

*Illinois Department of Children & Family Services
Central Region
2023
Annual Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan*



(Prepared in accordance with the Illinois Foster Parent Law – Public Act 89.19 Section 1-25)

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Introduction

History of the Foster Parent Law

In the late 80's as Chair of the Child Welfare Subcommittee, Representative Tom Dart traveled around the state listening to child welfare issues. Foster parents who were already involved in the Illinois Foster Parent Association attended those town meetings and began voicing their concerns. As a result, a select few were invited to testify in political forums. The result of Representative Dart's findings led to a legislative report of recommendations for improving the child welfare system. Included in those recommendations was a Foster Parent Bill of Rights.

Representative Dart introduced the Foster Parent Bill of Rights to the Illinois General Assembly, but because of its lack of legal language and corresponding responsibility section the Bill was referred back for negotiations. A Governor's Task Force was formed to create a "responsibility" section and to write the entire recommendation in a legal format. A few legislators, selected DCFS staff, and some of the original group of foster parents were assigned to this Task Force.

On June 3rd, 1995, Governor Edgar signed Public Policy 89.19 into law. The original Foster Parent Bill of Rights, now incorporated in The Foster Parent Law, became a reality on its third trip before the legislature. Its title is misleading because it is actually good child welfare practice that is not intended to be a solution, but a step toward better teamwork between DCFS and foster parents. Indeed, it is the foundation for all foster parent trainings, conferences, and work groups. It is also a part of new worker training and will be included in Best Practice.

The fifteen Rights and seventeen Responsibilities listed in the Foster Parent Law provide a job description for foster parents. The Foster Parent Law is also a part of DCFS policy and rule (Foster Parent Code 340). "The Department and purchase of service agencies are responsible for developing annual plans for implementation of the law to ensure foster parents are provided with the information and support to fulfill their responsibility to fully participate as a member of the child welfare team," (Foster Parent Code – Section 340.30). Annual plans must be submitted to the Illinois Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Council for review and approval. The implementation plan must state how each DCFS region or private agency will implement the law for their licensed foster parents. These plans are graded and must achieve a passing rate or they are returned to the agency for resubmission. An ongoing monitoring process was developed to hold regions and agencies accountable for their plans.

Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

In early 2020, the United States entered an historic period of time as the country began to grapple with their first pandemic in over 100 years. In response to the national health crisis, the State of Illinois and the Department of Children and Family Services enacted several measures in an attempt to protect our youth in care, their foster parents, and the families we serve.

In mid-March, an action transmittal outlining contact with youth in care was provided to the field. This action transmittal was developed due to the Governor's Stay at Home order put into place because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Workers were informed that unless there was an immediate safety concern, workers were to have weekly contact via video with youth in care until further notice. DCFS utilized Foster Parent Support Specialists to communicate and explain many of the changes enacted because of the pandemic and Stay at Home order. Communication with foster parents increased at the start of the pandemic. Foster Parent Cafés were moved to a virtual platform. The Cafes were held more frequently during the early stages of the pandemic and then tapered to twice a month. A PRIDE COVID-19 Help for Foster Parents training was posted to the Virtual Training Center for foster parents to access if needed. Zoom meetings and video messaging were also held with foster parents as needed.

As of July 1, 2020, workers began to have in person contact with youth in foster homes after asking questions related to the health of household members, prior to each visit. This action transmittal was listed on the DCFS state website to ensure foster parents were aware of this information.

To address the needs of our foster parent candidates while following state, local and agency guidelines, the Department shifted PRIDE pre-service training from in-person classroom settings to a virtual training application. This allowed foster parent candidates the opportunity to continue their training and education as they endeavored to open their homes to our youth in care.

As the pandemic progressed into 2021, the Department continued to modify policy and procedure to make every effort to ensure the safety and well-being of our youth, foster parents, and staff. This continued throughout 2022. Most meetings (i.e., trainings, support groups, child and family team meetings, administrative case reviews, etc.) remained virtual throughout most of the 2022 reporting period.

Once positivity rates decreased and the State began to lift restrictions, gatherings such as foster parent appreciation events were held in-person or with social distance modifications.

Section – II

Foster Parent Rights Narratives

Foster Parent Rights

- 1. The right to be treated with dignity, respect, and consideration as a professional member of the child welfare team.**

Strategies

- A. Every foster parent has the right to be treated as a respected member of the team by having their concerns, questions, suggestions, and needs addressed in a timely and informative manner by Department staff. Telephone calls, e-mails and texts will be responded to in a timely and appropriate manner. Full disclosure is paramount to meet child and family needs. Notification of meetings, court and school meetings are critical to ensure inclusion of the foster parent with the child and family team. Field offices coordinated events such as Halloween parties, Christmas parties, foster parent appreciation events, foster parent support groups, roundtable discussions and picnics. Participation in all Department social functions and celebrations are open to foster parents.
- B. Regional Administration supports and directs all staff to know the importance of adhering to the Foster Parent Law. Surveys are sent regionally by the Quality Enhancement (QE) Customer Satisfaction sub-committee to survey foster parents about their satisfaction with services they receive and whether services are being delivered to foster parents and foster children per policy and procedure. The results of these surveys are utilized to determine areas for improvements. In addition, the region retains one toll-free number for the three sub-regions (866-368-5204). This line is used as a Foster Parent Help Line and helps to reduce long distance charges to foster parents when calling the regional office and, in some cases, local offices. The line was approved and became operational February 15, 2003 and continues today. The Help Line's voicemail message asks callers to email Marsha.Jones@Illinois.gov when needing assistance. This allowed for quicker response to requests for help.
- C. The Regional QE committee sends surveys to foster parents annually with questions that pertain to their satisfaction with services and performance (i.e., casework and child protection services, etc.)
- D. Foster parents are encouraged to attend Child and Family Team Meetings regarding the foster children in their home and to offer their input. The Child and Family Team concept truly demonstrates a belief in the teamwork approach within central region. In addition, foster parents are also encouraged to attend Administrative Case Reviews (ACR) and juvenile court hearings.
- E. Trainings are offered throughout central region to assist foster parents in developing skills necessary to participate as a member of the professional team. These trainings often occur during foster parent meetings and support groups. Trainings are also available through

community events. Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS) help to make foster parents aware of these training activities. Foster parents are encouraged to attend and be active in local meetings and trainings. Some area offices work with other licensed foster care agencies to recruit, train, and support foster parents. The DCFS Virtual Training Center (VTC) is also available to foster parents for online training opportunities. The VTC now offers module 6 virtually: Teamwork. There are 3 sessions that address foster families working as a member of a professional team.

- F. The central region recognized foster parents during Foster Parent Appreciation month with events that included a cookout at a local church and dinner at a local restaurant. Several offices also gifted foster parents with potted plants/flowers, cakes or cookies, and various gift bags. Programs such as The Forgotten Initiative, Be Strong Families, Restore Network, and Foster Hope partner with DCFS and FPSS' to offer support groups, trainings, and parent café programs. Foster parents expressed virtual meetings are convenient; As meetings transition to in person, FPSS' are offering support groups in both virtual and in person settings. In addition, region-wide, foster parents' network and support one another. Foster parents are encouraged to join support groups in their respective areas. Throughout the region FPSS offer support groups with a varied schedule. See attachment A.

- G. It continues to be the Regional Administrator's goal to encourage teamwork among staff and foster parents. Central region attempted to hold quarterly Foster Parent Law meetings to provide a sense of connectedness between foster parents and staff. Due to scheduling and staff changes, meetings were only held on 12/07/21, 03/08/22, and 09/06/22. In some areas of central region, foster parent rights and responsibilities were provided to foster parents via monthly emails or closed social media groups.

- H. Foster parents are provided with folders when they have DCFS foster children in their homes. Folders are the foster parents' toolbox of what needs to be documented and how to document the information. All forms, within the folder, are consistent throughout Central Region. Every folder consists of: HealthWorks information, medication log; behavior log; discharge summary; foster parent note page; allowance tracking sheet and instructions; what you need to know before signing on the dotted line; IEP information; educational log; clothing inventory (what the child came with and documents what the child left with); face sheet (workers name and number, supervisors name and number, child's physician, religion, and names of who the child can be released to), and reimbursement amounts. Folders assist foster parents in providing accurate information concerning the child placed with them during professional staffing such as ACR, child and family team meetings, etc.

- I. Central region DCFS management supports the use of the Foster Parent Grievance Procedure and will continue to convey this during foster parent meetings and general conversations with foster parents.

Additionally, caregivers have help available through the toll-free Foster Parent Help Line. FPSS' also are very knowledgeable about the process and have the forms available upon foster parent request. The Foster Parent Grievance procedure/instructions and form is included in the Foster Parent Implementation Plan (See Attachment D).

An impartial third party will acknowledge, register, and assign the grievance to the appropriate administrator. The administrator will investigate and evaluate the grievance. The grievance will be resolved locally. A resolution will be developed with the foster parent. The resolution will be drafted by the administrator and the grievance will closed. The solution will be implemented, monitored, and documented. Grievances not specific to the rights will be considered a rejected complaint.

- J. Information and important telephone numbers that foster parents need to know are provided by the FPSS and/or Licensing staff, as well as through the toll-free Foster Parent Help Line. Central region field office staff continues to support foster parents with needed information such as important local telephone numbers and contact information.

2. The right to be given standardized Pre-Service Training and appropriate on-going training to meet mutually assessed needs and improve-the foster parent's skills.

Strategies

- A. There are scheduled Pre-Service PRIDE Trainings, using a co-training approach, that foster parents are required to take prior to becoming licensed. Within this training, foster parents view a series of videos featuring foster parents, adults who were fostered, birth parents of children who were removed from their care, etc. Foster parents are notified of Module In-Service Trainings and calendars listing dates of new Modules on an ongoing basis by various means, i.e., licensing representatives, the VTC (Virtual Training Center), DCFS website, Illinois Families Now and Forever, local field office staff, etc.
- B. At times foster parent support specialists (FPSS) and licensing workers will provide foster parents with upcoming training information. Foster parents are encouraged to use community resources and utilize the VTC and other online resources.
- C. Each local field office is expected to utilize a co-training approach in which local field office staff and foster parent representatives participate as both co-facilitators and trainers. Co-facilitators are responsible for assessing training needs, accessing training materials and resources, and presenting information. Other trainings offered by FPSS' and trainers included trainings on topics such as Lifebook's, Being the Best Foster Mom, Core Teen, and Shared Parenting through the Holidays. Foster parents continue to be offered virtual

training due to these being convenient for foster families. Examples include tax training when fostering youth, black hair care, advocating in schools, and trauma training.

- D. Questionnaires, FPSS', and Quality Enhancement (QE) processes are all regularly utilized as mutual assessment tools to identify training needs of foster parents. These results will be shared at Central Region Area Office Foster Parent Council meetings.
- E. Foster parents were given training on new policy, procedures and initiatives during Area Foster Parent Support Meetings and other trainings. Additional trainings were offered to help foster parents meet the needs of children in their care. Some examples of training topics Lifebook's, College for Youth in Care, Being the Best Foster Mom, Administrative Case Review Changes, Navigating the VTC, and Foster Parent Cafés. Foster parents also received information on local area resources available at no cost to youth in care. Where applicable, foster parents were trained and given updates on the Immersion Site process. These trainings are available in the VTC for on demand training.
- F. Foster Care Licensing staff and FPSS' assist foster parents in locating and registering for classes on the VTC.
- G. Caseworkers, FPSS, and Licensing workers will utilize regular meetings with foster parents (monthly visits, licensing monitoring visits, meeting before ACR and Court, Child and Family Team Meetings) to discuss ongoing training needs that are commensurate with the type of care provided by the foster parent for the best interest of the child. Supervisors will ask casework staff about foster parent's ongoing training needs during staff supervision.

