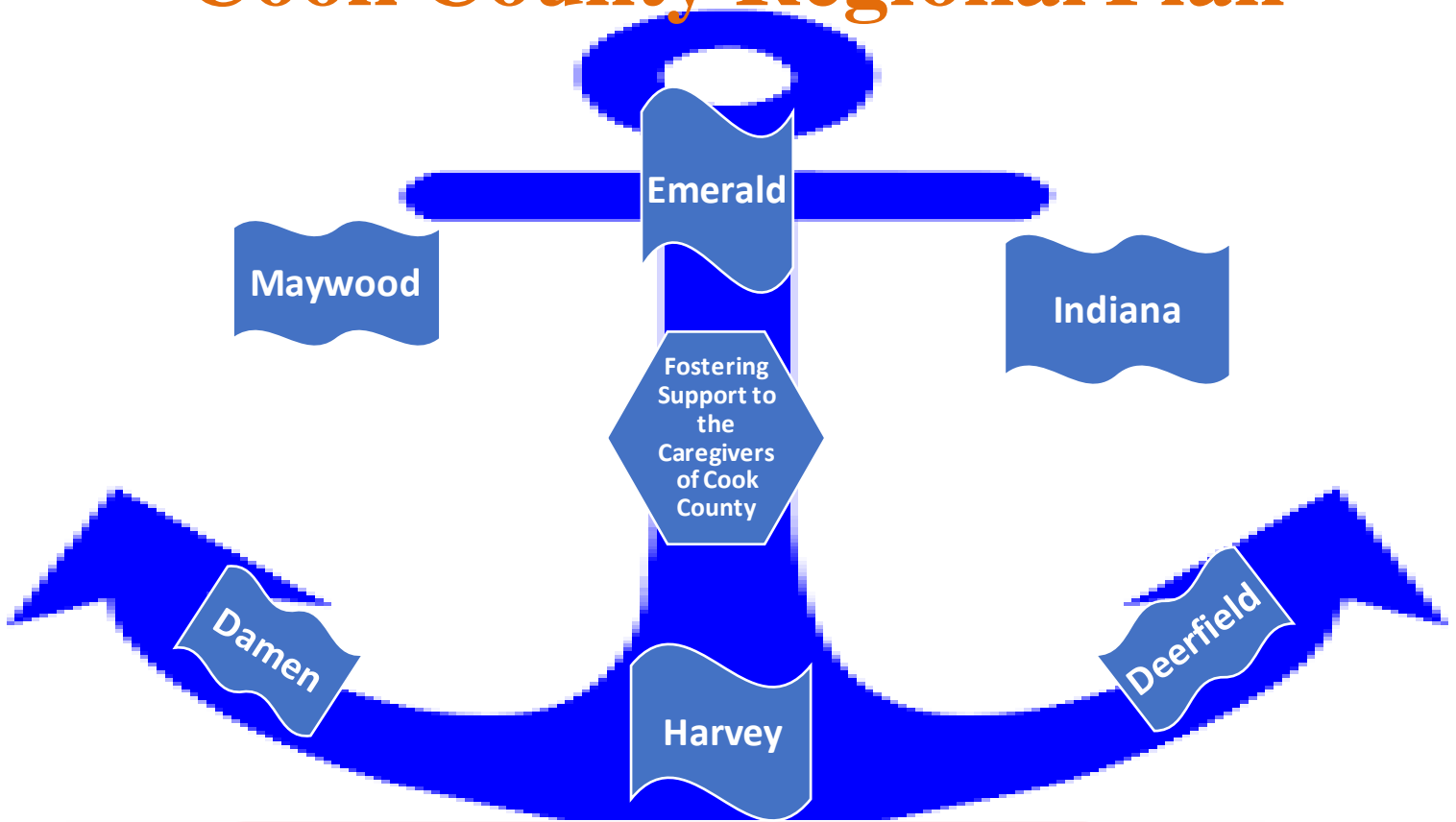


Cook County Regional Plan



Cook County Regional Plan

Implementation Plan

For The

Foster Parent Law



2023



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foster Parent Bill of Rights..... Page3

Foster Parent Responsibilities..... Page
279

Supports Available to Foster Parents Appendix A

Cook Regional Training Calendar..... Appendix B

Cook Region Grievance..... Appendix C

Cook Region Quick Reference Guide.....Appendix D

Foster Parent Plan Approval Signatures/Surveys.....Appendix E

Foster Parent Bill of Rights

Foster parents have the right to:

1. Dignity, Respect & Consideration

Be treated with dignity, respect and consideration.

