Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté
Santé Québec Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal – Universitaire



TRAINING PATHWAYS FOR FOSTER FAMILIES IN YOUTH PROTECTION

October 2026

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

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ISBN: 978-2-550-99239-4 (PDF)

Legal deposit
Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 2026
Library and Archives Canada, 2026

Suggested citation
Joly, M.-P., Pelletier, É., Poirier, M.-A., Guénette, M., Ringuette, P., Collin-Vézina, D., Louis-Jacques, S. (2026). Training Pathways for Foster Families in Youth Protection. Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté (IUJD) de Santé Québec Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal – Universitaire.

For more information on the work of the Working Group on Introductory Training for Foster Parents in Youth Protection, please visit *https://iujd.ca/fr/Formation_parents_accueil*.

This project was made possible through the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) as part of the Connection Grant program.

Thank you to the organizations that co-led the working group:
Institut universitaire Jeunes en difficulté (IUJD) of Santé Québec Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal – Universitaire
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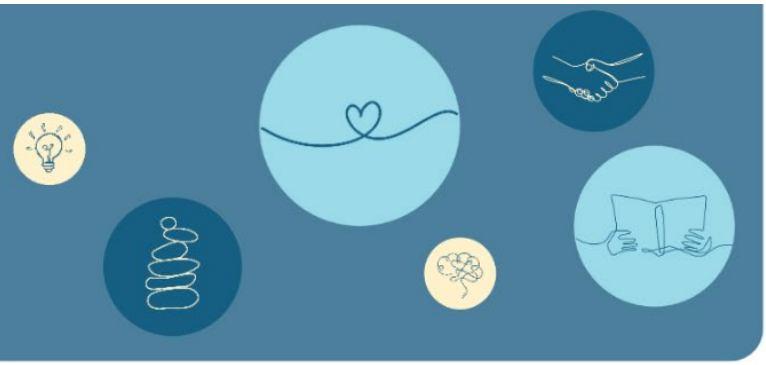
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This project is the result of a collective effort. We would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who contributed to its development at various stages. Their expertise greatly enriched the discussions surrounding our work and contributed to the quality of these training pathways.

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INTRODUCTION

Following the publication of the *Youth Protection Guidelines to Support the Training of Foster Parents* in 2024, members of the Working Group on Introductory Training for Foster Parents chose to continue collaborating in order to bring to life the vision proposed in that initial document. As such, to implement the **principles that underpin high-quality training** and the **competency framework** for foster parents, the partners renewed their commitment to translating these guidelines into tangible training pathways.

Using as a basis the collectively developed competency framework, **two training pathways were designed**: one aimed at regular and mixed-bank foster families (Section 2), and the other at kinship foster families (Section 3). Each of these pathways offers a structured program organized around three key stages: **information**, **pre-accreditation** and **initial training**. For each of these stages, the competencies to develop, learning objectives and priority content are specified. Certain andragogical guidelines (Section 1) were also specified to make sure that the pathways allow competencies to develop gradually, while drawing on the knowledge, know-how, interpersonal skills and resources needed to deal with complex situations in foster care.

As has been the case since the Working Group's creation, this approach is based on close collaboration among professionals from health and social services establishments, foster parents involved in representative associations, as well as researchers and students. This diversity of perspectives has made it possible to develop pathways that reflect the realities faced by foster parents, while drawing on practical knowledge and the most recent scientific findings.

These pathways do not constitute a training program in and of themselves. Instead, they serve as a key milestone in implementing the competency framework and guiding local training committees in developing training activities that are coherent, progressive and adapted to the realities of each type of foster family. We hope that they will help support the rollout of high-quality training programs, encouraging the development of skills among foster parents and, ultimately, the well-being of the children entrusted to their care.

Enjoy the reading!

The members of the Working Group on Introductory Training for Foster Parents in Youth Protection

METHODOLOGY

This section summarizes the method and steps taken by the Working Group to develop the training pathways.

Co-construction and complementary areas of expertise

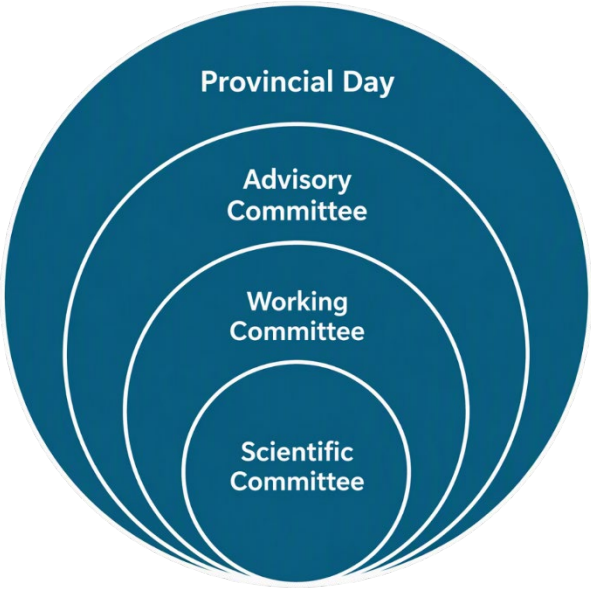
To develop these training pathways, the project drew on the approach to knowledge mobilization preferred by the Working Group, which combines experiential, practical and scientific knowledge. Co-construction can be defined as an intentional and structured process that enables multiple stakeholders to reach a shared understanding of a reality, or jointly develop a way of doing things or a solution to a problem (Foudriat, 2019). In this context, improving practices becomes a collective endeavour in which experiences, knowledge and areas of expertise intersect, mutually enrich one another, and contribute to generating responses that are more relevant and better suited to the community's needs (Godrie, 2019, *in* Jobin, Bazzarelli and Cayouette-Bourassa).

Work structure

To put this co-construction approach into practice, the structure already in place within the Working Group was brought into the process. It consists of various entities, which are illustrated in the figure below.

- Within the Group, the **Scientific Committee** is responsible for analyzing literature, conducting research and evaluating findings. The Committee oversees the scientific quality of the work and provides horizontal and inclusive leadership in producing deliverables.
- The **Working Committee** is composed of members of the Scientific Committee, as well as foster parents and representatives from organizations that wish to become more actively involved in the project. This committee is responsible for producing deliverables (e.g. reviewing documents to be presented to the Advisory Committee, consulting with the Scientific Committee on certain topics, helping facilitate certain meetings, etc.).
- The **Advisory Committee** consists of all members of the Working Group. This large committee meets four times per year. At these meetings, it provides feedback on the work carried out by the Working Committee.
- The **Provincial Professional Day** serves as an essential consultative forum for the Group. Held once a year in May, this event provides an opportunity to present the work that has been done to all stakeholders in the province, including community partners, representatives from the Ministry of Health and Social Services and Santé Québec, as well as researchers interested in the topic.

Figure 1: Structure and functioning of the Working Group on initial training for foster parents in youth protection



Stages in developing the pathways

Stage 1 – Analysis of existing training materials

At the beginning of the process, the Scientific Committee analyzed two types of documents: first, the content of evening information sessions and various initiatives offered at the beginning of the process by five member regions of the Working Group (N=18); second, the documents of three internationally recognized and evaluated training programs: the NTDC (National Training and Development Curriculum for Foster and Adoptive Parents), the PRIDE model (Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education), and the MAPP approach (Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting). The table below shows the content consulted at this stage.

Document type	Documents consulted
Scientifically evaluated training programs	- National Training and Development Curriculum (NTDC; USA) - Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education *(*PRIDE; CAN) - Trauma Informed Partnering for Safety and Permanence – Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (TIP-MAPP; USA)
Existing information and training materials (regions participating in the Working Group)	- CISSS of Abitibi-Témiscamingue. "Devenir famille d'accueil pour les 0-17 ans" [recruitment poster] - CIUSSS of the Capitale-Nationale. Applicant assessment form (family-type resource) - CIUSSS of the Capitale-Nationale. "Entrevue de sélection. Évaluation des postulants. Grille d'entrevue" [document] - CIUSSS of the Capitale-Nationale. "Comité de sélection. Mise en situation pour l'entrevue Clientèle Jeunesse FA régulière" [document] - CIUSSS of the Capitale-Nationale. "Offre de service pour devenir famille d'accueil (family-type resource)" [document] - CIUSSS of the Capitale-Nationale. "Devenir ressource de type familial – Famille d'accueil" [information session document] - CIUSSS of the Capitale-Nationale. "Suggestions de références, Familles d'accueil" [document] - CISSS of Lanaudière (June 2025). Devenir famille d'accueil. Programmes jeunesse [PowerPoint presentation] - CISSS of Montérégie. "Les enfants ont besoin de vous: Devenez famille d'accueil!" [poster] - CISSS of Montérégie. "Ce que vous devez savoir si vous souhaitez devenir famille d'accueil" [document] - CISSS of Montérégie. (July 2020). "Devenir une famille d'accueil" [brochure] - CISSS of Montérégie (May 22, 2024). Offre de service pour les ressources de type familial [PDF document] - K. Turgeon Guay and J. Rivet. (2025). Séance d'information "contrat" Contract management RI-RIRTF. DQEPP. (Estrie) - M. Brunet, Sylvain Rouleau and C. Bordeleau. (2022). *Groupe de soutien aux ressources de type familial basé sur le modèle ARC* (Centre Jeunesse de Lanaudière)

In each document, the themes and content were identified and included in a matrix based on the four competencies outlined in the framework previously developed by the Working Group (Joly et al., 2024) and the three stages of the pathway: information, pre-accreditation and initial training. Using this matrix, the Scientific Committee produced a first draft of the pathway.

Stage 2 – Approach to co-constructing the pathway

This initial draft was presented to the Working Group. Multiple working sessions made it possible to:

1) Ensure that the proposal is appropriate for the Quebec context.
2) Confirm that the content selected is comprehensive and consistent with the theoretical foundation of the framework, specifically trauma-informed approaches.
3) Adapt the pathway to the specific realities and needs of kinship foster families and mixed-bank foster families.

Alongside this, work was done to add instructions at each stage on how to present the content (methods).

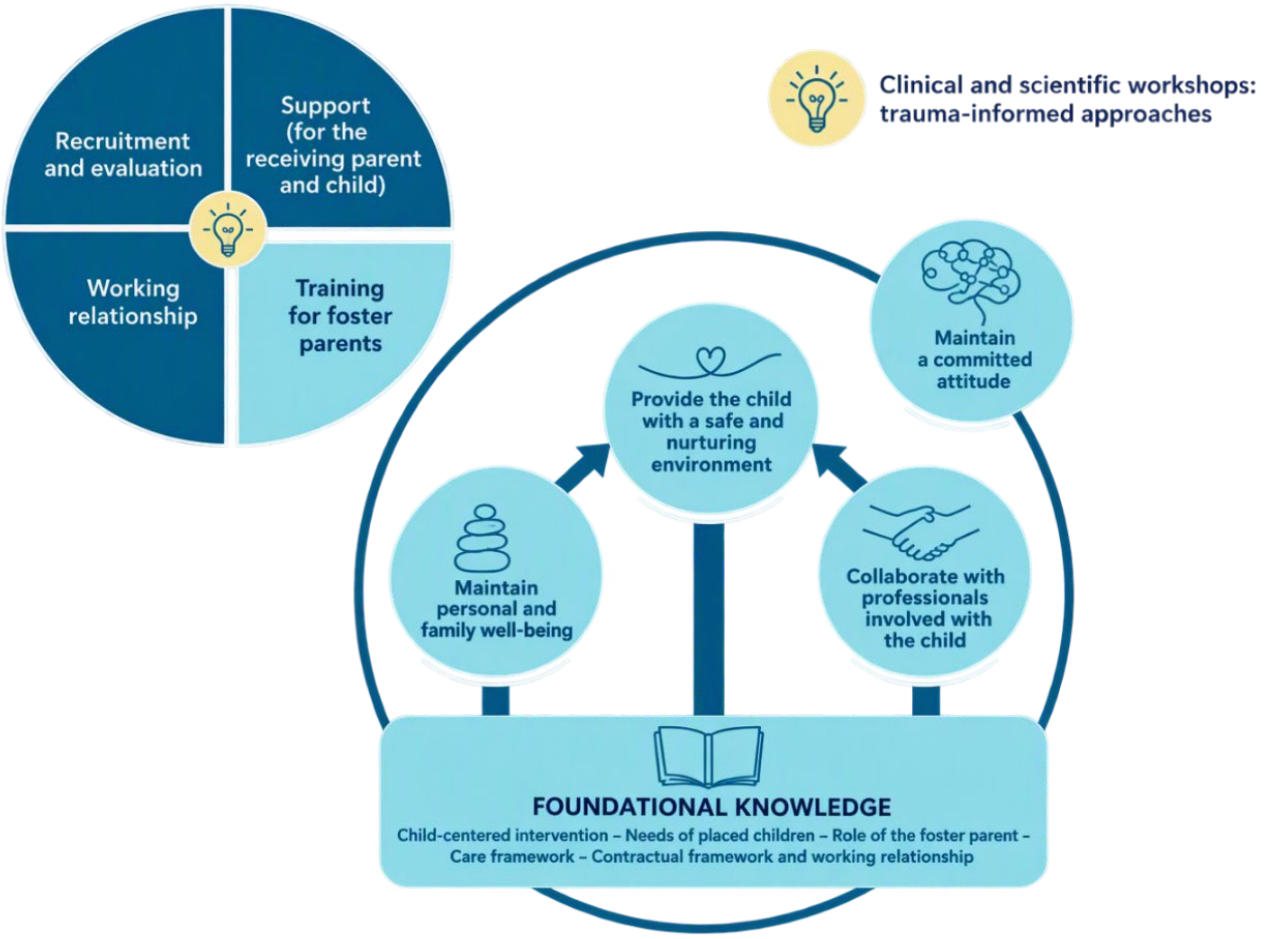
Stage 3 – Provincial validation

To validate and improve the proposal developed by the Working Group, a Provincial Consultation Day was held in May 2026. This event brought together more than 120 participants from all regions of Quebec, including representatives from the Ministry of Health and Social Services, various partners involved in foster parent training (e.g. community organizations), as well as researchers and students with expertise in the subject.

This meeting provided an opportunity to present the proposed pathway, obtain feedback from participants, and identify the adjustments needed to strengthen its relevance, coherence and feasibility. The discussions helped clarify certain content, expand on the topics covered and confirm several of the directions chosen. Following this extensive consultation process, the Working Group, with the support of the Scientific Committee, included the improvements deemed relevant and finalized this pathway.

COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

The figure below presents the competency framework developed by the Working Group (Joly et al., 2024). It consists of four competencies built on basic knowledge that foster parents must acquire before beginning the process of developing these competencies. The circle in the upper left corner symbolizes the fact that training is one of the four essential pillars of high-quality foster parenting and that it must be developed in alignment with the other pillars: recruitment and assessment, support for the foster parent and the child, as well as the working relationship. The lightbulb symbolizes the theoretical and scientific foundations of the framework: trauma-informed approaches and the ARC model (Blaustein and Kinniburgh, 2019).



ANDRAGOGICAL GUIDELINES

In order to develop a detailed training pathway for foster parents in the youth protection system, it is essential to establish andragogical guidelines that will help clarify how each competency is built gradually at each stage of the pathway.

What is a competency?

A competency enables a person to deal with complex situations appropriately and effectively by drawing on an integrated set of resources, including **knowledge**, **know-how**, **interpersonal skills** and **outside resources**.[1] The person must **be able to integrate** these various resources into the complex context of foster care.[2]



Do you know how to speak?

When applied to the field of trauma experienced by children and adolescents, "**knowing how to speak**" includes the skills needed to establish a genuine dialogue around painful topics between young people who have had difficult life experiences and important adults in their lives. It involves finding the right words – words that are empathetic and genuine – during conversations that require courage. These highly interpersonal skills must be developed and applied from the very beginning of training and throughout the training pathway.[3] In the model proposed here, knowing how to speak will be connected to the broader field of interpersonal skills.

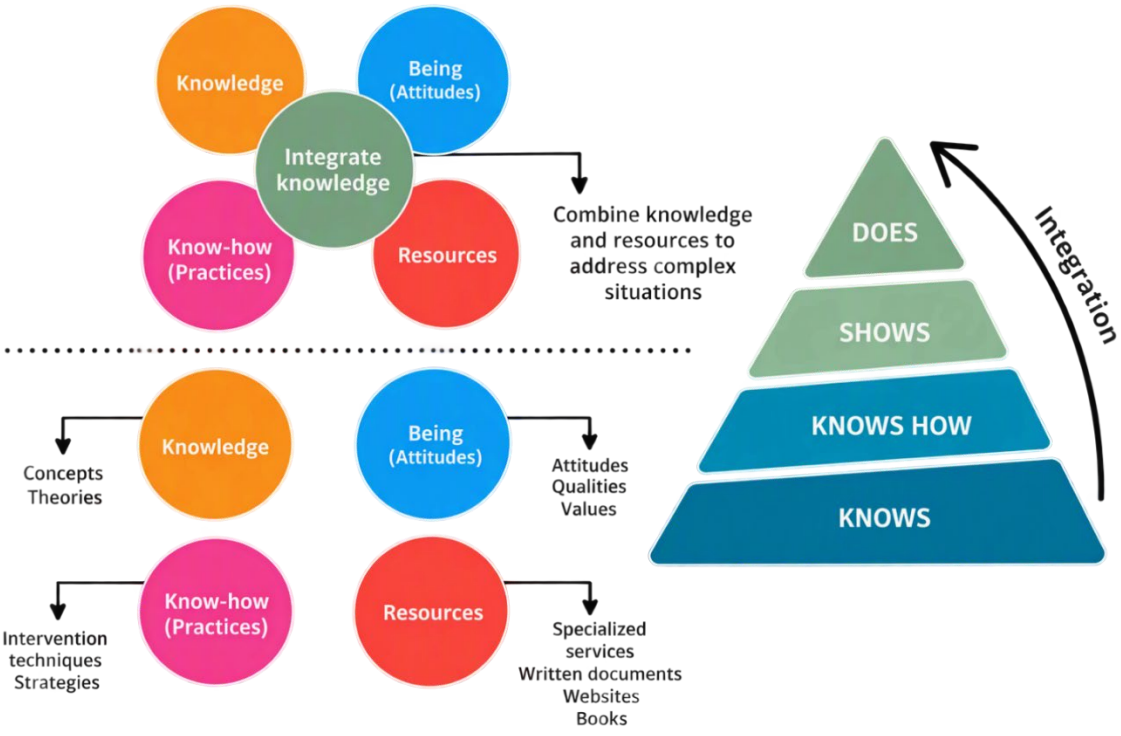
[1] Definition adapted from Poumay and Georges (2002, p. 4).
[2] Mehoy and Burns (2009).
[3] Collin-Vézina et Côté (undated).

Process for integrating competencies

Throughout the training process, foster parents go through various levels of integration: they **know**, **know how**, **demonstrate**, and **do**.[4] This progression makes it possible to identify the methods and content that should be prioritized at each stage of the training. Figure 2 illustrates this process of competency integration.

Please note! Research shows that the cognitive domain (**knows** and **knows how**) has little correlation with the behavioural domain (**demonstrates** and **does**). A learner who knows how to do something will not necessarily do this in everyday practice.[5] It is therefore essential to consider training methods that help foster parents make the connection between theory and practice.

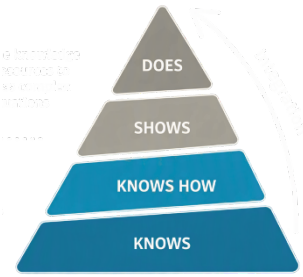
Figure 2: Process for integrating competencies[6]



[4] Miller (1990) in Centre de pédagogie universitaire (2025).
[5] Mehay and Burns (2009).
[6] Centre de pédagogie universitaire (2025).

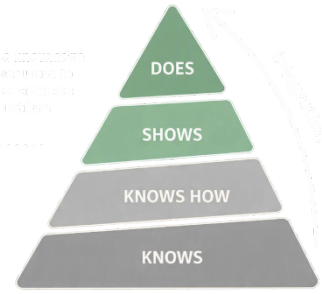
Along the pathways, the various items of content are followed by a letter in parentheses indicating the type of knowledge or resource to which they refer. The letters (K), (KH), (IS), and (R) stand respectively for knowledge, know-how, interpersonal skills, and resources.

The bottom two levels of the pyramid (KNOWS and KNOWS HOW) pertain to cognition.



These levels of integration are mainly associated with the **information and pre-accreditation stages** of the pathway. At these levels, the first step is to ensure that the prospective foster parent **KNOWS**, i.e. that they have acquired theoretical knowledge about foster care. Gradually, we make sure they **KNOW HOW** to apply the various types of knowledge and resources in complex situations.

The top two levels of the pyramid (DEMONSTRATES and DOES) pertain to behaviour.



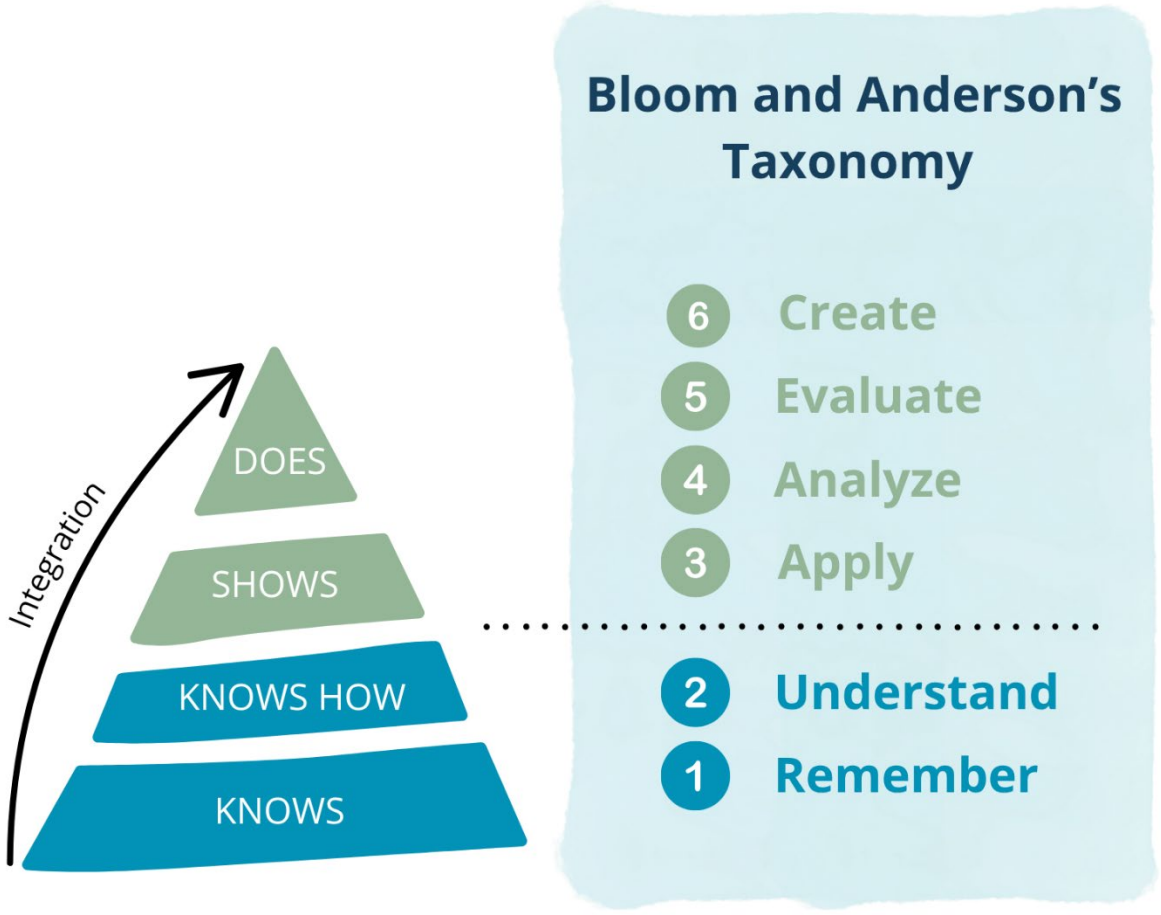
The foster parent reaches these levels during their early experiences of fostering. At this point, the **KNOWS** and **KNOWS HOW** levels continue to develop. They also help ensure that the foster parent **DEMONSTRATES** their ability to integrate all the knowledge and external resources relevant to foster parenting. Ultimately, we will see that the foster parent **DOES**, i.e. consistently applies this competency in real-life situations.

Attention!

Trauma-informed approaches recognize the challenges involved in working with young people who have experienced trauma. Based on this principle, support and supervision are essential for caregivers at every stage of their journey. As such, even at the highest levels of integration, foster parents are not expected to be completely self-sufficient in developing their skills. They will require regular support and supervision to achieve this.

Taxonomy of Bloom and Anderson

Depending on the targeted level of learning in the pyramid (knows, knows how, demonstrates, and does), the verbs chosen to describe the competencies will vary in order to reflect the complexity of the competency to develop. To approach the content at each stage of the pathway, Bloom's taxonomy (1956), revised by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001),[7] was selected. The figure below illustrates the correspondence between the levels.



On the next page, the detailed table[8] provides various examples of action verbs to use at each level of knowledge acquisition. This tool inspired the development of the training pathways.

[7] Anderson et al. (2001).
[8] This tool is taken from the Centre de pédagogie universitaire (2020).

Levels of learning according to Bloom and Anderson[9]

Bloom's taxonomy (1956), revised by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), can help us define objectives while taking their level of complexity into account. The taxonomy classifies cognitive skills into six levels, which are further subdivided into sub-levels (shown in bold in the table) for greater precision.

	1. Remember	2. Understand	3. Apply	4. Analyze	5. Evaluate	6. Create
Levels	Remember what they have already learned (mainly facts). **1.1 Recognize** **1.2 Recall**	Grasp the meaning of a piece of information (spoken, written or visual). **2.1 Interpret** (mathematical data, words in another language, etc.) **2.2 Illustrate** (using examples) **2.3 Classify** (in categories) **2.4 Summarize** **2.5 Infer** (connections and consequences) **2.6 Compare** (similarities and differences) **2.7 Explain** (causes and effects)	Use what they have learned to perform a task, whether familiar or not. **3.1 Execute** (a familiar task) **3.2 Implement** (a new task)	Break down the constituent parts of a whole (system, set, problem, etc.) and determine, in a logical and organized way, the connections between these parts and their relationship to the whole. **4.1 Differentiate** (the parts) **4.2 Organize** (a whole) **4.3 Attribute** (point of view, prejudices, etc.)	Express a line of reasoning regarding the value, relevance, or ethical aspects of things based on appropriate criteria or standards. **5.1 Verify** (inconsistencies) **5.2 Pass judgment** (on value, relevance, etc.)	Combine elements to form a totally new and coherent whole. **6.1 Generate** (hypotheses) **6.2 Plan** (solution, project, test, etc.) **6.3 Produce** (object, idea, solution, process, etc.)
Examples of verbs	Associate Quote Choose the correct answer Describe, define List Identify, indicate Name Order Recite, repeat Select	Convert Demonstrate, differentiate, explain in their own words Express Draw an analogy Generalize Interpret Paraphrase, predict Rephrase, represent	Administer, apply Calculate, construct, Determine Employ, establish Formulate, provide Manipulate, measure, modify, show Operate Process, find Use	Target, contrast, criticize Divide, demarcate, discriminate Examine Establish correlations, highlight Prioritize, connect, break down Organize, oppose Question	Appreciate, argue, attack Choose, conclude, criticize Defend, determine Estimate, evaluate Judge, justify Support	Adapt, anticipate Compose, design, build, create Develop Write, exhibit Incorporate, integrate Organize Prepare, propose Draft Structure, summarize

