



**children's home & aid**

**FOSTER PARENT RIGHTS AND  
RESPONSIBILITIES**

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN –2019**

**Based on the Foster Parent Law (Public Act 89.19)**

# FOSTER PARENT LAW IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2019

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**FOSTER PARENT RIGHTS. A foster parent’s rights include, but are not limited to, the following:**

**Dignity and Respect**

1. **The right to be treated with dignity, respect and consideration as a professional member of the child welfare team.**
  - Children’s Home & Aid case managers, supervisors and all other staff respect the foster parents’ experience and knowledge of the child(ren) in their care by returning phone calls promptly, scheduling appointments with consideration for the foster parents’ schedules, and by being at the home on time, or calling to cancel or reschedule when necessary.
  - Children’s Home & Aid supervisors and program directors are required to respond quickly to problems and concerns that are brought to their attention. While a foster parent’s primary contact is the case manager, the case manager’s supervisor or the program director may be contacted when the case manager is not available.

- Upon placement, the case manager provides the foster parent with the names and phone numbers for the case manager, supervisor, program director and a number to call in case of an emergency. The names and phone numbers are included in the Foster Child Record Folder that is given to the foster parent at the time of placement.
- Foster parents are to be provided with regular, formal and informal opportunities to provide feedback on how they are being treated and what changes and/or improvements the agency could make. This feedback is collected using written surveys, meetings and one-on-one conversations.
- In an effort to help keep foster parents informed about agency activities, and to help them feel included as professional members of the child welfare team, they will receive by mail a copy of the agency's regional foster parent newsletters.
- Children's Home & Aid staff encourage outside providers to include foster parents as part of the child welfare team, and will be available for problem resolution between foster parents and other members of the child welfare team if needed.
- Agency staff is held accountable for treating foster parents with dignity and respect through regular supervision between the supervisor and licensing representative or foster care case manager, and observation of the worker by the supervisor at various meetings that include the foster parent. If a foster parent has any further issues, the foster parent can contact the foster parent support specialist, licensing worker, supervisor, or the Advocacy Office.
- Children's Home & Aid is participating in the Quality Parenting Illinois as the only agency in Cook County working on this initiative. QPI gathers foster parents, agency leadership, caseworkers and licensing specialists with their supervisors, biological parents and representatives from the Office of the Public Guardian, the DCFS Office of Training, the Office of the Public Defender, DCFS Legal, Administrative Case Review, and other involved parties in an effort to establish a more cooperative working relationship between all branches of child welfare. Foster parents have full participation in this collaboration and have taken leadership roles in some committees.
- Children's Home & Aid launched a statewide Foster Parent Mentoring program in 2017. Foster Parent mentors are available in all four regions. The Foster Parent Mentor program aligns veteran foster parents with new foster parents to help provide support and a knowledge base through the first years of licensure and as needed for various training topics.
- In accordance to the new statewide Foster Parent Recruitment Plan, all employees of Children's Home and Aid are required to take a customer service training. This training will help to increase skills needed to be respectful, empathic, and kind at all times to foster parents, youth and birth parents. This training has been developed and will be rolled out across all four regions in 2019.

## Training

### **2. The right to be given standardized pre-service training and appropriate ongoing training to meet mutually assessed needs and improve the foster parent's skills.**

- Children's Home & Aid licensing staff ensures that new foster parents attend the PRIDE pre-service training, which includes training on 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes, or Adoption Conversion training when a foster parent will be adopting a child. Licensing staff assist licensed foster parents in receiving a minimum of 16 hours of training over a four year time period, and more depending on the type of care the foster parent provides, and/or contract requirements.
- Case managers and licensing representatives discuss individual training needs with the foster parents. Training needs are mutually agreed upon by the foster parent(s) and the licensing representative, and the licensing representative incorporates this information into the Foster Home Monitoring Record (CFS 597), which is completed on a semi-annual basis. Staff work with the foster parents to address these needs through training, videos and reading materials.
- On-going training needs of foster parents are assessed through discussion between the assigned licensing representative and the foster parents based on certain criteria, to include,

but not limited to:

- Type of care provided – traditional or specialized foster care
- Age of child(ren) placed in the home
- Individual needs of the child(ren) placed in the home
- Required trainings to maintain licensure
- Areas of interest to the foster parent
- Areas of need agreed upon by the foster parent and licensing representative
- Areas of need identified by the licensing representative
- Children’s Home & Aid staff inform foster parents of local, state and national trainings using verbal and written means.
- Children’s Home & Aid’s regional offices distribute foster parent newsletters to foster parents on a regular basis that includes agency training information, the agency training schedule, and training schedules on external training opportunities including PRIDE and other approved trainings.
- Training opportunities in each region of Children’s Home & Aid are listed on the Children’s Home & Aid website. Staff provides this information to foster parents who do not have access to a computer by providing a copy of the trainings available through the agency.
- Foster parents who have access to a computer can receive DCFS training schedules through: [www.dcfstraining.org](http://www.dcfstraining.org).
- Children’s Home & Aid includes foster parents as co-trainers for trainings throughout the year. When foster parents serve as co-trainers they are paired with a staff person who provides direction and support for the training. IF a co-trainer is not available a foster parent mentor or support specialist will be present to assist in connecting to the training to foster parents and share experiences.
- Agency staff from each region has been trained in the Attachment, Regulation, and Competency framework (ARC). ARC is a trauma informed practice principle used across the country in many different settings. ARC “creates a common language that supports the development of a trauma lens for all staff and programs”. Agency staff are working to bring the ARC framework to all foster parents on an ongoing basis by providing them with ongoing applicable resources.
- Each region provides an ARC skill of the month, and any internal or external trainings regarding trauma are provided to foster parents when available through the Foster Parent Newsletter.
- Foster Parent mentors actively review specific training topics with new and identified foster parents as needed. Training topics focus on the skills needed to be successful in the Foster Parent role.
- Foster Parent mentors develop trainings based on the requests of foster parents including topics such as budgeting self-care and navigating the system.
- Foster Parent orientation training is completed in each region to familiarize new foster parents with the information they need to be successful prior to their first placement and acclimate them to Children’s Home & Aid. Additionally the training allows for support to be started immediately for a family to prepare them for their first placement.

### **Contact with the Agency for Support**

#### **3. The right to be informed as to how to contact the appropriate child placement agency in order to receive information and assistance to access supportive services for children in the foster parent’s care.**

- When foster parents are licensed, they receive access to the DCFS Foster Parent Handbook from the PRIDE trainer, which contains a section listing available supports and contact information. Licensing staff follow up at the time a child is placed to ensure that licensed foster parents have a copy of the DCFS Foster Parent Handbook.
- At the time a child is placed in the home, the foster parents receive the Foster Child Record

Folder, which includes the following:

- Statewide numbers: Advocacy Office, Foster Parent Hotline, and Medical consent.
- Local numbers: names and phone numbers of the appropriate Children's Home & Aid worker, foster parent support specialist, supervisor and director, and after hours/emergency number which will enable the foster parent to reach the staff person who is on call 24-hours a day. After hours emergency service is available 7 days a week. Depending on the region, a case manager, and/or supervisor is on call, with back up available to provide support.
- The phone number for the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is on the OIG brochure that is provided to foster parents at the time of licensure and at the time a child is placed in the home.
- Case managers ensure that foster parents have numbers to access support services such as Screening, Assessment and Support Services (SASS), Healthworks, and treatment providers such as therapists and psychiatrists based on the needs of each individual foster child.
- All necessary contact information is available from the agency at any time if the foster parent has not been provided with the contact information, or has misplaced the information.

