

Adoption Subsidy Workgroup Recommendations for the current NAPR tool

This workgroup is a collaboration of professionals working in the area of foster care and adoption. Workgroup members represent agencies with membership in the Family Focused Treatment Association and the Nebraska Adoption Agencies Association. The Nebraska Foster Care Review Office and Nebraska Foster and Adoptive Parent Association are also represented. The workgroup has focused efforts on reviewing the revised NAPR tool and offers the following recommendations.

Process:

It is understood that the NAPR will be introduced to families when it has been determined that the family is committed to adoption or guardianship. The reimbursement rate using the NAPR does not change until after adoption/guardianship finalization.

It is recommended that the NAPR tool be introduced as soon as the family has made a commitment to permanency with the child and as the assessment of the match for adoption or guardianship begins. The tool should be used in collaboration with the home study process and overall assessment of the permanency match.

When assessing subsidy increase requests, it is recommended that the process be revised. It is recommended that the process of how and why subsidy increases are granted be examined that that creative and innovative thought be put into a new process and structure. Our group had discussion around how additional “money” empowers a parent to meet increased needs of their child. It is recommended that this be explored from the perspective of what additional services does the family need and how that particular service can be paid for by HHS instead of increasing the amount of “money” the family receives. We understand that most requests are made when youth have increased behaviors or mental health needs and simply adding more funds to their monthly reimbursement does not typically meet the need. It is recommended that a system of HHS financially covering services that families cannot cover with their subsidy for the period of time needed instead of increasing the monthly stipend be explored.

Overall recommendations for the NAPR tool:

Our workgroup spent time discussing the use of weighting categories of the NAPR. The workgroup did not have a unanimous recommendation for this, however, the majority of group members feel the tool should continue to use weighting to highlight categories that are seen as more significant.

It is recommended that the title of tool be changed to include language that suggests it is used for guardianship as well as adoption. A suggestion is “Nebraska Permanency Resource Responsibility Tool”. If the title cannot be changed, it is recommended that a separate tool be created for guardianships.

The bullets for the definitions in each level makes the expectations very clear and we hope this can be used for the NCR as well. Perhaps this has been updated on the revised version of the NCR.

Nebraska Adoptive Parent Subsidy Tool:

It is recommended that a statement about how to use the tool, when it is completed, who is present when it is completed, and how does that discussion and rating occur be included.

Subsidized Adoption:

It is recommended that the language of “in stable homes” be changed to “with stable families” as families raise children, not homes. We recommend that guardianship language be added to this and the title of this heading be changed if the tool will be used for adoption and guardianship.

Request for Subsidy Increase:

Please consider the process recommendation which would require a change in this language.

LOR1-Medical/Physical Health and Well Being

-In the current system of weighting, it is recommended that this continued to be a weighted category.

-It is recommended that participation in OT, PT, and Speech be in L2 instead of L3. There are many youth who receive these services who would not be considered to have special medical needs. We suggest that L3 be reserved for youth with high medical needs or are deemed “medically fragile”.

LOR2-Family Relationships/Cultural Identity

-In the current system of rating, it is recommended that this be a weighted category due to what we know about the success of adoption when family connections are maintained.

-It is recommended that the language “as determined safe and appropriate by the parent” be taken out for L1-L3. It gives an easy out as parents can (and in our experience do) say they don’t think it’s safe and/or appropriate when we know that most of the time safety can be managed and it’s rarely inappropriate to have some type of connection or contact. It seems like this gets away from where we want to go as a system.

-If a parent is not meeting their child’s needs even as outlined in L1, it is recommended that the family be assessed for further education and training needs before moving forward with the adoption or guardianship process.

-L1 seems to really be saying the parent supports things in general and helps youth have knowledge of their family of origin (except siblings-it specifies they foster these connections). We know that fostering connections with all important persons for a child is just as important towards the development of a positive identity.

-It is recommended that the items in L2 should be in L1 as they are basics that an adoptive parent or guardian should do. L2 should also include in person contact with family members that parents don’t need to be mediating potential safety issues to make happen.

