



Fostering hope for children and families.

*"Our Mission is to foster resilience in children and families so they can thrive."*

## Teaching Parent Role Description

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### The Role of the Teaching Parent

Our Teaching Parents are both caregivers and teachers. The Teaching Parent provides all the basic care, supervision, encouragement and guidance to children required of all parents and foster parents. As a teacher, you will be the primary agent of change helping a child overcome emotional and behavior problems and learn new skills needed to live successfully in a family and community.

Teaching Parents are **Trauma Informed**. You will need to respond to children's behavior in ways that may be very different from the ways you were raised and/or raised your own children. Parenting a child who has experienced trauma requires a shift in the way you think about childhood development as well as the way you communicate with and provide support for the child in your care. Becoming trauma informed opens up a new way of thinking about, and acting on, the behaviors you experience in your home. It can assist you in reducing power struggles, as you begin to make genuine strides toward improvement for the life of the child in your care.

### Why We Need Trauma Informed Caregivers

Children who enter foster care have experienced trauma. Being removed from one's home and family is traumatic. Often, children have experienced multiple traumatic events, in addition to entering foster care. Through experience, research and neuroscience, we know that Teaching Parents must not only create a safe home environment, but must also provide children a **sense** of safety through nurturing relationships with kind, caring, trustworthy caregivers.

Children and youth enter foster care with lots of past hurts from abuse and neglect and they experience the world differently because of this. These experiences have changed their brains and body, impacting how they see themselves and experience the world around them. When children are behaving in ways that confuse, frustrate or anger us, we encourage parents to remember to ask not "What is **wrong** with this child?" but "**What happened** to this child and how can I help them to **feel safe**?"

### Teaching Parent Responsibilities

While Teaching Parents are not employees, you will have a number of very important responsibilities which you will be expected to carry out in a professional manner. In addition to the day-to-day parenting chores of feeding, clothing, supervising, transporting, etc., Teaching Parents work to establish trusting relationships with hurt children. You will be expected to participate in team meetings, be an active participant in the child's services and goals and be willing to grow, change and learn throughout your journey as a Teaching Parent.

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You'll help children make, keep or strengthen permanent family connections. Teaching Parents understand the special nature of a child's relationship with his or her birth family and work hard to support and strengthen it, whenever that is possible. You will take an active role in helping your child and their family reunite when that is the goal of the child's placement plan. If return home is not possible, you may help prepare a child to live with relatives and assist that 'kinship' family in recognizing and responding to the child's needs. Many Teaching Parents are also certified for adoption and choose to adopt a child who cannot return home and for whom placement with relatives is not an option. Teaching Parents also assist children successfully transition to an adoptive home.

Teaching Parents also are team players. You will gain new relationships with children in your home, and often with birth family members. You will facilitate sibling contact for children who are not placed together in the same home. You'll be opening your home not only to children, but to agency staff, social workers, and other professionals involved with the child. Agency staff are in the Teaching Parents' home frequently for an hour or more. Consider this as you consider the nature of this work. Some people prefer to work alone. In therapeutic foster care, **we all work together**.

As a Teaching Parent, you are responsible for the day-to-day care of someone else's child. Regardless of what poor decisions were made or adverse circumstances the birth family has experienced, it is your duty to preserve the right for the birth family to participate in decisions about how care is provided for their child. Being a Teaching Parent means walking alongside the birth family in regard to treatment planning for their children. This might include attending school meetings and medical appointments with birth family present, in addition to other appointments and meetings.

Teaching Parents continually work to develop expertise to parent children who have been exposed to trauma. You will use skills taught in the Pre-Service Training on a daily basis and will participate in regular one to one training with agency staff, as well as support groups (optional) and monthly training articles/videos (required).

Teaching Parents also maintain daily records of their relationship with the child and report on a children's progress on specific goals. You will discuss these written and informal observations with staff on a regular basis during home visits and phone contacts. You may carry out individualized behavioral plans for the child in your care. These plans are designed to teach children skills needed to relate to others, live safely in a family and manage themselves.

Teaching Parents are members of a professional team led by a direct support staff, including a supervisor. The child, parents and the custodial agency caseworker are part of that team, which also may include the child's counselor/therapist, the child's special education teacher and other persons closely involved in the child's treatment. As a member of this team, you will be expected to bring a professional attitude to the role of teacher. By professional, we mean a commitment to be both responsible for completing your own tasks and responsive to others on the team working on behalf of the children and their families. Teaching Parents make a strong commitment to the children placed in their care.

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Social Services and People Places are expecting our Teaching Parents to provide the following for every child that is placed:

## Caregiver Duties

- Basic Care, Nutrition, Personal Space
- Physical, Medical, Dental Needs
- Safety & Supervision
- Transportation
- Emotional Support
- School/Academic Support
- Other Policy Requirements

## Therapeutic Duties:

- Safe and Trusting Relationships with the Child
- Referral/Admission activities
- Initial Planning Work
- Observe for Child Strengths, Consider Needs
- Collaborate with Program Staff
- Home Visits and Team Meetings
- Respite – taking breaks if and as needed
- Support for Other Therapeutic Services
- Inservice Training
- Treatment Planning, Delivery and Related Services
- Work with Birth Families
- Services to Client Agencies
- Record Keeping and Reporting
- Teamwork
- Performance Evaluation

*The most important tool People Places has to heal children is the relationship you have with children placed in your home. At times of crisis you will be expected to act in a professional manner and make all attempts to maintain a positive relationship with the child. There are rare occasions where children need to move to another placement due to safety concerns, transition to an adoptive home, etc. During these times of transition, you are still required to work to maintain the relationship and provide the basic care for the child as a planful transition occurs.*