in the face of challenges will be accompanied by sometimes difficult emotions, which must be recognized and regulated as effectively as possible.

With regard to the ARC framework, since it is adults and systems that must take action, the foster parent's committed attitude must be echoed in the commitment of all the other stakeholders surrounding the child, since fostering can only be a team effort.

<sup>65</sup> Benesh & Cui, 2017; Shklarski, 2019.

## **WHEN do we want to observe this competency?**

- Continuously
- Faced with the challenges of supporting the child
- Faced with the challenges of foster parenting more broadly

## **HOW do we want this competency to be used?**

As their training progresses, foster parents show increasing mastery of this competency:

- by being proactive regarding training
- with introspection and reflexivity
- by being creative and persevering in the face of difficulties

## ***Key themes and content***

### **THE FOSTERING PROJECT**

- The difference between an idealized and a "realistic" vision of foster care
- A reality check on the motivations for fostering

### **SELF-KNOWLEDGE**

- The importance of becoming increasingly aware of one's own strengths and challenges with regard to children's difficulties or needs
- The importance of knowing and expressing one's limits in relation to the fostering capacity of one's environment (e.g., pairing; being able to evaluate one's capacity, which sometimes implies saying "no" to maintain the quality of foster care based on family dynamics)

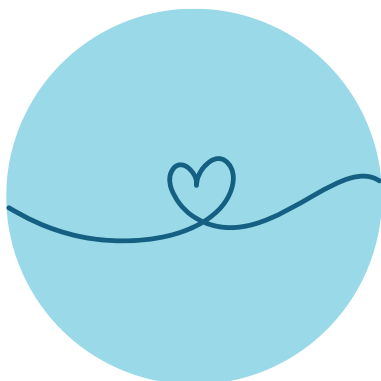
### **THE QUALITIES NEEDED TO BE A FOSTER PARENT**

- Perseverance and adaptability
- Humility and the ability to question oneself
- Creativity, interest in trying different things
- Openness to differences: children arrive with their own experiences, values, references, routines, and so on

### **CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT**

- Formal (e.g., training sessions) and informal (e.g., social follow-up) learning opportunities
- Reflexivity or the importance of adjusting and stepping back from a complex role

## PROVIDING CHILDREN WITH A SECURE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT



With this competence, the foster parent provides the child with a secure family environment through physical and emotional anchoring. The physical anchor refers to the foster family's house, which provides a home enabling the child to get settled. Emotional anchoring refers to relationships: those with the foster parents, who provide the opportunity for new restorative experiences, and those with the other members of the foster family, who contribute to developing a sense of belonging. <sup>66</sup>



### Clinical and scientific foundations

As this competency framework is based on trauma-informed approaches, we have chosen to emphasize the conditions that promote the child's emotional security. In the ARC framework, the acquisition of this competency refers first and foremost to attachment-related principles, such as managing the emotions of caregivers, empathic adjustment or attunement, and effective response. Acquiring this skill will help foster parents to provide children with a relational space where they can calm themselves and then explore different ways of interacting with others compared to what they have experienced with their family of origin.

The foundations of the framework, engagement, education and routines and rhythms will also be given priority.

According to the principles favoured by the ARC framework, these targets must be met by the adults and systems surrounding the foster child. Caution: As this competency framework is aimed at foster parents, it may give the impression that they alone bear the great responsibility of providing a secure environment for the child. Trauma-informed approaches recognize the importance of assisting caregivers and forming a caring network around a child whose trajectory has been marked by trauma. This is a shared responsibility, first and foremost with youth protection staff, who must support foster parents in this mission.

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<sup>66</sup>On physical and emotional anchoring, see the work of Côté, 2020



## **WHEN do we want to observe this competency?**

- In the daily support of the child
- When challenges arise in the relationship with the child
- At key moments in the child's life: arrival/departure, changes in the foster environment, review, contact with the family of origin, etc.
- In family dynamics involving several foster children and/or foster parents

## **HOW do we want this competency to be used?**

As their training progresses, foster parents show increasing mastery of this competency:

- by providing a stable, predictable, secure and consistent environment for the child
- by responding effectively to the child's needs
- by recognizing and valuing the role of the family of origin in the child's life, in accordance to the child's needs and life plan
- by using effective soothing techniques catered to the child in moments of emotional and behavioural dysregulation
- by regulating one's own emotions in order to be available for the child

## ***Key themes and content***

### **TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES**

- The impact of foster children's life course on their development
- The foster parent as a base of security that allows the child to explore AND find peace of mind (notions of attachment)
- Difficult behaviour such as the expression of a need
- The effect of trauma on the brain and stress reactions
- The challenge of fostering children with complex trauma profiles and the importance of self-care

### **FAMILY FUNCTIONING**

- Routines, rhythms and rituals that promote predictability
- Rules and caring supervision
- The untouchables (e.g., do not deprive children of what helps them self-regulate)
- The importance of adapting family functioning for each stage of the placement (e.g., the child's arrival)

## CHILDREN AND THEIR ORIGINS

- The role of the family of origin
- The importance of supporting children in their relationship with their family of origin (according to their needs and life plans)
- Contacts/visits (supervised or unsupervised)
- The issues and challenges of cross-cultural placements
- Cultural security

## THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN FOSTER CARE

- Mental health issues and diagnoses among foster children (e.g., Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional disorder, anxiety, suicidal ideation)
- The links between mental health and complex trauma
- Intellectual Disability – Autism Spectrum Disorder (ID-ASD) issues and diagnoses

## THE RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION OF FOSTER CHILDREN

- Understanding the child's experience and perspective
- The importance of giving children a voice and listening to them
- Favourable conditions for children's participation in decisions that concern them
- Fair treatment for all children
- The rights of foster children

## MAINTAINING PERSONAL AND FAMILY BALANCE



With this competency, the foster parent strikes a balance between meeting the child's needs, his or her own needs, and those of other people in the family system (other children, partner). The foster parent is able to implement effective self-care strategies and mobilize a variety of resources to receive support when needed.



### Clinical and scientific foundations

When it comes to foster parent training, the scientific literature and programs consulted emphasize the importance of addressing themes such as self-care and the role of the support network.<sup>67</sup> A number of studies also highlight the impact of placement on other family members (e.g., children of foster parents), the couple and the network at the moment the foster child arrives, is placed and leaves.<sup>68</sup> These principles are consistent with the proposals emphasized by trauma-informed approaches. For example, the ARC framework stresses the importance of caregiver affect management.