## **Timely Financial Reimbursement**

### **4. The right to receive timely financial reimbursement commensurate with the care needs of the child as specified in the service plan.**

- Board payments are mailed or direct deposited to licensed foster parents on or before the 12<sup>th</sup> of each month, with the amount of the board payment being based on the level of care the foster parents are providing to the child(ren). In the event of payment delays, Children's Home & Aid case managers and/or management staff make every effort to notify foster parents of reasons for delays and attempt to facilitate payment.
- The additional payment for unlicensed relatives who become licensed is added to the next monthly board check after DCFS approval.
- The additional payment for foster parents of children who have been through a Clinical Intervention to Placement Preservation (CIPP) meeting and it has been decided that the child be moved up to specialized, is added to the next monthly board payment after DCFS approval.
- The agency also completes prompt additional payments for behavioral specialized, medical specialized, and sibling foster care.
- Licensed foster parents who experience issues regarding foster care board payments should contact the assigned case manager or foster care administrative assistant, who will work with the agency finance department to resolve the issue.
- Unlicensed relative foster parents receive payment from DCFS and should call Springfield directly (1-800-525-0499) for help, or may ask the case manager to assist them in resolving the problem.
- Foster parents are reimbursed in a timely manner for any expenditure that has been pre-approved by the agency. A comprehensive list of expenses that are not included in the foster care board payment, and that may be considered reimbursable has been developed and is available to foster parents. The list will be provided to foster parents by licensing workers during monitoring visits semiannually, and by case managers when requested. Examples of the types of expenditures that may be reimbursable include, but are not limited to:
  - Camp/recreational activities
  - Preapproved respite for qualified placements
  - Case by case basis:
    - Cultural enrichment
    - Educational expenses
    - Emergency clothing replacement if not covered under the monthly clothing allowance
- Children's Home & Aid staff will be diligent about assisting foster parents in knowing that receipts will be required and should be submitted to the case manager within 60 days of any preapproved

expenditure. Payments will be processed with finance within 30 days of receiving receipts.

- If reimbursement is owed from another agency staff will assist foster parents in advocating to receive the reimbursement in a timely manner.

## **Placement Plan**

**5. The right to be provided a clear, written understanding of a placement agency's plan concerning the placement of a child in the foster parent's home. Inherent in this right is the foster parent's responsibility to support activities that will promote the child's right to relationships with his or her own family and cultural heritage.**

- Service plans are written according to the specific needs of the child and biological family as assessed by the case manager. Foster parents are encouraged to be active participants in the development and implementation of the child's portion of the initial and subsequent service plans and visitation plans.
- Children's Home & Aid case managers and supervisors use the Child and Family Team Meeting, if clinically appropriate, to include the foster parent in reviewing the recommended services and visiting plan, establishing new service goals and visiting plans, and to emphasize the importance of the child's right to family connections.
- A copy of the portion of the initial client service plan that relates to the child and to the specific expectations of the foster parents, and the child's visiting plan are provided to the foster parent within 10 days of the completion of the initial service plan. Copies of appropriate portions of subsequent service plans are provided to the foster parents every six months thereafter, within 10 days of the Administrative Case Review.
- When a child is moved to a new foster home, the foster parents receive a copy of the portion of the service plan that relates to the child and to the specific expectation of the foster parents, and the child's visiting plan within 10 days of placement.
- Children's Home & Aid program staff encourages and supports the foster parent's active participation in sibling visitation. Children's Home & Aid believes that sibling visitation should occur in the most natural setting possible and encourages foster parents who are fostering siblings to develop a relationship and facilitate sibling visitation. The case manager will be available to assist in this process.
- Children's Home & Aid provides timely verbal or written notice of ACRs, visitation changes, goal changes, the possibility of changing the type of foster care placement, and placement changes during the course of the case. Written notification of meetings is now being provided using the Notification of Scheduled Meetings form that is completed and given to foster parents by case managers.
- In the event that the plan is to remove a child from the foster placement, the foster parent receives a written Notice of Decision to Remove an Unrelated Child, or a Notice of Placement Change from the case manager that includes their appeal rights and/or right to a clinical review. All decisions to remove a child, and each Notice of Placement Change and Notice of Decision to Remove an Unrelated Child are reviewed and approved by the supervisor and program director. A two week notice is provided in writing to the foster parent for the removal of a child unless it is deemed by the case manager and supervisor that there is imminent risk of harm to the child.
- When a child of a different race/culture is placed in a foster home, the Children's Home & Aid case manager, and/or licensing representative provide the foster parent with information and/or training opportunities on the child's cultural heritage.

## **Investigation of Alleged Licensing Violations**

**6. The right to be provided a fair, timely and impartial investigation of complaints concerning**

**the foster parent's licensure, to be provided the opportunity to have a person of the foster parent's choosing present during the investigation, and to be provided due process during the investigation; the right to be provided the opportunity to request and receive mediation or an administrative review of decisions that affect licensing parameters, or both mediation and an administrative review; and the right to have decisions concerning a licensing corrective action plan specifically explained and tied to the licensing standards.**

**Steps taken when a complaint is filed against foster parents**

- Foster parents are notified of any formal licensing complaints, which may be followed by a home visit to address the concerns, and/or an investigation.
- There are two types of investigations:
  - One type of investigation involves a possible violation of 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes. This investigation is completed by the licensing representative.
  - Another type of investigation involves allegations of abuse or neglect. This investigation is completed by a DCFS investigator. This type of allegation implies that the foster parent may not be adhering to 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes; therefore, a concurrent investigation by the licensing representative will occur.
- During any type of investigation, the foster home may be placed on hold by DCFS or Children's Home & Aid depending on the alleged violations. This means that no children can be placed in the home while it is on hold.
- When there are serious allegations concerning the safety of a child, including allegations of abuse or neglect, a safety plan may be put into place.
- When there are serious allegation concerning the safety of a child, including allegations of abuse or neglect, the child(ren) may be removed from the home.

**Foster parent rights when there is a complaint or investigation**

- Foster parents have the following rights whenever they are the subject of a complaint or investigation (per Public Act 89.19 - Foster Parents Rights):
  - The right to have a person of their choosing present during the investigation and due process.
  - To be provided a fair, timely and impartial investigation of licensing complaint issues, to begin within two (2) business days after a complaint is received. There will not be an investigation if:
    - the alleged violation occurred more than 60 days before the complaint was received and is not continuing;
    - the complaint is anonymous and there is no allegation of immediate physical danger to the child; or
    - no violations of applicable laws, licensing standards or rules are apparent from the complaint.

**Licensing Investigation Procedure**

- A licensing investigation is completed within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the complaint. Within fifteen (15) business days after completing the investigation, a formal determination will be made whether a licensing violation occurred. Within five (5) business days of the determination, a certified letter shall be sent to the foster parent summarizing the findings of the investigation, to include:
  - The right to be provided the opportunity to request and receive mediation and/or an administrative review of decisions that affect licensing parameters. A certified letter sent to foster parents who have been determined to be in violation of licensing rules or standards will notify the foster parents that within ten (10) days of the postmark of the letter, the foster parent may send a written request to the licensing supervisor requesting an informal review of the decision with the licensing representative and the licensing supervisor.
  - The right to have decisions concerning a licensing corrective action plan specifically



explained and tied to the licensing standards violated. If there is a determination that licensing standards or rules have been violated, a certified letter sent to the foster parent will cite the rule or standard violated.