2. Training

Be provided Pre-Service and on-going training to meet needs and improve skills.

3. Contact with the Agency for Support

Be informed on how to contact the placement agency for assistance to access support services.

4. Timely Financial Reimbursement

Receive timely financial reimbursement for care included in the service plan.

5. Placement Plan Information

Be provided with information about the agency's plan for placement that includes supporting family relationships and cultural heritage.

6. Investigation of Alleged Licensing Violations

Be provided fair, timely and impartial investigations, including mediation and/or administrative review and explanations of decisions concerning licensing.

7. Additional Information about Children

Receive additional or necessary information relevant to the child's care.

8. Information Given About Children at or Prior to Placement

Be given information concerning a child.

9. Notification of Scheduled Meetings

Be notified of scheduled meetings concerning the child and decisions made concerning the child. To have input concerning the plan of services for the child and to communicate with other professionals who work with the child.

10. All Necessary Information on Child/Family

Have any information the caseworker has about the child and his family that pertains to the child's needs and care.

11. Written Notice of any Placement Changes

Receive written notice of any plans to end placement, along with the reason, and appeal information.

12. Notification of Court Hearings

Receive timely notification of court hearings.

13. Placement Option for Children Re-entering Care

Be considered as a placement option for foster children formerly in their care.

14. Timely Access to Service Appeal System

Have access to an agency's or DCFS's appeals process without retaliation.

15. Foster Parent Hotline Information

Be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline and information on reporting staff misconduct.

BILL OF RIGHTS – PLAN NARRATIVES

1) Dignity, Respect & Consideration

Be treated with dignity, respect, and consideration as professional child welfare team members.

- Strategies to ensure that foster parents are treated with dignity, respect, and consideration as professional child welfare team members

DCFS Cook County Foster Parents are the backbone to our department and are allowed to have a voice in the Region. Their professional input is a value to the region. The Caregivers of Cook County active participants in the monthly meetings, they provide input both Regionally and Statewide. Foster Parents are encouraged to attend meetings ongoing. They are invited by both written and verbal notices.

This year Cook County provided the caregivers a new approach to our service delivery. We engaged the foster parents monthly with a “Book Club Café”. This is where we had a former youth in care- Antonio Grate to speak on the topic of Respect of the Caregiver, and how guardians can successfully foster the child into their new home. This was so impactful; we provided all participants with a copy of the book, and they took part in “talks around the table”. This gave both the Department and the foster parents time to engage and interact.

Foster Parents are regarded with dignity and respect as it relates to their individual cultural, religious, and personal practice/beliefs, inside of the foster home. This is done in conjunction with considering the needs of the child in placement. Supervision is required if disrespect of foster parents is encountered or identified by any member of the professional team

Cook Region recognizes that foster parents require competencies—specific knowledge and skills—to effectively work with neglected and abused children who have been separated from their parents/families. Foster parents are considered partners with the various child welfare professionals for the benefit of children in care. We take into consideration not only their opinion but their availability to attend meetings, staffing and for in-person visits in their homes.

Cook Regional Casework staff members are expected to return phone calls within 24 business hours. Foster parents are encouraged to contact the caseworker’s supervisor when they do not receive a timely response from the caseworker. The support directory, accessible to them, gives them contact information for the Regional Administrator, Area Administrators, Licensing Specialist, Foster Parent Lead Support Specialists, and the Payment Unit. The staff is expected to

develop a relationship based on mutual respect and open communication. Foster parents are encouraged to call and follow the chain of command as necessary.