In addition to the initial PRIDE Pre-Service training required for licensure, all DCFS licensed foster parents must complete a minimum of sixteen clock hours of approved training during the period between each licensure renewal, which is every 4 years. Acceptable training includes conferences approved by the Department; training provided by a licensed child welfare agency whose foster care program is accredited by the Council of Accreditation (COA); training toward first-aid, Heimlich maneuver, and/or cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification; or other training approved in writing by the Department's Division of Training and Development Services. The licensing representative discusses this training requirement with foster parents and documents on the CFS 597. Licensing workers routinely reach out to the foster parent, casework staff, and/or the FPSS' at the time of license renewal and during the semiannual monitoring visit to mutually assess any identified training needs. FPSS' meet with DCFS foster parents to discuss any training needs and child concerns. The FPSS reports back to their supervisors any need for child specific training and the foster parent is given information on where to attend the appropriate training. Many child specific training opportunities are offered in the DCFS VTC where a foster parent can complete training online, at their own pace. These trainings include, but are not limited to: Understanding Diabetes, Lifebook's

Tutorial, Early Childhood Intervention Ages Birth to Three, Working with Youth with Sexual Behavior Programs, Core Teen, Social Media Mobile Technology Safety and Working with LGBTQI+ Youth in Care. Community trainings such as those offered at local schools or health departments have credit issued if a foster parent completes the Training Credit Approval Form (TCAF) - CFS-574.

- H. In development of the 2021 plan, a foster parent suggested there be a training 6 months *after* licensure as follow up to PRIDE training to determine if there are additional questions or further training needs. This suggestion was provided to the Central Region Training Manager who affirmed the idea and agreed to forward it to her administration. Based on this recommendation, in 2022, 4 micro trainings intended for new foster parents were created to include trauma, attachment, school, and cultural diversity.

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

Strategies

- A. DCFS Central Region has Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS) that are available 24 hours a day 7 days a week to assist foster parents. The FPSS' contact information is provided to foster parents.
- B. Foster parents are advised to contact their assigned caseworker during business hours. If foster parents need further information or assistance, they are to follow the management structure by contacting the assigned caseworker's supervisor. If further assistance is still needed, then the Area Administrator shall be contacted if a crisis occurs, and the caseworker is not available. Foster parents are advised that they may call the 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline (800-252-2873) if they have an emergency after hours. The call floor worker will notify standby staff who can respond to the foster parent in absence of assigned worker/supervisor. Foster parents are informed by casework staff, Licensing staff, and FPSS' that crisis services such as the CARES Line and the local mental health emergency lines are available to them in an emergency. DCFS Foster parents also receive a phone list ICE (In Case of Emergency). The phone list contains emergency numbers a foster parent might need to use and an explanation of the service. Numbers and information on this list include emergency services, abuse hotline, and behavior crisis (CARES, Medical and life threatening, poison hot line, run away and missing youth).
- C. The Department supports after hours placement disruptions through attempts to create informal and formal supports for the foster family and children. If the DCFS caseworker and/or supervisor are not available after hours, the foster parent can contact the Child Abuse Hotline for support. The call floor worker will notify standby staff who can respond to the foster parent in absence of assigned worker/supervisor. There is a FPSS available

24 hours a day 365 days a year who can respond after hours. The foster parents are given available community resources including the CARES line for afterhours emergencies. In most areas in the central region there are foster parent support groups available in person and online through social media as well as parent cafes.

- D. Updates regarding regional organizational changes and staff vacancies are routinely given at the regional and local Foster Parent Advisory Law meetings. Central region believes it is important that a “management structure” for any division, unit, worker, etc. be available and provided as well as how to access the information to prevent retaliation. Management structure and contact information can be obtained by calling the local office or via the DCFS website. In some areas where there are FPSS, they make sure the DCFS foster parent knows the management structure.
- E. Since February 15, 2003, DCFS Central Region has had a toll-free Foster Parent Help Line in place for the region. Currently, this is another avenue for foster parents to have their non-emergency concerns addressed within the region. The Help Line’s (866-368-5204) voicemail message directs callers to email Marsha.Jones@Illinois.gov when needing assistance. This allows for quicker responses to requests for help. Foster parents are advised of the help line via handouts at Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings, by their licensing representatives, and their FPSS’.
- F. Policy Guide 2017.07 was introduced to implement Public Act 99-839 and Title IV-E of the Social Security Act, both of which authorize all caregivers of children/youth in substitute care to use “Normalcy Parenting” and apply the Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standard when making parenting decisions in the children’s best interests. All caregivers for all children/youth in foster home placements licensed by the Department should use Normalcy Parenting and the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard for decision-making regarding the children/youth’s participation in extracurricular activities, enrichment opportunities, social activities, cultural activities, religious and other significant activities. As of July 1, 2017, normalcy is a required supplemental pre-service training and is available as an in-service training for foster parents licensed prior to that date. Normalcy Parenting has been discussed in numerous formats including an on-going conversation by the DCFS Guardianship Administrator at state-wide Foster Parent Advisory Council Meetings and other venues.
- Normalcy Parenting means empowering a caregiver to approve or not approve a youth’s participation in appropriate extracurricular activities based on the caregiver’s own assessment using the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard, without prior approval of the Department, the Permanency Worker, or the court. The goal of Normalcy Parenting and the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard is to allow children and youth in care the opportunity for normal growth and development through participation in age, physical, culturally, and mentally appropriate activities, responsibilities, and life skills.

- Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard means the standard characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the health, safety, and best interests of a child while at the same time encouraging the emotional and developmental growth of the child, that a caregiver shall use when determining whether to allow a child in foster care under responsibility of the State to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, cultural, and social activities.
- G. Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) services are offered throughout central region. Foster parents are informed this service is to provide support in maintaining the youth in care in their home.
- H. The Foster Parent Reimbursement Program is a type of reimbursement DCFS has for foster parents. To start the process, the foster parent asks their caseworker for a Foster Parent Reimbursement Program Claim Form. The foster parent can also call Sue Allen-Oats at DCFS in Chicago at 312/814-6862 or by email at Sue.Allen@illinois.gov. She will send the necessary paperwork to the foster parent via mail. Foster parents should remember to keep a copy of all documentation submitted for their own records. FPSS', where available, can also help foster parents gain access to the reimbursement program. The reimbursement program through DCFS is to provide "actual cash value" for damages such as personal injury, property damage and bodily injury caused by foster children. First party coverage may be provided for foster parents/relative caregivers, innocent victims or other claimants for their own property damage and bodily injury caused by a foster child while the child is in the care, custody, and control of the foster parent/relative. It is considered excess coverage over and above any other valid and collectable insurance for which the caregiver has. Foster parents are also informed that there can be a deductible and that depreciation is also part of the process. Foster parents are told that they need to call their personal insurance carrier to see if they will cover it and if their personal insurance does not cover, then a coverage letter needs to be sent by the insurance carrier to the foster parent. If a police report has been made, then a copy of the police report needs to be submitted with the claim. Estimates (usually 3 estimates if possible) should be submitted along with the claim. If the foster home or caseworker took pictures of the damage those pictures should also be submitted. Foster parents are informed that a group meets to decide on the claims. Foster parents are informed that the process takes time, and they can utilize the Advocacy Office if they feel the issue is not being addressed.
- I. DCFS is placing greater emphasis on working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer, Intersex Youth (LGBTQI+). DCFS, in collaboration with training, is moving forward with education regarding the needs of these youth. The Resource and Recruitment Unit has gathered information from all of central region's resources, programs and supports for this population and their caregivers. Additionally, active recruitment is ongoing by Resource and Recruitment to include the identification of LGBTQI+ friendly homes. In addition, there are instances in the central region where FPSS', Licensing and Resource and Recruitment have worked collaboratively to support and retain LGBTQI+

youth supportive foster parents. Supports within DCFS Clinical Unit are available for these youth as well as any caregivers who identify as such. Procedures 302, Appendix K provides DCFS staff and foster parents with direction and information that sets mandatory minimum standards to promote the safety, adjustment, and well-being of LGBTQI+ children and youth in the Department's care. All direct service staff and supervisors receive annual training in policy, support, and needs of this population. In addition, a webinar created by the Human Rights Campaign has been made a required in-service training for foster caregivers. The purpose of this training is to create cultural competency and best practice for serving youth in care as well as any parent who identifies as LGBTQI+. To meet the needs of youth who identify in the LGBTQI+ community, DCFS has the LGBTQI+ Diversity and Inclusion Committee that holds monthly meetings. The committee consists of statewide stakeholders to provide recommendations for considerations of youth in care who identify in the community. Trainings are available on the VTC website. These trainings were recently updated to provide the most current information.

- J. Foster parents have access via the DCFS website to the Service Provider Identification and Exploration Resource (SPIDER). The link can be found under Brighter Futures – Promoting Independence and Self Sufficiency or they can access the site at spider.dcfs.illinois.gov. SPIDER is a free, comprehensive service resource database for youth and families in Illinois. SPIDER connects foster parents to nearby organizations that offer programs and services to support children. The database contains over 4,400 social service programs. These programs include mental health services, caregiver support, educational advocacy, vocational and employment training, mentoring enrichment programs, and after school programs.
- K. Resource links are available on the DCFS website and Facebook. Examples of these links include information on DCFS scholarship programs, updated information on HIV/AIDS, resources for LGBTQI youth, special education, and remote learning information as well as job opportunities for our youth in care. By providing access to this information directly to foster parents, information can be distributed in a more efficient and timely manner.

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

Strategies

- A. The Central Payment Unit number is 800-525-0499. Hours of operation: Monday through Friday, 8:30 A.M. until 11:30 A.M. Payment statements to foster parents list this telephone number. This number is also listed in newsletters. Regular board payment reimbursement rates are placed in the child's folder that is given to the foster parent at the time of placement. DCFS mails a payment schedule annually with board payments as well.

Monthly Reimbursement Rate

Effective July 1, 2022

The following **licensed** rates apply to traditional and relative Department supervised homes as well as Private Agency supervised homes.

Child's Age	Board	Clothing	Allowance	Total
0 to 11 months	\$481.00	\$46.00	\$17.00	\$544.00
1 to 4 years	\$475.00	\$51.00	\$18.00	\$544.00
5 to 8 years	\$525.00	\$67.00	\$19.00	\$611.00
9 to 11 years	\$547.00	\$79.00	\$30.00	\$656.00
12 years and over	\$513.00	\$89.00	\$54.00	\$656.00

- B. Caseworkers and Foster Parent Support Specialists help foster parents with the forms to get payments for respite, camp, etc. In central region, the Regional Business Office continues to make itself available for training and to answer any questions workers or foster parents have regarding respite payments. The business office continues to offer instruction when needed on respite, exceptions, and payments for camp. The regional office personnel have worked to help foster parents receive services/supplies in a timelier manner by accepting faxed and emailed copies of documents from the worker until the original can be received via mail. Faxed or emailed copies are delivered promptly to the payment unit who data enters daily on the system. The tracking system tracks the date of respite as well as the approved respite payment form arriving in business offices. The regional protocol is sent to staff including foster parents for the reimbursement paperwork to be submitted.
- C. Upon referral, the local Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) provider will assess children placed in traditional relative homes for therapeutic intervention. An IPS worker will be assigned to provide support services to assist in stabilizing the placement. If it is determined that the child needs more services beyond what DCFS is providing or can provide, the IPS will assist in locating additional services for the child. If the child requires a more intensive placement such as specialized care or residential, the IPS provider can recommend this, and caseworkers will follow the referral process in place to help a child qualify for higher levels of service. This process will include monitoring of multiple

placements, issues dealing with specialized care, transitional and independent living issues as well as the possible need for residential placement. Cases involving children with the need for specialized foster care can be contracted out to Purchase of Service (POS) agencies throughout the state dependent upon availability. Each agency has requirements for additional specialized training and reimbursement rates for specialized care. Children that have specialized or intensive medical needs receive a referral to the DCFS nursing department. The case carrying worker completes the nursing referral and consults with DCFS nursing staff and the foster parent to assist in determining training needs according to the child's specific needs. If the child has been hospitalized and is to be discharged with medical equipment, foster parents receive training from medical staff prior to the child leaving the hospital. DCFS has implemented a process referred to as Priority Clinical Staffing (PCS). This is an emergency clinical staffing typically occurring within one week of referral to identify the level of care, including financial reimbursement and specific service needs of the referred youth and foster parent. Assessments are completed timely, and payment is commensurate with the determined level of care.

