

Improving Customer Service

PROSPECTIVE PARENT ORIENTATION SESSIONS

10 Things You Can Do

For many prospective parents, orientation sessions provide their first in-depth introduction to the adoption process and your agency. This interaction lays the groundwork for prospective parents' relationships with your agency. The experience that prospective parents have at the orientation session will send important messages about how welcoming, supportive and encouraging your agency is. Focusing on ways to incorporate good customer service principles into this session can help make sure that the messages parents receive about your agency are positive.

- 1 Provide clear, detailed directions to the location—including directions for where to park and where to enter the building—to everyone who expresses interest in attending the orientation session. Providing this information helps reduce parents' concerns about finding the location; it also sends a nice message that you're anticipating their questions and wanting to help them navigate the adoption process from the very first step.
- 2 Reserve the best parking spots at the orientation location for the prospective parents. Arrange to ask staff and speakers to park farther away from the front door.
- 3 Hold the orientation session in a room that is welcoming, clean and friendly. You can help create a positive environment in the room by displaying youth artwork, pictures of youth and photos of diverse families.
- 4 As part of your presentation at orientation sessions, be clear about the agency's nondiscrimination policy and the diversity of families that you welcome (e.g., single parents, same-sex couples, people who rent rather than own homes, etc.). Being explicit about seeking a wide variety of families—and your agency's commitment to encouraging and supporting them throughout the process—will help make prospective parents feel welcome, accepted and valued.
- 5 Provide prospective parents with a map or outline of the adoption process in your agency so they can see where they are in the process and understand the expected timeframes for completing upcoming steps in the process.
- 6 Provide national, State and local data on the number of children in care, the children who are waiting for adoption and what the needs of the agency are.
- 7 Ensure that trainers and presenters are well informed and can speak well to a public audience.
- 8 Have PowerPoint presentations, notebooks and handouts that are easy to read, accurate and consistent, so that families get the same information no matter what office or trainer provides the information.
- 9 Presenting videos, pictures and scenarios or actual people who can give a sense of the children in foster care as well as what the agency is looking for in terms of foster and adoptive parents makes the situation more real for those attending.
- 10 Provide clear information about costs, fees, reimbursements and other details that families will need in order to make an informed decision about whether to pursue foster care or adoption.



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