

ETO® Software PSM Overview



Performance Starter Model

Foster Family Recruitment & Retention

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Introduction

ETO software is performance management software designed to support an internally driven continuous improvement process. A performance starter model (PSM) is a starting point for ETO configuration. It is based on research and Social Solutions' experience, and it is designed to support driving to desired outcomes by making data useful at all levels of an organization, from frontline staff to executive leadership.

The PSM described in this overview is designed to support the recruitment and retention of foster families. It was developed in collaboration with Tara Lain, project director at the Regional Training Academy at the California Social Work Education Center (CALSWEC). CALSWEC uses ETO software for the Self-Evaluation Program, which supports counties in the collection of child welfare "gap" data, data not included in the state's SACWIS system. The PSM was designed to meet the needs of California, but it can be adapted to any other state.

This PSM may be combined with two other PSMs: 1) "Foster Care," designed primarily for nonprofits that provide services to children and their birth parents; and 2) "Independent Living for Foster Youth."

This document outlines the components of – and rationale behind – this PSM. It starts with an overview of how the PSM can be used to realize the full value of ETO software, followed by an introduction to ETO terminology relevant to understanding this document. That is followed by sections discussing how the PSM can be used to know and reach one's target population, track service delivery, and use the data to manage performance. The appendices include a list of recommended trainings, key administrator preparations before staff begin using this PSM, a quick reference guide designed to be used after viewing the recorded training available in the ETO Help Manual for this PSM, and a list of all forms and fields that feed the custom reports. All references to ETO functionality appear in italics.

IMPORTANT: The ETO administrators of agencies using this configuration may remove forms and fields that are not relevant to their programs and add other forms and fields that are unique to them. Please familiarize yourself with this document, including all of the appendices, before making changes to the PSM. It is important to understand the implications potential changes may have for reports, for instance, before proceeding. Should you choose to make changes to this PSM that result in loss of functionality in any of the associated reports, it is your responsibility to modify the reports to work for the modified configuration, or purchase services to help you do so.

What it Takes to Make a Difference

Producing positive social outcomes takes more than what is typically invested. In the past few decades of randomized, controlled trials (RCTs), it has become clear that, *in practice*, social programs have very limited effects. A great deal of research has been done to identify evidence-based programs and practices, but while those programs have been shown to make a difference when studied in a controlled setting, they typically are not subsequently implemented as designed in real life, and therefore do not have the same effects (Fixsen & Blase, 2012).

The key question, in the context of evidence-based programs, has become: What does it take to implement programs with fidelity, so that they will have the same positive effects? While fidelity is much discussed in the context of evidence-based programs and practices, it is equally relevant to programs that are not (yet) evidence-based.

In both cases, core components – the "most essential and indispensable components of an intervention practice or program" – must be implemented as designed (Fixsen et al., 2005). For those that implement un-proven interventions, implementing the program with consistency across staff, locations, and over time is necessary before it is worthwhile to commission external evaluations (Moore, Walker & Murphy, 2011). If external evaluations of outcomes are conducted while the intervention is not consistently implemented as designed, findings are necessarily subject to the question of whether they are caused by the intervention (the way the program is designed) or the implementation (the way the program is delivered).

What does it take, then, to implement programs the way they are designed? The National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) has developed five implementation frameworks, which together define what is required for successful implementation (SISEP & NIRN, n.d.):

1. Usable Interventions
2. Implementation Stages
3. **Implementation Drivers** – ETO software is one of several implementation drivers
4. Improvement Cycles
5. Implementation Teams

Visit the [Active Implementation Hub](#) for in-depth information about each of these frameworks.

ETO software can play a key role in successful implementation by supporting these frameworks. ETO is designed to serve as one of several “implementation drivers,” the “decision support data system,” or performance management system, which integrates data into day-to-day routines and makes it available for decision-making at all levels. In order to create a configuration that can support decision-making in a meaningful way, it must be based on clearly defined programming, or what is referred to as a “usable intervention” (SISEP & NIRN, n.d.; Hunter, 2013). The very design of this PSM has required us to articulate many of the components of a usable intervention. They will, of course, vary by agency, and the PSM can be modified accordingly.

Software is only one of the necessary components, and others must be in place if implementation is to be consistent and to produce reliable outcomes. It takes an estimated total of 17 years for only 14% of scientific discoveries to be put to use in day-to-day practice (Balas & Boren, 2000, cited in Fixsen, Blase & Duda, 2011). With effective use of implementation practices, however, one study found that 80% of Teaching-Family residential treatment sites sustained implementation with fidelity for six years and were certified within 3.6 years (Fixsen, Blase, Timbers, & Wolf, 2001, cited in Fixsen, Blase & Duda, 2011).

