Foster Care Team: Who You Will Work With in North Carolina

Foster care involves a team based approach. As a foster parent, you are a central, day to day caregiver who collaborates with many professionals focused on a child's safety, permanency, and well being.

Child Welfare & Legal System

DSS Social Worker (Child Welfare Worker)

- Employed by the county Department of Social Services (DSS)
- Case manager for the child and biological family
- Creates the child's and birth parent's case plan
- Coordinates services, visits, and court preparation
- Makes placement recommendations to the court and holds placement jurisdiction

CHS Licensing Social Worker

- Oversees licensing and pre-service training
- Compliance with foster homes
- Conducts biennial (every two years) relicensing
- Facilitates assessments of the family and preplacement studies (home studies).

CHS Placement Social Worker

- Conducts monthly home visits when a child(ren) are placed in the home and quarterly home visits
- Provides ongoing case management and support to child and family
- Liaison for family with DSS
- Supports family with policy, safety, and ongoing training needs.

Guardian ad Litem (GAL)

- Appointed by the court to represent the child's best interests
- Typically a team: Attorney Advocate, GAL Volunteer, GAL Program Supervisor
- Visits the child, speaks with foster parents, teachers, and providers
- Makes recommendations directly to the judge

Child's Attorney

- In some cases (especially older youth), the child may have an attorney
- Represents the child's legal wishes, which may differ from the GAL's position

Birth Parents' Attorneys

- Represent the child's parents in court
- Foster parents generally do not communicate with these attorneys directly

Judge / Court Officials

- District Court Judge presides over:
  - Nonsecure custody
  - Review hearings; Permanency planning hearings
  - TPR (Termination of Parental Rights)
- Relies heavily on reports from DSS and GAL

Health & Medical Professionals

Primary Care Doctor / Pediatrician

- Provides routine medical care
- Completes required foster care health screenings
- Communicates medical findings to DSS (with consent)

Health & Medical Professionals

Mental & Behavioral Health

Therapist / Counselor

- Individual therapy, play therapy, or trauma focused therapy
- May serve the child, birth family, or foster family
- Foster parents often provide input on behaviors and progress

Psychologist

- Conducts assessments, evaluations, testing, and diagnostics
- Often involved in trauma, attachment, or developmental evaluations

Psychiatrist

- Evaluates mental health needs and prescribes medications if needed
- Medication changes require DSS consent

Education System

Teacher(s)

- Daily educational contact
- Foster parents are often the primary school contact unless otherwise specified

School Counselor

- Supports emotional and academic needs
- May coordinate with DSS and therapists

EC (Exceptional Children) Case Manager

- Manages IEPs for children with disabilities
- Coordinates evaluations and school based services

McKinney Vento Liaison

- Ensures school stability and transportation for foster children

Visitation & Permanency Support

Visitation Supervisor / Parent Educator

- Supervises visits between child and birth family
- Provides feedback to DSS and court
- May coach parents during visits
- DSS Adoption Social Worker (if applicable)
- Becomes involved if plan changes to adoption
- Supports process to finalize adoption
- Supports transition, subsidy information, and post adoption services

Specialists

May include:

- Developmental pediatrician
- Psychiatrists
- Occupational, speech, or physical therapists

Dentist

- Required dental screenings and follow up care
- Foster parents usually manage appointments

Additional Support Roles

Foster Parent Trainer / Support Group Leader

- Provides training and peer support
- Often hosted by DSS or private agencies

Care Manager / LME MCO Representative

- Coordinates Medicaid funded mental health or developmental services

CHS Family Recruiter

- Recruits families interested in foster care
- Hosts information sessions
- Often the first point of contact with interested families
- Follows up with interested families to answer questions and address concerns

CHS Resource Team

- Connects with licensed families about potential child placement referrals
- Contact may be made via phone, email, or text message

CHS Child Focused Recruiter (CFR)

- Supports children in the Child-Focused Recruitment program for children with a plan of adoption
- Visits children in the program regularly

Quick Tip:
If you're ever unsure who to contact, start with your CHS social worker and they can point you in the right direction.