- If findings indicate the foster parent has not come into compliance with licensing standards within a reasonable period of time, a registered letter will be sent to the foster parents. The letter will outline the agency's plan to revoke the license, and will inform the foster parents that they have ten (10) days from the postmark of the registered letter to request, in writing, a hearing through DCFS. The foster parents will then receive a letter from DCFS advising them of their rights.

### **Appeals process**

- The agency Foster Parent Grievance Policy & Procedure, agency Foster Parent Statement of Confidentiality and the OIG Brochure are distributed to all foster parents at the time of licensure and will be re-distributed to all foster parents on a regular basis, as needed and upon request. During monitoring visits, licensing representatives remind foster parents that there is a grievance policy available, and asks the foster parents if they need of a copy.
- Foster parents receive a copy of the DCFS Appeal Process at the time of a licensing investigation or when the decision is made to remove child(ren) from the home.
- The DCFS Service Appeal Process outlines what can and can not be appealed by foster parents, and provides the phone number and address to use when requesting an appeal.
  - Administrative Hearings Unit  
Department of Children and Family Services  
406 E. Monroe St., Station 15  
Springfield, IL 62701  
217 782-6655
- The DCFS Service Appeal Process can be used by the foster parent regarding the clinical decision to change the placement of a child in the foster parent's care. The appeal process must be initiated within 10 days of the notice of the change of placement.
- The Children's Home & Aid appeal policy lists time frames for the process. Children's Home & Aid case managers, licensing staff and/or supervisors make themselves available to foster parents to answer any questions they may have about the policies/procedures to appeal.
- The Children's Home & Aid grievance process is to be used by foster parents only for grieving alleged violations of the Foster Parent Law that are not covered by an already existing grievance or appeal process. It cannot be used to address issues that are covered by the service appeal process, the appeal process for indicated cases of child abuse/neglect, the process for appealing licensing investigation findings or license revocations, etc.
- Children's Home & Aid program directors/supervisors ensure staff members are familiarized with the concurrent investigation process as well as the Children's Home & Aid and DCFS appeal processes. Children's Home & Aid completes licensing investigations within the time frames required by DCFS policy and procedure. In cases of suspected child abuse and neglect reports, DCFS takes responsibility for completing the investigation in accordance with the DCFS policy on concurrent licensing investigations.

### **Written statement of Rights + Responsibilities and Foster Parent Grievance Procedure**

- At the time of licensure foster parents are asked to sign a document indicating the Rights and Responsibilities and Foster Parent Grievance Procedure have been received and discussed.

## **Additional Information about Children**

### **7. The right, at any time during which a child is placed with the foster parent, to receive additional or necessary information that is relevant to the care of the child.**

- Case managers are trained by their supervisors to notify foster parents of new information on an ongoing basis as it is learned about the child(ren) placed in the home.

- Case managers will be available to provide new information about foster children as it becomes available, and to discuss with foster parents new and unforeseen developments concerning the foster child as they occur in the foster home. Examples of unforeseen developments may include; medical information/concerns, change in case status, visitation changes, etc.
- Shared information may be provided verbally or in written form, and is provided within the limits of confidentiality (does not violate HIPPA rights or the birth family's rights)
- Accountability is provided during regular supervision, and by having the supervisor present during Child & Family Team Meetings to ensure accurate, up to date information is shared with the foster parent.

### **Information Given About Children at or Prior to Placement**

#### **8. The right to be given information concerning the child from the Department of Children and Family Services and from the child welfare agency.**

- To ensure foster parents receive comprehensive information on children placed with them, Children's Home & Aid uses the Sharing Information with the Caregiver form (CFS 600-4). The form is provided by the case manager to the foster parent within 10 days of a child's placement. The signed CFS 600-4 is placed in the child's file, and a copy is given to the foster parents. Information about the child must be provided in writing and includes:
  - Case information and history
  - Health and medical
  - Educational information and history
  - Placement history
  - Behavior/social information
- Foster parents are encouraged to notify Children's Home & Aid if the Sharing Information with the Caregiver form (CFS 600-4) is not provided within 10 days of a child's placement.
- Workers receive training on the CFS 600-4 Sharing Information With the Caregivers during DCFS Foundation Training and throughout the new hire 6 month orientation period between supervisors and new case managers. This form is also reviewed on an ongoing basis during supervision and team meetings.
- An annual email reminder is sent out to all Direct Service Staff reminding workers and supervisors to complete the CFS 600-4 within 10 days of any placement.
- Information on the use of this form and the information sharing process is gathered from the internal peer review process to determine case manager compliance. Another form of accountability is provided during regular supervision, and by having the supervisor present during Child & Family Team Meetings to ensure accurate, up to date information is shared with the foster parent.

### **Notifications – Methodology**

#### **9. The right to be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings concerning the foster child in order to actively participate in the case planning and decision-making process regarding the child, including individual service planning meetings, administrative case reviews, interdisciplinary staffings, and individual educational planning meetings; the right to be informed of decisions made by the courts or the child welfare agency concerning the child; the right to provide input concerning the plan of services for the child and to have that input given full consideration in the same manner as information presented by any other professional on the team; and the right to communicate with other professionals who work with the foster child within the context of the team, including therapists, physicians and teachers.**

- Children's Home & Aid case managers provide the foster parent, either verbally or by use of the

Notification of Scheduled Meetings form, notice of scheduled meetings, administrative case reviews (ACRs), staffings, and court dates.

- Foster parents are informed by the case manager verbally or in writing, within 48 hours of decisions made during meetings, staffings and by the courts where the foster parent has not been present.
- Verbal notification of scheduled meetings, ACRs, staffings and court dates, discussion of service planning and provision, and the child's functioning and progress toward the established permanency goal can be communicated during visits to the foster home or by telephone. When verbal notification is used, it is the responsibility of the case manager to document all interactions with the foster parent in case entries.
- Supervisors are responsible for ensuring proper communication between case managers and foster parents, which is discussed during regular supervision. Supervisors also review the case entries written by case managers to ensure verbal communication is occurring, and/or documented appropriately.
- Children's Home & Aid staff values input from foster parents and seeks and uses foster parents' ideas, opinions and knowledge of the child's needs to complete service plans and permanency plans, and to determine the ongoing provision of services. Foster parent input is given full consideration just as with other members of the team.
- Foster parents are strongly encouraged to communicate regularly with other members of the professional team, including: case managers, licensing representatives, child welfare supervisors, counselors, school personnel, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), counselors, therapists, Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) and other team members as required, and to transport children to all appointments and participate as needed for the best interest of each child.
- Case managers provide to foster parents the names, addresses and phone numbers of all professionals from whom the foster child receives services, and keeps the foster parents informed of all appointments that were not scheduled by the foster parent. Foster parents are encouraged to become involved with the professionals who work with the foster children and to provide information received from other professionals to the case manager in a timely manner.
- Foster parents in Cook County sign the Notice to Foster Parent form if they do not want to, or cannot attend court hearings.

