

Hands Across The Water  
Job Description

**Title:** Foster Care Specialist

**Qualifications:**

The Foster Care Specialist shall hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in a human behavioral science, education or a related field. Experience in a professional setting with youth and families strongly preferred. Strong written and oral communication skills, professionalism, organizational skills and comfort with computer technology/database entry is required.

Appropriate candidate for this position must have the ability to handle stress well, have the ability to be an active listener with good clinical observation and evaluation skills, be flexible and able to handle change, be a team player yet able to work independently, able to multi-task, and maintain case responsibility and follow-through with multiple competing demands. The Foster Care Specialist candidate should demonstrate a commitment to the safety and well-being of children and families with the primary goal of ensuring that families have the tools and services needed to achieve reunification. Knowledge of available community resource for, and comfort working with, individuals facing challenges associated with substance abuse, mental health, cognitive/developmental disabilities, domestic violence, poverty, homelessness and trauma is required.

Candidate may not have been convicted of child abuse or neglect, a felony involving harm or threatened harm to an individual within the 10 years immediately preceding the date of hire, or be listed on the central registry as a perpetrator of child abuse or child neglect. The Foster Care Specialist shall possess a valid Driver's License, positive driving record and proof of automobile insurance.

Hands Across The Water does not discriminate against an employee or applicant for employment with respect to hire, tenure, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, or a matter directly or indirectly related to employment, because of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, height, weight, marital status, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, political beliefs or mental or physical disability.

**Salary:** According to the current salary schedule.

**Job Overview:**

Provide case management services for children who have experienced abuse and/or neglect, and are temporary or permanent court wards, and their families. Ensure that biological parents and foster parents are given the tools and resources to meet the educational, physical and emotional needs of the child. Case management services are goal-oriented and time-limited. The goals are to ensure the safety and well-being of the child while developing and monitoring a service plan for the child's parent(s), reporting and making recommendations to the court regarding a permanency plan for each child.

This position requires significant travel including in-office, in-home, and outside of office work, often during non-traditional hours such as evenings and weekends, depending on case needs.

Foster Care Specialist: This worker is focused on developing the necessary knowledge of the laws, policies, and administrative procedures of the program, the principles of human behavior and development, and developing interviewing, assessment, caseload organization, time management skills and use of community resources essential to their role.

Senior Foster Care Specialist: This worker has a minimum of 2 years of experience with Hands Across The Water as a foster care specialist or a closely related position. This title will be given to workers who have shown positive work performance, demonstrated leadership and skilled job knowledge, including applicable laws, policies, and administrative procedures of the program, principles of human behavior and development, interviewing, assessment, caseload organization, management skills and use of community resources. The Senior Foster Care Specialist is expected to assist in the growth and development of other team members, through positive leadership, demonstrated teamwork and sharing of job knowledge and information. This role may include guidance and/or supervision of interns and involvement in agency initiatives and committees as necessary.

Foster Care Specialist Team Leader: This worker has a minimum of 2 years of experience with Hands Across The Water as a foster care specialist. This is a promotion level based on performance and agency need. Worker will have shown positive work performance, leadership and exceptional skill in the knowledge of applicable laws, policies, and administrative procedures of the program, principles of human behavior and development, interviewing, assessment, caseload organization, management skills and use of community resources.

The Foster Care Specialist Team Leader will act as a leader/trainer/mentor to the foster care team, with special attention to guiding and assisting newly hired staff during the training period and beyond. The team leader may supervise interns. The Team Leader will be expected to show involvement in agency initiatives and committees as requested. A reduced caseload for this position will be prioritized as necessary as team needs dictate.

### **Training:**

The Foster Care Specialist shall complete a CWTI PSI (Child Welfare Training Institute Pre-Service Institute) training that includes a total of 270 hours (9 weeks) of competence-based classroom and field training.

Each trainee will receive a competence-based performance evaluation, which shall include a written examination. As part of pre-service training, a trainee may be assigned specific tasks or activities in connection with a case that is the primary responsibility of an experienced worker and may, under appropriate supervision, be assigned responsibility for a "training caseload." Prior to assuming any other casework responsibilities, including the assumption of a caseload other than a training caseload, the worker must demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge and ability to meet the case practice expectations by passing the performance evaluation.

Additionally, the Foster Care Specialist will complete all agency and DHHS mandated orientation and ongoing training as required (a minimum of 32 hours per calendar year).

## **Job Responsibilities and Duties:**

1. Develop, with the parents, a goal oriented, time limited Parent/Agency Agreement and Initial Service Plan within thirty days after the child is in care, based on a thorough assessment of the family, review of documents and interviews with relevant parties following intake.
2. Testify at court hearings and proceedings. Maintain regular contact with attorneys, therapists, school personnel and other involved providers for both parents and children.
3. Keep current and accurate client records, case files, record notes and medical records.
4. Fulfill the reporting guidelines established by Hands Across The Water, DHHS and the court. Submit written reports, including but not limited to, Updated Services Plans and court reports on each case on a timely basis.
5. Meet at least monthly with supervisor to consult on cases, to review case plan and direction and to evaluate client participation and progress.
6. Provide case management services to parents whose children are in foster care. Work to engage them in services. Be knowledgeable of community resources and treatment modalities. Make referrals to parent education, mentoring programs such as Parent Partners, counseling, evaluations and treatment for substance abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, or any other needed services to facilitate safety and well-being for parents and children, with the goal of reunification.
7. Provide services in a manner which empowers clients and follow professionally recognized standards of ethical practice.
8. Provide case management to children in foster care. Demonstrate an understanding of the effects that separation and loss, neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse has on a child. Assist child and develop treatment plan to enhance their well-being.
9. Coordinate and facilitate the completion of the treatment plan by keeping in contact with all providers and conducting quarterly Family Team Meetings. Bring together professionals involved to discuss case planning and progress, including foster parents, biological parents and children as appropriate.
10. Communicate and meet at least monthly with foster parents assisting them and ensuring that appropriate care is given to foster children. Monthly home visits in the foster home, where all children on caseload are seen and interviewed, are required.
11. Communicate and meet at least monthly with biological parents to support them in the reunification process. A quarterly home visit to the biological parent's home is required.
12. Must complete and pass a nine-week, 270 hour, competence based classroom and field training course required by the State of Michigan specific to foster care.
13. Complete at least 32 hours of job related training per year or as required by the State contract.
14. Attend agency staff and department team meetings.
15. Participate in a 24 hour on-call rotation system as required by program.
16. Carry a full-time caseload of up to 13 cases. Work collaboratively with Licensing Department to address complaints and concerns regarding foster parents/homes.

### **Accountability:**

The Foster Care Specialist is accountable to the Child Welfare Supervisor - Foster Care who is accountable to the State Programs Manager.

Resumes and cover letters should be sent to Donna Nafziger, Senior Human Resource Specialist at [donna@hatw.org](mailto:donna@hatw.org).