Youth who are exiting foster care or were formerly in foster care are eligible for Medicaid until age 26 through the Health Care and Family Services (HFS) under the Affordable Care Act. HFS has developed an implementation plan to expand Medicaid for those youth.

- D. The central region staff continue to support timely reimbursement and assistance in correcting payment problems. Information has been provided to foster parents at Regional Foster Advisory Council meetings on how to arrange for their board payments to be direct deposited, thus avoiding mail delays. Foster parents are encouraged to start with their local office and utilize their management structure to resolve payment issues. Foster parents can also utilize the Central Payment Unit (800-525-0499 option #2) if they have been unable to resolve a billing issue at the local level. For detailed explanation regarding direct deposits contact 217-557-0930.
- E. The billing unit, with input from supervisors and support specialists, put together sample forms and written explanations to guide in the completion of these forms. Options have been made available for direct deposit to expedite payment. Respite forms can be faxed and/or emailed from the worker to their respective Area Administrator until the original can be received via mail. Faxed or emailed copies are delivered same day to payment unit who data enters daily on the system. The regional protocol will be sent to staff as well as foster parents so each will know how to submit the paperwork. Workers will ensure addresses are regularly updated and entered in the system. Periodically, there is ongoing training with staff and foster parents regarding respite care.
- F. In central region, the business unit sends a cover sheet out with all initial clothing vouchers as well as with infant care grant vouchers. This cover sheet is designed to ensure foster parents know the purchase guidelines to prevent difficulty and delays at stores when trying to purchase items. The cover sheet also lists helpful instructions for the store on where to

sign the form and where to send it. A self-addressed stamped envelope is enclosed to simplify the process. Durable medical supplies not covered can be obtained through a request by the caseworker with an exception to payment voucher. Replacement clothing vouchers can also be used for circumstantial changes, i.e., excessive weights gain or loss, etc. DCFS can prepare and distribute initial clothing voucher requests at the local field office.

The 2021 and 2022 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan committees recognize the difficulties that foster parents sometimes experience in utilizing clothing vouchers. As a result, the committees have put forth a proposal to DCFS administration in which clothing vouchers are replaced with the use of debit cards. As of the writing of the 2023 plan, debit cards are being piloted and in use in the central region.

- G. The Extended Family Support Program (EFSP) assists relative caregivers, including fictive kin, who care for their relative's child. The most common goal of EFSP is to help the caregiver obtain guardianship through probate court. Other goals include assisting caregivers with applying for the Child-Only grant, subsidized daycare, medical benefits and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (also known as food stamps), enrolling the child in school, and referring family members for other services. The program also provides cash assistance to pay for costs associated with probate court and other items needed to care for the child.
 - H. Children who are 12 years of age or older and placed with a licensed or unlicensed relative caregiver are eligible for Subsidized Guardianship.
 - I. Illinois state funded universities and the in-district community colleges are required to waive tuition and mandatory fees after grants and scholarships are applied. The language governing the secondary education tuition waiver programs allow the schools to apply student's MAP and Pell grant funds first, if awarded, and then must waive any tuition/mandatory fee costs remaining.
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.**

Strategies

- A. Foster parents are engaged in the development of the service plan by the caseworker prior to completion of the initial service plan, and then, prior to the subsequent Administrative Case Reviews. Notices for Administrative Case Reviews (ACR) are mailed directly to the foster parent by the case review staff. Caseworkers contact foster parents by phone, video

chat, in-person and/or by written documentation. The visitation plan is developed within seven (7) days of initial placement. The 30-day family meeting includes participation by the parent, caseworker, supervisor, and foster parent. During this meeting, the initial service plan is presented. The foster parent is actively involved in the completion of the child's section of the service plan. The Department continues to strive for foster parent involvement consistently throughout the region. Child Family Team Meetings will be held quarterly thereafter. Procedures 315.130 states that the permanency worker shall develop a social support plan for children ages 9 – 14 who enter substitute care following the death or loss of a parent or significant caregiver or experience a death or loss of a parent or significant caregiver while in care. This social support plan shall be incorporated into the family service plan.

- B. When a child is diagnosed with a mental illness, the permanency worker shall discuss with the parents and the caregivers the importance of being educated about the child's mental health diagnosis. The available services will be included in the family service plan. The caseworker provides timely notification of changes in the service plan and the permanency goal to the foster parent by phone, in-person, and/or written documentation with a follow up copy of the written revised plan sent to the foster parent. When changes are made in the child's service plan, foster parents are informed of the right to appeal services and are provided with a copy of the Appeal Process brochure. During ACR's, the appeal process is verbally reviewed with the foster parents.
- C. Pursuant to Public Act 100-189, effective January 1, 2018, youth in care have the right to be placed in the least restrictive and most family-like setting available and near his or her parent's home consistent with the child's health, safety, best interests, and special needs. Foster parents are informed verbally at the time of placement concerning the need to explore relative placement and recognize the need for sibling placement whenever possible. Upon establishment of the permanency goal, the foster parent has a right to be provided a copy of the child's portion of the service plan. Discussion also occurs with the foster parent at the time of the Child and Family Team Meeting with a written copy of the service plan provided once it has been established.
- D. The Department recognizes the importance of including foster parents in the development of visitation plans for children in their care along with their parents. Caseworkers often utilize foster parent consultation to determine the impact of a planned visit's day, time, and/or location on the youth in care and adjustments are made accordingly. In June 2015, the Department implemented the Fictive Kin policy. This policy further supports maintaining significant relationships for a child by allowing persons with whom the child has a meaningful relationship to be considered for placement, even though no blood or legal relationship exists. The Department's Affidavit of Relationship has been updated to a Statement of Relationship to better reflect the broadening of placement possibilities. Moreover, upon a child's entry into care, the worker is to begin a log listing significant

persons in a child's life. Current and previous foster parents are included in this list. This process is referred to as Family Finding.

E. Visiting plans are developed and filed in court by the investigative/placement workers upon a child's entry into care. The caseworker reviews the original visiting plan with the foster parent at the initial meeting and during ongoing contact with the foster parent thereafter. The foster parent is asked to provide input re: days of the week, time of day and best location for the visitation to be scheduled. Consideration is given to the child's needs including school schedules, therapy appointments, and other pertinent activities. The permanency team will consider revising the visitation plan if the original plan does not work well for the foster parent. The foster parents are provided copies of all visitation plans by the caseworker for children placed in their care. In compliance with Procedure 315.135, the permanency worker will discuss with the caregiver that the youth in care shall not be denied sibling or family visitation/contact as a means of punishment.

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 violated.

Strategies

A. Rule 383 – Licensing Enforcement outlines the procedures to be followed in the investigation of licensing complaints in foster family homes. Rule 383 is followed in central region. Licensing complaints are initiated within two business days of receipt of the complaint. Licensing complaint investigations are completed within thirty calendar days unless a thirty-day extension is granted. In the case of a current investigation with Child Protection, the thirty-day licensing deadline does not begin until after the Child Protection investigation is completed. Foster parents are advised by their foster care licensing worker of their right to have a person of their choosing present during the licensing complaint investigation. See form CFS 596-29 "Right to Have Advocate Present." Foster care licensing workers advise foster parents of this right prior to conducting the investigation and advise foster parents they can have up to four hours to arrange for this person to be present if they are not already. Foster care licensing workers work with the foster parents to develop corrective action plans that address areas of non-compliance with the licensing standards. Foster parents are notified verbally during the licensing complaint investigation of any noncompliance areas that need to be corrected and the process of monitoring for corrections. Foster parents also receive written

notification of the outcome of the licensing complaint investigation. This correspondence cites the specific licensing standards violated, notes a timeline for correction and notifies the licensee of their right to appeal the findings of the licensing complaint investigation. The Foster Parent/Family Handbook which is available through the DCFS Virtual Training Center (VTC) explains the licensing complaint investigation process and the associated appeal process. It should be noted that the handbook is linked to DCFS Rule and Procedures which will automatically update as rule and procedures change.

- B. Central region DCFS foster parents who have been notified of a substantiated licensing complaint have the right to request a Supervisory Review of the findings. The notification letter of substantiated findings explains the right to request a Supervisory Review. They must request the Supervisory Review in writing within ten days of receipt of the letter. These reviews may result in no changes being made regarding the status of a substantiated licensing complaint or revisions may be made to one or more licensing violations as well as to the corrective action plan as result of the review. The review could also result in the supervisor revising the substantiated finding due to additional or new information being available. In addition, if the violations are of serious or reoccurring nature, the supervisor could recommend that this be automatically referred for an Informal Review which can include a possible outcome of the recommendation that the license be revoked.
 - C. If foster parents are not satisfied with the outcome of the Supervisory Review, they are notified that they have the right to an Informal Review with the Foster Care Manager. Foster parents are notified of this right during the Supervisory Review and by letter after the Supervisory Review. Foster parents must request the Informal Review in writing within ten days of receiving the letter notifying them of the outcome of the Supervisory Review.
 - D. If the result of the Informal Review is a recommendation to pursue revocation of the license and Central Office of Licensing accepts this recommendation, foster parents are notified by letter from the Central Office of Licensing of their right to an Administrative Hearing on this matter.
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.**

Strategies

- A. Caseworkers are trained in all information that is to be disclosed to the foster parents when they attend foundations/core training, and this is reinforced during supervision and team meetings when policy and procedures are reviewed. Confidentiality training for foster parents will continue to be offered periodically during Foster Parent Law meetings throughout the region. It was the recommendation of the 2021 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan committee for central region that on-demand confidentiality and

HIPPA training be made available to foster parents. A request was made to DCFS administration for this training to be made available on-demand to foster parents via the virtual training application. Training is currently available on-demand, but it is for staff only. It remains the recommendation of the 2023 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan committee that these trainings be made available to foster parents via the Virtual Training Center (VTC).

- B. Workers communicate and share any additional information with the foster parent during monthly home visits and phone contacts. This sharing of information is documented on case notes. During supervision, supervisors will review with the caseworker all new case information. Supervisors will then instruct caseworkers to relay pertinent information with the caregiver.

- C. At the time a child is placed in a foster home, the foster parents are advised of all known relevant information concerning the child consistent with the rules of confidentiality. This information is outlined on CFS 600-4, Sharing Information with the Caregiver. It should be noted that child information provided to the foster parents would include any information known about the child/child's history, including medical, educational, behavioral, and emotional information at the time of placement, as outlined in Administrative Code Section 301.120 "Sharing Appropriate Information with the Caregiver." As the case progresses, other information given to a foster parent would include a copy of the child's portion of the client service plan, as required per Procedure 315.170, including any visitation arrangements and all amendments or revisions. Case history of the child, including how the child came into care, the child's legal status, the permanency goal for the child, a history of the child's previous placements, reasons for placement changes, excluding information that identifies or reveals the location of any previous foster or relative home caregiver, and other relevant background information about the child of which the caseworker is aware. This is including but not limited to, any prior criminal history, information about any behavior problems, including fire setting, perpetration of sexual abuse, destructive behavior, and substance abuse habits, likes and dislikes, etc. Mental health information can be shared only as specified in 89 Ill. Adm. Code 431.110, Disclosure of Information of a Mental Health Nature. Information regarding Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), AIDS Related Complex (ARC) or Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) test results shall be shared only in accordance with 89 Ill. Adm. Code 431.110, Disclosure of Information Regarding Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). At the time of placement, supervisors review information with the assigned caseworker and the assigned caseworker shares information with caregiver via the CFS 600-4 Sharing Information with Caregivers. The foster parent is asked to review and sign the CFS 600-4. This form is completed upon initial placement and at each subsequent placement; a copy is retained in the child's case file. Staff are trained on providing information to foster parent at their foundations training, supervision and through the dissemination of new policy's/procedures. Foster parents are reminded via newsletters and during Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings to ask specific

questions before accepting a child for placement. A list of questions to ask is distributed during PRIDE Pre-Service training and contained in the Foster Parent/Family Handbook and periodically published in local foster parent newsletters.

