

Family Specialist Job Description

Post Date: September 15, 2017

Program: Chosen Affirming Family

Reports to: Associate Director

Job Location: Cleveland, OH office w/ limited travel throughout NE Ohio region

Salary: \$49,920/yr

Benefits: Medical, Dental, Retirement

Program Description

Youth who identify as LGBTQ are over-represented in the foster care system. A study of children in the custody of Los Angeles County found that 19% identified on the LGBTQ spectrum. Many times, children enter care due to rejection from their biological families when they begin to explore and express their SOGIE. Cuyahoga County recently completed a survey of their social work staff and found that only 1.9% of the children were identified on the LGBTQ spectrum. This low number can be attributed to worker bias, discomfort with engagement of the youth, and the perceived safety risk for the youth. In partnership with Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services, Case Western Reserve University, and the LGBT Center of Greater Cleveland the Waiting Child Fund is working to address the unique safety and permanency needs of LGBTQ youth in our community. Our collaborative efforts are designed to achieve the following goals:

1. Develop a framework and practice approach for youth to safely identify and express their SOGIE
2. Form a PRIDE Network of Foster Homes and PRIDE Youth Board to advocate and educate on behalf of youth who identify as LGBTQ in the foster care system
3. Implement the Chosen Affirming Family model to provide family acceptance work with biological family members, conduct Family Finding on behalf of youth, and to move youth to emotional and legal permanency with their lifelong permanent family

LGBTQ youth who experience foster care are more likely (than non-LGBTQ youth in care) to experience homelessness, rejection, physical and verbal abuse, and compounding trauma during their time in foster care. Long-term foster care is not a solution for children who have been rejected and/or removed from their biological families. Emancipating youth from care without permanent connections leaves them with higher rates of depression, suicide, illegal drug use, and high rates of STD's and HIV. Fortunately our partners, Seneca Family of Agencies and Family Builders by Adoption in Oakland, CA, have many years of experience providing specialized permanency and family acceptance services to youth and are committed to helping the Waiting Child Fund bring their expertise to Cuyahoga County. The Family Specialist will have the unique opportunity of helping youth to safely identify as LGBTQ and to achieve permanency outside of the foster care system.

Position Summary

The Family Specialist works directly with youth in the custody of Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (CCDCFS) who identify as LGBTQ with the goal of connecting them with a safe, loving, and permanent family. The role is designed to utilize three successful permanency planning strategies of 1) Family Acceptance, 2) Family Finding, and 3) Youth-Driven Planning. The Family Specialist will also be responsible for modeling and coaching these practices within the child's team and in collaboration with the Family Finding unit within CCDCFS.

Additional collaborative efforts will include work with the LGBT Center of Greater Cleveland, Case Western Reserve University, A Place for Me at the YWCA, Family Builders by Adoption in Oakland, CA. and the University of Maryland.

Responsibilities

- Work with families and other caregivers of targeted youth to build or rebuild relationships, educate and train, and provide other support as needed where there are challenges for family members in regards to the youth's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Follow up with family and caregivers of youth who have high incidences of absent without leave (AWOL) and are identified by their caseworker to be high risk youth.
- Execute the 7 steps to Family Finding for youth to build network of affirming relationships.
- Maintain connections log, genogram, placement trail, and other connections tracking tools for youth.
- Learn and utilize the tools and resources from the Family Acceptance Project.
- Facilitate youth-driven permanency planning meetings.
- Provide families with appropriate resources and services.
- Engagement with youth will be in concert with the caseworker in reviewing the history and needs of the youth and family.
- Conduct home visits with family members and accompanies case worker and others on the team on home visits as needed.
- Provide consultation to case worker and other providers regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Provide and coordinate training regarding LGBTQ youth to CWW's, families; providers and caregivers.
- Follow up with youth and family at 60, 90, 120 days to measure stabilization post placement and reconnect to resources if needed.
- Attend TDMs, Family Meetings, and Permanency Meetings for youth.
- Embraces and supports a culture of continual improvement.
- Participates in Waiting Child Fund staff and team meetings.
- Other duties as requested.

Qualifications

Bachelor's Degree (Master's Degree strongly preferred) in social work, psychology, child development or a related field. Experience facilitating family meetings and working with youth in the foster care system is preferred. Experience providing support to highly at-risk youth is strongly preferred. Experience working with African American and Latino families. Knowledge and experience assessing relevant public and community resources in Cuyahoga County is preferred. Ability to develop positive relationships with clients, colleagues and supervisors; ability to work with a variety of families and youth; ability to convene groups of individuals; ability to talk to families who have not been affirming and help them move towards acceptance of their youth's sexual orientation or gender identity; ability to provide LGBTQ training to families, foster families, group home providers and caseworkers. Skills and experience working in multicultural settings and through an intersectional lens. Ability to frequently remain in a stationary position, at a workstation or in the car. Ability to occasionally lift up to 25 pounds. Ability to frequently type and use a computer. Must have valid driver's license, access to a car, and be willing to travel. Commitment to the mission of Waiting Child Fund.

Please send resume and cover letter to Amy Milroy at amy@waitingchildfund.org.