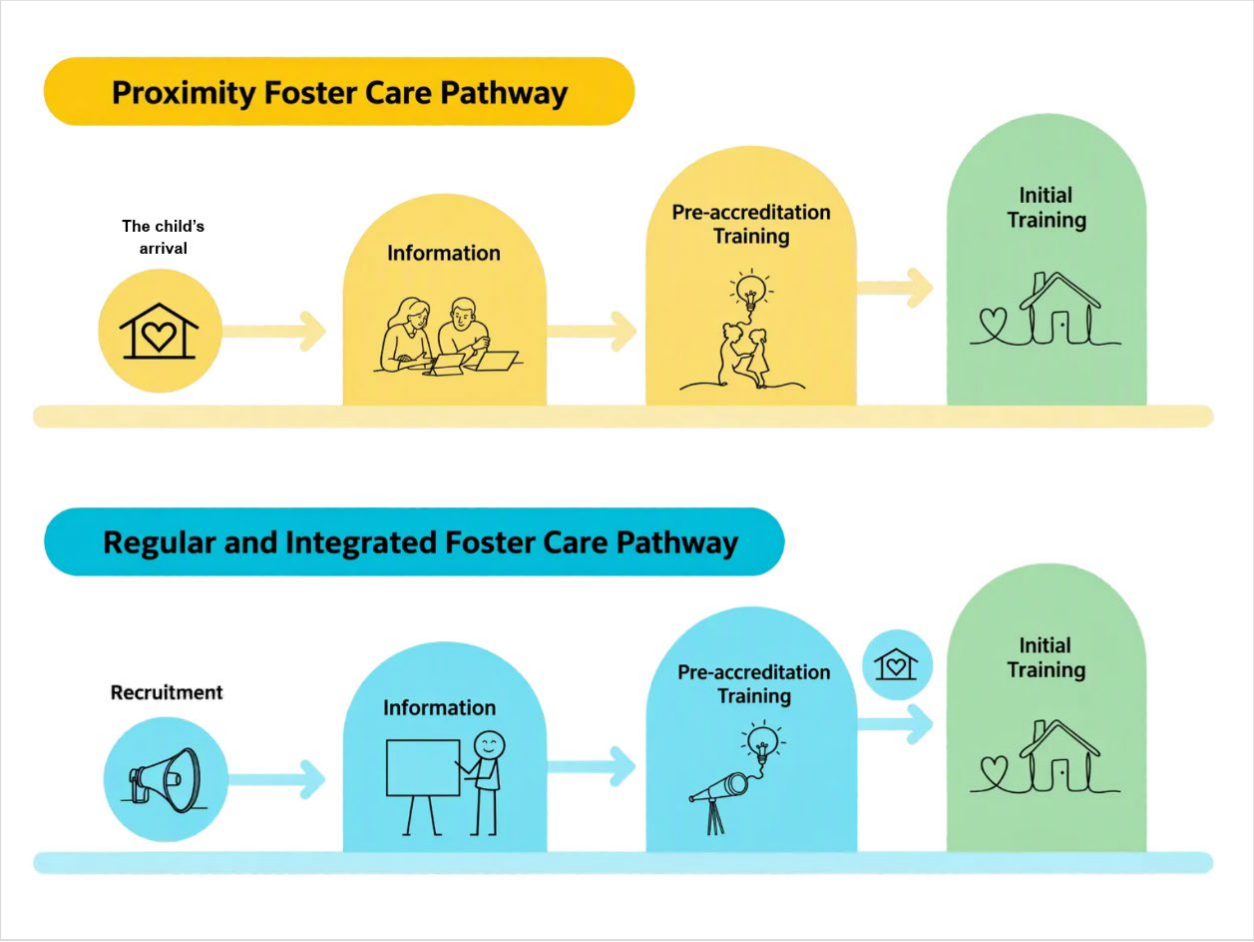
[9] Table taken from the Centre de pédagogie universitaire (2020), inspired by Anderson, L. et al. (2001) and McGrath and Noble (2008).

OVERVIEW OF TRAINING PATHWAYS

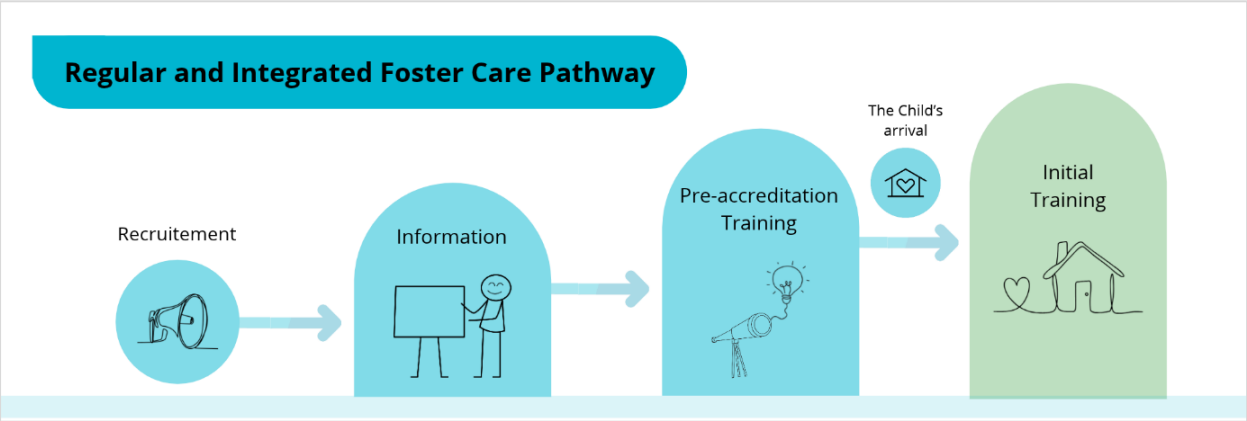
This section describes the two pathways developed by the Working Group. First, the pathway for regular foster families and mixed-bank foster families is presented, followed by the pathway tailored to kinship foster families.

The two pathways are different at the information and pre-accreditation stages. Although the content provided is similar, some nuances are added. In terms of methods, a more flexible and personalized process is offered to kinship foster families, to account for the fact that for these families, the process of fostering the child begins from the start of the pathway.
During the initial training phase, the two pathways converge. The same content and the same methods are then offered to all foster parents.
The figure below provides an overview of the two pathways and how they are structured.

Figure 3: Overview of the two training pathways



TRAINING PATHWAY FOR REGULAR AND MIXED-BANK FOSTER FAMILIES



This section presents the three stages of the training pathway for regular and mixed-bank foster families. Click the images below to view the stages.



The INFORMATION stage starts when the interested person begins taking steps to become a foster family (e.g. by signing up for an information session).

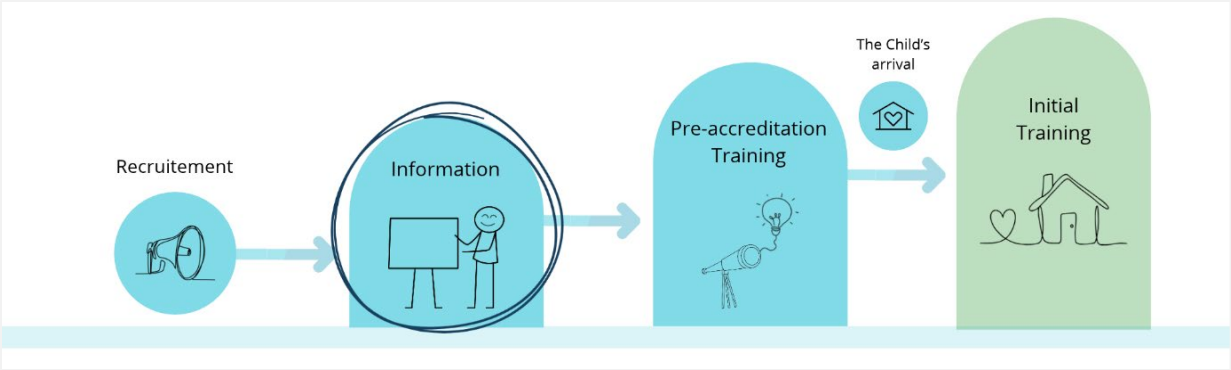


The PRE-ACCREDITATION stage begins when the person starts the assessment process and officially becomes an applicant. This stage ends when the applicant is accredited (or rejected) as a foster parent.



The INITIAL TRAINING stage begins when the individual is accredited as a foster parent. **At this stage, the child is living with the foster family.**

INFORMATION STAGE – REGULAR AND MIXED-BANK FOSTER FAMILIES



Description

The **INFORMATION** stage starts when the interested person begins taking steps to become a foster family. **At this stage, training activities should help them decide whether or not to proceed with the assessment process.**

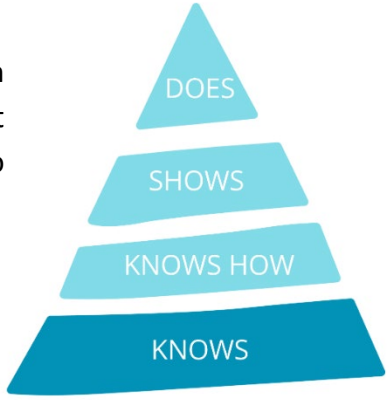
Overall objectives

At the end of this stage, the interested person:

1. Is able to explain what motivates them to become a foster family.
2. Is able to define the main points of their foster care project.
3. Has the information they need to make an informed decision about whether to proceed with the assessment process to become a regular or mixed-bank foster family.

Level of knowledge integration

The level of integration sought at this stage is based on knowledge. The person interested in becoming a foster parent knows enough about this role to decide whether or not to proceed with the assessment process.



Methods

For people who wish to become a regular or a mixed-bank foster family, this stage of the training pathway is the very first formal step toward achieving their goal. It is often their first contact with the establishment. In this context, here are the training methods to prioritize.

Plan for at least one in-person information session. This allows the person interested to interact with the presenters, ask questions and hear the questions of others in attendance. Offering only online sessions does not allow for personalized answers, which are essential at this stage.

Make sure that current foster parents are present at this stage to share their experiences and answer questions from people who are interested. This provides highly practical insight into the foster care experience, which people who are interested in fostering greatly appreciate.

Involve representatives from the regional representative association in organizing information sessions. This will ensure that accurate and up-to-date information about the association (e.g. contact information, services) is provided.

Encourage in-person interactions. This helps build a personal connection and demonstrates the establishment's commitment to people interested in becoming foster parents.

Vary the methods used to convey information. While the information session plays a key role in conveying content at this stage, it is advisable to vary the learning methods by including videos, information available online, sharing of experiences, downloadable fact sheets, etc.

Choosing the type of session

Depending on local circumstances, choose either combined information sessions (including regular and mixed-bank foster families) or separate sessions. Regardless of your choice, make sure the presentation clearly distinguishes between the two types of fostering. In all cases, people who are undecided can be invited to stay after the session to speak one-on-one with a representative from the establishment to discuss their situation and address any concerns they may have.



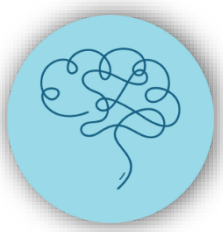
"In my region, as we have only a small number of applicants each year, presentations cover both regular and mixed-bank foster families. For people interested, hearing about both projects in the same presentation, with a clear distinction between the two types, can help confirm their choice." – Caseworker



"In my organization, information sessions are separate because they are hosted by two different clinical teams. People who are undecided can enter through either entry point, but they are encouraged to stay until the end of the session to speak with us if they have any doubts." – Caseworker

Learning objectives

This section presents the content to cover at this stage of the learning pathway. It serves as a guide to make sure that no details are left out, thereby helping ensure uniform practices across regions and maintain consistency between the stages of the learning pathway.



Competency 1 — Maintain a committed attitude

This competency refers to the foster parent's motivation to persevere in their role and adapt when challenges arise. This is a transversal competency, meaning that it supports the acquisition of other competencies.

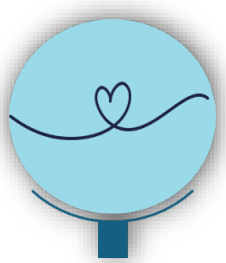
Foster care project: Motivation and commitment

- Know the **differences** between regular and mixed-bank foster care. (K)[10]
- Explore their personal **motivations** for becoming a foster family. (IS)
- Be prepared that foster parenting requires a 24/7 commitment and will change their personal and family life. (K, IS)
- Be aware of the **uncertainty** regarding the duration and outcome of the placement, which cannot be known in advance and may change while the protective measure is in effect. (K)
- Understand that it is important for **members of the immediate family** (partner, children) to agree with the project, since they will also need to contribute to it. (K)
- Taking these various factors into account, verify that it is the right project at the right time. (IS)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Know the differences between **the roles of a parent, a foster parent, and a mixed-bank foster parent**. (K)
- Understand how the mixed-bank arrangement compares to **other potential paths to parenthood** (e.g. fertility treatments, traditional adoption, surrogacy). (K)
- Understand that, in the case of a mixed-bank arrangement, even if they expect to adopt, the child's life plan could change and result in reunification with their family, placement until adulthood, or legal guardianship. (K)
- Realize that finalizing the adoption process can take several years after the child is placed in foster care. (K)
- Gauge their level of comfort with these different scenarios, to be sure that a mixed-bank arrangement is the right choice at the right time. (IS)

[10] Legend for types de knowledge: (K) knowledge; (IS) interpersonal skills; (KH) know-how; (R) resources.



Competency 2 — Offer the child a secure family environment

Thanks to this competency, the foster parent provides the child with a reassuring family environment through physical and emotional anchors. Physical anchors refer to the home, which offers the child a place where they can settle down. Emotional anchors refer to relationships: with the foster parents, who provide opportunities for new, restorative experiences; and with other members of the foster family, who help them develop a sense of belonging.

Foster child: Journey and needs

- Through concrete examples, recognize that abuse and being removed from their original environment can lead to **challenges for children in terms of their development, relationships and functioning**. (K)
- Understand that due to their life experiences, foster children may require a **higher level of care and support**. (K)

Parental role: Provide support with sensitivity

- View foster care as an opportunity for the child to have a **more reassuring relationship** with one or more parental figures, who will help the child learn to trust, develop and grow. (K)
- Recognize that **acting as parent to a child** who has experienced abuse and has been removed from their original environment can be deeply rewarding, but also involves significant challenges. (IS)
- Be open to **adjusting their parenting practices** to respond to the emotional, developmental, interpersonal and physical needs of each child in their care. (IS)

Family functioning

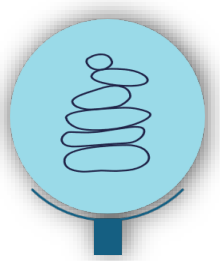
- Be aware of the fact that **family functioning** will need to adapt over time, depending on the child's needs (e.g. adjusting routines, rethinking certain events or activities that might present challenges for the child). (K, IS)

Foster child: Origin and life story

- Be aware that the child's birth family will continue to **play a role in their life**, whether through a physical or symbolic presence. (K)
- Understand that it is part of the foster parent's role to support the child in the challenges this particular family situation may present. (K)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Recognize that this **real or symbolic presence of the birth parents will continue** throughout the child's life. (K)
- Understand that this could lead to tension and difficult emotions. (IS)



Competency 3 — Maintain personal and family balance

Thanks to this competency, the foster parent can respond in a balanced way to the child's needs, their own needs, and the needs of others in the family system (other children, partner). They are able to put effective self-care strategies into practice and draw on a variety of resources for support when needed.