Since these targets and strategies are supported by adults and systems, beyond the foster parents, the stakeholders who gravitate around the foster family must also commit to putting in place conditions that are conducive to maintaining this balance.

<sup>67</sup> Benesh & Cui, 2017; Miller et al., 2019; Vanderwill et al., 2021.

<sup>68</sup> Findley & Praetorius, 2023.

## WHEN do we want to observe this competency?

At all times, but especially:

- upon the arrival and departure of the foster child, and when major changes occur
- when the foster parent feels overwhelmed or exhausted due to the difficulties of caring
- for the child
- when tensions or conflicts arise in the family
- when the usual strategies do not work

## HOW do we want this competency to be used?

As their training progresses, foster parents show increasing mastery of this competency:

- by promoting a balance between meeting the needs of the foster child and those of other members in the family system
- by identifying difficult emotions (e.g., anger, misunderstanding, worry, etc.) and spotting signs of fatigue or exhaustion
- by using effective self-care strategies
- by asking for help when needed
- by developing a support network where they can thrive and find help when needed

## Key themes and content

### THE IMPORTANCE OF ANTICIPATING CHALLENGES

- The challenges of foster care
- The importance of anticipating difficult situations
- The child's "baggage" (the psychological burden carried due to a life marked by adversity)

### PERSONAL BALANCE AND SELF-CARE

- Self-care strategies
- Self-compassion : normalizing imbalance, accepting that everything will not always be perfect
- Knowing yourself and recognizing the warning signs of exhaustion
- Stress reactions: understanding them, observing them at home, developing effective emotional regulation strategies
- Resilience: the importance of knowing the resources you can draw on and being able to mobilize them



## **FAMILY AND SOCIAL BALANCE**

- The potential impact of a placement on a couple
- The potential impact of a placement on the other children (children of the foster parent, other foster children)
- The importance of making all people around us aware beforehand of the realities of fostering

## **FORMAL AND INFORMAL SUPPORT**

- Knowing the resources available through youth protection services (knowing the role of the people who can help)
- Knowing the resources available through the representative association (knowing the role of the people who can help and for what needs)
- The importance of the support network (informal support)

## **GRIEF AND LOSS**

- Loss and the different forms of grief related to a placement
- Reasons for ending a placement
- The impact of departure on the entire family system
- Moments of imbalance linked to grief: anticipating them, planning for them, naming them

## COLLABORATING WITH THE PEOPLE SURROUNDING THE CHILD



This competence enables the foster parent to cooperate with all those involved in the foster child's situation, whether clinical staff associated with youth protection, other collaborators or the family of origin.



### Clinical and scientific foundations

In the scientific literature, the relationship with caregivers and youth protection services has a major influence on the quality of the foster parent's experience<sup>69</sup> and on the possibility of providing a quality response to the needs of the foster child.<sup>70</sup> The authors also point out that challenges can arise in the collaborative space created between the foster parents and family of origin, making this an unavoidable topic in training programs.

In trauma-informed approaches, this skill mainly refers to the fact that the foster parent must engage with the other stakeholders surrounding the foster child, since no one can meet the child's needs alone. It means working together to establish genuine, respectful communication, where everyone can assert themselves and be heard. It goes without saying that this cooperation is greatly facilitated if it is built on the shared vision of foster care discussed at the beginning of this document.

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<sup>69</sup> Findley & Praetorius, 2023.

<sup>70</sup> Special Commission on the Rights of the Child and Youth Protection (CSDEPJ), 2021; Nesmith et al., 2020.

<sup>71</sup> Chateauneuf et al., 2018.

### **WHEN do we want to observe this competency?**

- In interactions with youth protection staff
- In interactions with other stakeholders (e.g. schools, special services, etc.)
- In interactions with the family of origin

### **HOW do we want this competency to be used?**

As their training progresses, foster parents show increasing mastery of this competency:

- by acting according to the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the child's situation
- by communicating authentically, transparently and respectfully
- by expressing observations and views in a way that encourages a positive response to the child's needs

## ***Key themes and content***

### **THE CLINICAL AND LEGAL PROCESS IN YOUTH PROTECTION**

- Stages in the clinical process (assessment, referral, application of measures, review)
- Permanency planning.
- The court (reasons for using it, how it works, the role the foster parent can play)

### **THE CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT**

- The intermediate resources (IR) and family-type resources (FTR) framework
- Collective and specific agreements
- Determination and classification tools (common services, specific services)
- The roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders involved
- Recourse in the event of a dispute
- A relationship of equals (no subordinates) based on the complementary nature of each person's work
- The importance of openness, authenticity and transparency in communication on both sides



## CONFIDENTIALITY

- Confidentiality rules.
- Information management: knowing what to communicate, to whom and how
- Managing the foster child's file

## RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PARENT OF ORIGIN

- The role and responsibilities of the caregivers regarding the parents of origin
- Conflicting loyalties
- The importance of respect and cooperation between the adults in the child's life

