



About the PRIDE Model

Purpose

PRIDE is a model for the development and support of resource families. It is designed to strengthen the quality of family foster care and adoption services by providing a standardized, structured framework for recruiting, preparing, and selecting foster parents and adoptive parents. It also provides foster parent in-service training and ongoing professional development.

PRIDE is the result of a national cooperative effort. The program was developed through a multi-year project initiated by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. The project involved the collaboration of 14 state child welfare agencies, one private family foster care agency operating in several states, one foster parent association, two national resource centers, one foundation, and several universities and colleges. The name was selected by foster parents and adoptive parents in Illinois. It stands for **P**arent **R**esources for **I**nformation, **D**evelopment, and **E**ducation.

The program is based on the philosophy that the value of family life for children, however family is defined, is compelling. Because of this, knowledgeable and skilled foster parents and adoptive parents are integral to providing quality services. They, like social workers, should be qualified, prepared, developed, selected, and licensed or certified to work as members of a professional team equipped to protect and nurture children and strengthen families.

The **PRIDE** Program's goals are to help:

1. Meet the protective, developmental, cultural, and permanency needs of children placed with foster families and adoptive families.
2. Strengthen families, whether they are families of origin, blended families, extended or kinship families, foster families, adoptive families, or members of a tribe or clan.
3. Strengthen the quality of family foster care and adoption services by providing a standardized, structured framework for pre-service training and mutual assessment; for foster parent in-service training; and for ongoing professional development.
4. Share resources among public and voluntary child welfare agencies, colleges and universities, foster parent and adoptive parent associations, and national child welfare organizations.

Competency-based Approach

PRIDE is based on specific competencies (knowledge and skills) needed to perform successfully the tasks of foster and adoptive care. This approach begins with an analysis of those tasks. Specific activities needed to complete tasks are identified. Next, these tasks are formulated into a written 'role description'. The role description establishes the expectations for the foster parent and adoptive parent role.

After describing the tasks, the agency must ensure that foster parents and adoptive parents perform them. The **PRIDE** Program offers agencies an approach to training that builds necessary competencies. These competencies have been grouped into categories. The competencies also are arranged in sequence according to when they need to be learned, and organized by levels of depth of knowledge or skills involved.



Competency Categories

The **PRIDE** Program has established the following five essential competency categories:

- Protecting and nurturing children;
- Meeting children's developmental needs and addressing developmental delays;
- Supporting relationships between children and their families;
- Connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime; and
- Working as a member of a professional team.

These competencies 'drive' the entire mutual assessment, selection, preparation, support, and development process of resource families.

Sequence of Competencies

The **PRIDE** program has identified pre-service competencies for foster parents and adoptive parents, and core, advanced, and specialized competencies for foster parents.

Pre-service competencies are essential before a child is placed with a foster family or adoptive family. These competencies are addressed in the PRIDE Pre-service Training. An example of a pre-service competency is 'Foster parents and adoptive parents know the importance of promoting a child's positive sense of identity, history, culture, and values to help develop self-esteem'. The **PRIDE** training program addresses competencies and learning objectives that are shared by the fostering and adopting roles, and some that are specific to each. It is also recommended that state, county, and/or agency specific information, especially as related to the legal process of adoption, be inserted as indicated in the curriculum. **PRIDE** In-Service Module Eight covers additional adoption competencies for those states, counties, and/or agencies that have further requirements for adoption certification or licensing.

Core competencies are those competencies required of all foster parents, regardless of the child's condition or conduct. Core competencies are addressed in the modules of the PRIDE In-Service Training Program. They guide the agency's efforts to provide ongoing support to foster families. Core competencies are more effectively learned after the foster parent is licensed, certified, or approved, and a child is placed. They should be developed in the first two years of experience. An example of a core competency is 'Foster parents can support visits and other contact with child's family'.

Note: While the **PRIDE** Core was written for foster parents, many of the competencies addressed may also be helpful to adoptive parents. It is recommended that the agency invite adoptive parents to attend modules of interest to them.