Monthly Foster Parent Advisory Supportive Meetings are held for information sharing, training, networking, and support. The meetings are held virtually every 3rd Tuesday of the month in Cook Region. The reminder letters are emailed, and snail mailed. The invite is provided to all licensed Foster Parent and Home of Relative Foster Parents in which we service within this area. The Zoom Link is then forwarded via email as well as a letter mailed to the homes.

We distribute a support directory of Sub-Regional staff telephone numbers annually along with a copy of the implementation plan. The support directory includes contacts such as: Area Administrators, Educational Advisors, Foster Parent Lead Support Specialists, crisis assistance, payment line and the advocacy office.

2) Training

Be provided pre-service and ongoing training to meet needs and improve skills.

- Minimum Standardized Pre-Service Training per DCFS Rule 402

A variety of Pre-Service training locations are located throughout each Cook sub-region and suburban areas. Weekday and weekend schedules are available year-round to complete the 27-hour requirement for licensure that is mandated per DCFS Rule 402. The licensing workers provide the schedule to foster parents and submit the enrollment request to the Office of DCFS Training via e-mail. The schedule can also be seen on the Department web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs).

- PRIDE or other DCFS approved training

The 39-hour training for licensure requires attendance to Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE classes. Applicants interested in caring for related children are required to only complete the first 6 hours of the PRIDE classes, though completion of the entire training is recommended. Applicants who complete 6 hours of PRIDE training are eligible to care for related children only. Module 2 regarding discipline is highly recommended for all foster caregivers.

Training required for license renewal—In-Service training modules—are scheduled at the PRIDE training locations. Other DCFS approved training for license renewal includes relevant topics such as CPR and First Aid. Caregivers simply need to complete a Training Credit Approval Form that can be mailed or faxed to DCFS Training in Springfield.

Additional training may be needed before placement occurs due to the special needs of the child about to be placed. Training can also be identified during the Integrated Assessment process, due not only to the needs of the child placed in the home but based on identified needs during the assessment process. During on-going in person visitation and communication between foster parent and case manager, additional training needs may be identified that would assist the foster parent in caring for the child. Foster parents, licensing, child welfare specialists and resource staff work together to identify the resources for the training needed.

Licensing workers can provide class schedules. DCFS Foster families can register themselves for Inservice training by contacting the DCFS Training Unit at **877/800-3393** or ask for assistance from their licensing worker or support specialist. Foster Parents can also access the Virtual Training Center at www.dcfstraining.org.

Adoption Conversion Training is also provided to caregivers who are in the process of adopting a child.

CORE TEEN Training is also provided to our caregivers within our Region. This training is done by our Foster Parent Support Specialist. The training helps caregivers understand how trauma has impacted the cognitive and emotional development of the youth. Builds self-awareness of the resource family, highlights the root causes of behaviors rather than the behaviors themselves.

Pre-Service and In-Service Classes and materials are available in Spanish. The caseworkers also remind foster parents of the training schedule on their monthly visits.

- Sub Region Foster Parent Advisory Council Ongoing Trainings:

Agency staff and foster parents are all eligible for the same Pre-Service and In-Service trainings. Both staff and foster parents attend the monthly Sub-Regional Foster Parent Advisory Council meeting/trainings. The Sub-Region and the advisory council together develop an annual training calendar for the Advisory Council meetings that is mailed to foster parents and posted in the lobbies of the offices. Please see attachments regarding Training Wrokshops

- Mutual assessment tool

The Foster Home Utilization Assessment is a form that helps licensing workers and foster parents mutually determine training needs based on the children currently in placement. The Utilization

Form is completed by the Sub-Region's licensing workers annually at minimum. The form asks about the individual children in the home, their ages, their adjustment behaviors and the foster parents' overall response to the children. The discussion is supposed to help caregivers identify their own needs and help staff make training recommendations.