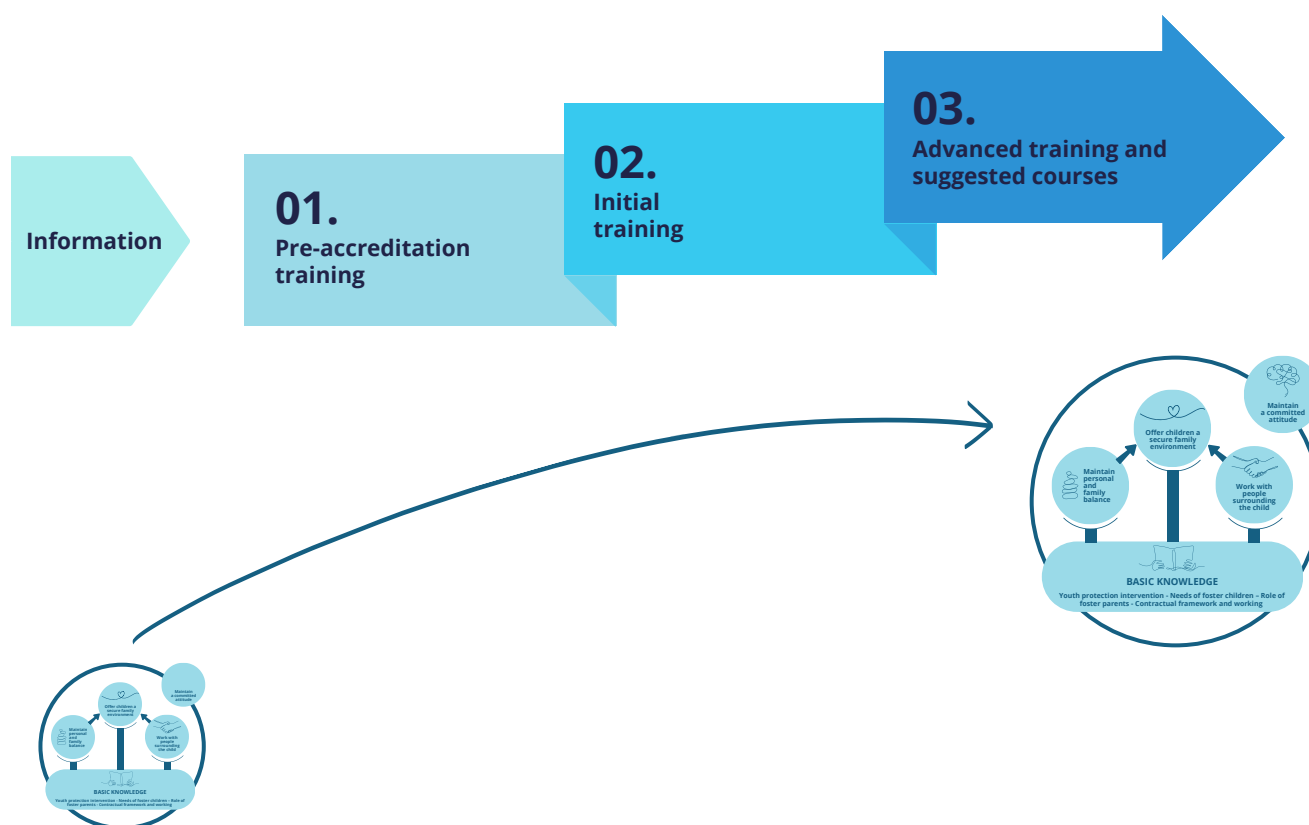


## SECTION 3.

# THE TRAINING PATHWAY

The competency framework is designed to ensure consistency throughout the training pathway for foster parents. It details the competencies to be attained and serves as a reference point for identifying the content covered and the training methods used at each stage of the training pathway. Indeed, one of the key principles of a quality training program for foster parents is to structure the training as an evolutionary pathway. The figure below shows the proposed training pathway for foster parents in Quebec.

### *General training pathway for foster parents in Quebec*



As illustrated in the figure on the previous page, foster parent training can comprise three main stages, preceded by an information stage aimed at the general population. The implementation of the pathway may vary from region to region to take into account any local particularities.

## **01.**

### **Pre-accreditation training**

The aim of this stage is to help prospective foster parents understand the nature of the project they are about to embark on and make an informed choice regarding this commitment. It also enables them to be well prepared for their first placement experiences and acquire the foundations needed to start developing the four competencies at the core of the competency framework. At this stage, it is important to find the right balance between providing necessary information and over-encumbering the assessment process.

## **02.**

### **Initial training**

The aim of this stage is to provide foster parents, as soon as accreditation has been obtained, with the training they need to master the four competencies set out in the framework as quickly as possible.

