



**Works at:**  
**Arizona Children's Association**

**Position Title:**  
**Family Engagement Specialist  
in the Fostering Sustainable  
Connections program**

## What do you do at AZ Children's Association?

When group homes were first created for children in DCS care, they were never intended to be a long-term/permanent placement. However, a major trend that we are seeing, is an overwhelming amount of children who are "aging out" of the system when they turn 18 years old. Often times, these kids have limited to no involved family members or connections. The Family Engagement Specialist works with youth in group homes to identify any family members, friends, neighbors, coaches or positive supports in their life, and then works with those identified connections to build a lifelong support network for the youth. The Family Engagement Specialist also helps the youth understand their identity, culture and sense of belonging.

One goal of the Fostering Sustainable Connections program is to minimize the number of children living in congregate care, and maximize the number of youth transitioning into more of a "family like setting". A lot of times, children in DCS care have a professional/clinical team that makes all of the decisions for their entire future. A goal of the Fostering Sustainable Connections program is to involve as many family/supports and encourage them to have a voice for the best interest of the child and the family.

## Favorite Part of the Position:

I really love my job! One of my favorite things is being able to go on community visits with my kids, and treating them to a special treat/snack and providing them with treasured one-on-one time, away from their group home and peers.

Another favorite part of my job is being able to locate a long-lost family member (who had no idea that the youth is in DCS custody), and being able to involve them in the team process, reconnect their relationship, and hopefully find a permanent placement for the child.

## How Did FSHD Classes & Internships Prepare You for This Work?

All of my FSHD classes have fully prepared me to be successful in this position. These classes were some of my favorites that provided me with knowledge, terms, and theories that I use every single day:

- FSHD 117 (human development)
- 323 (infancy & child development)
- 427A (prevention & treatment of problems in adult development and relations)
- 427C (prevention & treatment of problems in child/adolescent development and relations)
- 487 (Advanced Family Relations)
- FSHD 384 (leadership, ethics, and professional practices) also really prepared me by creating the perfect resume/cover letter and preparing for job interviews.

I was able to intern with Aviva Children's Services and was assigned to shadow a DCS Case Manager. I learned about other service providers and community agencies that offer behavioral health services to children in DCS care, and I knew after my internship what agencies I wanted to apply to.

## How Did You Find This Position?

I knew what agencies I wanted to apply to, but I didn't know what type of job I wanted. I just kept checking my preferred agency websites to see what jobs were available at that time. I also used my LinkedIn profile to get ideas of other positions that fit my interests.

## What Was the Application Process or Interview Process Like?

Applying was really easy, I just made a profile on the AzCA website, and submitted a cover letter and resume online. I was quickly contacted and set up an interview. The interview was with a panel of 3 and it was a very comfortable setting. The interview consisted of typical interview questions as well as being able to provide examples of when you were able to apply different characteristics and techniques (for example: leadership or de-escalating crisis)

## Tips for Students Interested in Pursuing a Position Like This:

If you are interested in Social Work, I would advise doing an internship in the Behavior Health/Child Welfare field to learn how DCS processes work and how to write good case notes. Also, get a fingerprint clearance card and become CPR certified. It makes the hiring process a lot easier!

For me it was best not to have set expectations for what type of job I wanted. I would suggest keeping an open mind. I knew what I didn't want, and went off of that.

Don't apply to only one position, apply to a variety of jobs so you have the choice to accept the position that fits you best