- Evidence of training schedule/calendar

An annual training calendar is developed with and for the Advisory Council meeting trainings (attachment). The schedule is mailed to foster parents and posted in the lobbies of offices.

The information is also available on the DCFS website and in the Department newsletters that are mailed to caregivers. Foster families can register themselves for In-Service training by contacting the DCFS Training Unit at 877/800-3393 or ask for assistance from their licensing worker or support specialist. Foster Parents can also access the Virtual Training Center (VTC) at www.dcfstraining.org. The VTC also offers some online courses. For assistance with registration for any Virtual Training Center class, cook foster parents should contact the Cook Regional Training Manager, Veronica Sanchez at 773/371-6000.

3. Contact with the Agency for Support

Be informed on how to contact the placement agency for assistance to access support services.

- 24-hour, 7-day availability of emergency support

The Cook Region foster parent support specialists are accessible 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. The Department also has emergency/after-hours telephone numbers: (773) 538-8800 or (866) 503-0184 for 24-hour assistance. Along with the implementation plan, Cook Sub-Regions annually distribute a telephone directory that includes the telephone numbers for 24-hour support and other emergency contacts (Supports Available to Foster Parents Directory attached).

- Established method for accessing support services (e.g. System of Care, staff phone numbers and on-call schedules)

The Support directory provides easy access to the staff and support services. The telephone log lists various support services such as System of Care provider, education advisors, Sub-Regional nurse, payment line, advocacy office and other emergency contacts (attachment a). An updated

phone log is handed out to foster parents annually along with the Implementation Plan. Staff will provide the directory to caregivers.

Licensing workers provide a folder to foster parents at initial licensure with a form for foster parents to write down important telephone numbers such as caseworker, supervisor, licensing worker, foster parent support specialist and the after-hours number.

4. Timely Financial Reimbursement

Receive timely financial reimbursement for care included in the service plan.

- Regular board payment

Board payments are made on a monthly basis to licensed foster parents approved and **Licensed, Non-Specialized Foster Care** supervised by DCFS to provide care for a child for whom the agency has legal **Reimbursement Rate responsibility**. Payments are mailed directly from DCFS according to a set schedule

typically, during the third week of each month. Licensed foster parents providing the amount of **licensed monthly reimbursement** payment is based on age of the child and is commonly referred to **traditional foster care** receive the following board rates: as the “foster care board rate”. Any changes to the regular foster care rate must be approved by the Illinois

Legislature within DCFS’ annual budget.

Child’s Age	Total	Board	Clothing	Allowance*
0 thru 11 mo.	\$468	\$468	\$44	\$16
1 thru 4 yrs.	\$476	\$410	\$49	\$17
5 thru 8 yrs.	\$498	\$415	\$65	\$18
9 thru 11 yrs.	\$528	\$423	\$76	\$29
12 yrs. & Over	\$572	\$434	\$86	\$52

*The personal allowance for children age 4 years and under is to be used by foster parents for incidentals (toys, rattles, etc.), which become the property of the child.

For children for whom the Department is legally responsible who are residing in a home of an unlicensed relative caregiver, the Department will pay only the standard of need established by the Illinois Department of Human Services, currently set at \$310 a month in the Cook County Sub Region.

A foster care payment begins the day a child is placed in the foster home. Foster parents will receive a check for the previous month. For example, if a child is placed on October 15, the foster

parent will receive the first board payment during the third week of November. The amount will be for days October 15 – 31. A full board payment amount will be received during the third week of December for the month of November.

The Department's Placement Clearance Desk must be called by the caseworker prior to any placement for approval. Once a clearance confirmation number is obtained, it is valid for only 24 hours; the placement must be made within that 24-hour period. The caseworker must complete the Authorization for Payment form to initiate the Board payments. The payment form is then faxed or emailed to the Case Assignment Unit within 2 business days.

The caseworker should leave a copy of the payment form with the foster parent when placing the child as a receipt and to document the child's proof of residence. A copy is also maintained in the file.