- D. When any new programs are offered that would benefit children, foster parents are informed of these through caseworkers, FPSS, mailings, telephone calls, and local area Foster Parent Law meetings.
 - E. Foster parents are included in quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings and receive and share information first-hand through the meetings. The supervisor will discuss the need for full disclosure during supervision, and if a foster parent is not present at a team meeting, the caseworker will review with them the information shared at that meeting.
 - F. The Integrated Assessment process is available statewide. During the assessment process, the caseworker or clinical screener interview foster parents for their perspective regarding child behavior and to address any special needs of their child. This provides a framework for the creation of the service plan.
 - G. All foster parents are surveyed at least annually regarding casework services. The aggregated information from surveys is shared with the statewide licensing manager/supervisors, licensing staff and foster parents through the local area Foster Parent Law meetings. This information provides guidance for corrective action planning as well as informing foster parents that their comments were heard to improve service delivery and overall satisfaction.
 - H. When service plans are written, casework staff will go over the child portion/information with the foster parents. Supervisors will ensure compliance by reviewing the documentation with the caseworker.
 - I. Foster parents will be informed that youth in care ages 16 and above should have a State of Illinois Identification Card or a driver's license.
8. **The right to be given information concerning a child (i) from the Department as required under subsection (u) of Section 5 of the Children and Family Services Act and (ii) from a child welfare agency as required under subsection (c-5) of Section 7.4 of the Child Care Act of 1969.**

Strategies

- A. Per Rule 340.40, caseworkers are required at the time or prior to placement, whenever possible, to provide in writing via CFS 600-4 all relevant information concerning the child. Workers should document their communication of this information to the foster parent in a case note. During supervision, supervisors will ensure that the caseworker is providing

up-to-date information on the child to the foster parent. Supervisors remind workers to update foster parents of learned child information as the case progresses. When Department staff calls foster parents for placement, all information known about the child is shared with the foster parents in order to allow foster parents to make an informed decision. If the placement was found through CAPU, the investigator calls the foster parent to make sure they were given all the information regarding the child and answer any questions the foster parent may have.

- B. Caseworkers are trained in all information that is to be disclosed to the foster parents when they attend Foundations/core training, and this is reinforced during supervision and team meetings when policy and procedures are reviewed. Confidentiality Training for foster parents should be offered periodically during Foster Parent Law meetings throughout the region. It is the recommendation of the 2023 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan committee for central region that on-demand confidentiality and HIPPA training be made available to foster parents. A request was made to DCFS administration for this training to be made available on-demand to foster parents via the virtual training application. Training is currently available on-demand, but it is for staff only. It remains the recommendation of the 2023 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan committee that these trainings be made available to foster parents via the virtual training application.
- C. When a child is first placed in care the investigator gives the foster parent all known information regarding the child, including any information from the physical, the hospital and any medications that are prescribed. The foster parent is informed at that time which school the child is attending and is asked if they will take and pick up that child from school when possible. In other cases, the foster parents enroll the child in their school district and the records are then requested by the school. Foster parents are taught how to do this in PRIDE Pre-Service Training and in the Educational Advocacy Training. Where available, the Foster Parent Support Specialist (FPSS) will talk the foster parent through enrolling a child in their school district.
- D. Depending on placement location, HealthWorks calls the foster parent and gives them all known medical information pertaining to the child (depending on the information the caseworker may be given the information and then shared with the foster parent). A packet is given to the foster parent by the investigator with HealthWorks phone numbers so foster parents can call to get additional information as needed.
- E. It is the goal of the Integrated Assessment (IA) screener to complete the assessment within 45 days of the initial placement. An IA is done on new placements and information regarding the child is shared during this time with the foster parent.
- F. Once the service plan is created and expectations for the foster parents are explained, the foster parent will be provided their portion as well as the child's portion. In addition, the child portion is given to age-appropriate children as well. Foster parents have informed

licensing and casework staff if they will work with birth parents and to what extent. In many of the field offices composition books are given to foster parents to share information back and forth between the foster parent and birth parent. When a child goes on a visit, the book is sent along for the birth parent and/or foster parent to ask questions and/or share information.

- G. As information becomes available the caseworker shares that information with the foster parent through phone conversations and monthly visits. Child and Family Team Meetings are also used to build relationships between the foster parent and the birth parent to ensure information regarding the child is shared.
 - H. In central region, child folders are given to foster parents to keep pertinent information regarding the child and this folder goes with the child if the child moves to another foster home. This folder contains a fact sheet with the child's name, DOB, worker, and parents' names. The folder also includes medication logs, behavior logs, educational information, a clothing and personal allowance sheet, medical information, and any written records pertinent to the child's needs. All the information that is known about the child stays with the child and is available for the new foster parent to review. In 2021, the child folder was created in a digital form to facilitate ease of distribution to foster parents.
 - I. When adoption is the goal and a permanent home has been established, the adoption worker goes through the entire file and gives medical, educational as well as all pertinent information regarding that child to the adoptive home as part of the full disclosure process. The foster parent will on occasion receive a copy of the redacted file. Staff understands the importance of ensuring the adoptive home has all known information on a child from whom they are adopting.
 - J. Supervisors, during monthly supervision, review each case and information that has been shared with the foster parent. Supervisors have access to the workers' case notes in SACWIS and can look up each case. Supervisors often receive phone calls from foster parents when the worker is not available or has not been in the office and can share information.
 - K. By keeping foster parents informed about any new information involving a youth in care, casework staff can assess a foster home's needs and provide services to enhance stability. This type of feedback allows the worker and foster parent the opportunity to build upon the placement stabilization for the child.
9. **The right to be notified of scheduled meetings and staffing's 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 staffing's, 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.

Strategies

- A. The Administrative Case Review (ACR) unit sends written notification to foster parents of all ACR's. Caseworkers also notify foster parents of ACR's if the child moves after notices have been sent. Caseworkers will review with foster parents the child portion of the ACR prior to the ACR for input and feedback.
- B. Caseworkers inform foster parents during in-person visits, telephone contact and letters about court hearings, Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) and the clinical staffings. Foster parents are notified of all significant service providers and how to contact them. They are encouraged by the team to participate in all facets of child service provision. Their input is given full consideration. Supervisors will discuss foster parent participation in the child's services during supervision with the caseworker to ensure foster parents have been made aware of the child's services and agency decisions concerning the child.
- Caseworkers invite and/or ask foster parents to attend initial and subsequent family meetings for their input in developing the service plan. Foster parents receive their portion of the written service plan at required case milestones.
 - Prior to a scheduled court hearing, the caseworker may share the child portion of the court report with the foster parent for input and feedback. If a foster parent is unable to attend a court hearing or meeting, the caseworker contacts the foster parent following the hearing to share any outcomes that impact the child's placement or permanency. Any other pertinent information is shared with the foster parent during the next regular contact unless the foster parent calls the worker prior to the next visit requesting the information.
 - Caseworkers invite and/or ask foster parents to attend Early Intervention and transitional meetings as well as individual Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.
 - Foster parents can consult with a youth's Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) and Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).
- C. The Department prepares an educational profile assessment (CFS407-4) including any testing, evaluations or screenings that may be appropriate for youth in care. The information provided in the assessment stems from the CFS 407 that is completed by the youth's teacher. Any special education needs will be met as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Act. The education plan will also be developed as part of the client

service plan for each child in care. Foster parents will receive a copy and be included in any staffing including an IEP for the child.

- D. The IA process has been implemented statewide. During the assessment process, the caseworker and clinical screener interview foster parents regarding child behavior and to address any special needs of their child. This provides a framework for the creation of the service plan.
 - E. All foster parents are surveyed yearly regarding casework services. The aggregated information from surveys is shared with the statewide licensing manager/supervisors, licensing staff at meetings and foster parents through the local Foster Parent Law meetings. This information provides guidance for corrective action planning as well as informs foster parents their comments were heard to improve service delivery and overall satisfaction.
- 10. The right to be given, 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 be making of a permanency plan of the child. Disclosure of information concerning the child's family shall be limited to that 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.**

Strategies

- A. The workers provide the foster parents with all known information about the child at the time of the placement (such as health, school, mental health, likes/dislikes, activities, and special needs) within the parameters of confidentiality. As new information is obtained, the worker passes on that information to the foster parent through home visits, phone calls, and staffings. Workers are required to accurately identify and document any disability affecting a child's ability to communicate and to advise the foster parent.
- B. Foster parents receive a copy of the child's Healthworks exam completed at the time of protective custody as well as the medical RIN number. If the child is being placed as a subsequent foster care placement, the child's medical and educational information should be in the child's folder. This folder follows the child through the life of the case.
- C. The use of Child Family Team Meetings (CFRM), when children are in care, fosters the sense of teamwork among all parties and improves communication.
- D. Foster parents are advised of questions they should ask a placing worker through PRIDE classes, newsletters, and resource staff visits. The list of questions is also published in the Foster Parent/Family Handbook which is available on the DCFS website.

- E. When staffing levels allow, Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS) contact foster parents within 72 hours of being notified of the placement. The FPSS will review information provided to the foster parent by the placement worker. This includes reviewing required records and forms, answering questions and assisting the foster parent in obtaining any needed materials or information.

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.

Strategies

- A. In the event a decision was made to move a child, the foster parent is provided with a 14-day verbal notification and the CFS 151, Notice of Decision will follow. The only exceptions are pending DCP investigations and court orders. They are told the reason for the move, notified of their right to appeal and what the appeal process is. They are provided with a copy of the Appeal Process brochure (CFS 1050-32). If the foster parent agrees, the 14-day notification period can be waived. Copies of the CFS 151 and CFS 1050-32 are available for viewing on the DCFS website at www2.illinois.gov/dcfs.
- B. Staff also provide foster parents the CFS 151-B, Notice of Change of Placement, which provides the caregiver, parent, youth in care, and Guardian Ad Litem with clinical review rights. A copy of the CFS 151-B is available for viewing on the DCFS website at www.state.il.us/dcfs under the forms section.
- C. Foster parents can request a clinical review in place of or in addition to an appeal. If a foster parent wishes to challenge the removal of a child, they may request a clinical review or file a service appeal per Rule 337 or both. If both a clinical review and an appeal are requested, the clinical placement review will be done before the appeal hearing.

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.

Strategies

- A. Caseworkers, per Procedure 315.230 (f), are to notify the foster parents verbally in advance of a court hearing regarding the following: a) court date; b) time; c) docket number; d) courtroom; e) GAL (Guardian Ad Litem); and f) DCFS recommendation(s)

involving the child. Caseworkers document this notification in a case note. This exchange of information regarding court is reviewed in supervision with the worker.