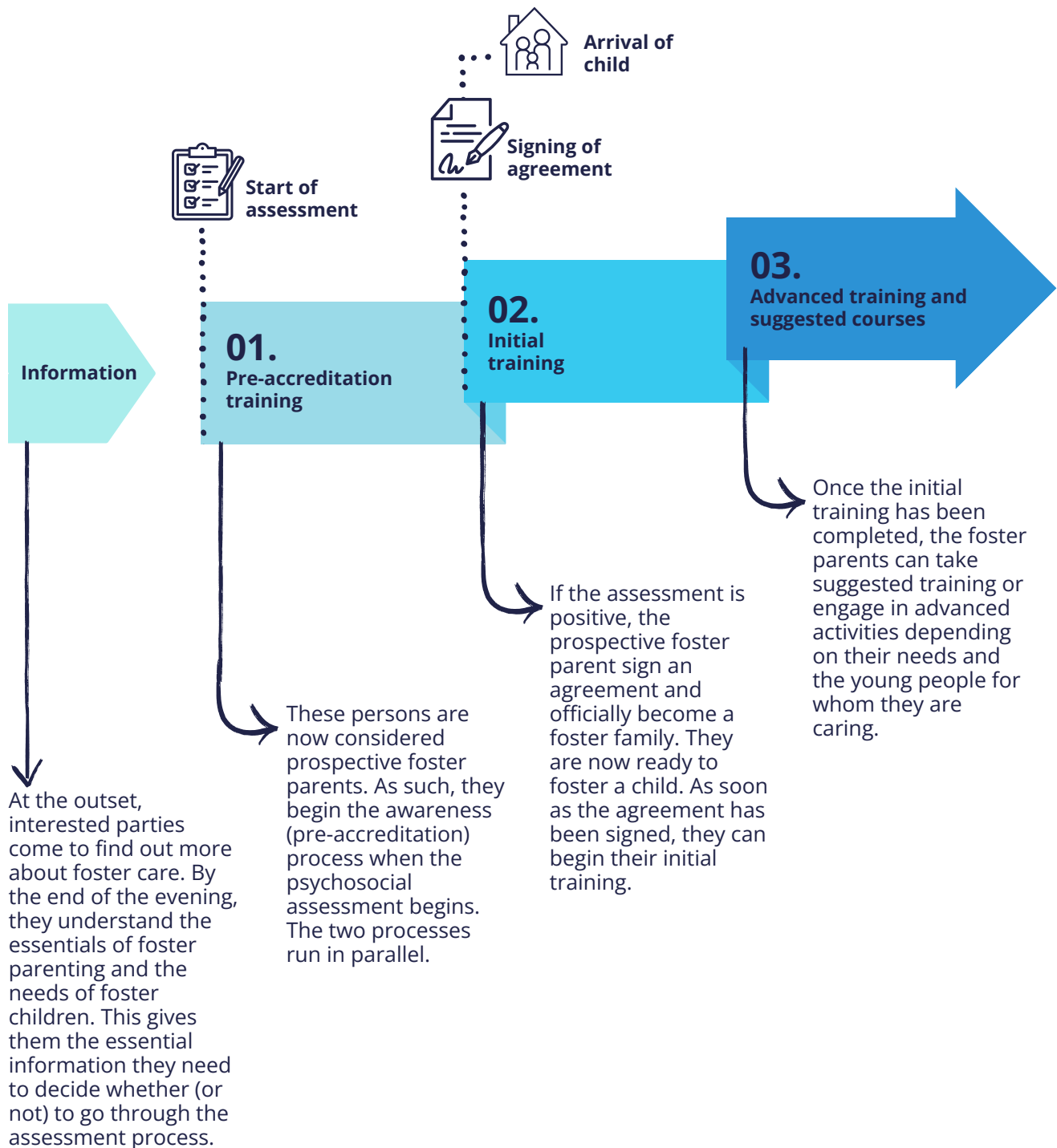
## **03.**

### **Advanced training and suggested courses**

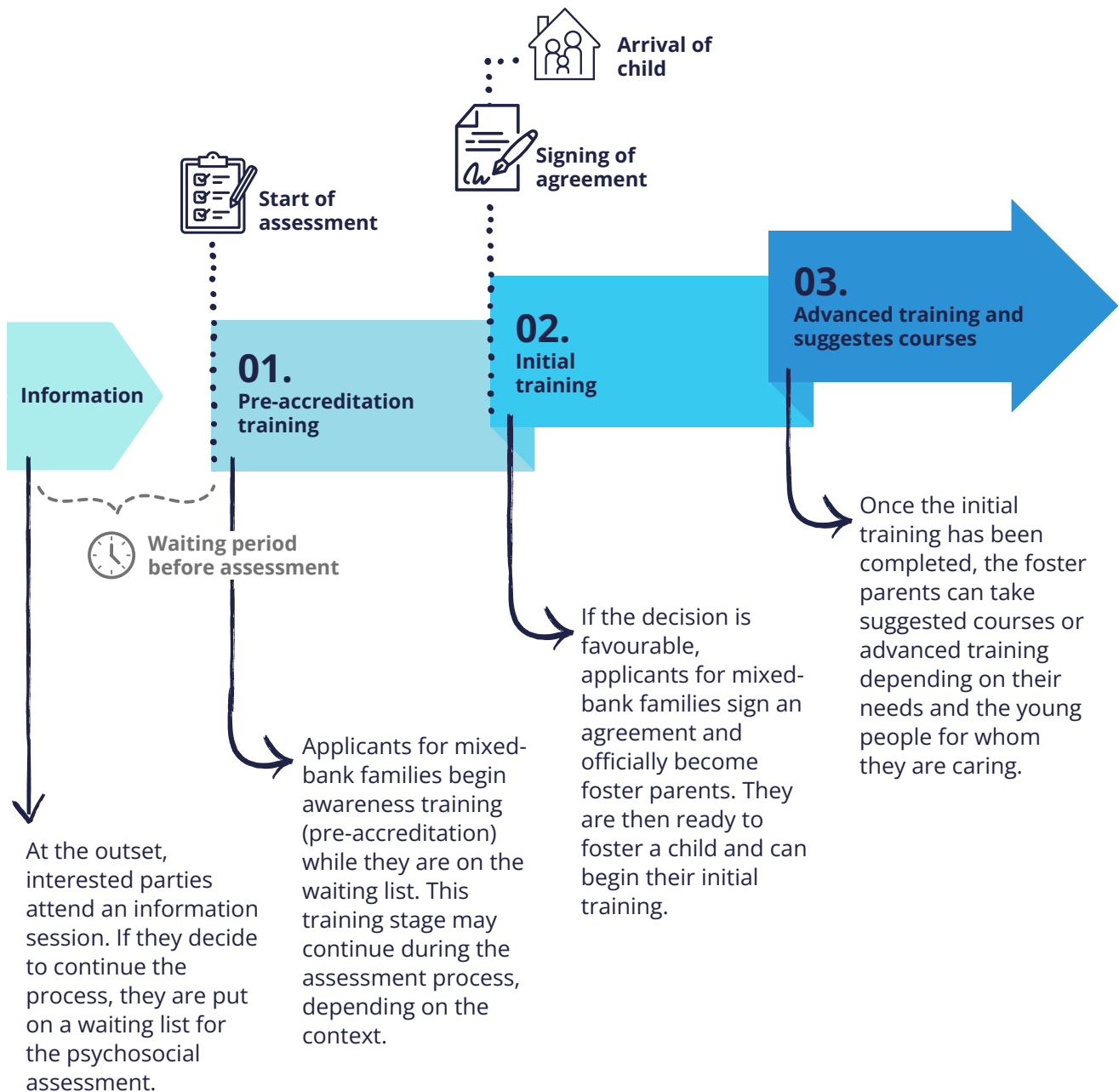
Once the initial training has been completed, foster parents may take advanced training to improve their skills or meet certain specific needs (e.g., a particular need of the child or a particular challenge for the foster parent). The two stages of training (initial and advanced) will generally take place one after the other. However, in some cases, these two stages may be juxtaposed (e.g., to meet specific needs of the foster family). Therefore, the training continuum presented here requires flexible interpretation in order to respond more effectively to the needs of foster parents.

Different types of foster families (regular, kinship, mixed-bank) will not go through these three stages in the same manner: the order and pace may vary. The following pages present the sequence of these stages for each type of foster family.