### **All Necessary Information on Child/Family**

**10. The right to be provided, in a timely and consistent manner, any information a case worker has regarding the child and the child's family which is pertinent to the care and needs of the child and to the making of a permanency plan for the child. Disclosure of information concerning the child's family shall be limited to the information that is essential for understanding the needs of and providing care to the child in order to protect the rights of the child's family. When a positive relationship exists between the foster parent and the child's family, the child's family may consent to disclosure of additional information.**

- Case managers provide pertinent information concerning the health and well-being of a child to foster parents at the time of placement, and on an ongoing basis as it becomes available, within the limits of confidentiality. To facilitate the sharing of this information, Children's Home & Aid created a Foster Child Record Folder, which the case manager provides to the foster parent at the time each child is placed in the foster home.
- Information that is shared with the foster parent at the time of placement, or as soon as it becomes available, includes information such as:
  - Basic personal information about the child
  - Why the case came into the system
  - Placement history
  - Permanency goal
  - Visitation information

- Educational history, status and needs
- Special medical, developmental or behavioral needs
- Services needed
- Service providers and contact information
- Religious information
- Other information needed for the best possible care and understanding of the child
- Documents such as the following are provided to foster parents at the time of placement, or as soon as they become available
  - Medical card
  - Health passport
  - Consents for ordinary and routine medical, dental, hearing and vision care
  - Copy of child's portion of the service plan
  - Copy of the visitation plan(s)
  - Sibling contact information (if applicable)
  - 906 Placement Authorization form
  - Individualized Education Plan (if applicable)
- To ensure foster parents receive comprehensive information on children placed with them, Children's Home & Aid uses the Sharing Information with the Caregiver form (600-4). The form is provided by the case manager to the foster parent within 10 days of a child's placement.
- In those situations where a positive relationship exists between the foster parent and the child's family, the Children's Home & Aid case manager facilitates the obtaining of consents for disclosure of additional information. When appropriate, Children's Home & Aid program case managers and supervisors use Child & Family Team Meetings to facilitate positive relationships between biological parents and foster parents, and to facilitate the sharing of information.
- Continual support and encouragement of the birth parent and foster parent relationship will be promoted by case management to ensure adequate information sharing when appropriate.

## **Child Movement – Replacement**

**11. The right to be given reasonable written notice of (i) any change in a child's case plan, (ii) plans to terminate the placement of the child with the foster parent, and (iii) the reasons for the change or termination in placement. The notice shall be waived only in cases of a court order or when the child is determined to be at imminent risk of harm.**

- Children's Home & Aid program staff use the DCFS Notice of Decision to Remove-Unrelated Children, or Notice of Placement Change to inform foster parents of placement terminations and changes, and reasons for such decisions. The Notice of Decision to Remove Unrelated Children or Notice of Placement Change is issued only after review and approval by the case manager's supervisor and the program director.
- Foster parents are notified at least 14 calendar days prior to a child's move from the foster home except in cases of imminent risk. In non-imminent risk situations, a clinical meeting is held with the foster parent, worker, supervisor and director, if needed, to process the reason(s) for the change.
- The Service Appeal Process brochure that outlines emergency appeals, which decisions can be appealed, the steps in the appeal, contact information to initiate an appeal is provided to foster parents any time a decision is made to move a child from a foster home. The staff member providing notification of the child's placement change will review the brochure with the foster parents and provide assistance in initiating an appeal if needed.
- A request to appeal the decision to have a child moved from the foster parents' home is to be made within 10 days of receiving the notice. The request is made to the following:
  - Administrative Hearings Unit

Department of Children and Family Services  
406 E. Monroe St., Station 15  
Springfield, IL 62701  
217-782-6655

- The Service Appeal Process is reviewed annually with case management staff and is offered as a training to foster parents annually.

### **Court Hearing Notification**

**12. The right to be notified in a timely and complete manner of all court hearings, including notice of the date and time of the court hearing, the name of the judge or hearing officer hearing the case, the location of the hearing and the court docket number of the case; and the right to intervene in court proceedings or to seek mandamus under the Juvenile Court Act of 1987.**

- Case managers inform foster parents of the date, time, court docket numbers, and locations of court hearings, and name of the judge or hearing officer either verbally or by use of the Notification of Scheduled Meetings form.
- Foster parents are notified that they have a right to be heard in court during certain court proceedings. Foster parents in Cook County are asked to sign the Notice to Foster Parents form if they do not wish to be involved in court proceedings.
- While recognizing that not all courts honor a foster parent's right to be heard, Children's Home & Aid will continue to provide foster parents with this information, and encourage their attendance, which can provide an opportunity for the foster parents to advocate on the child's behalf.
- Case managers inform foster parents, verbally or in written form, within 48 hours of the results of a court hearing after hearings that are not attended by the foster parent. The date, time and location of the next hearing are also provided to the foster parent at that time.
- Supervisors monitor whether the foster parents have been notified of court hearings as part of regular supervision.

### **Placement Option for Children Re-entering Care**

**13. The right to be considered as a placement option when a foster child who was formerly placed with the foster parent is to be re-entered into foster care, if that placement is consistent with the best interest of the child and other children in the foster parent's home.**

- Anytime a child is referred to Children's Home & Aid the referral source is asked if the child has been in placement before, and if so, where. If the child had been in placement previously documentation is requested from the referral source.
- The DCFS electronic system is checked by staff to explore past placements.
- A previous foster home will be considered as a placement for a child re-entering foster care if the placement of the child in the home is in the best interests of the child and other children in the home, the foster home is not full, and does not have a pending investigation or other bar to placement.
- The Child/Caregiver Matching Tool and supervision are used to determine the best interests of a child coming into placement.
- Background checks and the DCFS licensing tracking system are used to determine if there are any bars to placement.
- Foster parents may write a letter to the agency regarding their wishes as a future placement resource for the child when a child is moved from their home.

### **Timely Access to Service Appeal System**

**14. The right to have timely access to the child placement agency's existing appeals process**

**and the right to be free from acts of harassment and retaliation by any other party when exercising the right to appeal.**

- Children's Home & Aid has a Client Grievance Policy and Procedure, and a Foster Parent Grievance Procedure for Violations of the Foster Parent Law, which are provided to foster parents, and reviewed as part of the licensing process.
- The grievance/appeal procedures will also be provided to the foster parent by agency staff at the time of an incident and/or any time they are requested. Agency staff will review the process with the foster parent.
- The Children's Home & Aid's grievance/appeal states that there will be no retaliation for filing a grievance/complaint, and that foster parents have the right to receive grievance/appeal procedures in writing when services are initiated by Children's Home & Aid.
- A packet of information, including Children's Home & Aid information and the grievance/appeal procedures will continuously be updated and provided to foster parents as part of the licensing process (initial and renewal).
- The DCFS Service Appeal Process brochure is provided to and explained to foster parents at time of licensure, at ACRs, when a grievance is made, and/or upon request.
- The Service Appeal Process brochure is reviewed with the foster parent by the case manager and/or licensing representative, and foster parents are assisted in accessing the appeal process when need be:
  - When notice is provided that a child will be removed from the foster home
  - When a licensing investigation is substantiated

### **Foster Parent Hotline**

**15. The right to be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline established under Section 35.6 of the Children and Family Services Act and all of the rights accorded to foster parents concerning reports of misconduct by Department employees, service providers, or contractors, confidential handling of those reports, and investigation by the Inspector General appointed under Section 35.5 of the Children and Family Services Act.**

- Children's Home & Aid provides foster parents with a list of resources/phone numbers, including:
  - Statewide numbers such as Inspector General, Advocacy Office, Foster Parent Hotline, and Medical consent.
  - Local numbers: names and phone numbers for the Children's Home & Aid worker, supervisor and program director, and after hours/emergency number.
- Foster parents receive this information at the time of the compliance visit, at placement, at ACRs, in the regional foster parent newsletters, and upon request.
- A training for foster parents on how to access important phone numbers will be done during orientation offered in each region. A copy of numbers will also be given during the training for foster parents to take home.
- The Foster parent support coordinator, foster parent support specialists, and foster parent mentors are available 24/7 to assist foster parents in finding resources, and accessing phone numbers.