Another example is that of coaching. In human services, the practitioner *is* the intervention (Fixsen & Blase, 2012), and consistent implementation means that each practitioner provides services in the same way. Research in education has found that a combination of theory, discussion, and demonstration in training is insufficient for teachers to apply evidence-based practices in the classroom. Even when practice and feedback during training was added, only 5% of teachers used the evidence-based practice back in the classroom. When it was combined with coaching in the classroom, however, 95% of teachers used it (Joyce and Showers, 2002, cited in Fixsen & Blase, 2012).

ETO software can support implementation components like coaching (considered an implementation driver), by allowing supervisors or “implementation teams” to track frequency, duration, and notes about their coaching, as well as resulting staff improvements. The remainder of this document describes the specific ways in which this PSM can support performance management.

ETO Software Terminology

All references to ETO functionality appear in italics. While it is helpful for the reader to be familiar with ETO software functionality, it is not generally required in order to understand this document. A few terms, however, merit explanation up front:

- ***Programs***: When population, services, expected outcomes, and/or staff are distinct from each other, it makes sense to create separate *programs* in ETO. Each ETO *program* may be easily reported on separately. Reporting can also be done across *programs*. This PSM includes one *program* for “Foster Family Recruitment” and one for “Foster Family Retention.”
- ***Participants***: *Participants* are your clients, in this case prospective and parenting foster families. Most work in ETO is recorded for your *participants*.
- ***Families***: *Family functionality* allows for connecting individual participants, such as a husband and wife, together in the system.
- ***Entities***: *Entities* are third parties, such as service providers to which you make referrals.
- ***Demographics***: *Demographics* track characteristics of *program participants*, and may be used when something does not change over time, or the program only needs to know and report on the most up-to-date information. ETO includes *standard demographics*, such as contact information, gender, age, and race, and *custom demographics*, which provide agencies with a way to add fields not already available.
- ***TouchPoints***: This document frequently refers to *TouchPoints*, which are, simply, forms built in ETO software. When completed, they may be associated with a *participant, entity, or program (general TouchPoints)*, or they may be anonymous. Everything from needs assessment forms to pre-post tests and progress note forms may be built as *TouchPoints*.

The remainder of this document describes the PSM and the functionality available in the context of target population, measuring outcomes, tracking service delivery, and driving performance.

ETO Software Components for Foster Family Recruitment & Retention

TouchPoints for Participants

The following forms are available:

- Casey Foster Applicant Inventory (CFAI)
- Foster Family Support
- Licensure Training
- Foster Parent Survey
- In-Service Training

General TouchPoints

The following forms are available:

- Family Friendly Response System
- Recruitment

Custom Reports

This model comes with the following custom reports:

- Foster Family Recruitment & Retention
- Foster Family Support – Individual Report
- Foster Family Support – Aggregate Report
- Foster Family Contacts
- Foster Family Capacity
- Foster Family Licensing Activity (California State Report)

Knowing Your Target Population

The target population is the group of people for whom an agency holds itself accountable for achieving positive outcomes and to whom the agency therefore provides intensive services intentionally designed to achieve those outcomes (Hunter, 2013). In foster care, the target population is children in the foster care system.

Foster families, on other hand, are part of an agency's service population. The service population is a group of people to whom an agency provides services but for whom it does not hold itself accountable for outcomes. Instead, agencies hold themselves accountable for providing quality services, or outputs (Hunter, 2013), as discussed in the remainder of this document, so that families will effectively support child outcomes.

Tracking Service Delivery

The supply and quality of foster families is critical to producing positive outcomes for children in the foster care system. Recruiting and retaining families, however, is a challenge across the country. In California, counties reported a decline of 30% over a decade (CWDA & LAPP, 2007). Studies in different states have found that up to 60% of families leave the system within 12 months, and families' median duration of service is often less than children's median duration of stay in the foster care system (Gibbs, 2005). Some agencies lose 30-50% of their foster parents each year (National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment, 2013).

This is of great concern, because stability of placements is critical to foster children, whose lives have already been disrupted. Furthermore, it can cost five to ten times as much effort to attract a new customer as it does to keep one you already have, according to the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment (2013).

This section outlines how recruitment and retention efforts may be tracked in this PSM, while the next section outlines how the data can be used to ensure that scarce resources are used in the most productive ways.

Recruitment

One simple form is available to track general recruitment efforts, whether events or administrative/preparatory work. Staff are able to track all the time they invest in recruitment efforts, including details such as type of recruitment source and the specific name of the organization facilitating an event, if applicable.