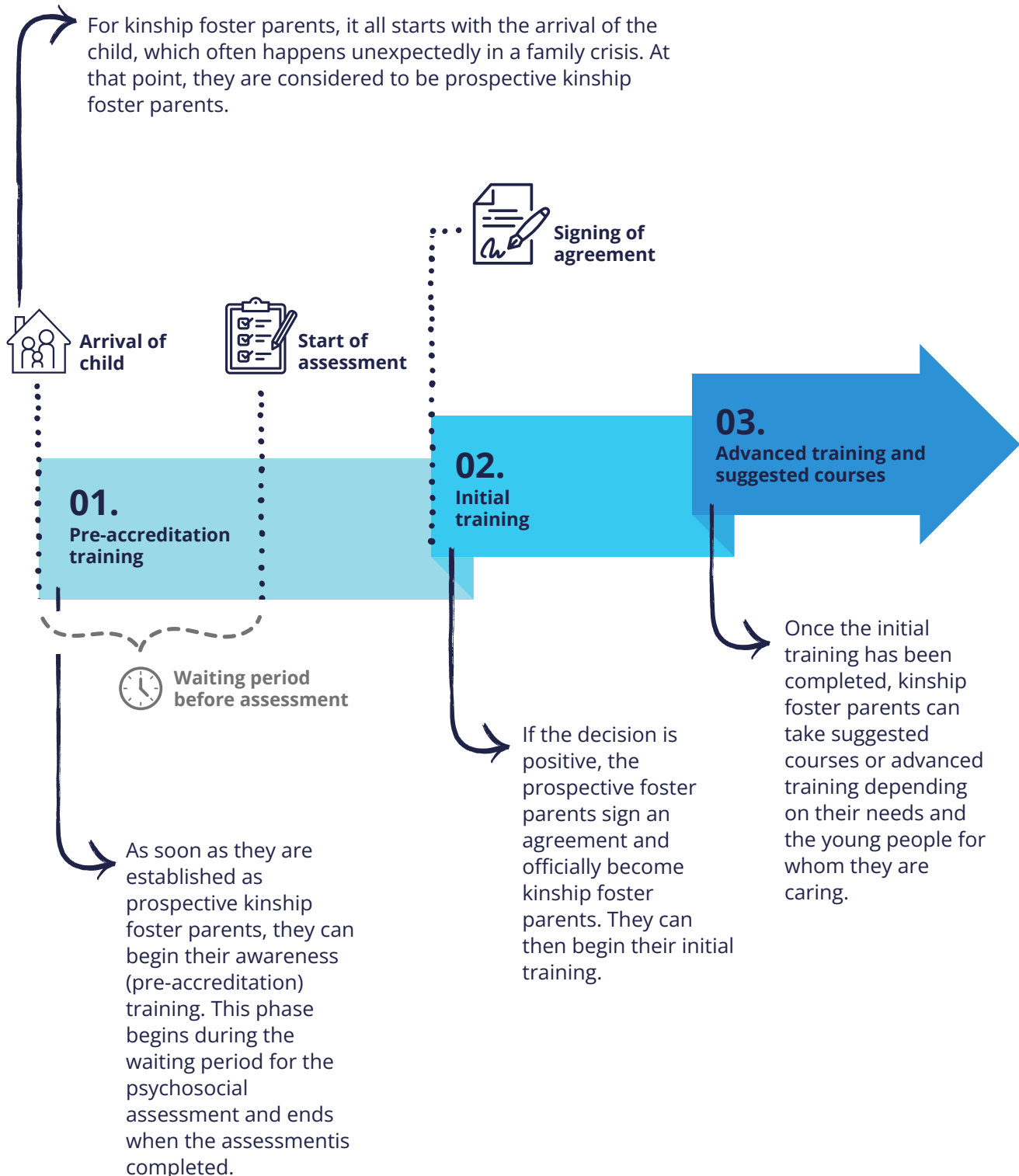
# TRAINING PATHWAY FOR REGULAR FOSTER PARENTS



# TRAINING PATHWAY FOR MIXED-BANK FOSTER PARENTS



# TRAINING PATHWAY FOR KINSHIP FOSTER PARENTS





# CONCLUSION

These **Guidelines for quality foster parent training** are the result of 18 months of hard work by the members of the Working Group on Training for Foster Parents in Youth Protection.

This first phase of work highlighted the need for a concerted approach on the issue of training in order to develop a common vision. Meetings with foster parents, youth workers, managers, students and researchers enabled us to hold rich discussions and reach a consensus on the general guidelines that should govern training. This work filled a gap, since no document in Quebec proposed benchmarks to guide the important task of developing training plans for foster parents.

Members of the Working Group on Training for Foster Parents in Youth Protection and the other stakeholders involved unanimously agreed that we need to build on the good work already done. Therefore, a second phase is planned to continue the work in order to guide local training committees, associations and institutions with greater precision:

- What content should be taught and at what stage of the training pathway?
- Does content need to be adjusted for different types of foster families?

These issues will be examined in the next phase of the working group's work.





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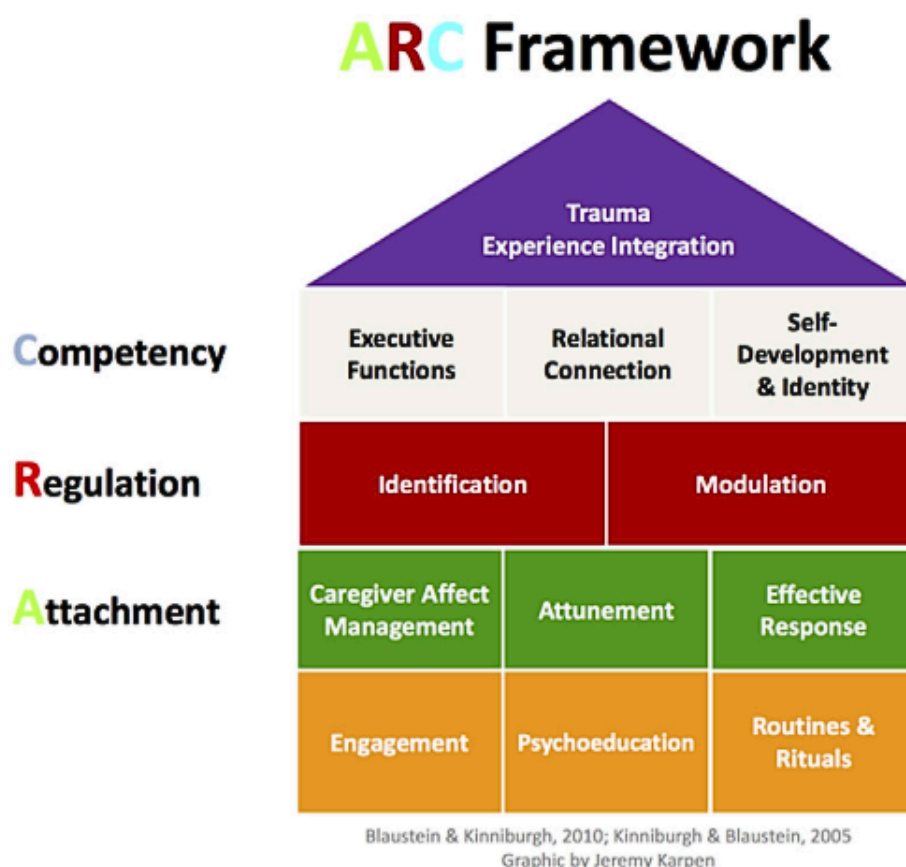
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# APPENDIX 1.