Personal balance and self-care

- Be aware of the main **challenges associated with fostering a child** (e.g. difficulties related to the child, co-operating with the birth parents and other stakeholders, maintaining a balance between personal and family life, etc.). (K)
- Be aware of the emotions (both positive and negative) that may arise in the role of foster parent (e.g. joy, pride, anger, incomprehension, worry, helplessness, etc.). (K)
- Understand the importance of **asking for help** and developing **effective self-care strategies** to cope with the more challenging times in the role of foster parent. (K)

Spousal and family balance

- Be aware that **all family members will need to adapt** when the child arrives (foster parent, couple, host children and social circle) and this adjustment could be challenging and affect everyone in different ways. (IS)
- Recognize the importance of being attentive to the **needs of all family members** (their own, those of their partner and of the host children) at every stage of the foster care process. (IS)
- Understand that they will need to make sure to **take care of their spousal relationship**, as it may be more difficult to make time for each other as a couple after the child arrives. (IS)
- Anticipate the adjustments in family functioning that will be required in order to **provide the child with the availability they need** (e.g. work arrangements, scheduling the child's appointments, rethinking annual trips, etc.). (IS)

Formal and informal support

- Understand that to address the challenges of foster care, it is important to **draw on formal support resources** (e.g. youth protection caseworkers, school, representative associations, etc.) and **informal support resources** (e.g. friends, family, loved ones). (K)

Grief and loss

- Understand that the role of a foster parent can involve **various experiences of grief and loss** (e.g. plan that doesn't go as expected, dashed hopes, child's departure, etc.). (IS)



Competency 4 — Work with people surrounding the child

Thanks to this competency, the foster parent can work with the various stakeholders involved in the foster child's case, whether they are clinical staff working in youth protection, other stakeholders, or the child's birth family.

Clinical and legal process in youth protection

- Have a general understanding of the **mission of the Director of Youth Protection (DYP)**, the reasons why youth protection intervention is warranted, and the steps involved in this process. (K)
- Be familiar with the potential life plans for children placed in foster care (reunification with birth family, foster care until age 18, legal guardianship, adoption). (K)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Understand the various life plans that may unfold for a child in a mixed-bank arrangement (adoption, legal guardianship, foster care until age 18, reunification with birth family). (K)

Working relationship and conditions of practice

- Be familiar with the **steps in the assessment process required to become accredited as a regular or mixed-bank foster family**, as well as the criteria that will be assessed (e.g. court records, foster family's home, ability to respond to the child's needs, etc.). (K)
- Understand that the services the foster parent provides for the child will be **continuously assessed**, as the establishment is responsible for ensuring that the child receives high-quality support. (K)
- Understand the **principles underpinning the collaborative relationship** between foster parents and the establishment (partnership, contractual agreement) (K)
- Be informed of the **financial aspects** of being a foster family. (K)
- Be informed of the establishment's expectations regarding presence, availability and the material conditions to provide for the child (especially on their arrival) in order to anticipate the impact on the family's organization and finances. (K)
- Know that once they are accredited, foster parents are represented by the **association responsible for their region**, and be able to identify that association. (K)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Be informed that a mixed-bank foster family is considered a regular foster family until the child becomes eligible for adoption. (K)

- If applicable, be informed of the waiting period to be assessed as a mixed-bank foster family (K).
- Be informed of the establishment's rules regarding the possibility of undertaking two processes at the same time (e.g. is it possible to stay on the mixed-bank waiting list while undergoing fertility treatment, or to be assessed as a regular foster family while staying on the mixed-bank waiting list?). (K)

Collaborating with caseworkers and other professionals

- Be aware of the **key stakeholders** who work as a team to support the foster child (e.g. the child's caseworker and the quality/resource caseworker), and depending on the child's situation, other stakeholders that may be involved (e.g. educator, child psychiatrist, psychologist, speech therapist, occupational therapist, school). (K)
- Be familiar with key aspects of collaborating with the child's caseworker and the quality/resource caseworker (e.g. home visits, follow-up appointments, ongoing assessment of services provided). (K)

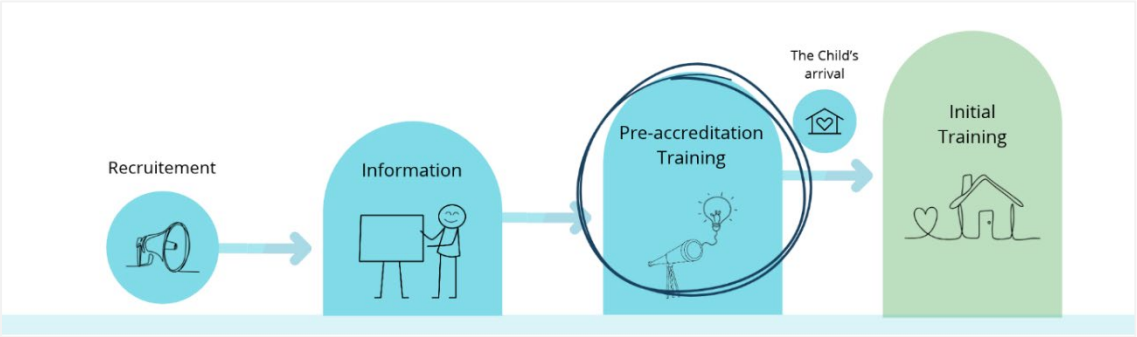
Collaborating with the child's parents and birth family

- Know that, due to their life experiences, birth parents may be dealing with **various challenges**. (K)
- Understand that birth parents may **have different attitudes** regarding the placement (e.g. mistrust, anger, acceptance). (K, IS)
- Accept the idea that **parenting will be shared** among multiple stakeholders, which will require compromises (e.g. certain decisions made by the birth parent, permission required from the caseworker for certain actions). (IS)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Understand that, in the child's best interest, the child may maintain ties with members of their birth family, or wish to reconnect with them later. (K)
- Assess their level of comfort with these various possible scenarios. (IS)

PRE-ACCREDITATION STAGE – REGULAR AND MIXED-BANK FOSTER FAMILIES



Description

The **PRE-ACCREDITATION** stage begins when the interested person commits to the assessment process and officially becomes an applicant. It ends when the person receives accreditation (or is denied) as a foster parent. This stage may therefore vary in length depending on the speed of the assessment process. **At this stage, training activities run parallel with the psychosocial assessment and are intended to encourage a process of self-reflection by the prospective foster parent: Am I truly ready for this? What about my family? Is this the right time?**

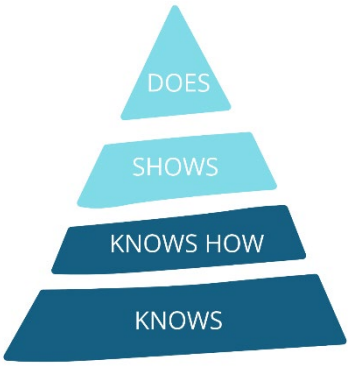
Overall objectives

At the end of this stage, the prospective foster parent:

1. Has a clearly defined fostering plan, and their decision to commit to the project was well thought out.
2. Is improving their competencies in preparation for their first experience as a foster parent.
3. Is developing increasing awareness of their strengths and vulnerabilities in the role of foster parent.
4. Is aware of certain ways available to them to continue developing their competencies.

Level of knowledge integration

The level of integration added at this stage deals with know-how.[11] In other words, the prospective foster parent will continue acquiring new knowledge, but will increasingly demonstrate that they **KNOW HOW** to apply the core competencies of foster parenting by being exposed to real-life situations.



[11] Mehay and Burns (2009).

Pre-accreditation

This stage of the training pathway takes place at the same time as the assessment process. In this context, here are the training methods to focus on.

Vary the proposed schedules. If possible, offer training activities in different formats. A full day will allow some participants to miss only one day of work, while half-days or evening workshops could encourage participation by others who are dealing with challenges related to work-life balance.

Vary the methods. To encourage prospective foster parents to learn, theoretical and practical knowledge should be conveyed using a variety of methods: presentations, discussions, clinical vignettes, videos, website, sharing of experiences, downloadable fact sheets, etc.

Provide spaces for conversation and discussion where prospective foster parents can make connections between their life experiences and the training content, as well as hear the reactions from other prospective or current foster parents. For example, presentations on theory should be followed by opportunities for conversation and discussion to encourage connections between theory and practice.

Include methods to support networking. If there are enough prospective foster parents in your region, try bringing them together for training activities, in person whenever possible, to give them the opportunity to meet other prospective foster parents and help create an informal network.

Make as many connections as possible between the concepts presented and real-life situations, to help prospective foster parents imagine themselves in these roles. To do so, use role-playing exercises, clinical vignettes, testimonials, etc., so that the concepts presented are as concrete as possible.

Provide a workbook for participants and make the course materials easily available. This will enable prospective foster parents to later refer to the materials in their daily lives.

Consider practical tools to encourage self-reflection. Prospective foster parents are asked to think about their motivations, strengths and vulnerabilities, as well as their availability and that of their family. To support this reflective approach, be sure to provide them with practical tools that encourage self-reflection.

> ***ATTENTION!*** *Training activities must provide a safe space where prospective foster parents can express their vulnerabilities and develop their skills without fear of being disqualified. Only assessment meetings should determine whether an applicant has the competencies and abilities required to be a foster parent.*

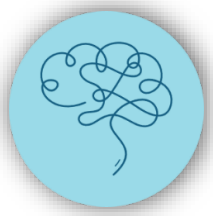
When the prospective foster parent lives with a partner, the presence of both partners is strongly encouraged. Taking in a foster child changes the balance within the couple and the family. Participation by both partners is essential to confirm their mutual commitment to this project.

Inform and train caseworkers on the content of the training provided to prospective foster parents. This will encourage a better transfer of knowledge to foster parents in their practice, along with the development of a shared vision regarding this role.

Involve foster parents in developing and presenting the training content. Be sure to seek input from the representative association in your region to develop the content in partnership with them. Also, give foster parents a role in training activities (e.g. co-facilitating sessions, sharing experiences, answering questions from applicants).

Learning objectives

This section presents the content to cover at this stage of the learning pathway. It serves as a guide to make sure that no details are left out, thereby helping ensure uniform practices across regions and maintain consistency between the stages of the learning pathway.



Competency 1 — Maintain a committed attitude

This competency refers to the foster parent's motivation to persevere in their role and adapt when challenges arise. This is a transversal competency, meaning that this attitude affects all other aspects of the competency framework.

Foster care project: Motivation and commitment

- Feel well equipped to **encourage family discussion about the foster care project**, to ensure that each family member is on board (e.g. questions to ask to fuel discussion, resources to explain in practical terms what foster care in youth protection entails, concrete examples of what foster care is like on a daily basis, pros and cons, values important to the family, etc.). (R, KH, IS)
- Debunk certain common **myths** in order to adopt a realistic attitude toward the project (e.g. "These children just need love" or "Love will fix them"). (K)
- **Be aware of their expectations** regarding the project and the child; contrast these expectations with the reality shown in training activities. (IS)
- Think about their tolerance for **uncertainty**, since the duration and outcome of the placement cannot be known in advance. (IS)
- By looking back at the content covered in the training activities, reaffirm their **commitment** to the chosen project. (IS)

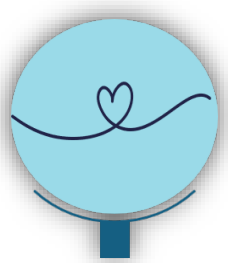
For mixed-bank foster families

- Think about the importance of the **motivation to adopt a child** in the foster care project. (IS)
- Assess their willingness to stay committed to the child if the plan that ultimately happens is **reunification, legal guardianship or long-term placement**. (IS)
- Anticipate their own reactions and those of other members of the immediate family if the adoption does not go through. (IS)

Continuous development

- Explore **their strengths and areas of vulnerability** as they relate to the role of foster parent. (IS)

- Recognize the importance of maintaining a **learner's mindset**, which means being open to learning and questioning their assumptions. (IS)
- Be familiar with the **training opportunities** available to foster parents (training pathway, other reliable sources of information). (K, R)
- Anticipate situations where it will be **necessary to adapt, try new intervention strategies**, or show creativity. (KH)



Competency 2 — Offer the child a secure family environment

Thanks to this competency, the foster parent provides the child with a reassuring family environment through physical and emotional anchors. Physical anchors refer to the home, which offers the child a place where they can feel at home. Emotional anchors refer to relationships: with the foster parents, who provide opportunities for new, restorative experiences; and with other members of the foster family, who help them develop a sense of belonging.

Foster child: Journey and needs

- Get to know **the needs** that all children share (security, self-worth, stability, love, etc.). (K)
- Understand that **addressing the needs of children exposed to abuse can pose specific challenges** (e.g. rejection of the foster parent, defiance, phobias, relationship difficulties, etc.). (K)
- Be aware of certain **effects that being removed from the family can have** on the child, and recognize that these effects can be negative (e.g. loss of reference points, insecurity, disrupted relationship, loyalty conflicts, etc.) or positive (e.g. safety, no longer being exposed to abuse, etc.). (K)
- Understand that **expectations based on the child's biological age** often need to be put into perspective based on their emotional age. (K)
- Know that some children may have experienced **multiple living environments, and therefore multiple disrupted relationships**, before arriving in the foster family (e.g. transfer from another foster family, attempted reunification). (K)
- Understand the importance of helping the child **discover and develop their strengths** and envision their future. (K)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Understand that, even if a child arrives in a mixed-bank foster family at a very young age, their early life experiences and family history could have serious consequences for their development and functioning, and that it is impossible to know these consequences in advance. (IS)

Foster child: Attachment and trauma

- Be aware of what an **attachment relationship** is: how it is defined and what its purpose is. (K)
- Be aware of the **concepts of trauma and complex trauma** (events that lead to trauma, effects on the child). (K)

Foster child: Understanding their behaviour

- Understand that in children, certain behaviours that pose a challenge are **adaptive**, meaning that they should be viewed as strategies to help protect themselves and survive in the adverse environment where they grew up. (K)
- Recognize that, even though the child is safe in the foster family, **these protective and survival strategies** may persist. (K)

Parental role: Provide support with sensitivity

- Be aware of the **basic concept of security** (calming a child in a stressful or distressing situation). (K)
- Using hypothetical scenarios, practice **identifying the need underlying the child's disruptive behaviour**, in order to be able to respond (parental sensitivity). (K)
- Understand that for the foster child, **the attention and love of a "parent" may be synonymous with danger**, and in some cases, patience and perseverance are required to earn the child's trust and ensure that they feel safe and secure. (K)
- Identify a variety of **strategies for calming and emotional regulation** that can be used with the child. (KH)
- Understand the importance of having **their own effective emotional regulation strategies**, in order to be able to calm the child (co-regulation). (IS)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Understand that when the child arrives, it is important to focus on stability and consistency among the primary caregivers. In other words, foster parents should as a priority be the providers of the child's basic care, so that the child identifies them as a new source of security that they can turn to. (K, IS)

Family functioning

- Understand that predictable and consistent **routines, rhythms and rituals** help children feel calm and support their development. (KH)
- Identify examples of **flexible, supportive and personalized** rules that provide a reassuring framework and can be adapted to the child's needs. (KH)

Foster child: Rights and involvement

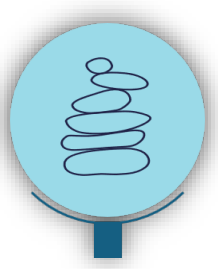
- Be aware of **children's rights**. (K)
- Recognize the need to **take the foster child's point of view into account** when making decisions about their life. (K)

Foster child: Origins and life story

- Appreciate the importance for the child of **developing their identity** by harmoniously integrating their origins and life story (family, culture). (K)
- Be familiar with certain **strategies to put in place to support the child** in their relationship (or lack thereof) with their birth parents. (KH)
- Be aware of issues that may arise when fostering a child from a **different ethnocultural background** and the principles that should guide such a placement. (K, IS)
- Be aware of the **conflict of loyalty** that may arise in the child. (K)
- To reduce the risk of a conflict of loyalty, understand the importance of an open, respectful and neutral attitude toward the child's birth parents and family. (K, IS)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Anticipate the emotions that may arise if the birth parents continue to play a more prominent role in the child's life than the foster parent expected. (IS)



Competency 3 — Maintain personal and family balance

Thanks to this competency, the foster parent can respond in a balanced way to the child's needs, their own needs, and the needs of others in the family system (other children, partner). They are able to put effective self-care strategies into practice and draw on a variety of resources for support when needed.