**FOSTER PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES. A foster parent's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:**

**Open Communication**

**1. The responsibility to openly communicate and share information about the child with other members of the child welfare team.**

- Foster parents are encouraged to communicate with staff regarding their foster child's needs and status in a timely, comprehensive manner to assist the agency in providing the best possible services for the child.
- Foster parents are offered training in open communication in Foster Adopt/PRIDE and/or agency sponsored training.
- The Children's Home & Aid case manager solicits information from the foster parent during home visits by asking questions, actively listening, modeling open communication and documenting the content of the discussion in case entries.
- Foster parents are advised by case managers and licensing representatives, and trained in PRIDE, of the importance of notifying staff of unusual incidents within 24 hours.
- Quality Parenting Initiative will help to promote open communication between the case managers, supervisors, and birth parents in order to strengthen the quality of care for children.

**Confidentiality**

**2. The responsibility to respect the confidentiality of information concerning foster children and their families and act appropriately within applicable confidentiality laws and regulations**

- Confidentiality is included in the PRIDE curriculum. Children's Home & Aid licensing representatives review and discuss the need for and importance of confidentiality during six month monitoring visits.
- At the time of placement, the placing worker discusses the confidentiality guidelines with the foster parent, and background information regarding the child is provided. The Children's Home & Aid case manager reviews confidentiality guidelines periodically with the foster parent, and addresses issues and questions as needed.

- Foster parents receive a copy of Children’s Home & Aid’s Foster Parent Statement of Confidentiality, specifically developed for foster parents, at the time when they first apply for a foster care license and when the license is renewed, with copies available as needed. This statement references the various laws and regulations covering confidentiality, including:
  - Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Confidentiality Act
  - Illinois Administrative Act 431
  - Confidentiality of Personal Information of Persons Served by the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services
  - Health Information for Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH)
  - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- Licensing representatives and case managers will provide copies of the laws and regulations covering confidentiality upon request.
- Under Illinois law, certain exceptions to confidentiality exist and foster parents are informed of this during PRIDE training, and by licensing representatives and case managers. Children’s Home & Aid employees are mandated reporters and must abide by the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act of 1975. This means that if a Children’s Home & Aid staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused and/or neglected, Children’s Home & Aid may report that information to the Department of Children and Family Services with or without consent.
- Children’s Home & Aid’s regional offices distribute foster parent newsletters to foster parents on a regular basis that includes agency training information, the agency training schedule, and training schedules on external training opportunities.
- Training opportunities in each region of Children’s Home & Aid are listed on the Children’s Home & Aid website. Staff provide this information to foster parents who do not have access to a computer.
- For foster parents that have computers, licensing representatives and case managers will assist foster parents access DCFS training schedules through:
  - [www.dcfstraining.org](http://www.dcfstraining.org)

## **Advocating for Children in Care**

### **3. The responsibility to advocate for children in the foster parent’s care.**

- Foster parents are trained to advocate for the child’s educational, medical, dental, and therapy needs and of the importance of transporting them to appointments.
- Foster parents are encouraged to take DCFS Educational Advocacy training as soon as possible, and are required to complete the training prior to their first license renewal.
- Educational Liaisons are available to assist foster parents in their role as Educational Advocates, and to train foster parents on advocating for children in an educational setting. Information regarding how to contact the Educational Liaison is sent out annually in each regional newsletter. Foster parents are also taught information regarding the educational liaison through the orientation process and during licensure. Case management staff in the Metro region is also introduced to the educational liaison and their role during early employment.
- Foster parents learn about the Juvenile Court System during PRIDE training, and case managers provide ongoing instruction to foster parents on the court process as needed.
- PRIDE training addresses the right to appeal decisions regarding children, and foster parents receive the Foster Family Handbook from the PRIDE trainer.
- The DCFS Service Appeal Process brochures are available from Children’s Home & Aid and are provided to foster parents at the time of initial licensure, at ACRs, when a grievance is made, and/or upon request.
- Case managers and/or supervisors are available to assist foster parents if they wish to file



- an appeal.
- Foster Parents may also be invited to be involved in advocating on behalf of general foster care issues.
- On an ongoing basis, Children’s Home & Aid case managers encourage foster parents to participate in all aspects of services provided to the children in their care, including: acting as Educational Advocates, and participating in school staffings. Foster parents are also encouraged to participate in Integrated Assessments and service planning, Administrative Case Reviews (ACR), Local Area Networks (LAN), Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP), and court hearings.
- Children’s Home & Aid’s regional offices distribute foster parent newsletters to foster parents on a regular basis that includes agency training information, the agency training schedule, and training schedules on external training opportunities.
- Training opportunities in each region of Children’s Home & Aid are listed on the Children’s Home & Aid website. Staff provides this information to foster parents who do not have access to a computer.
- QPI initiative encourages foster parents to have full participation in this collaboration with agency leadership, caseworkers and licensing specialists with their supervisors, biological parents and representatives from the Office of the Public Guardian, the DCFS Office of Training, the Office of the Public Defender, DCFS Legal, ACR and other involved parties in an effort to establish a more cooperative working relationship between all branches of child welfare. One goal of this initiative is to make it known that we do have excellent and involved foster parents throughout our state who are making a difference for the children and youth that we serve. Foster parents are encouraged to participate in various QPI committees by their licensing workers, case workers and foster parent support specialist.
- The ARC trauma initiative will help foster parents become more informed on how trauma impacts a child’s behaviors and types of trauma practices that would be best used when parenting foster children. This initiative will help foster parents to advocate properly for the child (ren) in their care with community providers such as, schools, therapists, etc.
- For foster parents that have computers, licensing representatives and case managers will assist foster parents access DCFS training schedules through:  
[www.dcfstraining.org](http://www.dcfstraining.org)

## **Treating Children and Families with Dignity and Respect**

### **4. The responsibility to treat children in the foster parent’s care and the children’s families with dignity, respect and consideration.**

- PRIDE training includes instruction on the ramifications of negative comments made by the foster parent about the foster child(ren) or the biological family, and of the importance of the foster family working with the biological family.
- Foster parents are taught by Children’s Home & Aid staff that treating children in their care, and the children’s families, with dignity and respect are demonstrated through the following activities and behaviors:
  - Recognizing the child and his/her family as members of a team, whose voice and input is equal to their own.
  - Strongly advocating for the child’s bond with his/her birth family, which includes encouraging contacts and visits between the child and his/her birth family.
  - Recognizing the importance of the birth family to the child in their care.
  - Attempting to develop a relationship with the birth family that includes supportive activities and advice.
  - Providing birth parents with information either directly or indirectly regarding the child’s psychological, medical, developmental and educational functioning.

- Recognizing that derogatory comments regarding the child/birth family are not in the child's best interest.
- Children's Home & Aid licensing staff review the Foster Home License Compliance Record (CFS 590) with foster parents at the time of licensure and renewal, which includes discussion and instruction on treating children and their families with dignity and respect.
- The issue of dignity and respect can be addressed and discussion/instruction documented by the licensing representative on the Foster Home Licensing Monitoring Record (CFS 597) during semiannual monitoring visits.
- Case managers observe foster parent interaction with children in their care during home visits and in other situations, and provide guidance and direction to foster parents on treating children and their biological family with dignity and respect. If concerns arise the case manager consults with the supervisor immediately to ensure the issue is addressed in a timely manner.
- Foster parents are taught during the informational meeting and orientation (Metro) about the expectation of shared parenting and their role working with the birth family.