## ARC FRAMEWORK

This appendix presents the foundations and intervention targets of the ARC framework adapted for foster care and the role of foster parent.<sup>72</sup>



<sup>72</sup>The ARC framework's target definitions and examples for foster parents were inspired by the following sources:

- Collin-Vézina et al. (2018). A chapter on ARC framework-inspired support groups for foster parents
- Brunet et al. (2022). Facilitator's manual for foster parent support groups inspired by the ARC framework
- Blais, M.F., Pentecôte, C., Joly, M-P and Girard, C. (2022). Raising awareness of complex trauma [online]. Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté.

# THE FOUNDATIONS

In this section, we describe the foundation on which the levels of the ARC framework can be built. The descriptions and examples have been adapted for foster care and the role of foster parent.

Target	Description	Examples for foster parents <sup>73</sup>
<b>Engagement</b>	<b>Commit to the relationship.</b>  Supporting a child with a complex trauma profile presents major challenges. It is important that foster parents and other stakeholders (caregivers, managers) demonstrate a sustained and genuine commitment during the placement. Who holds this child in their heart? Who believes in him or her? Who are the people who have earned his or her trust?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do not let difficulties discourage you.</li><li>• Be curious in order to understand the child's reactions.</li><li>• Be invested in the collaborative relationship with the players involved in the child's life.</li></ul>
<b>Education</b>	<b>Demonstrate curiosity and seek to develop knowledge and skills.</b>  Those involved (foster parents, caregivers, managers, etc.) need to have access to the knowledge they require to support the clinical process that takes place in foster care and make it as "trauma-informed" as possible. What are the objectives? How can they be achieved? What knowledge can help us?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the context of youth protection and placement.</li><li>• Understand the desired objectives for the child.</li><li>• Understand the impact of trauma on children's functioning, etc.</li></ul>

<sup>73</sup> **Please note:** The examples provided in the right-hand column must be implemented in collaboration with the players involved in the child's life, especially the youth protection worker who monitors the child. The choice of methods deployed must be a shared responsibility between the foster parents and the other players involved.

Target	Description	Examples for foster parents
<b>Routines and rhythms</b>	<p><b>Establish consistent, predictable routines.</b></p> <p>Complex trauma is often associated with unpredictability, chaos and loss of control. As a result, foster parents need to pay attention to routines so that the child can devote his or her energy toward developmental tasks instead of being focused on "survival."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapt routines to the child's abilities.</li> <li>• Ensure that foster parents are consistent in their routines.</li> <li>• Identify the moments of the day that need to be addressed to make the child feel safe.</li> <li>• Create foster family rituals: What makes this family unique? What are its anchors?</li> <li>• Identify the "untouchables," routine moments that should never be made conditional on the child's good behaviour.</li> </ul>



# ATTACHMENT

Target	Description	Examples for foster parents
<b>Caregiver affect management</b>	<p><b>Take care of yourself to be available for your child.</b></p> <p>It is impossible for foster parents to remain neutral in the face of their child's difficult behaviour: they have to be constantly aware of their own reactions if they are to reassure the youngster.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normalize and validate the emotions experienced by foster parents in response to the child's behaviour (discouragement, irritation, fear...).</li> <li>• Identify the most sensitive situations ("red buttons") that plunge them into more difficult emotional states.</li> <li>• Know and mobilize strategies for taking care of yourself.</li> </ul>
<b>Attunement</b>	<p><b>Decipher the needs behind behaviour.</b></p> <p>When the child is going through difficult times, foster parents must do their best to stay in tune with the child. They must avoid not only becoming entangled, invaded and caught up in the emotional burden, but also avoid being too distant. They must aim for a healthy proximity, remain available and sensitive, and follow the child's rhythm.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand that "triggers" can interfere with a child's functioning (e.g., being left alone in his room can evoke abandonment, being reprimanded can remind them of abusive situations).</li> <li>• Develop sensitivity and empathy toward a child who adopts challenging behaviour (e.g., understand the impact of trauma on the stress response system to be more sensitive to hypervigilance - the "short fuse" - of a child).</li> <li>• Improve the ability to decode the emotions behind behaviour (e.g., detect shame or guilt masked as anger).</li> </ul>
<b>Effective response</b>	<p><b>Use appropriate, proactive and thoughtful behaviour management strategies.</b></p> <p>For children with a complex trauma profile, most difficult behaviour is a facade hiding unmet needs. Foster parents should do their best to meet these underlying needs so that such behaviour subsides.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify behaviour to be improved (i.e., behaviour that needs to be supported and encouraged).</li> <li>• Identify behaviour to be extinguished (i.e., behaviour for which the underlying need must be met and which requires sustained efforts of emotional regulation.)</li> <li>• Adjust expectations in line with the young person's developmental age, which does not always correspond to his or her chronological age.</li> </ul>



# REGULATION

Target	Description	Examples for foster parents
<b>Identification</b>	<p><b>Help children become aware of their internal states (emotional, physiological) and those of others.</b></p> <p>Children with a complex trauma profile may not have had the support they needed to identify their emotional and physiological states and to understand why these states develop. Therefore, foster parents will need to provide support to help them put into words the emotions they may be feeling and establish a link between events, physiological states and emotions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide children with a variety of activities and opportunities to help them recognize and identify their emotions (e.g., Snakes and Ladders, pictograms, stories, dinnertime discussion where everyone identifies their main emotion of the day).</li> <li>• Adjust expectations in line with the child's developmental age (e.g., for a 13-year-old with the social and emotional development of a 3-4-year-old, what should we expect in terms of emotional identification?).</li> </ul>
<b>Modulation</b>	<p><b>Support children in experimenting with safe and effective strategies to modulate and regulate their emotions and energy levels.</b></p> <p>Children who have experienced trauma need the support of the adults in their lives to develop safe and effective strategies for regulating their emotional and physiological states. Emotional regulation is learned in relationships with others, through experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce activities that will help young people modulate their emotional states in order to move more and more easily from a state of activation to a state of calm and vice versa (e.g., yoga, martial arts, trampoline, drawing, music, breathing).</li> <li>• Develop a personalized plan to help young people regain a state of calm after a crisis or difficult moment (e.g., relaxation, soft music, drawing, manipulating a soft object).</li> </ul>