Personal balance and self-care

- Normalize the **more difficult emotions they may feel** when the child faces a major challenge or they leave (e.g. grief, uncertainty, anger, guilt, helplessness). (K)
- Identify **situations that might be especially sensitive** and could upset their balance (self-reflection). (IS)
- Anticipate times when it will be necessary to **ask for and receive help**. (IS)
- Define what **self-care** is and provide examples related to foster care. (K)

Spousal and family balance

- Make sure that **all family members are prepared to adapt** when the child arrives (foster parent, couple, host children, friends and relatives) and understand that this adjustment may be **challenging and experienced differently** depending on the individual. (IS)
- Understand the **impact of foster care** on the couple, the family and the host children. (K)
- Have practical strategies and tools available for discussing foster care and the challenges ahead with the host children. (R, KH)
- Understand the impact of foster care on single-parent fostering arrangements (e.g. feeling of loneliness when faced with certain challenges). (K)
- Understand that it can sometimes be difficult to maintain a balance between meeting the needs of the foster child and being available to other family members (partner, host children). (IS)
- Anticipate the adjustments to make in order to **be available when needed** after the child arrives (e.g. work arrangement, taking the child to various appointments, etc.). (IS)
- Prepare for the intensity of care and support that will be needed when the child arrives, to ensure that the child and other family members adapt successfully. (IS)

Formal and informal support

- Identify **formal and informal support resources** that can help address the challenges of fostering. (K)

- Understand that fostering will have an impact on the family and may lead to **changes in their social circle**, as the dynamic changes considerably following the arrival of a child. (IS)
- Recognize the importance of their **social circle**, determine the type of support that family and friends can offer in the context of the project, and give special attention to this network if they are a single-parent or lone-parent family. (K, KH)
- Identify community resources that could offer support. (K, R)

Grief and loss

- Be aware of emotions that may arise during **various types of grief and loss** that foster parents may experience (e.g. a placement that doesn't go as planned, dashed hopes, the child's departure, possible changes in relationships with extended family and friends, etc.). (IS)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Be aware of the intensity of emotions that can accompany this grief and loss when they are motivated to adopt a child. (K, IS)



Competency 4 — Work with people surrounding the child

Thanks to this competency, the foster parent can work with the various stakeholders involved in the foster child's case, whether they are clinical staff working in youth protection, other stakeholders, or the child's birth family.

Clinical and legal process in youth protection

- Be familiar with **the mission of the Director of Youth Protection (DYP) and the main steps of the youth protection intervention process** (reporting, assessment, referral, application of measures). (K)
- Understand that these steps will proceed at varying speeds, depending on the child's situation, the birth family, court delays, etc.
- Identify the **reasons that may lead to a child's placement or relocation** (e.g. return to their birth parents, relocation to a foster family better suited to their needs, or to a more supervised environment such as a group home or rehabilitation centre). (K)
- Be aware of the concept of a life plan and what is involved in defining a life plan. (K)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Identify the main stages of the adoption process. (K)
- Understand the clinical and legal requirements for filing an application for a declaration of adoptability (DOA). (K)

Working relationship and conditions of practice

- Understand the main points of the **contractual relationship with the establishment**. (K)
- Be informed regarding the functions of the **collective agreement, the specific agreement, the reference framework, and the classification tool**. (K)
- Be informed regarding the aspects covered by the initial assessment and, subsequently, the ongoing assessment of the quality of services provided to the child. (K)
- Be informed regarding the **financial aspects** of foster care, in order to plan a realistic budget when taking in a child. (K)
- Understand the main roles of their future representative association (support, advocacy, guidance). (K)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Understand the requirements associated with being a foster parent that will remain in effect until the adoption is finalized (e.g. co-operating with visits, supervised or unsupervised; co-

operating with the birth parents; demonstrating parenting skills; attending follow-up meetings with caseworkers, etc.). (IS)
- Understand the rules regarding eligibility for parental leave while the child is in foster care. (K)

Collaborating with caseworkers and other professionals

- Identify the **stakeholders involved** in foster care and gain a general understanding of their respective roles (child's caseworker, resource/quality caseworker, reviewer, representative organization, educator, etc.). (K)
- Remember that co-operation with youth protection caseworkers takes the form, for example, of **home visits or follow-up appointments**. (K)
- Anticipate that the foster parent will also need to collaborate with **other stakeholders** (educator, child psychiatrist, psychologist, speech therapist, occupational therapist, school). (K)

Collaborating with the child's parents and birth family

- Define the **role of the foster parent** vis-à-vis the birth parent. (K)
- Understand that birth parents **hold and exercise the responsibilities** associated with parental rights (unless otherwise specified). (K, IS)
- Identify some concrete examples of **what it means for birth parents to generally retain parental rights** (e.g. waiting for permission for vacations, summer camp or a haircut; dealing with a parent's refusal even when it goes against the child's interests) and anticipate the emotions this might trigger. (K)
- Understand **the purpose of contact and visits** between the child and their birth parents. (K)
- Be aware of the contribution expected from the foster parent regarding contact and visits. (K)
- Anticipate that the child may need to **maintain ties with other members** of their birth family (e.g. siblings, grandparents, other family members). (K)
- Be aware that the birth parent has the right to know the address of their child's living arrangement and anticipate the challenges this may create. (K, IS)

Confidentiality

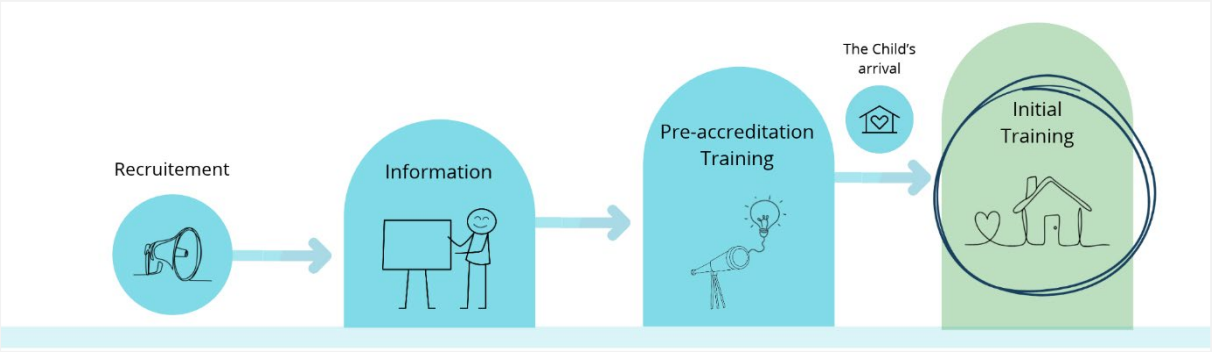
- Be aware of **confidentiality issues** (child, birth family). (K)

Interpersonal skills and relationships with other parties

- Anticipate **their own reactions and emotions** when challenges arise in dealing with people involved in the foster care process (e.g. child protective services, birth family). (IS)
- Identify **strategies to deal with challenging situations**. (IS, KH)
- Understand the importance of maintaining **an open, genuine and respectful attitude**. (IS)

- Understand that being a foster parent may involve playing a **role in raising awareness** of the foster child's reality (advocacy role) among the people in the child's life. (K, IS)

INITIAL TRAINING STAGE – REGULAR, MIXED-BANK AND KINSHIP FAMILIES



Description

The **INITIAL TRAINING** stage begins once the person has been accredited as a host family.

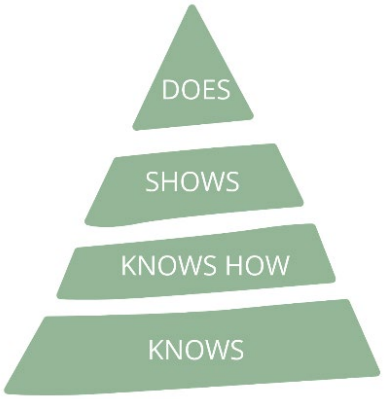
Overall objectives

At the end of this stage, the foster parent:

1. Demonstrates a sufficient level of competency acquisition to support their current foster care experience.
2. Develops a growing awareness of their strengths and areas of vulnerability with regard to the role of foster parent.
3. Is familiar with some of the resources available to them to continue developing their competencies.

Level of knowledge integration

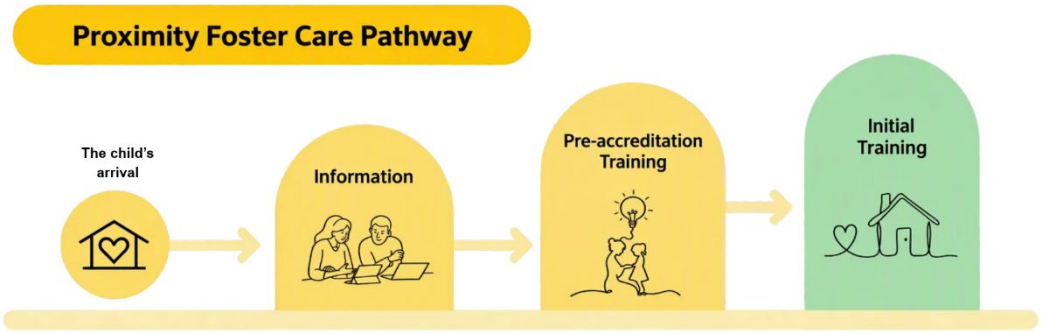
The level of integration added at this stage involves knowing how to act. In other words, the foster parent continues to acquire new knowledge, **DEMONSTRATES** a growing mastery of foster care competencies, and **MAKES** more systematic use of them in real-life situations.



In the initial stage, the objectives, procedures and proposed content are the same for kinship foster families, regular foster families and mixed-bank foster families. **For details on this training phase, see the section on the initial training for FAR, FABM, and FAP on page 61.**

TRAINING PATHWAY FOR KINSHIP FOSTER FAMILIES

This section presents the three stages of the training pathway for kinship foster families. Click the images below to view the stages.





The INFORMATION stage starts when a relative or other person close to the child is asked to take in a child, or when that person offers to do so. **In most cases, the child is already in the foster care setting or will be placed there during this stage.**

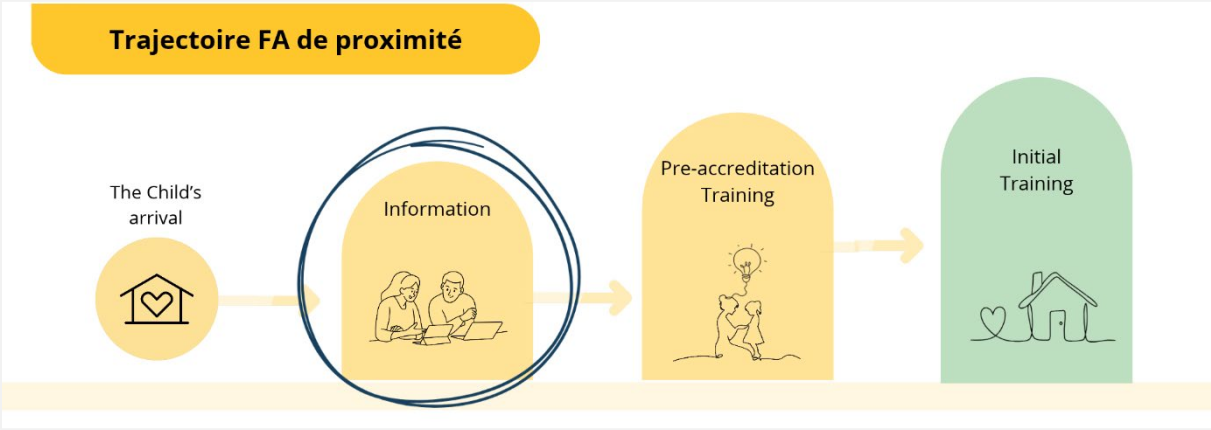


The PRE-ACCREDITATION stage begins when the individual decides to begin the evaluation process and ends when they receive accreditation (or are rejected) as a foster parent. The duration of this stage can therefore vary, depending on the speed of the evaluation process. **At this stage, the child is already living with the prospective kinship foster family.**



The INITIAL TRAINING phase begins once the individual has been accredited as a kinship foster family. This stage brings together all foster families, whether they are regular, mixed-bank or kinship foster families. **During this phase, the child continues to live in the foster family's home**.

INFORMATION STAGE – KINSHIP FOSTER FAMILIES



Description

The **INFORMATION** stage begins when a relative or close acquaintance is asked to foster a child, or when they volunteer to do so. **In the majority of cases, the child is already in the foster care system or will be placed there during this stage**.**Training activities therefore help the interested person decide whether or not to commit to the process of becoming a kinship foster family and get answers to their questions during the early stages of the placement.**

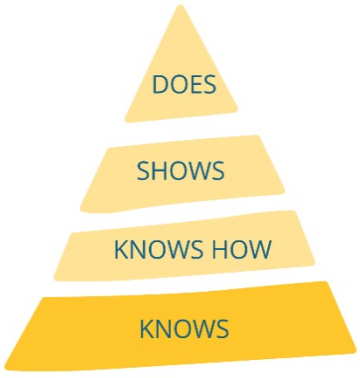
Overall objectives

At the end of this stage, the person:

1. Has the information they need to make an informed decision about their commitment to fostering a child and, as a result, to the process of becoming a kinship foster family.
2. Is able to identify their motivations for committing themselves to foster care.
3. Has the essential basic information they need to begin their role as a foster parent.