Once people express interest, the program can begin tracking them by name, at which point they will use the "Foster Family Support" *TouchPoint*. That form may be used both for prospective and parenting families.

Screening & Licensing

Application forms, screening, and licensing details are not included in this PSM, as this is information that must often be recorded directly into a state system. Agencies can, however, include such forms in ETO, should it be useful to them.

We have included the "Casey Foster Applicant Inventory (CFAI)," which may be used as a foundation for discussing family strengths and needs for further training toward the end of the licensing process. It takes about 20 minutes to complete (Casey Family Programs, 2015). A version for workers is also available, but not included in this PSM.

Agencies that intend to use the CFAI should consult the [Casey Foster Family Assessments website](#), which provides necessary information about completing and interpreting results of the CFAI. The *TouchPoint* includes

average scores for each sub-scale, but it is more meaningful to compare the scores to a normative group. Normative scores are available on the website under [CFAI-Applicant Scoring Instructions](#).

The “Foster Family Recruitment” *program* also includes a *TouchPoint* called “Licensure Training” to track attendance and time spent in pre-service training, as well as the “Foster Family Support” *TouchPoint*. This *TouchPoint* may be used from an individual’s first expression of interest in the program through their entire parenting experience. There are some differences in which fields are displayed in the “Foster Family Recruitment” *program* versus the “Foster Family Retention” *program*, but the form is the same, for the sake of continuity.

Supporting Parenting Families

When parents are licensed, they are moved into the “Foster Family Retention” *program*. There, the “Foster Family Support” *TouchPoint* continues to be the location for recording one-on-one family contacts. When completed in this program, the *TouchPoint* includes questions about stressors currently affecting the family, as well as questions about how well the parents feels that the agency is supporting them at this time, and the extent to which they feel they are being treated as part of a team. These fields are all designed to allow staff to get in front of problems and address them before families decide to quit, at which point, it is too late. The form also allows for tracking time spent and notes, among other details.

Customer Service

Given the widespread challenges with recruiting and retaining foster families, many have started to apply a customer service lens to the work. The National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment (2013) defines customer service in child welfare as:

Customers’ perceptions of the way they are treated, the responsiveness of the services provided, and the extent to which they are engaged in teamwork to meet the needs of children and youth.

Lessons from other fields show that 96% of dissatisfied customers will not complain, and 91% of those non-complaining customer simply will not come back. Dissatisfied customers, on the other hand, will tell 10 more people about their negative experience (National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment, 2013). The need to be proactive about ensuring satisfaction is clear.

In that context, we have put in place a few mechanisms for ongoing assessment of the quality of customer service:

- **Ongoing check-ins:** As noted above, the “Foster Family Support” *TouchPoint* includes two questions which social workers can ask families at each interaction in order to solicit ongoing feedback. Those questions were chosen because lack of support and not feeling like part of a team are two of the most common reasons why families leave (National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment, 2013).
- **Periodic parent survey:** The “Foster Parent Survey” is a satisfaction survey which parents may complete during the program and upon exit. The survey has been generously shared by Tara Lain, Project Director at the Regional Training Academy at the California Social Work Education Center (CALSWEC), University of Berkeley.

It includes the question: “How likely are you to recommend being a foster parent with our agency to others?” This is what is commonly referred to as a Net Promoter Score (NPS) question, very commonly used in business. Aggregate answers to the questions are used to generate the NPS, a customer loyalty score. In recent years, advocates for constituent or beneficiary feedback have started to promote NPS as a useful tool that can be applied productively in social services (Hurst, 2012; Ni, 2014; Maxson, 2013).

- **Program self-assessment:** The “Family Friendly Response System” is a program self-assessment of the extent to which all parts of the application, licensing and parenting phases incorporate customer service concepts. The assessment was developed by the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids (2013). It is available in both *programs*, whereas the two options above only apply to the “Foster Family Retention” *program*.

Driving Performance

Performance management is a dynamic process designed to drive to desired, positive outcomes. It involves regular, ongoing performance measurement, reporting, analysis, and, potentially, program modification. It differs from evaluation in several ways, including its purpose (management rather than research), intended audience (agency staff and managers rather than external stakeholders), the timing of data collection (continuous rather than one-time or periodic), who leads the process (internal staff rather than external evaluators), and how progress is measured (against benchmarks rather than increases/decreases) (Walker & Moore 2011).

Andy Feldman, author of the Gov Innovator blog, offers a helpful overview of the relationship between performance management and evaluation: [Performance Management & Program Evaluation 101](#).

One key way in which high-performance organizations drive to outcomes is by making data useful at all levels of the organization (SISEP & NIRN, n.d.), as described below.