# COMPETENCY

Target	Description	Examples for foster parents
<b>Executive functions</b>	<p><b>Use everyday opportunities to promote the development of executive functions.</b></p> <p>Children who have experienced trauma may have developed a reactivity to stress that makes it more difficult to access the brain's reflexive ones. We need to help them develop the ability to inhibit behaviour and words in order to speak and act at the right moment, plan, engage in problem-solving, anticipate the consequences of their actions, and so on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide recreational activities that help children develop their planning, organization and thinking skills (e.g., learning to play a musical instrument, playing board games).</li> <li>• Help children practice problem-solving skills through everyday experiences (e.g., help them generate solutions, evaluate pros and cons).</li> </ul>
<b>Self-development and identity</b>	<p><b>Help children build a unified, unique and positive self-image.</b></p> <p>Children's identities may have been negatively altered by traumatic experiences. They need opportunities to explore in order to discover their tastes, interests and values and to learn how to actualize their strengths and self-knowledge in relationships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk with children about what they are proud of and their interests (e.g., a success chart, an activity to talk about "what I want to do later").</li> <li>• Pay attention to labels that are used and that children may integrate in a negative way.</li> <li>• Set up activities to develop a sense of belonging to the foster family (e.g., photo album) and, depending on the children's needs, pathway and permanency plan, to their family of origin.</li> </ul>
<b>Relational connections</b>	<p><b>Develop better communication skills to build and maintain healthy relationships.</b></p> <p>Children who have experienced trauma may sometimes have been restricted in their opportunities to communicate or may have had more difficult relational experiences. Therefore, they need to experiment and/or learn how to communicate with support from caring adults.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Propose social activities and family outings (extended family, friends) according to the child's rhythm.</li> <li>• Use everyday moments to talk with children about their day, a pretext for talking about their relationships (e.g., when they get home from school).</li> <li>• Play board games that require discussion and/or negotiation.</li> <li>• Help children face the challenges they encounter in their relationships.</li> </ul>

# TRAUMA EXPERIENCE INTEGRATION

Target	Description	Examples for foster parents
<b>Trauma experience integration</b>	<p><b>Explore and integrate difficult memories and establish links between the past and the present to successfully engage in a resilience process.</b></p> <p>Trauma integration is a lifelong process, not an end in itself.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Never force children to talk about their trauma.</li><li>• If they do, welcome it warmly and without judgment.</li><li>• Identify the best person to support them through this delicate process.</li></ul>



## APPENDIX 2.

# REVIEW OF BEST TRAINING PRACTICES - METHODOLOGY

A review of best practices in foster parent training took place between December 2023 and February 2024. The state of knowledge presented does not constitute a systematic literature review, although the methodology adopted was rigorously developed. The literature research strategy consisted of an investigation of the various databases generally used in the social sciences using keywords in English and French. An additional manual search was then carried out using the bibliographic references of the texts already listed. The database exploration covered the years 2016 to 2023.

Of the 185 texts found, **18 were selected and analyzed for their actual relevance to the project.** These included four systematic reviews, one non-systematic literature review and one meta-analysis. The majority of articles (six of them) were qualitative in nature, four were quantitative studies and two were mixed studies. The literature came mainly from Western countries, including Canada, the United States, Norway, the United Kingdom and Australia. The following two tables show the search engines and keywords used.

### Search engines consulted :

Google Scholar	ProQuest	EBSCO	Cairn.info	Oxford Academic
Sofia	Érudit	PsycINFO	RefSeek	Semantic Scholar

### Keywords used :

<b>Français</b>	Famille d'accueil Parent d'accueil	Bonnes pratiques de formation Formation Pratique de formation Programme d'apprentissage
<b>Anglais</b>	Foster family Foster parent Infant foster care	Training Training practice Learning program

Here are the **18 articles listed**. It should be noted that each of the complete references is listed in the References section of this document.

Type de recherche	Nombre	Auteurs
Systematic review	4	Bergström et al., 2020; Cooley et al., 2019; D'Amato & Brownlee, 2022; Kaasbøll et al., 2019.
Unsystematic review	1	Miller, Green & Lambros, 2019.
Meta-analysis	1	Solomon et al., 2016.
Quantitative method	4	Adkins et al., 2018; Fowler et al., 2023; Strickley, Trunzo & Kaelin, 2018; Nash et Flynn, 2016.
Mixed method	2	Gibbs et al., 2022; Hébert & Kulkin, 2017.
Qualitative method	6	Benesh & Cui, 2016; Israel et al., 2023; Mallette et al., 2020; Marrero, 2020; McDermid et al., 2021; Shklarski et al., 2019.

# APPENDIX 3.

## IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT TRAINING THEMES AND CONTENT - METHODOLOGY

As part of the work leading up to the development of a competency framework for Quebec foster parents, we carried out a review of the various foster care training programs in use around the world. The aim was to list the various themes and content presented in these training courses and then compare them with those put forward by the members of the working group. To achieve this, a three-stage approach was adopted.

### Stage 1: Review of themes, objectives and content of existing training programs

For this stage, we conducted a review of the themes, objectives and content of selected training programs in North America and Europe. It should be remembered that a large number of programs exist since a number of youth protection agencies and services have developed their own local training programs.<sup>74</sup> In addition, a number of programs have not been evaluated or published scientifically<sup>75</sup> or are only briefly presented online. For these reasons, the choice was made to focus on North American and European programs for which information about themes, objectives and content was accessible and complete. Particular attention was paid to programs that have been evaluated.

The table on the next two pages identifies the programs that were reviewed and served as the basis for the working group's analysis. It is based on information gathered between September 1, 2023, and December 1, 2023.

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<sup>74</sup> Kasbool et al., 2019; Strickley et al., 2018.

<sup>75</sup> Kasbool et al., 2019.