- B. During PRIDE Pre-Service Training, the trainers remind foster parents about their right to attend court hearings and the importance of attending these hearings. Court training is provided throughout the region to assure staff and foster parents remain updated on roles, responsibilities, and the legal process. Some sub-regions cover court trainings annually while others may do court trainings every other year. Some offices have a DCFS attorney that may provide the trainings. In other areas, the Assistant State's Attorney has provided trainings for the offices and foster parents.
- C. Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS) also encourage foster parents to attend court hearings and encourage the foster parent to be proactive and call the court or the caseworker if they are unsure of the next court date.
- D. Foster parents are encouraged during local area Foster Parent Law meetings to utilize the management structure to resolve concerns. This would apply if they felt they are not receiving the information they need to fully participate in court hearings regarding the children in their care.
- E. Foster parents are reminded about upcoming court hearings at the Administrative Case Review (ACR).
- F. The caseworker and investigator notify the court of the foster parent's name and address for each youth in care.
- G. The investigator and caseworker notify the foster parent of emergency hearings and other unscheduled meetings as soon as possible.
- H. Foster care licensing workers are encouraged to remind foster parents during the annual home visit and other meetings to attend all court proceedings.
- I. Foster parents can access a flow chart of the court system in the Foster Parent/Family Handbook. Foster parents are reminded at foster parent meetings that the Foster Parent/Family Handbook is available on the DCFS website at www2.illinois.gov/dcfs in English and Spanish or on the VTC at:

<https://www2.illinois.gov/dcfs/lovinghomes/fostercare/Pages/FosterParentHandbook.aspx>.
- J. In some counties, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) have been assigned to interact with the children and foster parents. CASA reports back to the Juvenile Court on how the child is doing in placement, concerns about reunification and permanency, school

performance and any other issues relating to the child's well-being. As the caretaker for the children in their care, the foster parents have valuable information to share with this worker. The foster parents can also discuss concerns with the child's GAL who represents the child's interests in Juvenile Court.

- K. The Regional Quality Enhancement (QE) committee provides various tools for supervisors to ensure that they are verifying and reminding staff to confirm that foster parents participate in discussions about changes to the visitation plan; specific sections of the case plan; are notified of upcoming court hearings and that this is documented in a case note. It remains beneficial to use a section of the supervisory notes that prompts the supervisor to discuss this with staff during their monthly supervision and to remind them to notify foster parents about any upcoming court hearings if they had not already done so. Court hearings are also covered in quarterly supervisor reviews. Supervisors also have access to the worker's case notes in our computer system to assure that the worker has documented their discussions with the foster parents.

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.

Strategies

- A. Central region utilizes the following methods for checking past placement records to ensure former foster parents are considered as a placement option for foster children re-entering the system who were previously placed in their care:
- When foster children re-enter the system the investigator ensures that a search is conducted on the Department's IMSA and SACWIS systems. The CM07 screen in the IMSA system and the Case Assignment Payment Unit (CAPU) provide data relevant to a foster child's previous placement history.
 - The investigator consults with those persons having past knowledge of the child's previous placements such as Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS), placement workers, and previous foster parents. Sibling home placements take precedent unless it is determined not to be the child's best interest. If a previous placement is private agency, contact is made with that agency for access to those homes directly. The involved administrators and managers will ensure notification of the placement decision is communicated to the former foster parents in a timely manner. When appropriate and time allows, the former foster parent will be allowed to offer input in the decision-making process.
 - Investigators and placement workers discuss previous placement history with verbal children soliciting their opinions and exploring the relationship with each

of the previous foster families. Documentation will identify how a family selected is in the child's best interest while honoring his/her opinion.

- Previous investigators and placement workers may also be consulted for additional information about a child's previous placements.

B. Central region's process for determining best interest regarding placement decisions includes supervisors of placement workers. Supervisors are to ensure the "Best Practice" policy is followed so former foster parents are considered for children who were previously in care. Former foster homes are documented in the child's case file and will be considered for placement. These discussions take place during supervision. The new fictive kin policy assists in utilizing prior foster parents as it supports placing children with persons with whom they have a significant, meaningful relationship, despite blood or legal ties.

C. When a child is returned home from a private agency foster home placement, and re-placement occurs, the former home will be considered to lessen the trauma to the child. (Note: On some rare occasions, when re-placements are made over the weekends and/or in the middle of the night, investigators may not be immediately aware of previous placement information, especially if the family or child cannot tell them.)

D. In the event a child re-enters care, central region staff recommend utilizing the management structure to ensure placement with a previous foster home occurs. This management structure consists of:

- Investigator
- Supervisor
- Area Administrator
- Regional Administrator

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.

Strategies

A. If foster parents do not agree with a decision made or action taken by DCFS pertaining to services, they may do the following:

- Appeal within 10 days from receiving notice which may be able to stop the Department from acting on its decision until such time that the case has proceeded through the Service Appeal Process.

- Request a service appeal in writing within 45 days from receiving notice of the decision or action intended to be taken by the Department.
- If the foster parent does not agree with the decision made in a clinical placement review regarding the change of placement of a child in their care, they can request an appeal within 10 days from the clinical placement decision. For questions contact 217-782-6655. The written requests for a service appeal go to:

Administrative Hearings Unit
 Department of Children and Family Services
 406 E. Monroe St. Station 15
 Springfield, IL 62701

- B. The Foster Parent/Family Handbook explains the appeal process to the foster parent. The handbook covers how to appeal a licensing complaint investigation, service appeals, and appeals of findings of abuse and neglect. Foster parents are reminded in newsletters and local foster parent meetings that the Foster Parent/Family Handbook is available on the DCFS website at www.state.il.us/dcf. Brochures are available in reception areas at the DCFS offices.
- C. The Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS) offer guidance and assistance to foster parents who wish to appeal a decision by offering information regarding appeals and encouraging the foster parent to advocate for themselves and their children by utilizing the DCFS management structure when a problem arises.
- D. Foster parents seek guidance from foster care licensing workers regarding the appeal process. Foster care licensing workers provide a brief explanation of the foster parent's appeal rights when first licensed. In addition, licensing workers also remind foster parents to reach out to their respective support specialist with questions about the appeal process. Licensing workers remind foster parents that the appeal information is on the DCFS website. Foster care licensing workers inform foster parents of their appeal rights concerning Licensing Complaint Investigations.
- E. Foster parents are encouraged by FPSS' to document any violations with specific information pertaining to the incident. Foster parents are free from retaliation.
- F. Foster parents are encouraged to contact the licensing supervisor and/or the caseworker supervisor with specific information pertaining to any incident.
- G. Foster parents are provided a Notice of Decision regarding placement decisions and given the Service Appeal Process brochure by the caseworker.
- H. FPSS', supervisors, and staff inform foster parents of the Advocacy Office telephone number (800-232-3798). The Advocacy Office responds to complaints, concerns,

inquiries and suggestions about the Department of Children and Family Services. The Advocacy Office staff provides referrals to appropriate DCFS staff and suggestions to executive staff for improvements and changes.

- I. Foster parents have the right to appeal. Inherent in this right is the assurance that they can do so without fear of harassment or retaliation. Due to the diversity of DCFS and their foster parents, it is the responsibility of management and caseworkers to ensure that no foster parent is being harassed or retaliated against. DCFS staff are educated about foster parent rights, including the right to appeal in various formats such as in supervision, All Staff meetings, and other trainings. Foster Parents also have access to contact the Office of the Inspector General for assistance if they feel a worker or agency's intentions are retaliatory in nature.

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.

Strategies

- A. The Foster Parent Hotline information is now included in the PRIDE Pre-Service Training. The contact number is managed by the Office of the Inspector General (800-722-9124/872-769-6820).
- B. The Foster Parent/Family Handbook contains information and phone numbers to access assistance. The Central Payment Unit (800-525-0499), Direct Deposit (217-557-0930), Office of Advocacy for Children and Families (800-232-3798) and the Inspector General's Office (800-722-9124/872-769-6820) telephone numbers are also listed in the handbook. During local foster parent meetings foster parents have been reminded of the valuable information on the DCFS website www2.illinois.gov/dcf. This includes a list of the numbers for the Foster Parent Hotline, Advocacy Office, and Inspector General's Office. Also available are brochures from the Inspector General's Office and Advocacy Office.
- C. Foster parents are reminded of this right by the Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS) when an issue is discussed. They are also reminded at yearly meetings with the foster care licensing worker and at local foster parent association meetings.
- D. The toll-free Foster Parent Help Line (866-368-5204) is an additional resource for foster parents in the central region. The Help Line's voicemail message requests callers to email Marsha.Jones@Illinois.gov when needing assistance. This allows for quicker response to requests for help.

Section – III

Foster Parent Responsibility Narratives

Foster Parent Responsibilities

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

Strategies

- A. The foster parents are taught about open communication through teamwork in the following trainings: 1) PRIDE Pre-Service and 2) Module Six – Working as a Professional Team Member.
- B. Pride curriculum is based on 5 core competencies, one of which is being a member of a professional team.
- C. Caseworkers meet with foster parents in their home to share information about the child monthly. In addition, the Child and Family Team (CFTM) process promotes open communication among team members including foster parents.
- D. The foster care licensing worker and Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS) discuss this issue with foster parents at in-person meetings and in telephone conversations.
- E. The foster parent is trained and reminded that they are to keep vital records on the children in the child's folder. This includes: a) the Medication and Behavior log, b) case notes, c) Comprehensive Health Record, d) other medical records, e) documentation of education arrangements, f) record of clothing and personal allowance, g) clothing inventory forms, h) schedule of board payments, i) monthly reimbursement rate, j) intake summary, k) Normalcy policy, l) the ICE (In Case of Emergency) form, m) foster parent law, n) important phone numbers, o) the Youth Bill of Rights. Caseworkers pick up copies of the Medication and Behavior logs during visits, but FPSS' are encouraging foster parents to keep a copy for their records too. This is discussed at Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings. The Behavior and Medication Log policy is distributed to foster parents by their FPSS, foster care licensing worker, and caseworker. Foster parents are provided with new logs by their caseworker and FPSS when they accept a new placement.
- F. Confidentiality is discussed at the following meetings with foster parents: a) PRIDE Pre-Service, b) licensing monitoring visits, c) FPSS visits, and d) Confidentiality Training that is incorporated into the Foster Parent Law meetings.
- G. The limitations of open communication related to confidentiality are discussed during Area Foster Parent Law meetings. Policy Interpretation 2000.15, which was issued on November 22, 2000, is frequently handed out and discussed at Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings. This policy interpretation clarifies that subsequent foster parents cannot talk directly to the prior caregiver about a child.

- H. FPSS' share with foster parents the Relevant Information Checklist form, which formerly was in the Quick Reference Guide. This form gives suggestions for what to ask caseworkers at monthly visits.
2. **The responsibility to respect the confidentiality of information concerning foster children and their families and act appropriately within applicable confidentiality laws and regulations.**

Strategies

- A. Confidentiality laws and regulations are explained in PRIDE Pre-Service Training and provided in the foster parent portal in the DCFS Virtual Training Center (VTC) under the PRIDE pre-service workbook and resources. Foster parents may also access Rule and Procedures 431, Confidentiality of Personal Information of Persons Served by the Department of Children and Family Services.
- B. Confidentiality is explained in the Foster Parent/Family Handbook link which is found in the foster parent portal in the DCFS VTC under Foster Family Handbook. This is also available in Spanish. The laws and regulations are included in this handbook.
- C. The Foster Parent Support Specialist's (FPSS) remind foster parents of confidentiality during in-person and telephone contacts.
- D. Confidentiality is discussed through on-going training and meetings with foster parents.
- E. Legal staff are available to provide confidentiality training as needed when requested by licensing staff, casework staff, FPSS, etc. Current policy training addresses confidentiality and changes that affect foster parents. On-going training on confidentiality is provided at quarterly meetings.
- F. Confidential information should not be disseminated over social media. Caregivers and youth should be able to benefit from the positive aspects of the Social Media/Mobile Technology for Children/Youth in Care policy PT 2014.08 while still maintaining the requirements of confidentiality. For example, a caregiver can post on his/her Facebook account about a specific accomplishment of a youth in the caregiver's home/placement if the caregiver does not specifically identify that child as a youth in care of DCFS. As of July 1, 2017, newly licensed caregivers are required to participate in a pre-service training class about DCFS social media policy. This training is also available on-line or in-person for caregivers who were licensed before that date.