As foster parents become more experienced, they will need *advanced* and *specialized* competencies. Advanced competencies build upon core competencies to further develop knowledge and skills that improve a foster parent's abilities to provide for children in care, and to work as a member of a professional team. An example of an advanced competency is 'Foster parents know the agency approved methods to de-escalate aggressive behavior,



prevent assaults, and provide physical restraint, and can use them appropriately'. Specialized competencies relate to a particular area of expertise, such as working with teen parents, caring for medically fragile infants, or preparing youths for independent living. An example of a specialized competency is 'Foster parents can use caregiving strategies to maximize the development of children who have been prenatally exposed to alcohol and other drugs'.

PRIDE competency categories:

- Protecting and nurturing children
- Meeting children's developmental needs, and addressing developmental delays
- Supporting relationships between children and their families
- Connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime
- Working as a member of a professional team.

Note: The **PRIDE** training program addresses pre-service competencies and learning objectives that are shared by the fostering and adopting roles, and some that are specific to each. The revised **PRIDE** curriculum addresses these adoption competencies. Some states and localities may have additional requirements for adoption certification that go beyond the identified competencies. In this situation it is recommended that the **PRIDE** In-Service Module 8: Promoting Permanency Outcomes be utilized to cover additional adoption competencies. Session Two of this module focuses solely on the adoption process. In addition, agencies will need to be prepared to cover state or locale specific information regarding the legal process of adoption, as legal procedures vary greatly across the country.

A Progression of Learning

In addition to the hierarchy of competencies that foster parents need to develop, there is also a progression of learning related to their performance of tasks. This progression consists of four levels of competencies, as defined by the Institute for Human Services. (Adapted from a resource sheet by Judith Rycus. (1991). 'Sequencing Curriculum'. Columbus, OH: Institute for Human Services)

The first level, *Awareness*, is achieved when foster parents acquire a conceptual framework for organizing new information. They become aware of why something is important to learn. A competency statement that reflects this desired level would state, for example, 'The foster parent is aware of the human need for connections and attachments'. This awareness is critical to being able to understand the effects of separation and loss.

For the second level of competence, *Knowledge/Understanding*, foster parents must have comprehensive, factual information. Using the example of separation and loss, a foster parent would 'know the stages of grieving as related to separation and loss'. Understanding is a higher level of knowledge: the ability to integrate knowledge with observed behavior. A foster parent who understands the stages of grieving would not only know what the stages are, but could interpret a child's behavior as a normal reaction associated with a particular stage.

The third level of competence, *Understanding How Knowledge and Skills Apply to the Job*, addresses the issue, 'How do I use this information?' A foster parent who has reached this level of competence 'knows how to do something' such as, 'knows how to assess a child's movement through the stages of grieving'.

The fourth and highest level of competence is *Skill Acquisition*. Competency statements including 'can do', and 'is able to', reflect this level. For example, 'the foster parent can use reflective listening to help a child express his or her feelings in response to being separated from his or her family'.

A progression of learning is essential for successful task performance. The PRIDE Program applies this concept by



sequencing when specific knowledge and skills should be acquired by resource families. For example, some competencies related to specific tasks need to be developed only at the awareness and knowledge levels during the pre-service training program. Prospective resource families will also need to know how to apply their understanding of important concepts to the job (level 3), and acquire skills to perform certain tasks (level 4) at the in-service stage of their professional development.

Guiding Principles

The **PRIDE** Program is guided by beliefs and principles, which serve as unifying themes throughout.

Promoting Children's Development

Knowledge about how children best grow and develop must be central to child welfare in general, and family foster care and adoption services specifically.

Keeping children safe, helping them maintain or develop nurturing attachments, promoting their self-esteem and cultural identity, and keeping them connected to lifetime relationships are all essential components of **PRIDE**.

The Importance of Parents and Families

PRIDE is based on the belief that parents and families have the strongest impact upon a child's development. The program acknowledges that all families need some support at some time. Separating children from parents is a serious measure that should be taken only after all efforts to prevent separation and to maintain children safely in their own homes have been explored. Family preservation is an essential component of a continuum of child welfare services, including in-home services, kinship care, family foster care, group/residential care, and adoption services.

The Value of Diversity and Cultural Competence

This program is based on the principle that becoming culturally aware, then responsive, and ultimately, culturally competent does not happen as the result of a training event. It is a process that happens as all members of the child welfare team work together to learn from each other in order to work together competently in serving children and families.