### **Foster Parent Strengths and Weaknesses**

#### **5. The responsibility to recognize the foster Parent's own individual and familial strengths and limitations when deciding whether to accept a child into care; and the responsibility to recognize the foster parent's own support needs and utilize appropriate supports in providing care for foster children.**

- As part of the process for becoming a foster parent, a thorough assessment is conducted with the foster parent by the licensing representative. The licensing representative explores with the foster parent the age and gender preferred for a child that might be placed in the home, and the types of behaviors the family thinks it can handle.
- To assist the agency in making the best match possible, the agency assesses the foster parent's strengths and limitations prior to placement.
- The agency makes training recommendations tailored to the needs of the foster parent(s) and the specific children in their care.
- Ongoing assessment with the foster parent by the licensing representative and/or case manager is provided to help determine continuing training and support service needed by the foster parent.
- Trainings and support services are also determined and recommended based on any requests made by the foster parent.
- When support services and more training is identified for a foster parent, the licensing representative and/or case manager will assist the foster parent with locating the appropriate services and trainings.

### **Affiliations with Foster Parent Associations**

#### **6. The responsibility to be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliation with other foster parents and foster parent associations in improving the quality of care and service to children and families.**

- Children's Home & Aid program staff encourage foster parents to seek support from other foster parents and to share supportive information at support groups, foster parent advisory meetings, and at other Children's Home & Aid activities and functions.
- Children's Home & Aid is a member of the National Foster Parent Association. Foster parents may join by:
  - Calling 800 557-5238
  - On-line at [www.nfpainc.org](http://www.nfpainc.org)
- Foster parents may join the Illinois Foster Parent/Adoptive Parent Association:
  - On-line at [www.ilfapa.org](http://www.ilfapa.org)
  - Or, this information will be provided to the foster parent by a licensing representative or case

manager

- Foster parents can also receive information about foster parenting from Foster Care Central:
  - On-line at [www.fostercarecentral.org](http://www.fostercarecentral.org)
  - Or, this information will be provided to the foster parent by a licensing representative or case manager

### **Foster Parent Training Needs**

#### **7. The responsibility to assess the foster parent's ongoing individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.**

- The training needs of foster parents are assessed through discussion between the assigned licensing representative and the foster parents based on certain criteria, to include, but not limited to:
  - Type of care provided – traditional or specialized foster care
  - Age of child(ren) placed in the home
  - Individual needs of the child(ren) placed in the home
  - Required trainings to maintain licensure
  - Areas of interest to the foster parent
  - Areas of need agreed upon by the foster parent and licensing representative
  - Areas of need identified by the licensing representative
- Discussion of training needs can occur at any time; however, it is a requirement that training needs are discussed as part of each semi-annual monitoring visit. Identified training needs are documented on the Family Foster Home Licensing Monitoring Record (CFS 597) by the licensing representative at the time of the monitoring visit.
- Foster parents are provided with the Foster Parent Training Credit Approval Form (CFS 574) to ensure they get proper credit for training. The licensing representative completes the information pertaining to the licensing agency, and the foster parent is to complete the remaining information, attach proof of training, and submit the form to the licensing representative.
- Children's Home & Aid staff informs foster parents of local, state and national trainings using verbal and written means. Foster parents can find information about training provided by Children's Home & Aid and outside providers in regional foster parent newsletters.
- Foster parents who have internet access may access DCFS training schedules through:
  - [www.dcfstraining.org](http://www.dcfstraining.org)
  - Or, the Children's Home & Aid licensing representative or case manager will provide the information to the foster parent
- Foster parents are encouraged to notify their assigned licensing representative if they are experiencing difficulty in locating a specific training. The licensing representative will provide assistance to try and identify a resource for the training.
- Children's Home & Aid will continue to offer or arrange regular trainings. Regular participation in training will assist foster parents meet all DCFS training requirements for foster parents who provide care for children placed in specialized foster care, and for renewal of the foster parent license.
  - Foster parents need 16 training hours every 4 years for license renewal. They are encouraged to take 4 hours of training each year.
  - Foster parents who provide care for children/youth in specialized foster care must have 12 training hours every year in addition to the training hours that are required for license renewal.

### **Strategies to Prevent Placement Disruption**

#### **8. The responsibility to develop and assist in implementing strategies to prevent placement disruptions, recognizing the traumatic impact of placement disruptions on a foster child and all members of the foster family; and the responsibility to provide emotional support for the**

**foster children and members of the foster family if preventive strategies fail and placement disruptions occur.**

- Case managers assess children in placement at each home visit for any issues that may create problems for the foster family, or might put the placement at risk of disruption. Foster parents are encouraged to contact the case manager or supervisor if a problem occurs between scheduled visits to the foster home.
- Foster parents are encouraged to honestly express to the case manager, supervisor or licensing representative any concerns related to a child in their home when they first become aware of a problem instead of waiting until they are ready to request that the child be removed from the home.
- When an issue with the placement is identified, the case manager seeks supervision. The case manager may also request a staffing with the clinical team, which includes foster parents as an important part of that group, to discuss the problems and develop a plan of action.
- The case manager accesses services needed to stabilize the placement, such as counseling, contact with the foster parent support specialist, homemaking services, respite, and referral to the mentoring program, referral to Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) etc. as appropriate and available.
- As necessary, referrals will be made for the child to receive appropriate assessments in an effort to further identify the issues, and strategies for working with the child.
- Foster parents are offered training on the types of support and stabilization services that are available, which might include Screening Assessment and Support Services (SASS), Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS), respite, etc. depending on the needs of the child. Foster parents may receive individual training from the assigned case manager if no group training is available at the time support and stabilization services are required.
- Children's Home & Aid case managers ensure the foster parents know how to access additional support services available such as Screening Assessment and Support Services (SASS), Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS), Clinical Intervention Placement Preservation (CIPP), respite, etc. by providing contact information to the foster parent.
- A staff from IPS is present at every Clinical Intervention Placement Preservation (CIPP) meeting. CIPP meetings are held to determine if a child should be stepped up to specialized foster care. The IPS staff member is present to provide input on any services that may be implemented to stabilize the placement as opposed to stepping the child up to specialized foster care.
- If efforts to maintain the placement are not successful, case managers, their supervisors, and licensing staff work with the foster family to provide as smooth a transition as possible by involving the foster family to the fullest extent possible in the placement process. Foster parents are encouraged to participate in:
  - Agency and/or community sponsored support groups
  - Individual consultation
- Foster parents are encouraged to be as sensitive as possible to children during the time of transition, so the best interests of both the child and the foster family can be considered in ensuring a smooth and successful transition for the child and foster family.
- Counseling and/or other support services are offered to children when they are moved in an effort to assist them with the transition.
- Except when an emergency or at-risk situation prevents advance notice, Children's Home & Aid requests that foster parents provide verbal and written notification at least 14 days prior to a requested placement change; however, longer notice is preferred if possible.