Program name / Location	Pathway stage	Methods (based on available information)	Program information/Scientific studies and evaluations (see "References" section for full details)
<b>PRIDE</b> <i>(Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education)</i>  <b>Locations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canada: all provinces except Manitoba (in-house program) and Quebec (no program)</li> <li>United States: 7 states</li> <li>Europe: 11 countries</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pre-accreditation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initial training <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advanced training	<b><u>PRIDE Pre-Service:</u></b> Duration: 27 to 35 hours, depending on the province Method: 9 or 10 online or in-person sessions (variable according to location)  <b><u>PRIDE In-Service:</u></b> Format: variable (7 to 12 modules) Duration: 50 hours or more to be done continuously  * Some of these countries/provinces only use PRIDE Pre-Service.	<b><u>Program information :</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alberta : <a href="#">Children's Services Provincial Caregiver Training</a></li> <li>Colombie-Britannique : <a href="#">PRIDE Pre-Service program</a> et le <a href="#">PRIDE In-Service Training</a></li> <li>États-Unis : <a href="#">PRIDE Model of Practice Overview</a></li> <li>Netherlands</li> </ul> <b><u>Scientific studies and evaluations :</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Christenson &amp; McMurthy, 2009.</li> <li>Nash, 2015.</li> <li>Nash &amp; Flynn, 2016.</li> </ul>
<b>TIPS-MAPP</b> <i>(Trauma Informed Partnering for Safety and Permanence – Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting)</i>  <b><u>Locations :</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>United States (15 States)</li> <li>Nicaragua</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pre-accreditation <input type="checkbox"/> Initial training <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced training  <i>* A program that provides a coherent framework for the training and assessment of applicants.</i>	Duration: 30 hours Method: 10 face-to-face sessions	<b><u>Program information:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://www.childally.org/mapp">https://www.childally.org/mapp</a></li> <li><a href="https://www.fosterfocusmag.com/articles/mapp-training">https://www.fosterfocusmag.com/articles/mapp-training</a></li> </ul> <b><u>Scientific studies and evaluations :</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Combs-Omre &amp; Orme, 2014.</li> <li>Puddy &amp; Jackson, 2003.</li> </ul>
<b>NTDC</b> <i>(National Training and Development Curriculum)</i>  <b><u>Location :</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>United States</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pre-accreditation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initial training <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advanced training	Duration: 17 sessions Method: In-person	<b><u>Program information :</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://spaulding.org/professionals/academy/ntdc-national-training-and-development-curriculum-for-foster-and-adoptive-parents/">https://spaulding.org/professionals/academy/ntdc-national-training-and-development-curriculum-for-foster-and-adoptive-parents/</a> (July 07<sup>th</sup>, 2025)</li> </ul> <b><u>Scientific studies and evaluations :</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Salazar et al., 2020.</li> <li><a href="https://ntdcportal.org/about/evaluation/">https://ntdcportal.org/about/evaluation/</a></li> </ul>



Program name / Location	Pathway stage	Methods (based on available information)	Program information/Scientific studies and evaluations (see "References" section for full details)
<b>KEEP – KEEP Safe</b> <i>(Keeping families supported)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep : children from 4 to 12 years old</li> <li>Keep-Safe : Adolescence</li> </ul> <b>Locations :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>United States</li> <li>Australia</li> <li>Denmark</li> <li>United Kingdom</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-accreditation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initial training <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced training  <i>* Both support and training</i>	Duration: 16 weeks (90-minute sessions) Method: Online or face-to-face	<b>Program information :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://keepforfamilies.org/">https://keepforfamilies.org/</a></li> </ul> <b>Scientific studies and evaluations :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://keepforfamilies.org/research/">https://keepforfamilies.org/research/</a></li> <li>Chamberlain, Price, Leve, Laurent, Landsverk &amp; Reid, 2008.</li> <li>Price, Chamberlain, Landsverk, Reid, Leve &amp; Laurent, 2008.</li> <li>Price, Roesch, Walsh &amp; Landsverk, 2015.</li> </ul>
<b>DEAF</b> <i>(State diploma for family assistants)</i> <b>Location:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>France</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pre-accreditation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initial training <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced training	Duration: 60 hours for pre-accreditation and 240 hours for initial training  <i>*Mandatory for accreditation as a family assistant</i>	<b>Program information :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://askoria.eu/voy_content/uploads/2022/08/DEAF_REAC.pdf">https://askoria.eu/voy_content/uploads/2022/08/DEAF_REAC.pdf</a></li> <li>Verdu &amp; Velasquez, 2024.</li> </ul>
<b>Initial training for foster families in the canton of Vaud</b> <b>Location:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Switzerland</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Préaccréditation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initial training <input type="checkbox"/> Perfectionnement	Format: 44 training periods over 10 days Method: Face-to-face	<b>Program information :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://www.hetsl.ch/formati-on-continue/formations-certifiantes-hetsl/formation-initiale-des-familles-daccueil-du-canton-de-vaud/">https://www.hetsl.ch/formati-on-continue/formations-certifiantes-hetsl/formation-initiale-des-familles-daccueil-du-canton-de-vaud/</a></li> </ul>
<b>The Standard</b> <b>Location:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Scotland</b></li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pre-accréditation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initial training <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Perfectionnement	Not available	<b>Program information :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/1625/standard-for-foster-care.pdf">https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/1625/standard-for-foster-care.pdf</a></li> </ul>
<b>TSD Standards</b> <i>(Training, Support and Development Standards)</i> <b>Location:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>United Kingdom</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pre-accreditation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initial training <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advanced training	Maximum time to complete each stage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-accreditation: 6 months</li> <li>• Initial training: 12 months</li> <li>• Advanced training: 12 months</li> </ul>	<b>Program information :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://childhub.org/sites/default/files/library/attachments/1206_400214_Guidance_for_SSW_-_AW6_original.pdf">https://childhub.org/sites/default/files/library/attachments/1206_400214_Guidance_for_SSW_-_AW6_original.pdf</a></li> </ul>

## **Step 2: Review of themes, objectives and content deemed essential by working group members**

For this stage, the working group used its first few meetings to identify essential themes, objectives and content. To do so, group members took turns presenting the training initiatives underway in their region. Based on these presentations, discussion groups were held to identify the essential themes to be addressed in foster parent training.

## **Step 3: Pooling of results**

In this final stage, the results of stages 1 and 2 were pooled, summarized and validated by the working group. Based on this list of themes and content, several working group meetings were held to formulate a simple, clear and accessible competency framework covering all of the content identified during the process.



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