PRIDE's content closely connects respecting and affirming cultural identity with promoting self-esteem, and weaves this concept throughout the program.

Managing Loss

This program is based on the belief that loss is a natural part of life. It is part and parcel of family foster care and adoption services, and it triggers a grieving process. What varies is how people deal with it. To understand loss, cope with it, and be strong enough to manage the losses of others is essential to fostering and adopting.

The Importance of Teamwork

PRIDE recognizes that the needs of children and families at risk are so complex and perplexing that no social worker, foster parent, adoptive parent, family development specialist, supervisor, or administrator can manage alone. A contemporary poster states that the letters in "team" stand for "Together everyone achieves more." It is a goal of this program to help foster parents and adoptive parents learn and practice the skills for teamwork; it is the responsibility of everyone else in the agency to support that learning and practice.

Consistent with the philosophy of teamwork, **PRIDE** pre-service and **PRIDE** In-Service use a co-facilitator model. The



training team includes a child welfare social worker or child welfare educator, and an experienced foster parent or adoptive parent.

Role Clarity

PRIDE is based on the belief that children and their families can be served best when the role of each member of the professional team is defined, understood, and valued.

Foster parents, in particular, have been hampered in the past by a lack of role clarity; often they have been viewed as clients, colleagues, or something in between. Since children in care usually have special, if not extraordinary, needs, today's foster families and adoptive families are clearly *Resource Families*.

Combining Training for Prospective Foster Parents and Adoptive Parents

Combining pre-service training for both foster parents and adoptive parents is helpful for several reasons:

Both groups need the same basic information such as: the difference between family foster care and adoption services; separation, loss, and attachment; parenting a child born to someone else; the importance of birth families to children; parenting a child who has experienced the tragedy of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and/or maltreatment; how to transition a child to an adoptive family; and the impact of a new role on oneself, as well as one's marriage, family, work, and finances.

Adoptive parents need to fully understand the dynamics of family foster care and the probable experiences of children in care before they are adopted. Combining a pre-service program for prospective foster parents and adoptive parents also addresses the need for foster parents to learn about adoption dynamics, since many foster parents become adoptive parents of children in their care.

The combined program helps prospective foster parents and adoptive parents recognize important differences between fostering and adopting so they can make an informed and earnest commitment to the role they choose, or an informed decision not to foster or adopt.

Concurrent planning efforts encourage foster families to commit to reunification, while also committing to adopt the child if reunification cannot occur. Concurrent planning or permanency planning families need to be trained in both foster care and adoption issues.

The combined program approach models teamwork, increases the number of participants for the program (which may be helpful in rural areas), and is cost-effective for staff time and training resources.

Integrating Mutual Family Assessment and Group Preparation

This program is based on the belief that the integration of family assessment and group training facilitates a more accurate assessment decision, thereby reducing the likelihood of placement disruptions and further losses for children.

The family assessment, conducted through a series of "at-home consultations," focuses on the five competency categories. The subject matter of the assessment coincides with the content of the pre-service training sessions. Families are helped to consider the information learned during the sessions in relation to their strengths and needs, by applying this information to their current and past functioning. Assessment tools, called **PRIDE**



Connections, are used to facilitate this process.

Mutual Assessment and Informed Decisions

In the **PRIDE** Program, assessment is done 'with' (not 'to', 'for', or 'on') prospective resource families. The process involves identifying strengths and needs pertaining to the family's past and current functioning in relation to the five competency categories. This leads to an informed decision about the family's willingness and ability to participate as part of the professional child welfare services team.

The mutual assessment process leads to the following informed decisions:

- The family has the ability, willingness, and supports to foster or to adopt, and the agency is willing and able to work with them. The family is invited to select into the program.
- The family does not have the ability, willingness, and/or supports to foster or to adopt and selects out of the program.
- The family decides they do not have the ability, willingness, and/or supports to foster or to adopt, and, although the agency may disagree, the family selects out of the program.
- The family decides that they do have the ability, willingness, and supports to foster or to adopt but the agency disagrees. In this case, the family is not invited to select into the program and is counseled out.

The philosophy of **PRIDE** is that the process is mutual. However, the final decision to select in, select out, or counsel out may not be mutual. The family always has the right to decline the invitation based on its own self-assessed strengths and needs. The agency has the right to extend (or not) the invitation, based on its legal mandate to protect and nurture children, and strengthen families.