**Acknowledge/Minimize Stress**

- 9. The responsibility to know the impact foster parenting has on individuals and family relationships; and the responsibility to endeavor to minimize, as much as possible, any**

### **stress that results from foster parenting.**

- Foster parents are taught during PRIDE classes and ongoing trainings about the potential stressors that are associated with foster parenting. They are also taught to be aware of these stressors, and of the importance of seeking assistance to deal with stress before a crisis occurs.
- Case managers inform foster parents about available support groups, and foster parents are encouraged to seek out foster parent support groups to receive support services.
- Foster parent mentors are available to all newly licensed foster parents and act as a support and knowledge base during the first few years of licensure.
- Foster parents who share issues of stress may do so with assurance of confidentiality.
- Foster parents may discuss with the case manager the need for, and request a voluntary placement hold for placements or additional placements in times of personal stress. A "voluntary hold" may then be placed on a home when the foster parent determines it would be in the best interests of the home not to take additional placements for a period of time.
- The case manager and licensing representative look for signs of stress during home visits and will encourage the foster parents to take a break from foster parenting when appropriate.
- Each specialized foster parent is advised of the respite policy. Respite needs are assessed by the case manager who encourages the foster parents' use of respite as outlined in the program plan.
- Under certain circumstances and if deemed appropriate for the situation, case managers may be able to assist traditional foster parents in times of stress by arranging for the child(ren) to stay in a different foster home for a short period of time.
- When resources allow, and where the situation warrants, a therapist may be assigned to help foster parents deal with the stress of foster parenting.
- Case managers make referrals to IPS, which provides social activities with an IPS case manager, IPS therapist, and a mentor for children in need of such services.
- Using the ARC model, foster parents will be educated by agency staff on the building blocks of the ARC model, which include components such as caregiver affect management. Caregiver affect management is all about how caregivers manage their emotions, self-care, and using healthy and effective coping skills.

### **Promotion of Foster Parenting**

#### **10. The responsibility to know the rewards and benefits to children, parents, families, and society that come from foster parenting and to promote the foster parenting experience in a positive way.**

- Foster parents are encouraged to read the regional Foster Parent Newsletters to help keep them informed of activities in which they can participate. The newsletters provide information on regional events and activities, trainings, and meetings of Children's Home & Aid, DCFS and other local agencies.
- Children's Home & Aid staff encourages communities and businesses to give special recognition to foster parents.
- Children's Home & Aid foster parents are encouraged to be involved at a regional level with local groups and organizations whose primary role is to recruit and retain foster parents, and promote foster parenting as a valued life style.
- Children's Home & Aid has regular events to recognize and honor foster parents. These events vary depending on the region in which the foster parent is licensed.
- Input and information from foster parents is used to help improve both recruitment and retention of foster parents.
- Foster parents receive financial incentives when a potential foster parent is referred, licensed and accepts the first placement. Foster parents are responsible to help track the progress of individuals referred to become foster parents to help ensure they receive any

financial incentive to which they are entitled.

- Foster parents are encouraged to participate in various recruitment events, and share their stories and experiences in videos, and at orientations and informational meetings.
- Each region of Children's Home & Aid provides trainings that are available to foster parents. Training in the public relations aspect of foster parenting was added to the list of trainings provided by the agency in 2011.
- The Quality Parenting Initiative's goal is to create a new "brand" of foster parenting that creates a team with the foster parent as a full partner to support the child(ren). Foster parents have taken leadership roles, and are a part of subcommittees within this initiative.
- Children's Home & Aid have rolled out a Statewide Recruitment Plan for Fiscal Year 2018. The plan includes mandatory customer service training for all employees. Additionally it includes a focus on foster parent support improvements to help retain quality foster parents.

## **Roles, Rights and Responsibilities of Child Welfare Team**

### **11. The responsibility to know the roles, rights and responsibilities of foster parents, other professionals in the child welfare system, the foster child and the foster child's own family.**

- The Children's Home & Aid foster parent job description specifies the foster parents' roles and responsibilities. It is provided to foster parents at the time of licensure, is available from licensing staff at any time and/or is provided to foster parents during monitoring visits.
- Foster parents are also provided with a one page abbreviated version of their rights and responsibilities to use as a quick reference. This will be provided to foster parents on an annual basis along with the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan.
- Children's Home & Aid licensing staff ensures that foster parents attend the Foster/Adopt PRIDE or other agency sponsored training in order to be informed of these roles, rights and responsibilities.
- Children's Home & Aid case managers and licensing representatives discuss the roles of other para-professionals/professionals involved in the child's life with the foster parents on an ongoing basis.
- When appropriate/possible Children's Home & Aid identifies foster parents to serve as co-trainers along with Children's Home & Aid professional staff.
- Formal input is sought from foster parents annually for strengthening the foster care programs and services. Also, foster parents participate annually via surveys and meetings in the development, review and endorsement of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan.
- Children's Home & Aid case managers provide the foster parent, either verbally, or by use of the Notification of Scheduled Meetings form, notice of scheduled meetings, administrative case reviews (ACRs), staffings, court dates and Child & Family Team Meetings. Foster parents are encouraged to attend all of the scheduled meetings and staffings.
- To help ensure foster parents are knowledgeable of the Foster Parents Rights and Responsibilities, a copy of these is provided at Foster Parent Orientation meetings.
- To assist foster parents in understanding their roles, information from DCFS Rule 402, Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes, is shared with foster parents by licensing staff during semi-annual monitoring visits and at licensure renewal.
- With the Quality Parenting Initiative, several foster parents who participate in this initiative have a direct voice in the future planning of the agency; as our agency leadership is available to hear and respond to the foster parent's voice.

## **Mandated Reporter Responsibility**

### **12. The responsibility to know and, as necessary, fulfill the foster parent's responsibility to serve as a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect under the Abused and Neglected**

**Child Reporting Act; and the responsibility to know the child welfare agency's policy regarding allegations that foster parents have committed child abuse or neglect and applicable administrative rules and procedures governing investigations of those allegations.**

- The role and responsibility of being a mandated reporter is explained to foster parents during the licensing process, PRIDE training, and through Mandated Reporter training provided by DCFS.
- PRIDE training also provides training on the applicable rules and regulations involved if there are allegations of neglect against a foster parent. These rules and regulations can be found in policy and procedure 300, which will be provided upon request. If a foster parent has any further questions, the foster parent can contact the licensing worker, supervisor, or the Advocacy Office.
- Children's Home & Aid staff inform foster parents of local, state and national trainings using verbal and written means. Foster parents can find information about trainings provided by Children's Home & Aid and outside providers in regional foster parent newsletters. These trainings would include training on the responsibilities of being a mandated reporter and what to expect if allegations are made against a foster parent.
- Foster parents are provided with the phone number for the child abuse hotline, which is to be used if they become aware of any child that is suspected to be a victim of abuse or neglect:
  - 1 800 25-ABUSE (1 800 252-2873)
- Foster parents sign the Mandated Reporter Acknowledgment form before a child is placed in the home. The licensing representative is responsible for explaining the Mandated Reporter Acknowledgment form in a way that the foster parents can understand the responsibility of being a mandated reporter and the reason for signing the form.
- If allegations of abuse or neglect are made against a foster parent, an investigation will be conducted as outlined in Right 6, Investigation of Alleged Licensing Violations.
- The Children's Home & Aid case manager addresses issues and defines protective plans regarding a child with sexually problematic behaviors at the time of placement. Foster parents are then able to work with the case manager to ensure the protective plan is appropriate and manageable.

**Administrative Case Reviews and Court Hearings**

**13. The responsibility to know and receive training regarding the purpose of administrative case reviews, client service plans, and court processes, as well as filing or time requirements associated with those proceedings; and the responsibility to actively participate in the foster parent's designated role in these proceedings.**

- Staff emphasize the importance of attending and participating in the Integrated Assessment, service planning, ACRs, and court proceedings during home visits, and notifies the foster parent of such events verbally or in writing with the Notification of Scheduled Meetings form. Each region also emphasizes the importance of attending these important case planning events in the Foster Parent Newsletter.
- Foster parents receive ongoing training/information on the purpose of various service processes and the need to be involved in these.
- Children's Home & Aid's regional offices distribute foster parent newsletters to foster parents on a regular basis that includes agency training information, the agency training schedule, and training schedules on external training opportunities.
- Training opportunities in each region of Children's Home & Aid are listed on the Children's Home & Aid website. Staff provides this information to foster parents who do not have access to a computer.
- Case managers strongly attempt to involve the foster parents in permanency planning for

- child(ren) placed in their home.
- Barriers foster parents face to participate in these various processes are being identified and ways to overcome these are being considered and implemented where possible.
- Foster parents are also encouraged to contact their Child's Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) or CASA worker to discuss court concerns, or to inquire about the upcoming hearings for the child(ren).
- Foster parents receive mailed notification of each scheduled Administrative Case Review, and should contact the case manager if they do not receive one.
- QPI gathers foster parents, agency leadership, caseworkers and licensing specialists and their supervisors, biological parents and representatives from the Office of the Public Guardian, the DCFS Office of Training, the Office of the Public Defender, DCFS Legal, ACR and other involved parties in an effort to establish a more cooperative working relationship between all branches of child welfare.