Level of knowledge integration

The level of integration sought at this stage is based on knowledge. The person interested in becoming a kinship foster parent **KNOWS** enough about this role to decide whether or not to proceed with the assessment process.



Methods

For the person interested in becoming a kinship foster parent, foster care becomes a reality when they are invited to take in a child they know, or when they volunteer to do so. The person has little time to decide whether to commit to the process of becoming a foster parent (a few hours, a few days). In this context, here are the training methods to prioritize.

Take a one-on-one approach. It is recommended that a caseworker assigned by the establishment convey the information to the person who may become a kinship foster parent during a personalized meeting. Even if this stage is brief, it is important to provide the person with the essential information and give them time to ask all their questions.

"People interested in becoming kinship foster parents do not want the child to be placed with strangers – it's essential that they have the information they need to consider their commitment." - A foster parent



Encourage in-person interactions. This helps build a personal connection and demonstrates the establishment's commitment to people interested in becoming foster parents.

Convey the information concisely. For the person interested in becoming a kinship foster family, this stage often involves a sense of urgency. In this context, it is important to make the most of the limited time available. Priority should therefore be given to the essential information.



*"People who agree to take in a child from their social circle face **a major challenge in adjusting** at the beginning of the process! At this stage, information must be clearly targeted and effectively communicated."*
- A caseworker

Provide the information in writing. Essential information must be given to the person in a simple, easy-to-read format (e.g. brief fact sheets).

Make sure to provide up-to-date and complete information. Caseworkers involved should be trained in the reality of kinship foster care and have access to the latest resources. Since multiple caseworkers may host training activities for prospective kinship foster families, it is important to assign a contact person within the establishment to answer questions from clinical teams and prospective foster families.

Learning objectives

This section presents the content to cover at this stage of the learning pathway. It serves as a guide to make sure that no details are left out, thereby helping ensure uniform practices across regions and maintain consistency between the stages of the learning pathway.



Competency 1 — Maintain a committed attitude

This competency refers to the foster parent's motivation to persevere in their role and adapt when challenges arise. This is a transversal competency, meaning that it supports the acquisition of other competencies.

Foster care project: Motivation and commitment

- Distinguish between **commitment as a kinship foster family** and commitment as a relative or close family member (uncle, aunt, grandparent, brother, sister, close friend of the family or the child, etc.). (K)[12]
- Understand that it is possible to remain committed to the child without becoming a foster parent. (K)
- Explore their personal **motivations** for becoming a foster parent. (IS)
- Anticipate that being a foster family will require a 24/7 commitment and have concrete examples of how this will change their personal and family life. (S, IS)
- Understand that it is important for **immediate family members** (partner, children) to agree to the project, since they will also need to contribute to it. (K)
- Recognize that the **role played** prior to the placement (uncle, aunt, grandparent, brother, sister, close relative of the family or the child, etc.) **will transform** due to the expectations linked to the role and responsibilities of a foster parent. (K)
- Be aware of the **uncertainty** regarding the duration and outcome of the placement, which cannot be known in advance and may sometimes even change during the course of the protective measure. (K)

[12] Legend of types of knowledge: (K) knowledge; (IS) interpersonal skills; (KH) know-how; (R) resources.



Competency 2 — Offer the child a secure family environment

Thanks to this competency, the foster parent provides the child with a reassuring family environment through physical and emotional anchors. Physical anchors refer to the home, which offers the child a place where they can settle down. Emotional anchors refer to relationships: with the foster parents, who provide opportunities for new, restorative experiences; and with other members of the foster family, who help them develop a sense of belonging.

Foster child: Journey and needs

- Understand that, due to their life experiences, foster children may require a **greater intensity of care and support**. (K)
- Be aware that, despite the pre-existing relationship with the child, **foster care may reveal aspects** of the child's past that were previously unknown, which can be unsettling. (IS)

Parental role: Provide support with sensitivity

- Recognize that **acting as parent to a child** who has experienced abuse and has been removed from their original environment can be deeply rewarding, but also involves significant challenges. (IS)
- Be open to **adjusting their parenting practices** to respond to the emotional, developmental, interpersonal and physical needs of each child in their care. (IS)

Family functioning

- Be aware of the fact that **family functioning** will need to adapt over time, depending on the child's needs (e.g. adjusting routines, rethinking certain events or activities that might present challenges for the child). (K, IS)



Competency 3 — Maintain personal and family balance

Thanks to this competency, the foster parent can respond in a balanced way to the child's needs, their own needs, and the needs of others in the family system (other children, partner). They are able to put effective self-care strategies into practice and draw on a variety of resources for support when needed.

Personal balance and self-care

- Be aware of the main **challenges associated with fostering a child** (e.g. difficulties related to the child, co-operating with the birth parents and other partners involved, maintaining a balance between personal and family life, etc.). (K)
- Be aware of the emotions (both positive and negative) that may arise in the role of foster parent (e.g. joy, pride, anger, incomprehension, worry, helplessness, etc.). (K)
- Understand the importance of **asking for help** and developing **effective self-care strategies** to cope with the more challenging moments in the role of foster parent. (K)

Spousal and family balance

- Recognize the importance of being attentive to the **needs of all family members** (their own, those of their partner, and those of the host children) at every stage of the foster care process. (IS)

Formal and informal support

- Understand that to address the challenges of foster care, it is important to **draw on formal support resources** (e.g. youth protection caseworkers, school, representative associations, etc.) and **informal support resources** (e.g. friends, family, loved ones). (K)
- Understand that fostering a child will **disrupt relationships** within the family, particularly with the child's birth parents. (IS)
- Understand that foster care may lead to **changes in their social circle**, since the dynamic shifts considerably after a child arrives. (IS)



Competency 4 — Work with people surrounding the child

Thanks to this competency, the foster parent can work with the various stakeholders involved in the foster child's case, whether they are clinical staff working in youth protection, other stakeholders, or the child's birth family.

Clinical and legal process in youth protection

- Become familiar with the legal and clinical process involved in youth protection. (K)
- Understand the placement arrangements (voluntary, court-ordered, temporary). (K)

Working relationship and conditions of practice

- Be familiar with the **steps in the assessment process required to become accredited as a kinship foster family**, as well as the criteria that will be assessed (e.g. court records, foster family's home, ability to respond to the child's needs, etc.). (K)
- Understand the **principles underpinning the collaborative relationship** between foster parents and the institution (partnership, contractual agreement) (K)
- Be informed of the establishment's expectations regarding presence, availability and the material conditions to provide for the child (especially on their arrival) in order to anticipate the impact on the family's organization and finances. (K)
- Be informed of the **financial aspects** of fostering, whether as a prospective kinship foster family or a kinship foster family. (K)
- Understand the **possible scenarios** following the kinship foster family assessment (becoming a kinship foster family, being granted "entrusted to" status, or seeing the child relocated). (K)
- Know that once they are accredited, foster parents are represented by the **representative association in their region**, and be able to identify this association. (K)

Collaborating with caseworkers and other professionals

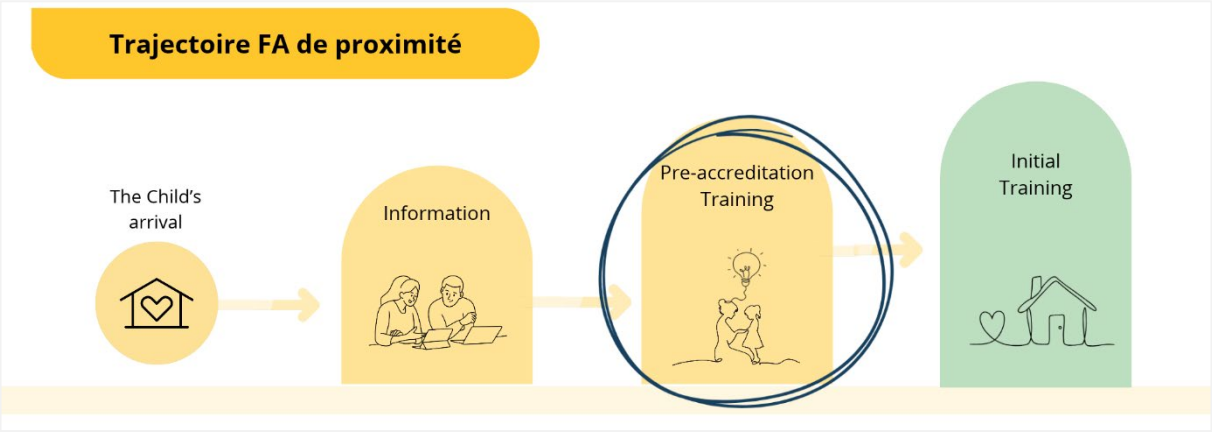
- Understand the form that collaboration with **the child's caseworker** will take during the prospective period (before accreditation) and have their contact details. (K)
- Know whether **other stakeholders are or will be part of the team** supporting the child and understand their roles. (K)

Collaborating with the child's parents and birth family

- Know that the birth parents will continue to **play a role** in the foster child's life, whether through a physical or symbolic presence, and that the nature of this role will be determined by legal arrangements (voluntary or court-ordered). (K)

- Know that the legal arrangements for the placement and role of the prospective kinship foster family are likely to **affect the relationship with the birth parents** (e.g. no overnight stays for the birth parent, changes in the frequency of visits, introduction of supervised visits, etc.). (K)
- Anticipate that co-operation with the birth parents and family may require **adaptation and compromise**. (IS)

PRE-ACCREDITATION STAGE – KINSHIP FOSTER FAMILIES



Description

The **PRE-ACCREDITATION** stage begins when the person commits to the assessment process and officially becomes an applicant. It ends when the person receives accreditation (or is denied) as a foster parent. This stage may therefore vary in length depending on the speed of the assessment process. **At this stage, the child is already living with the prospective kinship foster family. Training activities take place alongside the psychosocial assessment and help the applicant gain a solid understanding of the role of a kinship foster family**.

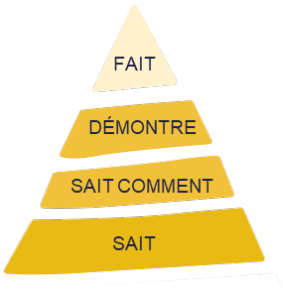
Overall objectives

At the end of this stage, the prospective kinship foster parent:

1. Has the information they need to confirm their foster care project.
2. Demonstrates a level of competency that enables them to support their current foster care experience.
3. Is developing increasing awareness of their strengths and vulnerabilities in the role of foster parent.
4. Is aware of certain resources available to them to continue developing their competencies.

Level of knowledge integration

The level of integration added at this stage deals with know-how. The prospective foster parent will increasingly demonstrate that they **KNOW HOW** to apply the competencies at the core of foster care. Since the foster child is already living with them, the foster parent can also **DEMONSTRATE** their mastery of these competencies in certain real-life situations.



Methods

This stage takes place at the same time as the assessment process, while the child is already living with the foster family. In this context, here are the training methods to prioritize.

Continue with the one-on-one approach. Since the prospective kinship foster family is already working with the child and does not have much time available, it is suggested that a worker assigned by the establishment conduct some of the training activities through personalized meetings.

Allow for methods that encourage networking among prospective kinship foster families. In addition to one-on-one meetings, these families will benefit from meeting in groups, if the number of participants allows. This type of method helps overcome isolation, facilitates networking and promotes the development of support from peers.

Vary the schedules on offer. If possible, offer training activities in different formats. A full day will allow some participants to miss only one day of work, while half-day or evening workshops could encourage participation from other people who are dealing with challenges in balancing work and personal life.

Prioritize in-person interactions. These meetings are even more productive when held in person. Face-to-face contact helps build a personal connection and maximizes the chances that prospective kinship foster parents can have all their questions answered. Furthermore, this practice shows the establishment's commitment to the people taking on this role.

Allow space for sharing and discussion where prospective kinship foster parents can relate their life experiences to the content of training sessions, while also hearing the perspectives of other prospective parents. For example, presentations on theory should be followed by opportunities to share and discuss, in order to build links between theory and practice.

Make sure that current kinship foster families are present at this stage to share their experiences and answer questions from prospective families. This provides a very practical insight into the foster care experience, which prospective families greatly appreciate.

Set up support spaces within the training sessions. Prospective kinship foster families are already actively involved at this stage. For them, it is important to include support mechanisms within the training sessions themselves (e.g. spaces for discussion and sharing, connections with caseworkers who can offer more personalized support).

Consider practical tools to encourage self-reflection. Prospective foster parents are encouraged to reflect on their motivations, strengths and vulnerabilities, as well as their own availability and that of their families. To support this reflective process, make sure practical tools that encourage self-reflection are available.

> ***ATTENTION!*** *Training activities must provide a safe space where prospective kinship foster parents can express their vulnerabilities and develop their skills without fear of being disqualified. Only assessment meetings should determine whether an applicant has the competencies and abilities required to be a foster parent.*

Provide a participant workbook and make the training materials easily accessible. That way, prospective kinship foster families can refer back to the materials later in their everyday life.

Inform the clinical teams supporting the prospective kinship foster families about the training content. If the clinical team overseeing the placement is aware of the topics covered in the training activities, they can discuss them in follow-up meetings, which will help the prospective families put this new knowledge into practice.

Involve kinship foster families in developing and presenting the content. Be sure to consult the representative association in your region to develop the content in partnership. Also give kinship foster families a role during training activities (e.g. co-facilitating sessions, sharing experiences, answering questions from applicants).

Learning objectives

This stage of the training pathway takes place at the same time as the assessment process, when the child is already living with prospective kinship foster family. In this context, here are the training methods to prioritize.



Competency 1 — Maintain a committed attitude

This competency refers to the foster parent's motivation to persevere in their role and adapt when challenges arise. This is a transversal competency, meaning that it supports the acquisition of other competencies.