Frontline Staff

Those who serve people directly need a system that supports intentional work toward goals and provides access to real-time reports on the extent to which foster parents are receiving the support they need, so that they may take corrective action as needed.

Intentionality Integrated into the Data Entry Process

In order to drive performance at the frontline staff level, ETO has been configured to support intentional work toward goals through the process of data entry itself. For example, foster parents need good support in order to do a good job with the children in their care, and in order to remain with the program over time. Built into the “Foster Family Support” *TouchPoint* are, as discussed earlier, two satisfaction-related questions to be asked of parents at each interaction: One question asks to what extent the parent feels well supported by the agency, and the other question asks to what extent the parent feels treated like part of a team to support the child. The requirement to ask those questions at each interaction will draw attention to the need to ensure that the *parents* feel they are getting what they need.

Real-Time Data to Support Decision-Making and Self-corrective Action

Frontline staff also need access to real-time data to support their decisions about next steps with prospective and current foster parents. Here are some examples:

- **Keeping prospective foster parents engaged:** Many social workers emphasize the importance of keeping regular contact with prospective foster parents so that they don’t lose momentum and drop out. This PSM includes a report for the Recruitment *program* called “Foster Family Contacts” which shows a list of families who have not been contacted for given amounts of time. Workers can use that list to follow up.

- **Finding the right family for children:** When social workers are called on to identify a placement for a given child, they need to take into account things like school district and cultural background, to ensure the lowest possible risk for placement disruption and the best possible child outcomes (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2012). This PSM includes a report called “Foster Family Capacity,” which gives workers a real-time view of the capacity of each licensed family to take new children. The report shows school district, primary language, and capacity to take new children by gender and other characteristics.

Along with the reports mentioned above, the “Foster Family Support – Individual Report” is available. These are some ways in which frontline staff can make use of data available in the report to decide how to best direct their efforts:

- **Am I meeting with each family as often as expected?** The report shows the number of direct and indirect contacts by month, providing an overview of the extent to which each family is receiving the intended number of in-home visits.
- **Do parents feel well supported?** As mentioned above, parents must feel that they are treated well by the agency. The report includes a line graph which displays the number of stressors and answers to questions about how well-supported parents feel and the extent to which they feel treated like part of a team. Looking at that graph will give social workers a good sense for change over time. If families have experienced a very high number of stressors for a long time, for example, special measures may need to be taken to support them.
- **Are parents meeting in-service training requirements?** A table displays – for each parent – the number of in-service training sessions schedule and attended, attendance rate, and the total number of hours of training in the date range. Run the report to see if parents are on track to meeting their training requirement.

Program Managers

Program management includes the responsibility to ensure that services are delivered as intended and that progress is made toward program and agency goals. Managers need the ability to review and assess the quality of services delivered to individual families by each staff, so as to identify and meet training and coaching needs, for example. They also need access to aggregate reporting on the extent to which the people served are receiving the expected types, frequency, and quality of services.

Making the Most of Recruitment Resources

Recruiting a sufficient number of families who will be successful foster parents is a perpetual challenge. In this PSM, managers can access information that can help them direct future resources toward the more effective sources of recruitment. The “Foster Family Recruitment & Retention” report shows:

- **Time investment:** The amount of time spent on events and administrative recruitment efforts by type of recruitment source.
- **Recruitment sources:** A breakdown of recruitment sources for families who exited prior to licensure, and the same breakdown for parenting families. Use this to see if parents from some types of recruitment sources are more likely to complete the process, for example, and concentrate your efforts on recruiting from those sources.
- **Stage of process at exit:** For exited families, at what stage in the process did they leave? Use this to examine whether any steps of the process require improvement.

Success of Family Retention Efforts

Various studies have found that as many as 60% of foster families leave within 12 months of service, which poses an enormous challenge from the perspective of children's stability of placement and cost of recruiting new families. The "Foster Family Recruitment & Retention" report includes data to assess program success in retaining families:

- **Duration of service:** Out of all exited families, how many left within 12 months and how many left after 12 months or more of service?
- **Feelings of support and being part of team:** What did satisfaction with agency support and being treated as part of a team look like in the time before exit? Two graphs show average responses to those questions, broken down by those who left before and after 12 months. This allows managers to assess whether there are differences and whether more could be done to support parents who leave prematurely (before 12 months of service).
- **Closure reasons:** A pie chart displays the primary reasons for exit.
- **Satisfaction ratings:** A table shows average ratings in various areas of parents' experiences during the program, again broken down by families who left before and after 12 months of service. The page also includes the NPS, discussed earlier, a single measure of customer loyalty which could be used to compare programs or make comparisons over time within the same program.