Mutual assessment is an ongoing process that extends throughout the family-agency working relationship. For example, decisions regarding the types of supports the foster family may need are based on a mutual assessment process.



PRIDE's 14-step **Process to Develop and Support Resource Families**. Overall implementation of these steps is the responsibility of agency staff charged with administering family foster care and adoption programs. Daily implementation is the responsibility of the Family Development Specialist in collaboration with the team of individuals who work with foster parents and adoptive parents.

The **Family Development Specialist** is the title used in PRIDE materials to refer to the person responsible for recruiting, assessing, preparing, licensing, or certifying foster parents and adoptive parents, and providing ongoing support. Job titles of the persons performing these tasks vary from agency to agency, and include licensing staff, adoption specialists, home finders, family resource workers, and foster home coordinators.

Process to Develop and Support Resource Families

- 1** Identify agency mission and goals
- 2** Define role, tasks, and competencies
- 3** Conduct local needs assessment
- 4** Develop community education and recruitment strategies
- 5** Respond to inquiries
- 6** Prepare for **PRIDE** program; mail information packet
- 7** Conduct initial at-home family consultation meeting
- 8A** Provide **PRIDE** training
- 8B** Continue mutual family assessment
- 9** Complete mutual assessment; make decision for foster parent licensing or for referral for certification for adoption
- 10** Provide adoption certification
- 11** Complete Family Development Plan with foster parents
- 12** Collaborate with foster parents and adoptive parents as team members; conclude formal relationship with the adoptive family
- 13** Provide **PRIDE** In-Service; advanced and specialized training; and other supports
- 14** Conclude formal relationship with foster families



Components of PRIDE

As the preceding diagram indicates, there are two major components of **PRIDE**:

I. Developing Resource Families

The Recruitment, Preparation, and Assessment Component is comprised of Steps 1 through 10. Its primary aspects include:

- Recruitment—Guidelines and activities to assist agencies in conducting local needs assessments; developing community education and recruitment strategies; and responding to inquiries.
- Preparation—**PRIDE** Pre-Service, a nine session (27 hour) pre-service training program designed for prospective foster parents and adoptive parents.
- Mutual Assessment—A series of meetings, called at-home family consultations, conducted by the Family Development Specialist with prospective resource families. The meetings are designed to help the families assess their strengths and needs for support in relation to the five competency categories. The subject matter of the meetings relates directly to the content of the pre-service training sessions. Assessment tools, referred to as **PRIDE Connections**, are used to help consider the family's past and current functioning as it relates to the competency categories.

II. Supporting Resource Families

The Ongoing Professional Development Component includes Steps 11 through 14. Its primary aspects include:

- **PRIDE** Is an in-service training program for foster parents consisting of a variety of modules (over 90 hours of training) that address core knowledge and skills that are needed by all foster parents. Example of core modules include 'Responding to the Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Abuse' and 'Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity'.
- Advanced Competencies and Curricula build upon core competencies to further develop knowledge and skills. Advanced competencies and curricula address such topics as domestic violence and are applicable to all foster parents.
- Specialized Foster Parent Competencies and Curricula prepare foster parents for a certain area of expertise such as working with children with ADHD or working with adolescents.
- The Family Development Plan (FDP)—A written plan, developed by the family and agency together, describing a foster family's competencies, annual training goals, method for reaching those goals, and how to determine if goals have been met. The FDP helps foster parents and agencies determine how to get the right training to the right foster parents.

Implementation of the PRIDE Model

Successful implementation of the **PRIDE** model requires the commitment of staff at all levels of the organization and across all program areas, including the agency director, managers, supervisors, and social workers, as well as foster parents and adoptive parents.

The necessity for such broad-based commitment becomes clear when the five essential competency categories are stated as desired outcomes of agency practice, as follows:



Children needing family foster care or adoption:

- Will be protected and nurtured;
- Will have their developmental needs met and developmental delays addressed;
- Will be given support for their relationships with their families;
- Will be connected to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime; and
- Will have these needs met by foster parents, adoptive parents, social workers, and others, who work together as a professional team.