Foster care project: Motivation and commitment

- Taking the current foster care experience into account, **confirm the family's commitment** to the foster care project. Does the project align with the family's initial motivations? How are family members adapting to the new reality? (IS)
- **Ensure that all family members are on board** with the placement. (IS)
- Dispel certain common **myths** in order to adopt a realistic attitude toward the project (e.g. "These children just need love," "Love will fix them"). (K)
- Provide examples of how their **role vis-à-vis the child** has changed since the placement (e.g. having to enforce a no-contact order between the birth parent and the child, accompanying the child to supervised visits, etc.) (IS)
- Be aware of their **level of comfort** with this change in role. (IS)
- Reflect on their tolerance for **uncertainty**, since the duration and outcome of the placement cannot be known in advance. (IS)

Continuous development

- Explore **their strengths and areas of vulnerability** as they relate to the role of foster parent. (IS)
- Recognize the importance of maintaining a **learner's mindset**, which means being open to learning and questioning their assumptions. (IS)
- Be familiar with the **training opportunities** available to kinship foster parents (training pathway, other reliable sources of information). (K, R)
- Identify situations where it was **necessary to adapt, try new intervention strategies**, or show creativity. (KH)



Competency 2 — Offer the child a secure family environment

Thanks to this competency, the foster parent provides the child with a reassuring family environment through physical and emotional anchors. Physical anchors refer to the home, which offers the child a place where they can feel at home. Emotional anchors refer to relationships: with the foster parents, who provide opportunities for new, restorative experiences; and with other members of the foster family, who help them develop a sense of belonging.

Foster child: Journey and needs

- Get to know **the needs** that all children share (security, self-worth, stability, love, etc.). (K)
- Realize that abuse and removal from the child's home environment can lead to **challenges for the child in terms of development, relationships and functioning**. (K)
- Understand that **expectations based on the child's biological age** often need to be put into perspective based on their emotional age. (K)
- Recognize certain **effects that removal from the birth family can have** on the child, and that these effects can be negative (e.g. loss of reference points, insecurity, severed ties, conflict of loyalty, etc.) or positive (e.g. security, no longer being exposed to abuse, etc.). (K)

Foster child: Attachment and trauma

- Be aware of what an **attachment relationship** is: how it is defined and what its purpose is. (K)
- Be aware of the **concepts of trauma and complex trauma** (events that lead to trauma, effects on the child). (K)
- By reflecting on their current experience with foster care, begin to **make connections between these concepts and the foster child's case**. (K)

Foster child: Understanding their behaviour

- Identify the child's behaviours that pose a challenge and understand that they are **adaptive**, meaning that they should be viewed as strategies that helped them protect themselves and survive in the adverse environment where they grew up. (K)
- Recognize that, even though the child is safe in the foster family, **these protective and survival strategies** may persist. (K)

Parental role: Provide support with sensitivity

- View foster care as an opportunity for the child to have a **more reassuring relationship experience** with one or more parental figures, who will help the child learn to trust, develop and grow. (K)
- Be aware of the **basic concept of security** (calming a child in a stressful or distressing situation). (K)
- Practice **identifying the need underlying the child's disruptive behaviour**, in order to be able to respond (parental sensitivity). (K)
- Understand that for the foster child, **the attention and love of a "parent" may be synonymous with danger**, and in some cases, patience and perseverance are required to earn the child's trust and ensure that they feel safe and secure. (K)
- Know that a child's sense of trust and security is likely to evolve over the course of the placement.
- Describe and apply a variety of **calming and emotional regulation strategies** that can be used with the child. (KH)
- Understand the importance of having **their own effective emotional regulation strategies**, in order to be able to calm the child (co-regulation). (IS)

Family functioning

- Understand that predictable and consistent **routines, rhythms and rituals** help children feel calm and support their development. (KH)
- Identify examples of **flexible, supportive and personalized** rules that provide a reassuring framework and can be adapted to the child's needs. (KH)
- Provide examples of **adjustments to family functioning** that have been made or may be necessary in the future. (KH)

Foster child: Origins and life story

- Appreciate the importance for the child of **developing their identity** by harmoniously integrating their origins and life story (family, culture). (K)
- Give examples of **strategies to put in place to support the child** in their relationship (or lack thereof) with their birth parents. (KH)
- Be aware of the **conflict of loyalty** that may arise in the child. (K)

Foster child: Rights and involvement

- Be aware of **children's rights**. (K)
- Recognize the need to **take the foster child's point of view into account** when making decisions about their life. (K)



Competency 3 — Maintain personal and family balance

Thanks to this competency, the foster parent can respond in a balanced way to the child's needs, their own needs, and the needs of others in the family system (other children, partner). They are able to put effective self-care strategies into practice and draw on a variety of resources for support when needed.

Personal balance and self-care

- Anticipate and **normalize the more difficult emotions they may feel** when the child faces a major challenge or they leave (e.g. grief, uncertainty, guilt, anger, helplessness). (IS)
- Identify **situations that might be especially sensitive** and could upset their balance (self-reflection). (IS)
- Identify **self-care strategies** that help maintain personal balance in the context of foster care. (KH)
- Know the different **times when it is appropriate to use self-care strategies** (regular strategies, anticipation and recovery strategies, emergency strategies). (KH)

Spousal and family balance

- Be aware of the **impact of the current foster care project on themselves and other family members**. (IS)
- Understand that it is important to **take care of the couple's relationship**, as it may be more difficult to make time for each other after the child arrives. (IS)
- Identify **adjustments to the family routine** that have already been necessary to make sure the child has the availability they need (e.g. adjusting work arrangements, taking the child to various appointments, etc.). (KH)
- Try to anticipate other potential **adjustments** to make. (KH)

Formal and informal support

- Identify **formal and informal support resources** that can help address the challenges of fostering. (K)
- Call on their **social circle** when needed. (KH)
- Identify how **social relationships have changed** since the child arrived and recognize the emotions this evokes. (IS)
- Explore the possibility of **building a network with other foster families**, if needed. (IS)
- Identify community resources that could offer support. (K, R)

Grief and loss

- Understand that the role of a foster parent may involve **various experiences of grief and loss** (e.g. project does not go as planned, dashed hopes, departure of the child, possible changes in relationships with extended family and friends, etc.). (IS)



Competency 4 — Work with people surrounding the child

Thanks to this competency, the foster parent can work with the various stakeholders involved in the foster child's case, whether they are clinical staff working in youth protection, other stakeholders, or the child's birth family.

Clinical and legal process in youth protection

- Be familiar with **the mission of the Director of Youth Protection (DYP) and the main steps of the youth protection intervention process** (reporting, assessment, referral, application of measures). (K)
- Understand the **main life plans** that could become a reality for children in foster care (reunification, placement until they reach adulthood, legal guardianship, adoption). (K)
- Understand that the stages of this process proceed at varying speeds, depending on the child's situation, that of the parents, court delays, etc.
- Identify the **reasons that may lead to a child's relocation** (e.g. return to their birth parents, relocation to a foster family better suited to their needs, or to a more supervised environment such as a group home or rehabilitation centre). (K)
- Be aware of the concept of a **life plan** and what is involved in **defining a life plan.** (K)
- Understand that the services the foster parent provides to the child will be **assessed on an ongoing basis**, as the establishment is responsible for ensuring the quality of support given to the child. (K)

Working relationship and conditions of practice

- Understand the main points of the **contractual relationship with the establishment**. (K)
- Be informed regarding the functions of the **collective agreement, the specific agreement, the reference framework and the classification tool**. (K)
- Be informed regarding the aspects covered by the initial assessment and, subsequently, the ongoing assessment of the quality of services provided to the child. (K)
- Be informed regarding the **financial aspects** of foster care, in order to plan a realistic budget. (K)
- Understand the main roles of their future representative association (support, advocacy, guidance). (K)

Collaborating with caseworkers and other professionals

- Identify the **stakeholders involved** in foster care and have a general understanding of their respective roles (child's caseworker, resource/quality caseworker, reviewer, representative organization, educator, etc.). (K, KH)
- Understand the main aspects of collaboration with the child's caseworker and the quality/resource caseworker (e.g. home visits, follow-up appointments, ongoing assessment of services provided). (K)

Collaborating with the child's parents and birth family

- Accept that the **birth parents hold and exercise the responsibilities** associated with parental rights (unless otherwise specified). (K, IS)
- Identify some concrete examples of **what it means for birth parents to generally retain parental rights,** and reflect on the emotions this triggers (e.g. waiting for permission for vacations, summer camp or a haircut; dealing with a parent's refusal even when it goes against the child's interests). (K)
- By reflecting on their current foster care experience, identify the reactions of the birth parent (e.g. refusing to accept the placement, failing to comply with contact arrangements, mistrust, anger, gratitude) and recognize the emotions this triggers. (IS)

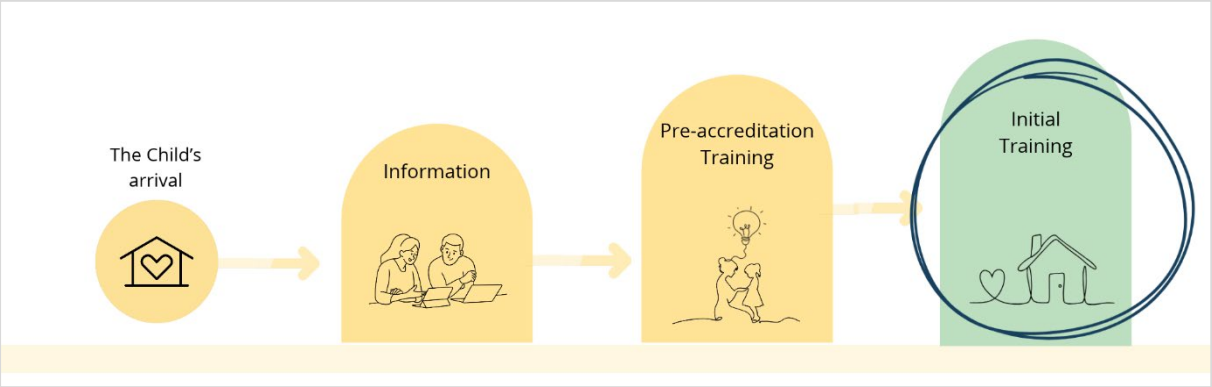
Confidentiality

- Be aware of **confidentiality issues** (child, birth family). (K)

Interpersonal skills and relationships with other parties

- Discuss **situations that have previously posed a challenge** when working with collaborators. (IS)
- Be mindful of **their own reactions and emotions** when challenges arise. (IS)
- Identify **strategies for dealing with collaborative situations** that pose a challenge. (IS, KH)
- Understand the importance **of adopting an open, genuine and respectful attitude toward all stakeholders in foster care.** (K)
- Understand that being a foster parent may involve playing a **role in raising awareness** of the foster child's reality (advocacy role) among the people in the child's life. (K, IS)

INITIAL TRAINING STAGE – REGULAR, MIXED-BANK AND KINSHIP FAMILIES



Description

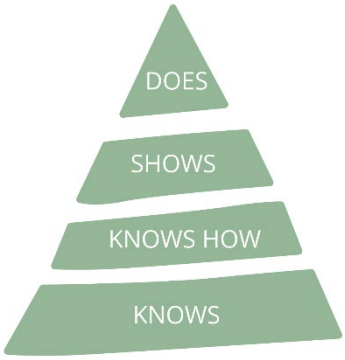
The **INITIAL TRAINING** stage begins once the person has been accredited as a host family.

Overall objectives

At the end of this stage, the foster parent:

4. Demonstrates a sufficient level of competency acquisition to support their current foster care experience.
5. Develops a growing awareness of their strengths and areas of vulnerability with regard to the role of foster parent.
6. Is familiar with some of the resources available to them to continue developing their competencies.

Level of knowledge integration



The level of integration added at this stage involves knowing how to act. In other words, the foster parent continues to acquire new knowledge, **DEMONSTRATES** a growing mastery of foster care competencies, and **MAKES** more systematic use of them in real-life situations.

In the initial stage, the objectives, procedures and proposed content are the same for kinship foster families, regular foster families and mixed-bank foster families. Pay special attention to the blue and yellow boxes. They will help you identify the specific details to consider for mixed-bank (blue) and kinship (yellow) foster families.

Methods

This stage of the training pathway takes place after the foster parent has been accredited. In this context, here are the recommended methods.

As soon as they are accredited, new foster parents are invited to sign up for training activities. It is important to take advantage of the momentum (end of the assessment, first foster care experience imminent) to quickly get them moving forward on their training pathway.

Give priority to in-person sessions. These sessions allow foster parents to interact with caseworkers, ask questions and hear the questions of others in attendance. While it is important to vary the methods used (e.g. short videos, websites, downloadable information sheets, etc.), in-person meetings tend to demonstrate the establishment's commitment to the people taking on this role.

Plan activities to encourage networking. If the number of foster parents in your area allows it, try to bring them together for training activities where they'll have the opportunity to meet other foster parents, in order to support the development of an informal network.

Provide opportunities for sharing and discussion where foster parents can connect their personal experiences with the content, as well as hear the reactions of other foster parents. For example, presentations on theory should be followed by time for sharing and discussion to help participants make the connection between theory and practice.

Make as many connections as possible between the concepts presented and the situations foster parents experience. To do this, use role-playing exercises, clinical vignettes, case presentations, testimonials, etc., so that the concepts presented are as "practical" as possible.

Consider providing concrete tools to encourage self-reflection. At this stage of the training pathway, participants are encouraged to turn their attention inward and reflect, in particular, on their strengths and areas of vulnerability, as well as their own availability and that of their family. To support this reflective process, make sure that concrete tools are available.

Encourage collaboration with the representative association in your region to develop training content. Representative associations have access to detailed information about the experiences of foster parents, which can enrich the content being developed. In addition, involving them in the process will uphold the spirit of partnership that should guide the development of training programs, as well as help ensure consistency in the content presented.

Call on foster parents to help deliver the training content. It is important to connect new foster parents with the experiences of their peers who have been in the role longer, in order to help them better understand their reality. In this regard, best practices recommend co-facilitating training sessions (caseworker/foster parent).

Inform and train caseworkers on the training content offered to foster parents. This will encourage a better transfer of knowledge to foster parents in their practice, along with the development of a shared vision of this role.

Learning objectives

This section presents the content to cover at this stage of the learning pathway. It serves as a guide to make sure that no details are left out, thereby helping ensure uniform practices across regions and maintain consistency between the stages of the learning pathway.



Competency 1 — Maintain a committed attitude

This competency refers to the foster parent's motivation to persevere in their role and adapt when challenges arise. This is a transversal competency, meaning that this attitude affects all other aspects of the competency framework.