## Appeals Systems

### 14. The responsibility to know the child welfare agency's appeal procedure for foster parents and the rights of foster parents under the procedure.

- The grievance procedure clearly defines and delineates the procedures to follow to file a complaint/grievance. There are three types of grievances foster parents can file, as listed below. If a foster parent is not sure which process should be followed, the case manager or licensing staff should be contacted for assistance. It is their duty to assist in this process.

#### 1. Licensing Grievance/Appeal

If a foster parent wishes to make a complaint in relation to a foster home licensing issue, they are to follow DCFS procedure for appealing licensing decisions. This procedure is available to foster parents in the DCFS Foster Parent manual or from Children's Home & Aid licensing staff.

#### 2. Service Plan Appeal

If a foster parent has an objection to a part of their foster child's DCFS Client Service Plan, they should follow the DCFS procedure for a Service Appeal. An explanation of this process is available from their Administrative Case Reviewer, child's case manager, or their DCFS Foster Parent manual.

#### 3. Children's Home & Aid Foster Parent Grievance Procedure

If a foster parent believes they are being treated unfairly, or that one or more of their rights have been violated, they have the right to address their concern with agency staff and/or file a grievance. If necessary, the foster parent may have their concerns heard by the President of Children's Home & Aid. Certain procedures must be followed in the grievance process.

**This grievance policy is to be used by foster parents only for grieving alleged violations of the Foster Parent Law that are not covered by an already existing grievance or appeal process. It cannot be used to address issues that are covered by the service appeal process, the appeal process for indicated cases of child abuse/neglect, the process for appealing licensing investigation findings or license revocations, etc.**

##### A. Informal Grievance Procedure

*Step One: Address issue with the Licensing Representative or Case Manager:*

If an issue or concern arises, the foster parent should first address concerns with their assigned licensing representative or case manager. If the issue has not been resolved at that time, the direct supervisor should be contacted.

*Step Two: Address issue with the next level supervisor:*

If the issue cannot be settled with the first level of staff, the foster parent should contact the next level supervisor (Foster Care Director, or Program Manager). This may be done over the telephone, in writing, or in person. The next level supervisor may wish to call a "staffing" (meeting with all concerned parties) to resolve the situation with the foster



parent and others involved.

#### **B. Formal Grievance Procedure**

If the informal process proves to be inadequate, then the procedure outlined in the Children's Home & Aid Foster Parent Grievance Procedure is to be followed. Foster parents receive the grievance & appeal procedures from their licensing specialist and are given the opportunity to discuss it with agency staff.

- At the time of licensing, the foster parent is asked to sign a document indicating the appeal and grievance procedure has been received and discussed.
- Foster parents wishing to file a grievance may request help from staff in doing so.
- The Foster Parent Grievance Procedure, Foster Parent Statement of Confidentiality and the OIG Brochure are distributed to all foster parents at the time of licensure and will be re-distributed to all foster parents on a regular basis, as needed and upon request. During monitoring visits, licensing representatives remind foster parents that there is a grievance policy available, and inquires about their need of a copy.
- The Office of Inspector General (OIG) addresses complaints from the general public concerning child welfare services. The OIG brochure will be included with the Grievance Policy & Procedure and other materials that are distributed to newly licensed foster parents.
- The Children's Home & Aid Foster Parent Grievance Procedure can be located on the agency's website under Foster Parent Resources at:
  - [www.childrenshomeandaid.org](http://www.childrenshomeandaid.org)

### **Accurate and Complete Records**

#### **15. The responsibility to know and understand the importance of maintaining accurate and relevant records regarding the child's history and progress; and the responsibility to be aware of and follow the procedures and regulations of the child welfare agency with which the foster parent is licensed or affiliated.**

- At the time of placement, the foster parent receives a Foster Child Record Folder for each child placed in the home. Training/direction on maintaining required documentation is provided to the foster parents by the assigned mentor, case manager and/or licensing representative.
- The Foster Child Record Folder includes a file folder/binder in which to retain documents, along with a list of information that needs to be documented as required by Rule 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes, and instructions on maintaining records on foster children. The folder also contains important contact numbers for Children's Home & Aid and other resources, medical information, educational information, etc.
- Records that are maintained by foster parents are reviewed by the Children's Home & Aid licensing specialist during the semiannual compliance visit. Any improvements or changes needed are identified and instruction is provided to foster parents on how to implement the needed changes.
- Foster parents will receive a copy of the 906 Placement Authorization Form as soon as possible after placement of a child to use as proof of placement and to aid in accessing services. The 906 is to be maintained in the Foster Child Record Folder.
- Each youth in care is required to get fingerprinted to help aid in safety; foster parents will assist in the fingerprinting process for youth in care.

### **Communication with Subsequent Caregivers**

#### **16. The responsibility to share information, through the child welfare team, with the subsequent caregiver (whether the child's parent or another substitute caregiver) regarding the child's adjustment in the foster parent's home.**

- While foster parents are to maintain information on foster children on an ongoing basis,

particularly during a placement transition, staff solicits this information from the foster parent, and as provided, includes it in the Foster Child Record Folder. All information provided by the foster parent, written and/or verbal, is then given to the child's new family.

- This responsibility is shared and discussed with the foster family during the licensing study, during Foster/Adopt PRIDE or internal trainings and during pre-placement activities. Children's Home & Aid staff strongly encourages direct communication/sharing of information between the foster parent and the next placement, where appropriate, particularly if the next placement is the home of the natural parent.

## **Cultural Sensitivity**

**17. The responsibility to provide care and services that are respectful of and responsive to the child's cultural needs and are supportive of the relationship between the child and his or her own family; the responsibility to recognize the increased importance of maintaining a child's cultural identity when the race or culture of the foster family differs from that of the foster child; and the responsibility to take action to address these issues.**

- The need to be culturally sensitive and responsible is discussed and explored by the Children's Home & Aid licensing specialist during the licensing and assessment process, in ongoing support groups, in ongoing contacts with the case manager, through Foster/Adopt PRIDE training, and ongoing agency trainings. Children's Home & Aid case managers provide resources and support to the foster family and the child when placing a foster child of a different race or culture in a home. Children's Home & Aid staff solicits information from the foster family on an ongoing basis to determine any stressors which may be present and plan for a course of action.
- Foster Parents are invited to participate in diversity trainings provided to Children's Home & Aid staff, as well as being notified of such trainings offered by other groups.
- Notification of internal and external trainings and resources on cultural sensitivity are provided to foster parents on an ongoing basis through the Regional Foster Parent Newsletters and through mass agency emailing.
- Children's Home & Aid is recognized by the Human Rights Campaign as an All Children All Families Child Welfare Agency, and as a leader in supporting and serving LGBTQ youth and families.