Ongoing Support and Customer Service

Managers will not want to wait until families have left to assess the success of their retention efforts. Throughout the program, they will want to make sure that families are receiving good customer service, which is so critical to retention (National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment, 2013). The "Foster Family – Aggregate Report" helps monitor customer service and family satisfaction so that managers can identify warning signs and take appropriate action:

- **Family Friendliness:** The "Family Friendly Response System" program self-assessment results in a total score, which places the program in one of three categories: needs improvement, on its way, and family friendly. Both total score and the category into which it places the program are displayed in the report.
- **Net Promoter Score (NPS):** As described above, the NPS score is a single indicator of customer loyalty. Those who score their likelihood of recommending the program 9-10 are considered promoters, who will speak enthusiastically about the program to others. Those who score it 0-6 are detractors, who will share their bad experiences. Those who score it 7-8 are neutrals – they do not feel strongly either way. The NPS is calculated like this: % of promoters -- % of detractors (Bain & Company, 2015)
- **Feelings of support and being part of team:** The report includes a line graph showing two lines: One line displays the average answers to the question about feeling supported by the agency, while the other line show the average answers to the question about feeling like part of a team.
- **Monthly contacts:** In order for families to feel supported, they must be in regular contact with their social worker. A bar graph shows, by month, the number of families who have received the required monthly visit, and the number who have not. This is accompanied by a table providing details like family name, number of visits and number of other contacts, such as unsuccessful attempts to reach the family. The latter helps managers assess whether social workers have made appropriate efforts to meet the requirement.

- **In-service training:** Training is important not only for compliance, but also because it helps parents improve their skills and their parenting practices. The report shows sessions scheduled, attended, attendance rate and total hours of in-service training in the date range.

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Foster Family Recruitment & Retention

Appendix A: Quick Reference Guide

This document outlines the steps for recording service delivery and progress toward outcomes in ETO software. It should be considered a quick reference to be consulted after training; it does not replace the recorded training.

Foster Family Recruitment

Log into ETO and enter the “**Foster Family Recruitment**” program. On your *dashboard*, follow these steps:

1. **Record Recruitment Efforts** – On *My Dashboard*, go to “Recruitment” and click on “New”.
2. **Enter Families into the “Foster Family Recruitment” program** – Under “Participants,” click on “Enroll” if the *participants* have been in another program in your organization or in this program in the past, or “Add/Edit Family” if they are new to your organization.
3. **Record Pre-Service Training** – On *My Dashboard*, go to “Licensure Training” and click on “New”.
4. **Complete the Casey Foster Applicant Inventory** – On the *participant dashboard*, go to “Casey Foster Applicant Inventory” and click on “New”.
5. **Record Contacts with Parent** – On the *participant dashboard*, go to “Foster Family Support” and click on “New”.
6. **Record Work for Two Parents at Once** – Any of the above actions may also be taken with both parents at the same time. On the *participant dashboard*, go to “Family Information” and click on the family name to go to the *family dashboard*.
7. **Exit Participant Who Drop Out** – Go to *My Dashboard* and click on “Dismiss.” Indicate the reason why the *participant* is leaving the program.

8. **Refer Licensed Families to the “Foster Family Retention” Program** – On *My Dashboard*, click on the “Refer” icon.
9. **Assess How Family Friendly Your Response System is** – On *My Dashboard*, go to “Family Friendly Response System” and click on “New”. **Foster Family Retention**

Log into ETO and enter the “**Foster Family Retention**” program. Licensed parents referred from the “Foster Family Recruitment” program will automatically appear in this program. On your *dashboard*, follow these steps:

1. **Record In-Service Training** – On *My Dashboard* or the *participant dashboard*, go to “In-Service Training” and click on “New”.
2. **Record Foster Parent Survey** – On *My Dashboard* or the *participant dashboard*, go to “Licensure Training” and click on “New”.
3. **Record Contacts with Parent** – On the *participant dashboard*, go to “Foster Family Support” and click on “New”.
4. **Record Work for Two Parents at Once** – Any of the above actions may also be taken with both parents at the same time. On the *participant dashboard*, go to “Family Information” and click on the family name to go to the *family dashboard*.
5. **Exit Parents Who Leave the Program** – Go to *My Dashboard* and click on “Dismiss.” Indicate the reason why the *participant* is leaving the program.
6. **Assess How Family Friendly Your Response System is** – On *My Dashboard*, go to “Family Friendly Response System” and click on “New”.

Accessing Reports

Open the right-hand navigation bar, go to “Reports” and “Custom Reports.”