Achieving these goals will take the effort of everyone within the agency. Managers must provide support, direction, and resources. Program staff must ensure that agency policies and procedures support the **PRIDE** model. Supervisors and social workers must work with foster parents and adoptive parents as team members, and training staff and Family Development Specialists must support prospective and experienced foster parents and adoptive parents.

In addition, Family Development Specialists and trainers, including foster parent and adoptive parent co-trainers, will need preparation to implement the **PRIDE** mutual assessment process and group training program; trainers will also need preparation to deliver the **PRIDE** In-Service. The **PRIDE** materials provide the supports needed. For most agencies, implementation represents the challenge of designing and managing major organizational change.

Successful implementation requires planning and coordination. A multi-year effort is usually required. The following recommendations for implementation are drawn from the experiences of the agencies that initiated the **PRIDE** program.

Secure agency management support for reviewing the model

The agency's director and senior managers must be fully informed about the program from the beginning and on an ongoing basis. The director's permission must be obtained to convene a group to consider the potential advantages and possible obstacles to selecting and implementing the **PRIDE** model.

Convene an advisory group

The advisory group should include managers, supervisors, and social workers from all program areas, a representative of the foster parent association and the adoptive parent association, other experienced foster parents and adoptive parents, the training director, and, if applicable, representatives of universities or colleges contracted to provide the agency's pre-service and/or in-service training.

Prepare the advisory group

The group should be given complete information about the **PRIDE** model, including its competency-based training approach, its philosophy and principles, materials and processes, and the implications for agency program, policy, practice, and resources.

Assess the appropriateness of the model and the agency's readiness to implement

The advisory group must determine whether the outcomes the **PRIDE** program advances are consistent with agency goals; if so, the group must complete a preliminary assessment of the agency's readiness to implement, including agency strengths and barriers in five areas:



1. The ability and willingness of staff, foster parents, and adoptive parents to work together as members of a professional team;
2. The current level of knowledge and skill of family development staff and trainers to carry out the 14-step process to develop and support resource families;
3. The degree of consistency between the role of foster parents and adoptive parents as described in agency policies and practice standards, and their role in the **PRIDE** model as members of a professional team;
4. The availability of resources to train staff, foster parents, and adoptive parents in the **PRIDE** model; and
5. The availability of resources to staff the **PRIDE** mutual assessment and group preparation program, and the **PRIDE** Core training.

Secure management support

The advisory group's assessment of the agency's readiness to implement must be shared with the director, and his/her permission secured to proceed. The group should be officially designated by the director as the project advisory committee charged with making recommendations regarding all aspects of implementation.

Establish an implementation team

The director should also appoint an implementation team responsible for carrying out the advisory group's recommendations. This team should consist of the directors of family foster care, adoption, training, and evaluation; senior program specialists responsible for foster care and adoption policy, including licensing; a representative of the senior manager responsible for field operations; a foster parent and an adoptive parent; and any other key staff who have major responsibilities for the operation of the agency's foster care and adoption programs.

The formation of an implementation team may vary depending on the size of the agency and the nature of the implementation. In some situations the Advisory Group expands and begins to take on the functions of the Implementation Team. In other situations the Implementation Team is organized and works under the direction of the Advisory Group. While the process may differ, the critical task is to ensure ongoing participation and oversight of the implementation process. Agencies that have been the most successful in implementation of the model have been those agencies that have recognized the importance of planning and implementation.

Develop a long-range plan

The advisory group must develop a long-range plan, which addresses training, policy, staffing and other resource issues, and evaluation. Usually the advisory group will divide into subgroups, each charged with responsibility for one of these areas. As the group proceeds, its recommendations should be presented periodically to the agency's senior management for approval.

Involve the entire agency

It is critical that field staff, including managers, supervisors, and social workers, are kept informed of and involved in the planning process from the beginning. Informational sessions should be planned to let them know about the program and its effect on their role, and to give them an opportunity to ask questions and give suggestions. Experienced foster parents and adoptive parents should be invited to participate in these or similar informational meetings. Information can also be disseminated through articles in intra-agency newsletters, and newsletters of the foster parent and adoptive parent association. Keeping senior managers and the field informed of the progress of implementation is the responsibility of the implementation team, working in conjunction with the advisory group.