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

Strategies

- A. The foster parents are informed about this responsibility in PRIDE Pre-Service Training and in the required Educational Advocacy Training. Workers encourage and support foster parents in the responsibility to advocate for children in their care.
- B. Foster parents are reminded of this responsibility through the Service Appeal Process (CFS 1050-32). Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS), caseworkers and administrative review staff also remind foster parents of the responsibility.
- C. Foster parents need to be knowledgeable about their rights and responsibilities to better advocate for children in their care as ensured in the foster parent law and foster parent implementation plan. Foster parents are notified that copies of the Regional Foster Parent Law Plan and Rights and Responsibilities are available on the DCFS website under the Foster Care link. A printed version of the Central Region Foster Parent Implementation Plan is made available to all licensed homes and can be accessed on-line. To view or print a copy, anyone with internet access may go to the DCFS website <https://www2.illinois.gov/dcf/> under the Foster Care link. Foster parents may also pick up a hard copy at their convenience from the nearest DCFS office. Some areas distribute Foster Parent Law plans to foster parents at committee meetings, scheduled events, etc. but all areas are required to review the Foster Parent Implementation Plan with foster parents and collect comments. Foster Parents acknowledge their input into the plan through quarterly meetings, conversations with FPSS' or by calling the Foster Parent Help Line (866-368-5204) and are asked to provide written acknowledgement they have received, reviewed, and commented on the plan (See Attachment C).
- D. The Illinois Foster Child and Youth Bill of Rights is another means for foster parents to advocate for the youth in their care. By familiarizing themselves with the document and by reviewing the information with the children in their care as well as the caseworker, foster parents become better informed advocates for their children (Form CFS 496-1).
- E. Licensed foster parents are required to attend Educational Advocacy Training prior to first renewal of their license. One foster parent from each home must be certified. Currently, once Educational Advocacy training has been completed, it does not have to be completed or renewed. However, PRIDE Trainers and FPSS' encourage foster parents to take Educational Advocacy Training prior to licensure or as soon as possible after licensure. Trainers and FPSS' remind foster parents of how valuable this training is to help them ensure the child's educational needs are met.

- F. Substitute care givers (including residential administrators and their designees) may consent to a child's participation in athletic activities. Substitute care givers are required to use Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards when making such decisions.
- G. The caseworker, foster care licensing worker and FPSS' encourage foster parents to attend Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM), Administrative Case Reviews (ACR), medical appointments, Individual Educational Plans (IEP), Integrated Assessment (IA) activities, and routine school staffing's as well as court hearings and Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP). The importance of attending these meetings is discussed in PRIDE Pre-Service Training.
- H. The caseworkers, supervisors and FPSS' help the foster parents identify resources for their foster children.

Per Procedure 302 Appendix M, Services Delivered by the Department, Transition Planning for Adolescents has been revised adding language instructing Permanency workers to provide administrative case reviewers with a copy of the Casey Life Skills Assessment (CLSA) results for all youth ages 14 to 21 regardless of living circumstances in addition to documentation of programs or services in which the youth is participating. This may include chores and/or training and direction that the youth is receiving in their foster home or living arrangement. Compliance results are being reported to DCFS Administration through various means including ACR Feedbacks.

- I. Casework staff has access to Child Welfare Nurse Specialists who can address medically complex children when a referral has been completed. They can assist in identification of resources for medically complex children or locating medical training resources for foster parents. HealthWorks, in available counties, distribute a list of medical and dental resources to foster parents. Youth in care are assigned a YouthCare worker affiliated with the state's insurance provider. Foster parents will follow-up with the YouthCare worker to communicate health needs and obtain needed resourced. The DCFS website lists additional resources.
- J. DCFS has educational liaisons that have presented valuable educational information at Regional Foster Care Advisory Council meetings regarding advocating for foster children's educational needs. These liaisons are available to assist foster parents with problematic educational issues.
- K. Periodically, court personnel and DCFS legal staff are asked to train foster parents on the court process. This enhances the foster parent's understanding of the court system and prepares them to advocate for the children in their care. Caregivers are directed to the Foster Family Handbook for detailed court system information.

- L. The Department offers additional opportunities for foster parents to participate in various meetings regarding their youth in care via virtual platforms and teleconference.
4. **The responsibility to treat children in the foster parent's care and the children's families with dignity, respect, and consideration.**

Strategies

- A. This responsibility is explained in PRIDE In-Service Training, by caseworkers, and through ongoing in-service Module 5 training. Foster parents are reminded of this responsibility by the caseworker and by the foster care licensing worker at their annual and renewal visits.
- B. A Lifebook will be introduced to the child and caregiver any time within the first 45 days after initial placement. The Permanency Worker shall introduce the Lifebook and the process for its development with child, birth parents and caregivers. Each child's Lifebook is his/hers to keep and should accompany the child if the child changes placement or leaves substitute care (i.e., return home, adoption, guardianship, emancipation, independence). The contents of each child's Lifebook must be treated with respect. Each Lifebook is entitled to the same level of confidentiality and privacy as other personal information obtained Lifebook training is offered on the Virtual Training Center (VTC) as well as provided in PRIDE Pre-Service training.
- C. Permanency workers monitor this responsibility through home visits. Foster care licensing staff also monitors and review this area of responsibility during annual and renewal visits. This is discussed with the foster parents if there is a concern.
- D. Foster parents are encouraged to transport, and in some cases, supervise visits with parents and siblings. Foster parents are encouraged to converse with biological parents regarding child specific issues. P.A. 97-1076 expanded the definition of "sibling" for purposes of placement and visitation, the Department's responsibility to place siblings together whenever possible, and the responsibility of permanency workers, post adoption/subsidy workers and caregivers to encourage children to build and maintain relationships with their siblings. The Department stresses the importance of siblings maintaining their relationships and works with the foster parents to ensure this occurs.
- E. Foster parents are encouraged to participate in child and family team meetings (CFTM). Through this process foster parents develop a relationship with the biological parent(s) and work toward the goal of shared parenting. Shared parenting emphasizes the role of the caregiver as a support to the family instead of just "substitute caregivers." By cultivating a nurturing relationship with the family, the caregiver may be able to develop a mentoring relationship with the parents and demonstrate appropriate parenting practices. Development of a supportive relationship between the parents and caregivers means the

positive connection between the caregivers, child and parents does not have to end when the placement ends. Examples of this type of supportive relationship include foster parents who engage in shared parenting activities with a biological family. Such activities include co-attending school events and medical appointments, providing transportation for visits and exchanging of phone numbers. There have also been instances of foster families extending invitations to the biological parent for holiday and birthday celebrations as well as church attendance. Oftentimes, foster parents have remained actively engaged with the child and family to include offering respite when needed, on-going supportive phone calls, and inclusion at birthdays and special events.

- F. This responsibility has been written in the Licensing Standards for Foster Homes. All foster parents sign an agreement at initial licensure and renewal that states they acknowledge that corporal punishment, threats and derogatory comments about the child or the child's family, and verbal threats cannot be used. Workers encourage foster parents to use positive reinforcement and self-esteem building techniques when working with foster children. Additional training can be obtained through the VTC to include Module 4, Effective Discipline, Trauma Training for Caregivers, and Core Teen.
 - G. If staff or a foster parent identify an issue related to the understanding or respect of the child and family's religious, ethnic, or cultural background, the caseworker and licensing worker will work together to identify resources to address this concern.
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.**

Strategies

- A. The Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS), Licensing workers, and caseworkers discuss training needs with the foster parent and assist by notifying foster parents when training becomes available. In addition, child specific training needs that are identified at placement or during the life of the case are also provided as assessed by the casework team.
- B. The foster care licensing workers review Foster Parent Training Logs during annual and renewal visits. However, it should be noted both the licensing worker and foster parent themselves can now view the training transcripts on the Virtual Training Center (VTC) provided the foster parent has registered with VTC. Licensing workers will discuss with foster parents training needs, and ways to meet those needs during their visit with the foster home.

- C. The Office of Learning and Professional Development – Foster and Adoptive Parent Training Program arranges Pre-Service and In-Service Trainings for foster parents in Central Region. The list of available materials can be found on the DCFS website (www2.illinois.gov/dcfs). Foster parents can also receive training credit from applicable community trainings via submission of a training credit approval form.
 - D. When foster parents are experiencing stress, the Foster Parent Licensing worker, FPSS and Permanency worker will encourage foster parents to utilize respite, place themselves on voluntary hold and/or to utilize support groups offered in the community, and/or short-term counseling.
 - E. Foster parents who need or desire to strengthen or gain more knowledge on identified topics (i.e., Trauma Training, Discipline Training, etc.) are referred for specific trainings through a mutual assessment process.
 - F. When foster parents are called about placements, they are encouraged to ask specific questions about the child that the worker would like to place in their home. Foster parents are aided in developing general questions via PRIDE Pre-Service training as well as with assistance from their Licensing worker, FPSS and, when applicable, their Resource and Recruitment Specialist. Foster parents always have the right to decline a placement, if they do not believe a child is a good match for their home.
 - G. On the VTC there is a list of frequently asked questions to assist foster parents in deciding about placement. It is titled, “Placement Checklist.”
6. **The responsibility to be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations in improving the quality of care and service to children and families.**

Strategies

- A. Through team efforts and Foster Parent Law activities, foster parents can meet and network with other foster parents. Foster Parents Support Specialists (FPSS), caseworker, licensing worker and placement supervisor provide support and information to foster parents. The Statewide Foster Care Representatives share information about upcoming meetings or policy issues and give foster parents the opportunity to comment. They will also convey issues from the Area Foster Care Advisory Council to the Statewide Council when warranted. Additional networks for foster parents have been created in outlets such as closed social media groups, foster parent cafés facilitated by Be Strong Families, and formal programs such as the Restore Network, Foster Hope, The Forgotten Initiative, and the Family Room. These groups create a supportive and nurturing environment that is grassroots based and available throughout the region.

- B. FPSS' and staff provide information regarding local, state, and national foster parents associations. During PRIDE Pre-Service training potential foster parents are educated on the importance of foster parent support groups and encouraged to participate. FPSS' and staff provide information to foster parents about support groups, foster parent cafés and supportive trainings.
 - C. The DCFS website (www2.illinois.gov/dcfs) publishes the minutes from the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and Adoption Advisory Council. There is also a link on the DCFS website to the Illinois Foster/Adoptive Parent Association. Through that link, foster parents can email and engage with the executive board members. The site also offers information about foster parent rights/responsibilities as well as available resources and information. During foster parent meetings, foster parents are encouraged to participate in statewide meetings and to join local and statewide foster parent associations.
- 7. The responsibility to assess the foster parent's on-going individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.**

Strategies

- A. Foster parents are encouraged to participate in facilitating training and to make suggestions for potential trainers or topics.
- B. Evaluations from previous training events are used to assess needs for future trainings. Through monthly visits with caseworkers, licensing, or Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS), any concerns may be discussed, and possible trainings identified.
- C. The Office of Learning and Professional Development – Foster and Adoptive Parent Training periodically assesses foster parent training needs. The DCFS FPSS' have advocated for specific training for foster parents in their areas when they recognize a need or foster parents have expressed a desire for a particular training.
- D. Licensing staff are aware of the types of training foster parents are requesting or needing. They share this information with training personnel at DCFS. FPSS, where available, are helping foster parents find the training or organizing the training that foster parents have requested.
- E. A foster parent is required to have a minimum 16 hours of training prior to their renewal. These trainings are now being offered via a virtual setting. Licensing staff work with foster parents to identify specific training needs and to help them locate appropriate and beneficial training. Foster parents are encouraged to seek training as needed above and beyond the 16 hours to ensure all needs are met for each child.

