# Courage Community Foster Care Program Goals

**Commitment**: Courage families are expected to make a commitment to each child they accept into their home. Our definition of commitment is that we do everything in our power to keep a child in placement until permanency can be reached. In general, foster parents should plan on at least a year until a permanent plan can be made for the child.

Permanency can mean several things: emancipation, return home, relative placement (including psychological kin or family friends), adoption by your family or adoption by another family.

There is no such thing as ‘temporary placement’. If you accept placement of a child, be prepared to work as hard as you can to maintain that child in your home for at least a year. If you are not ready to make that kind of commitment, please don’t accept a child for placement. This includes if you have any plans to move out of the area, take a long vacation (without children) or to start a new job. I have heard many stories of referral that start out as ‘just for a few days’ or ‘a weekend’, and turn into months and months, if not adoptive cases.

Know your limits. If you can’t transport outside a certain distance, make sure we are aware of that in advance. It’s perfectly ok to say no if you are hesitant. It’s better to do that before a child is placed than realize after the fact that you can’t accommodate that child.

Ask for help. If you don’t ask, we can’t guess what you are needing. If it’s hands on help, help with transportation, phone coaching for difficult behaviors, housekeeping assistance- whatever it is that can help you make that year long commitment, tell us. We can work out a plan.

If you are feeling stressed with your current responsibilities, think twice about accepting another child for placement. If you partner is not on board with accepting a child for placement, please say no. We pledge to never hold this against you.

Moving foster homes is intensely damaging and traumatizing to children. Courage was built on the hypothesis that we could do it better than other agencies. And we DO. Our disruption rate is almost non-existent. Let’s work together to keep it that way.

**Professionalism:** We expect our foster parents to present professionally in their written and verbal communication.

**Reports:** please make every effort to ensure that your reports are thorough, neatly compiled, and have all necessary documentation attached each month. It’s important that these are timely and complete. This is the face of our agency; we want to demonstrate that we are for our children in line with rules and regulations, and we want to help make the caseworker’s job easier. When documents are timely and complete, audits for the agency and the county are a breeze. This reflects well on the foster family and the CPA.

**Home visits:** caseworkers and Guardians ad Litem are overworked and carry dozens of children on their caseloads. They are very difficult jobs, and impossible to do perfectly. Please know this going in, and give your team professionals the benefit of the doubt that they are doing their best. Kindness, assertiveness (as opposed to aggressiveness) and forgiveness go a long way in establishing positive relationships with team members.

**Team meetings:** Please attend as many team meetings as possible, so that you can advocate for your foster children. This includes attending court when possible, administrative reviews, team decision meetings, family team meetings and VOICES meetings. We will try our best to attend as well in support of our families.

**Self-Care:** A necessary component of what we do is having the COURAGE to look within ourselves. Too often, our foster children, or the system at large, becomes the focus of our frustrations. We need to spend at least as much time managing our own emotions as we do trying to control others’.

We know that all negative emotions emerge from a state of fear. When we, as caretakers, are experiencing negative emotions, we must first look within to understand the origins of our fear, and address that. Until we become practitioners of self-management, we cannot be in a position to manage others. We must work to increase our own stress tolerance through exercise, diet, participating in relaxing/fulfilling activities, and practicing mindfulness, so that we may be better equipped to handle what is in front of us.