-In L3 it is suggested that parents should be making these connections happen despite safety issues they have to mediate. It is recommended that the language in the descriptions specifically reference mediating safety concerns by providing supervision when deemed necessary as opposed to “as determined safe and appropriate by parent”. It is also recommended that the language in the description references ongoing contact with siblings and family members.

LOR3-Supervision/Structure/Behavioral and Emotional

-LOR3 and LOR6 seem to be very alike. It is not understood why these are two separate categories. It is recommended that LOR6 and LOR3 be combined into LOR3, and LOR 3 be renamed. A suggestion would be “Structure for Behavioral, Emotional, and Mental Safety and Well Being”.

- It is recommended that mental health be further defined when combining the categories.
- In L2, It is recommended that “consults with psychiatric, mental health, or other treating professionals” be included rather than using the term “medical”.

LOR4-Education/Cognitive Development

- It is recommended that a 504 plan be added to all levels as currently only the IEP is referenced.
- In L1, It is recommended that participating in an IEP alone should still be a L1. We suggest that In order to move to a L2, the parent should be implementing specific strategies from the IEP in the home outside of school hours.
- In L2, It is recommended that the first definition of L3 be moved back up to a L2. More than one meeting per year doesn’t seem above and beyond unless there are things they have to have specialized training on in order to meet the educational or developmental needs.
- In L3, It is recommended that responsibilities such as the parent getting called to the school more than twice per month due to the child’s unwillingness to participate in education, behaviors in the classroom, expulsions, going to the school to sit with the child in order to allow them to stay in the classroom, be added.

LOR5-Socialization/Age Appropriate Expectations

- The group has no recommendations for this category.

LOR6-Support/Nurturance/Well-Being

- It is recommended that this be combined LOR3 and renaming the category. Please see suggestion under LOR3.

LOR7-Family Stability

- It is recommended that this be changed to include permanency/adoption focused responsibilities to include permanency specific trainings and demonstration of knowledge of permanency across the lifespan. We would recommend the following replace the current LOR7 category.

LOR7 SPECIALIZED SKILLS

- L1 Parent maintains open communication with professionals when needed to support the child. Parent assesses the child’s progress and adjustment to the adoptive home and contacts appropriate supports with identified concerns when necessary
 - Definition:
 - Parent creates a written community resource list of local supports and specialized adoption resources that will assist the family in meeting the child’s needs.
 - Parent works to maintain the stability of the adoption.
 - Parent communicates openly with professionals when needed to support the child.
 - Parent seeks out knowledge and skills to support the youth in the home. (we deleted the last sentence)
- L2 The child’s/youth’s needs require parental expertise that is developed through (took out experience) participating in adoption support groups (or group specific to another need of the child), a mentor support, (deleted in-service trng as it everyone marks this now and submits things that don’t apply

such as MANDT) and/or other adoption specific preparation training in order to better understand and meet the needs of the child.

- Definition
 - Parent attends adoption specific training to better understand the current and potential future needs of children and families in adoption.
 - Parent must utilize specialized knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to the specific needs of the child. Interventions provided by the parent must be based upon training recommendations or be in collaboration and/or consultation of other relevant professionals.
 - Documentation from the involved professional and/or certificates of specialized training relevant to the child is required.
 - Parent participates in a support group specific to the child's needs.
 - Parent participates in family support services to learn skills to better meet the child's needs.
- L3 The child's/youth's needs currently require daily or at least weekly involvement/participation by the parent as determined by professionals treating the child/youth.
 - Definition
 - Parent provides intensive treatment, as directed by involved professionals, in the home to maintain the child in the home.
 - Parent participates in Intensive Family Preservation Services in the home.
 - Parent provides medically necessary services in collaboration with medical professionals such as use of feeding tubes and other specialized medical equipment.
 - Post-adoption, the family works with adoption support services to keep the family intact.

LOR8-Life Skills/Developmental Transitions

-It is recommended that this category be deleted from the tool. These are all parenting responsibilities of all parents as a child grows.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback. If there are any questions or clarification needed regarding the recommendations, you can contact Michelle Moline at mmoline@nchs.org.