



# TN-KEY Overview

## Foster Parent Pre-Service Training

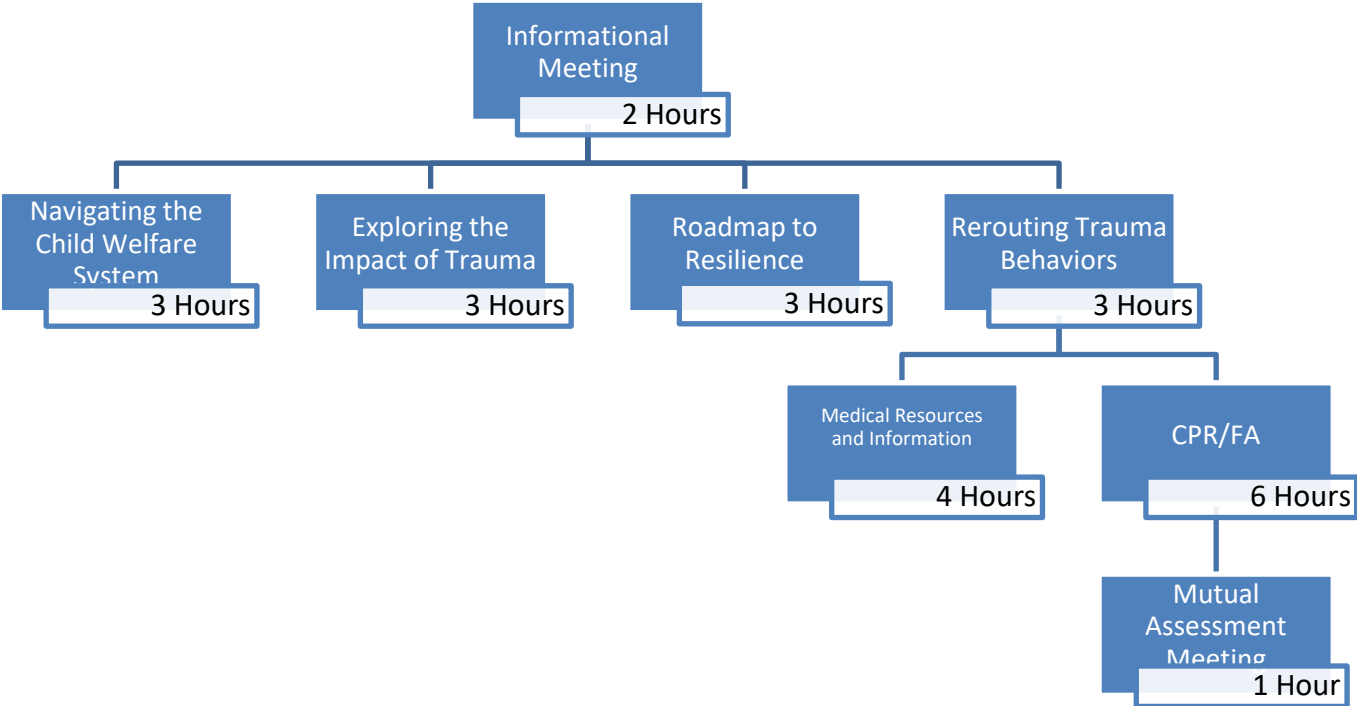
Office of Training and Professional Development

Tennessee Department of Children's Services | Ver. 23.12.1



# TN KEY Course Overview

The TN Department of Children’s Services requires all potential foster, kinship, and adoptive parents to attend 25 hours of Pre-approval training.



## **DCS TN-KEY Informational Meeting**

The DCS TN-KEY Informational Meeting provides prospective foster parents with information on the training and approval process to become a foster parent. During the 2-hour session, prospective foster parents learn about the types of children and families served by the child welfare system. Information will also be shared regarding the possible reasons children may need placement, the differences between foster care, adoption and kinship care as well as the importance of permanency when considering placement options for children. Prospective foster parents will learn about the possible challenges of raising a child who has experienced trauma and will be encouraged to assess their ability to partner with birth parents, DCS, and service providers.

## **Module 1: Navigating the Child Welfare System**

### **Overview of Module**

The DCS TN-KEY (Knowledge Empowers You) training curriculum was developed for the purpose of providing prospective foster parents with the most trauma-informed information to help assist in navigating their journey through foster care. This 3-hour module was designed to provide a framework for how to navigate the often-complex child welfare system while focusing on partnership with courts, agencies, caseworkers, birth families, and those that make up their Eco-Map. Participants are guided through the Permanency Plan development process while learning the function of a Child and Family Team meeting. An important aspect of this module is the need to identify resources that can provide support to the foster family after a foster child placement. Participants receive information on respite resources and are encouraged to network with other prospective foster parents in class so they can assist one another.

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## **Module 2: Exploring the Impact of Trauma**

### **Overview of Module**

Trauma among foster children is generally high, if for no other reason than entering the child welfare system. This 3-hour module explores the science behind toxic stress and trauma especially on brain development, behavior and overall health. After defining trauma, national experts discuss the ACEs study, along with how chemicals released during stressful events create a fight, flight, flee, or freeze response that helps us to survive real and perceived threats. At the center of trauma is a loss so profound that it can delay the development of the pre-frontal cortex which controls our executive functioning that enables us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully.

This module examines the types of abuse that bring children into foster care based on Tennessee policy. Participants learn that physical neglect is not only the number one reason children come into care, but also how detrimental it can be to the child's brain development and over-all health. Participants also learn the stages of grief and loss. They participate in a "Loss Circle " activity that demonstrates the profound loss children experience when every familiar connection is lost at once due to entering foster care.

## **Module 3: Roadmap to Resiliency**

### **Overview of Module**

Overcoming the effects of trauma requires that foster children build resilience through the development of secure attachments from serve and return interactions within a stable, committed relationship with caregivers. Secure attachment “inoculates children against toxic stress” and “paves the way for children to learn to regulate emotions.” (K. Hoffman)

The goal of this 3-hour module is to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to build resilience in foster children by understanding how attachment occurs when the Circle of Security model is successfully implemented, while utilizing the “Regulate, Relate, and Reason” techniques created by Dr. Bruce Perry. Additionally, there is a review of the resilience scale that shows how children of all ages and backgrounds can improve resilience and healing through the implementation of the secure attachment cycle and parental attunement.

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## **Module 4: Rerouting Trauma Behaviors**

### **Module Overview**

Children that have developed behaviors to survive their traumatic experiences must rely on caregivers to provide “felt safety” in order for them to reach the executive functioning of their brain. Trauma literally hijacks a child’s amygdala causing their responses to come from a place of fear and memories of adverse childhood experiences. Experience has shown us that traditional methods of correction are not effective when working with children from the foster care system, and alternative methods must be adopted in order to effectively teach new behaviors.

The goal of this 3-hour module is to recognize that discipline is teaching. Children who have not been exposed to healthy stress responses need caregivers who can remain regulated and persistent enough to provide age appropriate direction to trauma behaviors, while adhering to Tennessee’s non-negotiable Discipline Policy. Additionally, rerouting techniques will be presented and applied to previously discussed trauma behaviors offering an opportunity to practice skills before children are placed in the home.