- F. Training is provided on a regional level to ensure foster parents can access training on any new initiatives, laws and policies effecting foster parents.
 - G. Local offices will forward to foster parents via multiple means (i.e., foster parent social media sites, informational flyers, etc.) notification of relevant trainings that occur in the community.
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.**

Strategies

- A. Foster parents are encouraged to use respite during times of stress. Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS) maintain close contact with foster parents to help families identify their needs and prevent disruptions. Caseworkers are provided with DCFS issued cell phones. These numbers are given to foster parents for direct contact by calling or texting. Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) and communications with a child's therapist are other means in which a foster parent can be supported to prevent placement disruption. If a child is exhibiting behaviors identified by the caregiver or caseworker that appear to require care beyond the foster parent's skill set, local services will be initiated. These can include Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) and training for the foster parent specific to that youth's needs, for example Trauma Training. A referral to the Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) will be considered, if appropriate, to see if there are additional supports that can be provided for youth.
- B. Foster parents are advised to contact the child's caseworker first if there is a non-life-threatening emergency during business hours and if unable to reach the caseworker to proceed up the chain of command. Foster parents can always contact their FPSS in a non-emergency or emergency situations as they are available 24/7. In a non-threatening emergency after hours or on weekends, foster parents can contact the State Central Registry (SCR) Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 800-252-2873. Additionally, foster parents can contact the CARES number at 800-345-9049 if they have an after-hour's crisis involving the foster child. Per Procedures 301.66, if IPS is already involved with a youth, the IPS provider shall maintain crisis response services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for all open IPS clients. DCFS foster parents also receive a phone list entitled I.C.E. (In Case of Emergency). The phone list contains emergency numbers foster parents might need to use and an explanation of the service. Numbers and information on this list include Emergency Services, Abuse and Neglect Hotline, Behavior Crisis (CARES), Medical and Life Threatening, Poison Hotline, Runaway and Missing Youth (DCFS Child Location Service.)

- C. Other ways in which the Department provides disruptive supportive services are via the licensing worker, IPS, SASS, and DCFS Clinical staffing. Issues may be addressed through case management, through the child and family team support system, through referral to further support services provided through contracted agencies and community partners such as IPS. An IPS worker meets with the family on a weekly basis for support and guidance and assists with referrals to other community services such as counseling, support services, possible provision of a youth advocate, big brother/big sister, or any other appropriate services. The IPS worker will continue to work with the foster parent, child, and service providers in the event of a disruption, especially if the goal is for the child to return to the foster parent's care. The IPS provides more intensive services, interventions and supports to children and foster parents to prevent placement disruptions and to maintain children in the least restrictive environment. Trainings or updates from local IPS providers are periodically provided at local Foster Parent Law meetings throughout the region. Casework staff and FPSS' help foster parents understand what the IPS can provide. The caseworker or foster parent can make the referral by contacting the Crisis and Referral Entry System (CARES) at 800-345-9049.
- D. Other ways in which the Department provides disruptive supportive services are via the licensing worker, IPS, SASS, and DCFS Clinical staffing. Issues may be addressed through case management, through the child and family team support system, through referral to further support services provided through contracted agencies and community partners such as IPS. An IPS worker meets with the family on a weekly basis for support and guidance and assists with referrals to other community services such as counseling, support services, possible provision of a youth advocate, big brother/big sister, or any other appropriate services. The IPS worker will continue to work with the foster parent, child, and service providers in the event of a disruption, especially if the goal is for the child to return to the foster parent's care. The IPS provides more intensive services, interventions and supports to children and foster parents to prevent placement disruptions and to maintain children in the least restrictive environment. Trainings or updates from local IPS providers are periodically provided at local Foster Parent Law meetings throughout the region. Casework staff and FPSS' help foster parents understand what the IPS can provide. The caseworker or foster parent can make the referral by contacting the Crisis and Referral Entry System (CARES) at 800-345-9049.

In the Jacksonville, Illinois service area, the Restore Network offers support assistance to prevent placement disruption by means of Foster Parent Coaches who work with foster families to stabilize the home environment and assist in the relationship building efforts between foster parents and foster children. This is a church affiliated partnership with DCFS that provides a support network to foster families. This support comes in many forms including meals, tutoring, coaching, and assistance with any identified needs a foster parent may express as they progress in their journey of fostering.

- E. As per the Normalcy policy, foster parents are encouraged to create their own support systems which can include friends, family/extended family, and other foster parents as well as their official supports such as their caseworker, FPSS, etc. The need for and development of this network is discussed in PRIDE Pre-Service Training and is always reinforced.
 - F. FPSS' are available to help with crisis situations and to prevent placement disruptions. They are available to help all family members deal with the stress of difficult placements.
 - G. Procedures 329, Locating and Returning Missing, Runaway, and Abducted Children will be followed by the Department. Whenever a child, for whom the Department of Children and Family Services is legally responsible for, is believed to be missing or a runaway, or to have been abducted the incident shall be reported to Department staff during working hours and to the State Central Register after hours or on the weekends. As soon as the caseworker or foster parent learns the child is missing the local police department where the child resides should be contacted to report the child as missing which includes filing a missing person's report.
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.**

Strategies

- A. PRIDE In-Service Training Module 9 and Caring for Children who have Experienced Trauma Training cover recognizing and minimizing stress factors throughout most of sessions.
- B. Respite is available and encouraged in times of stress. Central region has established guidelines for respite. Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS) help facilitate access to respite. If the foster parent experiences a specific stressful event, such as a death or significant illness in the family, the assigned FPSS will contact the foster parent to offer respite rather than waiting for the foster parent to ask. The caseworker will also assist with facilitating respite to ensure the foster parents' needs are met.

There are church based support networks and other community-based organizations that offer support to our foster parents and families. These organizations offer a supply closet with clothes, diapers, formula, etc. Some churches have organized a support database of their church members who can assist with meal preparation, tutoring, etc. These organizations also allow foster parents to make use of their facilities for activities.

- C. The foster care licensing workers and the FPSS' have informed foster parents of the voluntary hold process. During times of family stress foster care licensing workers and FPSS' will contact foster parents and suggest that they utilize the voluntary hold process,

so they do not continue to get placement calls. When placed on hold, foster parents are removed from the vacancy list. Foster parents are told that they only need to contact their foster care licensing worker to be put on the voluntary hold list or to be taken off the voluntary hold list. Foster care licensing workers explain to foster parents that once they are placed on voluntary hold, they will not be able to take placements until they contact their licensing worker to request that they be taken off hold. Foster care licensing staff periodically contacts the foster parent to determine if they want to be taken off hold. The CFS 2011, Placement Hold Request form is completed and submitted to the Placement Clearance Desk.

- D. A foster family can receive short term counseling to address needs related to fostering. Counseling is reimbursed for up to 5 sessions utilizing the regional respite funds. If there is a family tragedy, FPSS', caseworkers, and Licensing staff will contact the family to offer their support and will advise them of the short-term counseling available to address these issues.
 - E. Caseworkers, licensing staff and FPSS are available to help the family in the case of placement disruptions. FPSS' can help link foster parents who are experiencing disruptions with other foster parents who have had similar experiences. FPSS' are available 24 hours a day 7 days a week to support foster parents.
 - F. Caseworkers are encouraged to return foster parent calls in a timely manner, ensuring questions are answered expeditiously, thereby reducing foster parent stress.
 - G. Caseworkers communicate with foster parents to allow for an ongoing assessment of stressors in the foster home and help create a plan to manage these ongoing stressors.
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.**

Strategies

- A. Regular foster parent meetings are available on local and state levels to share and promote positive aspects of foster parenting. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, these meetings were less frequent in the current reporting period. The central region recognized foster parents during Foster Parent Appreciation month with events that included pizza, swimming, skating parties, bowling, ice cream social, picnics and visits to miniature golf/adventure parks. Several offices also gifted foster parents with potted plants/flowers, desserts, and various gift bags.
- B. Foster parents are asked to help in the recruitment of new foster parents. They are encouraged to have those friends and family who are interested in fostering contact their

local agency. Events have been held outdoors to provide foster parents an opportunity to gather as well as bring friends and family interested in learning more about foster parenting. While participating in various local meetings, foster parents have been provided foster home recruitment materials for distribution in their communities.

- C. Information has been given to foster parents about the media and the need to go through the Department's Office of Communications before a foster parent engages in public speaking about foster parenting.
- D. Foster parents are normally included in local recruitment activities to help in the recruitment of new foster homes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, recruitment activities were adjusted to support mitigation efforts. Some events were held virtually, and others were in-person when appropriate and with utilization of sanitation, masks, and social distancing such as the Miller Park Zoo recruitment event and the state fair. Foster parents continue to advocate for new homes by word of mouth when speaking to family and friends about the benefits of fostering.
- E. Articles about DCFS youth in care who have won DCFS scholarships are periodically published on DCFS social media platforms. These stories illustrate the positive impact foster parents have on children.
- F. Foster parents are utilized in an official and informal capacity as recruiters.
- G. Caseworkers, licensing staff, and Foster Parent Support Specialists consistently convey appreciation for foster parents during their contacts year-round as well as special acknowledgements during Foster Parent Appreciation Month.

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.

Strategies

- A. Foster Parent Law is available in the Foster Parent/Family Handbook located in the Virtual Training Center (VTC). Foster parents have been informed of the Foster Parent Law through the DCFS website, Pride pre-service training, and local office foster parent meetings or activities.
- B. Foster Parent Law/Quarterly Local Advisory meetings are an example of co-training methods. Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS) provide copies of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan and explain the role of each team member. On a normal basis, local offices have meetings to implement the Foster Parent Law plan in their local area.

The Foster Parent Law/Quarterly Local Advisory meetings are also a way in which foster parents have a recognized voice within the agency.

- C. Foster parents are encouraged to participate in the Illinois Foster/Adoptive Parent Association to maintain a recognized presence within the agency management organization. The Illinois Foster/Adoptive Parent Association link is available on the DCFS website. Through that link, foster parents can email and engage with the executive board members. The site also offers information about foster parent rights/responsibilities as well as available resources and information. During Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings, foster parents are encouraged to use the DCFS website as a resource for information on foster parent associations and DCFS rules, policies, and policy interpretations.
- D. DCFS management staff regularly attend Area Foster Care Council meetings and other regional meetings and are open to hearing and working to resolve foster parent issues. Central region utilizes a Foster Parent Steering Committee made up of foster parent representatives from each of the Area Office Councils to provide information exchange with regional management staff. Concerns brought up at area office meetings are shared with regional administrators and resolutions are sought by staff. This process allows foster parents to have a direct voice with area and regional management.
- E. Central region strives to train DCFS staff and foster parents together whenever possible on new initiatives and policies. In addition, whenever possible central region tries to utilize foster parents and staff trainers together. Training offered through PRIDE Pre-Service and In-Service Training utilizes a co-training model. During this reporting period, a central region foster parent who is employed in the tax services industry offered her knowledge and expertise as she trained other foster parents tax law changes. Other trainings offered by foster parent support specialists included trainings on topics such as LifeBooks, Being the Best Foster Mom, Trauma, Black Hair Care, Education, Attachment Style, What is a GAL, Court Roundtable, CASA, Adoption Facts, and Shared Parenting through the Holidays. Foster parents have shown a preference for hybrid and/or virtual trainings; FPSS' have offered trainings and support groups on a variety of platforms.
- F. Foster parents are also invited and encouraged to attend and advocate for Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) and Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP). In addition, foster parents are also encouraged to attend Administrative Case Reviews (ACR's), court hearings, and other relevant meetings. This gives foster parents a direct venue to express their concerns or issues.
- G. The Regional Structure allows foster parent participation and interaction with Field Office staff and management via the quarterly Foster Parent Council Meetings. In order for foster parents to have a voice in the management organization the following has been implemented:

- Three foster parents serve on the Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Counsel. These foster parents take central region issues/concerns to statewide meetings and bring statewide issues back to the region.
- Regional administrators and/or Permanency area administrators attend local and Statewide Foster Parent Council meetings to hear concerns and to share information.
- The foster parent grievance process allows regional management to hear/respond to grievances from foster parents. Any systemic issues identified during the grievances are used to modify practice across the region.
- Upon written request of the Guardian Ad Litem (GAL), or attorney appointed to represent a youth in care, pursuant to Article II of the Juvenile Court Act of 1987, the requested information in a licensing record shall be submitted to the GAL or attorney, including licensing complaints and investigations regarding a foster home in which the youth is placed or in which the Department plans to place the youth. Information that cannot be disclosed per state or federal law shall be redacted, prior to submission to the requesting GAL or attorney appointed to represent the youth in care.