Foster care project: Motivation and commitment

- Understand that the arrival of a child can be **destabilizing** and it may be necessary to give themselves time to adjust to this new reality. (K).
- Taking the current foster care experience into account, reaffirm **commitment** to the foster care plan: Does the project live up to the initial motivations? How are family members adapting to the new reality? (IS)
- Be sensitive to the **experiences of all family members** since the child's arrival. (IS)
- Assess their tolerance for **uncertainty**, since the duration and outcome of the placement cannot be known in advance. (IS)
- Be aware of their own reactions and emotions if the placement does not go as planned, and shield the foster child from adult emotions. (IS)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Be aware of their own reactions and emotions if the adoption project does not work out and the situation moves toward family reunification, legal guardianship or long-term foster care. (IS)

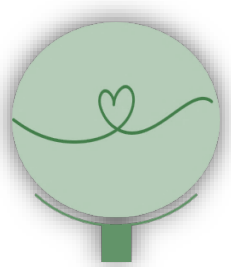
For kinship foster families

- Be aware of their own reactions and emotions if the project upsets family relationships (including the extended family). (IS)
- If fostering becomes too demanding, allow themselves to discuss it with the caseworkers in order to consider all possible options (e.g. a grandparent who realizes it's too much to handle). (KH)

Continuous development

- Continuously improve their ability to identify **strengths and areas of vulnerability** related to the various skills involved in foster care. (IS)

- Adopt a **learner's mindset** (take advantage of formal and informal learning opportunities) and be willing to question themselves and make adjustments. (IS)
- Be aware of and take advantage of **training opportunities** (training pathways, other reliable sources of information). (K, R)
- Identify situations where it has already been necessary to **adapt, acquire new strategies** for supporting the child, or show creativity. (KH)



Competency 2 — Offer the child a secure family environment

Thanks to this competency, the foster parent provides the child with a reassuring family environment through physical and emotional anchors. Physical anchors refer to the home, which offers the child a place where they can settle down. Emotional anchors refer to relationships: with the foster parents, who provide opportunities for new, restorative experiences; and with other members of the foster family, who help them develop a sense of belonging.

Foster child: Journey and needs

- Be familiar with **the needs** that all children share (safety, self-esteem, stability, love, etc.). (K)
- Learn about the impact of living conditions on pregnancy (e.g. neurodevelopmental consequences, fetal alcohol syndrome disorder, exposure to drugs, lack of prenatal care) as well as on the **development of children and adolescents**. (K)
- Provide examples of how adverse life events (abuse, removal from the home environment, disrupted relationships and relocations, etc.) can pose **challenges for the child's development and functioning**. (K)
- Identify tangible strategies to **build on the child's strengths** and provide them with a variety of learning opportunities so that they can achieve their full potential, taking their characteristics and needs into account. (K)

Foster child: Attachment and trauma

- Gain a deeper understanding of the **concepts of trauma and complex trauma**: events at the root of the trauma, effects on the child. (K)
- **Make connections** between these concepts and the child's situation. (K)
- Distinguish between "**being secure**" and "**feeling secure**." (K)
- Understand **attachment needs** (needs for closeness and exploration) and the different types of attachment. (K)
- Be familiar with the concept of an **internal working model** (children's core beliefs about themselves, relationships and the world in general). (K)

Foster child: Understanding their behaviour

- Explain how **certain behaviours observed** in foster children may be the **effect of trauma experienced** in childhood. (K)
- Understand **stress responses** (e.g. fight, flight, freeze, submit, collapse). (K)

- Make connections between stress responses and the survival and protection strategies the child uses. (K, KH)
- Understand that **these responses may become more deeply ingrained** in children who have been exposed to high and chronic levels of stress (trauma, abuse). (K)
- Understand that once a child is in a secure environment, they may show a potential for development and learning that is different from what they showed while facing adversity. (K)
- Based on real-life situations with the child, **decode the need hiding behind the disruptive behaviour** in order to be able to address it. (KH)
- Recognize that, due to their past, the child may have used certain **strategies to calm themselves that may continue to harm or endanger them** (e.g. violence, self-harm, substance use, running away). (K)
- Help the child **adopt effective and safe strategies** to calm themselves. (KH)

Foster child: Understanding their diagnoses

- Understand the main signs of certain common diagnoses among children in foster care (e.g. ID-ASD, ADHD,[13] oppositional defiant disorder, etc.). (K)
- Identify **available resources to get support** regarding the various diagnoses. (K,R)
- Understand how **complex trauma provides valuable insight** into the diagnoses of children in foster care. (K)

Parental role: Provide support with sensitivity

- Explain the **basic concepts of security** and **parental sensitivity** and give examples in a foster care setting (decoding needs, calming the child in situations of stress and distress). (K, KH)
- Based on real-life situations with the child, **decode the need behind the behaviour** in order to be able to respond to it. (KH)
- Use a variety of **strategies that encourage the child's emotional regulation** and help calm them. (KH)
- Gradually **adapt regulation strategies** based on what works well for each child. (KH)
- Recognize **co-regulation as an essential strategy** when supporting children whose lives have been marked by trauma. (IS)
- Gain greater awareness of **their own triggers** (hot buttons), which can make co-regulation more difficult. (IS)
- Know a variety of **strategies to regulate their own emotions**. (KH)

[13] ID-ASD: intellectual disability and autism spectrum disorder. ADHD: attention-deficit disorder with or without hyperactivity.

- Identify behaviours and responses in the child that warrant raising a "red flag" and seeking help (e.g. aggressive behaviour that is intense or repeated, or situations where the safety of one or more family members is at risk). (KH)

Family functioning

- Establish and adapt consistent and coherent **routines, rhythms and rituals** that encourage predictability and develop the child's sense of belonging to their foster family. (KH)
- Establish **flexible, supportive and personalized rules** that provide a reassuring framework and can be adapted to the child's needs. (KH)
- Instill a **sense of fairness among the children** (both fostered and biological). (IS)
- Have strategies in place to explain what foster care entails to children already living in the home (e.g. differences in culture or lifestyle, adjustments to daily routines, etc.). (KH)
- Make sure that **all family members adapt as well as possible** to the child's arrival and be attentive to everyone's needs. (KH)

For kinship foster families

- Consider adjusting certain habits in family life based on visitation rights or contact restrictions (e.g. Sunday family meals that must exclude the foster child's birth parent). (KH)

Foster child: Rights and participation

- Understand **children's rights** (K) and identify actions to ensure that these rights are respected. (KH)
- Understand and implement strategies that encourage the **child's participation** in decisions that affect them. (IS)
- Be aware of the role of an ally for children's rights, which may involve expressing support for respecting these rights with certain partners and stakeholders (advocacy role). (KH)

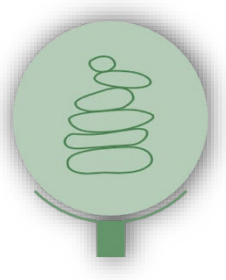
Foster child: Origin and life story

- Support the child in developing their identity by harmoniously including their background and life story (e.g. book of life). (K)
- Know and apply strategies that help reduce or avoid conflicts of loyalty in children. (K, IS, KH)

For kinship foster families

- Decide what relevant information to share with the child about their history or that of their birth parents. (KH)
- Take **cultural issues** into account when supporting the child. (K)
- Support the child in their relationships with other members of their family or community (e.g. siblings who live elsewhere, extended family, etc.). (KH)

- Accept that the child moves **between multiple environments** with potentially different educational values (birth parents and foster parents), which may require adaptation. (K)
- Recognize the emotions that cultural and racial differences may trigger in the context of foster care. (IS)
- Have concrete strategies in place to help the child feel secure in their **cultural identity and help them better understand their origins** (e.g. encouraging contact with members of the community). (KH)
- Identify the **emotions** that **contact with the child's birth parents** may evoke in the child. (IS)
- Support the child throughout the **contact process** (supervised or unsupervised). (KH)
- Welcome and support the child in dealing with their **reactions caused by visits** with members of their birth family. (KH)



Competency 3 — Maintain personal and family balance

Thanks to this competency, the foster parent can respond in a balanced way to the child's needs, their own needs, and the needs of others in the family system (other children, partner). They are able to put effective self-care strategies into practice and draw on a variety of resources for support when needed.

Personal balance and self-care

- Recognize the **more difficult emotions** that arise when a child faces significant challenges or when they leave (e.g. grief, uncertainty, guilt, anger, helplessness). (K, IS)
- Understand and **recognize their own responses to stress**. (IS)
- Recognize the **warning signs of exhaustion or distress, as well as their own limits**. (IS)
- Accept that the **emotions one feels are normal and be willing to get help when needed**; practice self-reflection and self-compassion. (IS)
- Know and develop a variety of **self-care strategies** (regular strategies, anticipation and recovery strategies, emergency strategies), and use them at the appropriate times (K, KH).
- Develop **healthy and effective emotional regulation strategies**. (KH)

Spousal and family balance

- Recognize the **impact of foster care on themselves, the couple and other family members**. (IS)
- Identify strategies to help family members **adapt positively**. (IS)
- Identify **situations that are especially sensitive** for themselves and their family and that may jeopardize personal and family balance (self-reflection). (IS)
- Adjust the family routine to **make sure they have the availability needed** for the foster child. (KH)
- Anticipate **difficult situations and more sensitive times** for the foster child, so that they are available to support them. (KH)

For kinship foster families

- Have strategies for dealing with changes in the family dynamic that will occur within the extended family, especially in the case of a kinship foster family (e.g. a grandparent taking in their grandson, leading to conflict with their own son). (KH)

Formal and informal support

- Call on **formal support resources** (e.g. caseworkers, health services, social services, school, community organizations) and **informal support resources** (e.g. friends, family, foster care network) as needed to help overcome the challenges of foster care. (K)
- Involve their **social circle when necessary** to provide relief or a supportive space. (KH)

Grief and loss

- Accept the **emotions and challenges** related to loss and grief associated with the role of a foster parent (e.g. a situation that does not go as planned, dashed hopes, the child's departure, possible changes in relationships with extended family and friends, etc.). (K, IS)
- Recognize that it may be necessary to **seek help** during these times. (K, IS)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Accept that it may take a long time before the life plan is clarified and the application for adoption eligibility is approved. (IS)
- Accept that the plan may change without them having any control over that decision. (IS)
- Be aware of the emotions that may arise if they have to go through a grieving process, for example, if a child leaves or if parenthood takes a different form than anticipated. (IS)



Competency 4 — Work with people surrounding the child

Thanks to this competency, the foster parent can work with the various stakeholders involved in the foster child's case, whether they are clinical staff working in youth protection, other stakeholders, or the child's birth family.

Clinical and legal process in youth protection

- Know the **main stages of the youth protection intervention process** (reporting, assessment, referral, implementation of measures, review). (K)
- Have a variety of concrete examples of **situations that may constitute grounds for concluding that a child's security or development is compromised, as set out in the *Youth Protection Act*, as well as examples of placement measures (e.g. temporary, voluntary, court-ordered)**. (K)
- Make connections between the **reasons that may lead to a child's placement or relocation** and the current foster care situation. (KH)
- Understand the **concepts of a life plan, permanence, and stability**. (K)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Navigate the legal process leading to adoption. (K)

Working relationship and conditions of practice

- Know the **main points of the collective agreement, the specific agreement, the reference framework, and the classification tool**, as well as their functions. (K).
- Be able to participate in **the child's assessment** with the caseworker using the classification tool. (KH).
- Be able to **fill out the various forms**: billing for expenses, transportation costs, and accounting for the child's personal expense allowance. (KH)
- Understand payment statements. (KH)
- Be able to identify examples of situations where it is possible to seek assistance from their representative association. (K)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Understand the requirements associated with being a foster parent that will be in effect until the adoption is finalized (e.g. co-operating with visits, supervised or not, with the birth parents; demonstrating parenting skills, etc.). (IS)

For kinship foster families

- Understand the requirements associated with the new status of foster parent and the differences from the previous status (e.g. grandparent, close family member), and accept the new responsibilities that come with it. (IS, KH)

Collaborating with caseworkers and other professionals

- Identify the **stakeholders involved** in foster care and distinguish between **their respective roles** (the child's caseworker, resource/quality caseworker, representative organization, educator, etc.). (K)
- Know **which party handles which issues** (e.g. issues concerning the child's behaviour, issues related to forms). (R, SF)
- Collaborate with **other stakeholders** as needed to support the child (school, child psychiatrist, community or recreational organization, etc.) (K).
- Be aware of and take advantage of **opportunities to share their understanding** of the child (e.g. participating in review meetings, reviewing the classification tool) (KH)

Collaborating with the child's parents and birth family

- Understand their **role as a foster family** vis-à-vis the birth parent. (KH)
- Accept that birth parents **hold and exercise the responsibilities** associated with parenthood (unless otherwise specified). (IS)
- Identify some concrete examples of what this means in the child's case and consider the emotions this might trigger (e.g. waiting for permission for a vacation, a camp, or a haircut; dealing with a parent's refusal when it goes against the child's interests) (K)
- Identify strategies to make decisions regarding parental responsibilities easier (e.g. planning vacations and trips well in advance, explaining the reasons for changing schools or daycare based on the child's needs). (KH)
- Working with the caseworker, establish **guidelines for communication** with the birth parents. (KH)
- Identify the **emotions** that **certain reactions** from the birth parent may evoke in the foster parent (e.g. a birth parent who is distrustful, angry, reactive or grateful). (IS)
- Identify the **emotions** that **certain reactions from the child** following visits may provoke in the foster parent (e.g. the child is sad, angry, anxious, confused, acting out or regressing). (IS)
- Be aware that the birth parent has the right to know the address of their child's living arrangement and, if applicable, identify the challenges this might pose and find ways to minimize them with the help of the caseworker. (K, KH, IS)

For mixed-bank foster families

- Be aware that, in the context of an adoption project, the presence of the birth parents and visits trigger emotions that are sometimes difficult and intense. Be attentive to these emotions and have strategies in place to express and regulate them. (IS)

For kinship foster families

- Be aware that foster care may create a conflict of loyalty between the foster child and their biological parent (e.g. a grandparent might feel conflicted between the grandchild in their care and their own son). (K)

Confidentiality

- Know the **rules regarding confidentiality** as they pertain to the child and their birth family (e.g. social media) (K)
- Respect the **confidential aspects** of the child's life and that of their birth family (IS)

Interpersonal skills and relationships with other parties

- Be mindful of **their own reactions** when challenges arise with those involved in the foster care process (e.g. clinical team, birth family). (IS)
- Identify **strategies for coping with challenging situations**. For example, be able to discuss them or request adjustments with the stakeholders involved. (KH)
- Adopt an **open, genuine and respectful attitude** toward the stakeholders involved. (IS)
- Be able to **set limits and ask for help** when the task becomes too overwhelming and balance is compromised (e.g. if caseworkers ask the foster parent to take in another child or a child with excessive difficulties). (IS)
- When necessary, and in collaboration with the caseworkers handling the case, **raise awareness** of the reality of the foster child's situation among certain colleagues or others in the child's life (advocacy role). (K, IS)

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