

2020 Foster Care Redesign Overview



Since 2016, The Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) has been working to improve its foster care system. The Department envisions a family-based foster care system inclusive of robust services for a diverse set of foster families who can care for children and youth when they are not safe at home.

Over the past four years, DCYF has implemented several improvements focused on the recruitment, development and support of foster families – caregivers who provide out-of-home care to children and youth in the care and custody of the Department.

To continue improvement efforts, the DCYF has successfully renegotiated contracts with all its private foster care agencies. The core of these renegotiations was to ensure all foster families will have access to the same level of services and supports, based on the needs of the child(ren) or youth in their care, so all foster families can be successful. New private foster care agency contracts began August 1, 2020.

Previously, foster board maintenance rates, services for children and families, and payments to private foster care agencies varied greatly. The goal of this re-negotiation process is for all private agencies, foster families, and children to receive payments and services based on their Level of Need assessment. Level of Need assessment is sometimes referred to as “LON.”

The purpose of the LON assessment is to clearly identify what each child’s needs are, what kind of homes would be a best fit for their needs, and what services might be needed for that child. The LON assessment is the cornerstone of Rhode Island’s foster care re-design.

Part of the foster care re-design is to right-size how we place and serve children and youth in the care of DCYF. The Department wants to build a system that recruits and retains an appropriate number of kinship and traditional foster families, therapeutic foster homes, and congregate care placements based on the needs of children and youth in care.

The Department will retain kinship foster families and is building a unit to recruit and retain traditional foster homes for children and youth. As DCYF builds its capacity to serve traditional foster families, private foster care agencies will serve more therapeutic foster families – families who can serve youth with higher level needs. This hybrid model is common in other states and in our region. Massachusetts and Connecticut both have similar models. But both the Department and private agencies can support children and families with all Levels of Need.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.dcyf.ri.gov/be-an-anchor/>



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