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.

Strategies

A. Foster parents are informed of their mandated reporter status during PRIDE Pre-Service Training. They are provided with the hotline number to report abuse or neglect. At this time, mandated reporter training is not a required training for potential foster parents prior to becoming licensed. Information about being a mandated report is briefly covered during PRIDE Pre-Service training. Mandated reporter training is offered on the DCFS Virtual Training Center (VTC) website www.dcfstraining.org/vtc or www2.illinois.gov/dcf where foster parents may complete the course, online, at their own convenience. The training is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This training includes:

- A pre-training assessment (13 multiple-choice questions).
- 60-90 minutes of self-paced interactive training.
- A post-training assessment (13 multiple-choice questions).
- A Certificate of Completion.

- B. Foster parents sign a form acknowledging they are mandated reporters during the licensing process. Foster parents are part of the professional team and are responsible for assuring that children are safe and free from abuse and neglect.
- C. The Foster Parent/Family Handbook has a section about mandated reporters and a section that explains the investigative process as well as Foster Parent Rights during a Child Abuse and Neglect Investigation. The Foster Parent/Family Handbook is available on the DCFS website at www2.illinois.gov/dcfs.
- D. Foster parents receive ongoing information through trainings, newsletters, and staffings concerning responsibility of reportable child behaviors as noted on the behavior log. In the event a foster parent does not have access to a computer, information from Rule 300 will be provided by the licensing worker, FPSS', caseworker, or the foster parent help line at the foster parents' request.
- E. DCFS provides foster parents with a brochure titled, *What You Need to Know About Child Abuse and Neglect Investigation in Licensed Facilities* (CFS 1050-55). Information in this brochure includes the fact that foster parents have the right to have someone of their choosing present during an investigation interview. The possibility and the process of being the subject of an investigation are also covered in PRIDE trainings. More information about foster home investigation can be found in Rule 300 available on the DCFS website at www2.illinois.gov/dcfs.
- F. In the event of an investigation, Protective Plans allow for children to remain in their placement with certain restrictions. The Protective Plan is written in conjunction with the licensing worker, investigative and casework staff.
- G. In the event of an investigation involving a foster parent, the investigator will provide a copy of a CANTS 8 Notification of a Report of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect to the foster parent that includes names of the children involved in suspected abuse or neglect, where the alleged incident occurred and the abuse and neglect allegations. The CANTS 8 also outlines the investigative process which includes:
- Notice of Intent to Indicate
 - Administrative teleconference
 - Expedited appeal hearings
 - The law
 - Length of time on registry
 - Who can get information from the State Central Registry?
 - The juvenile and criminal court process

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

Strategies

- A. PRIDE Pre-Service Training emphasizes taking an active role in planning for the child. Foster parents are provided with information about court proceedings, client service plans, Integrated Assessments (IA) and Administrative Case Reviews (ACR). Foster parents are encouraged to attend and participate. They are advised of what their role is and how important it is to take an active role.
- B. Foster parents provide input to the caseworker and clinical screeners during the creation of the IA and service plan. This process facilitates a collaborative approach to permanency planning for children and encourages foster parent involvement throughout all legal and administrative activities.
- C. There are training sessions that include a detailed explanation of the court process, legal timeframes, and the foster parents' right to be heard. During this training, DCFS Legal Counsel has encouraged foster parents to call them with any questions about the court process. This training will continue to be offered periodically throughout the region. There is a chart provided explaining legal time frames that is presented and explained to foster parents during events such as PRIDE Pre-Service Supplemental Training – Life of the Case Part 1 and other in-service trainings. A flow chart that explains the court process and time frames is in the Foster Parent/Family Handbook.
- D. Foster Parent Support Specialists, caseworkers and licensing staff regularly stress to foster parents the importance of foster parents participating in service planning for the child, participating in ACR's and court proceedings.

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

Strategies

- A. The DCFS Service Appeal Process is discussed in the Foster Parent/Family Handbook, as well as the PRIDE Pre-Service Training. This is also discussed in Administrative Case Review's (ACR).
- B. Foster parents receive information and participate in discussions on this subject at local office Foster Parent meetings and Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings.

- C. Foster parents are informed of their rights through the Service Appeal Process brochure (CFS 1050-32) made available to them, and by the, *What You Need to Know About Child Abuse and Neglect Investigations in Licensed Facilities*, brochure (CFS 1050-55). Foster parents who are the subject of a Child Abuse and Neglect Investigation are given a copy of the, *What You Need to Know About Child Abuse and Neglect Investigations in Licensed Facilities*, brochure (CFS 1050-55). Both brochures were previously handed out during in-person Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings throughout the region. Foster parents are advised by foster care licensing staff and child protection staff of their right to have a person of their choosing present during a licensing complaint or child abuse investigation.
 - D. Foster parents are advised per policy when the issues they are appealing involve the move of the child. They also have the right to a clinical review.
 - E. Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS), caseworkers, and foster care licensing staff are knowledgeable regarding the service appeal process and assist foster parents in understanding their appeal rights and how to prepare and submit an appeal, as well as where to go to get any questions answered. Staff shares this knowledge during visits and assist foster parents in navigating this process.
 - F. Training on investigations in licensed facilities is done periodically throughout the region and during these trainings the appeal process is also explained.
 - G. Foster parents are provided with contact information for staff and management at the local field office. Foster parents can contact staff and management regarding questions, complaints and/or appeals. The local management structure and the regional management structure are periodically handed out at local and Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings.
 - H. Additionally, casework, child protection and management staff understand the appeal process and work with foster parents to ensure that their rights are acknowledged and preserved. Foster parents are free from retaliation through a process of placement by a myriad of professionals including CAPU, investigators, placement workers, and supervisors. Should a foster parent feel they have been the victim of retaliation, they have the right to appeal to an Area Administrator and the Regional Administrator. There is also a system in place for “Fair Hearing” as well as “Clinical Reviews”, and the “Service Appeal Process.”
- 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.**

Strategies

- A. PRIDE Pre-Service Training teaches foster parents what records are to be kept.
 - B. When a foster parent takes placement of a child, they receive what is called a child folder. Child folders are the foster parent's toolbox of what needs to be documented and how to document the information. All the forms within the child folder are consistent throughout central region. Every folder consists of: medication log; behavior log; discharge summary; foster parent note page; allowance tracking sheet and instructions; what you need to know before signing on the dotted line; IEP information; educational log; clothing inventory (what the child came with and documents what the child left with); face sheet (workers name and number, supervisors name and number, child's physician, religion, and names of who the child can be released to), and reimbursement amounts. It is the responsibility of the foster parent to update records for the child in their care as needed. It should be noted not all regions utilize the folders however it is expected they will be utilized for record keeping and organization.
 - C. The Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS) and/or Foster Care Licensing staff also train foster parents during visits to keep accurate records to ensure they have the necessary documentation to advocate for services to meet a foster child's special or changing needs. FPSS', foster care licensing staff and caseworker staff review these records during visits and offer suggestions if records are lacking.
 - D. Foster parents are informed via many sources (i.e. PRIDE Pre-Service Training, local trainings, foster parent support specialists, caseworkers, etc.) of the importance of maintaining accurate records including, clothing allowance, monetary allowance, medication and behavior logs per DCFS policy.
 - E. During monitoring visits, foster care licensing workers check to ensure that foster parents are keeping required records and remind them this is a violation of Rule 402.26 a 1-12 if they are not maintaining these records. Department staff can assist foster parents in the event questions arise regarding any form completion.
16. **The responsibility to share information, through the child welfare team, with subsequent caregiver (whether the child's parent or another substitute caregiver) regarding the child's adjustment in the foster parent's home.**

Strategies

- A. PRIDE Pre-Service Training covers sharing information with subsequent caregivers. Good practice dictates that communication between caretakers would transpire in all circumstances. This expectation is covered in the Foster Parent/Family Handbook and is

facilitated and encouraged by the permanency team. Policy Interpretation 2000.15 issued November 22, 2000, clarifies the Departments position on how information should be shared with subsequent caretakers. This policy interpretation outlines the manner in which information from one caretaker to another should be shared. This policy guide has been reviewed and distributed at local area Foster Parent Law meetings.

B. Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) are held throughout the life of a case and prior to a child returning home. Foster parents should be invited to all CFTMs regarding a child in their care. This affords the foster parent and birth parent an opportunity to share information with the team.

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.

Strategies

A. Section 302.30 has been revised to incorporate general updates and to inform staff that language aids are available to staff and clients to help determine correct language needed to help someone who may walk into a DCFS office and may not be able to communicate in the English language. Additionally, information regarding the Office of the Burgos Coordinator has compiled community based foreign language resources. These resources may be used by DCFS and POS staff to effectively communicate with clients and are available for consultation.

B. Below are the D-Net links to the CFS 1050-63-4, Communication Accessibility, CFS 1050-63-6, Multi Language Interpreter posters and the CFS 1050-63-7, Multi Language Interpreter cards introduced in revised Section 302.30.

- http://dnet/Affirmative_Action/Forms/Affirmative_Action_Communication_Poster.pdf
- http://dnet/Affirmative_Action/Forms/AA_Language_Interpreter_Poster.pdf
- http://dnet/Affirmative_Action/Forms/AA_Language_Interpreter_Card.pdf

C. Staff may order language aids, posters, and cards from stores.

D. Cultural Competency is addressed in the PRIDE Pre-Service training. It is also a core competency of meeting children's developmental needs and addressing developmental delays. Cultural Competency is provided in the Supplemental Training classes especially

in Life of the Case. In addition, information is shared during the Foster Parent Association meetings and activities as well as at the Area Foster Care Advisory Council Meetings.

- E. Foster parents have provided training to other foster parents and staff, one-on-one and in small groups on cultural issues including, hair and skin care, foods, traditions, and holidays and religious practices.
- F. DCFS foster parents are required to be culturally competent in serving the needs of LGBTQI+ children and youth, including understanding the challenges that LGBTQI+ youth face in foster care and congregate care. LGBTQI+ training is included as a part of PRIDE Pre-Service training to allow foster parents the opportunity to educate themselves and ensure they provide the specific support needs of any child in their care.
- G. Foster parents are encouraged by staff to share their knowledge and experience with other foster parents in need of assistance.
- H. Mentors and specialty websites are offered for caregivers to learn about ethnic hair and skin care.
- I. DCFS supports community involvement and maintaining or placing children in their neighborhood of origin when possible. Also, foster parents and biological parents are encouraged, when possible, to exchange information relevant to a child's needs, education, culture, and spirituality. When this type of exchange is not possible, those involved in the child's case are encouraged to identify and meet the child's needs as appropriate.
- J. DCFS and POS agencies have a variety of multilingual and ASL fluent foster homes. Although limited, the Resource and Recruitment workers continue to make contacts in areas with multilingual populations, including churches and groups that interact with those communities to develop resources. This unit will continue to work with the Licensing Unit and Foster Parent Support Specialists to determine areas of need and recruitment opportunities.