- Payment for additional services, such as respite and camp

Children are eligible for payment of additional services that promote social development and cultural enrichment. Specifics of what DCFS will pay for and under what circumstances are detailed in DCFS Rule Part 359 Authorized Child Care Payments available in the Foster Parent Handbook provided at PRIDE training and on the DCFS web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs) or by request.

Cook Sub-Regions also provide reimbursement, according to policy, to eligible foster parents who enroll children in summer day camp at their local park district annually. Foster parents are notified via mail to contact the foster parent support specialist or the local DCFS office to obtain further details.

Respite care is subject to approval but provides short-term payment to an alternative caregiver when the foster parent needs assistance or is unavailable to care for the children due to an emergency or family crisis. Foster parents should contact the foster parent support specialists for assistance with respite care.

The staff and foster parent support specialists discuss with foster parents the variety of payments that they and a child in their care may be eligible for on an ongoing basis. Such reimbursements can include upfront out-of-pocket expenses for a child. Special Service Fees provide funds to caregivers who host overnight sibling visits or arrange events that promote family reunification.

Training on DCFS Rule Part 359, Authorized Child Care payments, regarding payments, programs and reimbursements is provided annually in the Cook Sub-Region at one of the Foster Parent Advisory Council meetings.

- Timely assessment and payment commensurate with type of care provided

Most foster children are considered as traditional foster care cases, cared for by families receiving the licensed reimbursement rates shown above. Some foster children, however, have severe behavioral, emotional or medical problems that require foster parents to have additional training and/or competencies. In those cases, the child's case may be referred to an agency that has a specialized program to meet his or her identified needs. Foster parents of a specialized child receive additional monthly compensation in order to support the foster parent's ability to meet that child's extra needs.

When a child exhibits behavior that have prompted additional resources to be put in place to help remedy or modify the behaviors, and more intervention is still needed, the child is considered for specialization. The caseworker requests a Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meeting. A Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) staffing is scheduled involving the foster parent, child and other child welfare team members to determine how we can help meet the needs of the child. If the Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meeting team decision supports the request, the child is matched with a specialized agency that will provide the needed services. Once an agreed upon date for case transfer is set, the Department provides the transfer documents to the receiving agency. The receiving agency submits a new payment form that will change the child's service code type, and the monthly board rate for that child is adjusted accordingly.

For those children who have some special needs but who reside in traditional foster care can still qualify for specialized service fees to help support the child and foster family.

- Method of resolving payment problems: contact staff, payment unit or advocacy office. Grievance process is also a method.

If there are payment questions or problems, the foster parent can contact their respective regional staff: caseworker, supervisor, licensing worker or foster parent support specialist for assistance. Foster parents can also contact the Payment Line for staff assistance from 8:30am to 11:00am Monday – Friday or for automated information 24 hours a day by calling 800/525-0499. If these efforts fail, caregivers can contact the Advocacy Office at 800/232-3798 for further assistance. The telephone numbers for the Payment Line and Advocacy Office are also listed in the support directory (attached).

A last resort for unresolved payment issues is to file a grievance. A copy of the grievance brochure is attached to the Implementation Plan when distributed to foster parents each year. Brochures

on the grievance process are also available in the regional office lobbies, at foster parent meetings, and by request.

5. Placement Plan Information

Be provided with information about the agency's plan for placement that includes supporting family relationships and cultural heritage.

- Foster parent participation in the development of the child's service plan

Caseworkers are expected to develop the child's portion of the service plan with the foster parent's input. Foster parent input is important because many of the child's service plan tasks are obligations that the foster parent must help fulfill, i.e. medical care, counseling or other services such as family visitation schedules. Foster parents document their input into the plan by signing the child's portion of the plan.

Foster parents are mailed an Administrative Case Review (ACR) invitation/notification through the Administrative Case Review (ACR) division. Foster parents can participate in the review and approval of the child's service plan when they attend the scheduled Administrative Case Review (ACR). Foster parents sign the service plan and are given a copy of the relevant portion upon completion of the Administrative Case Review (ACR).

- Timely notification of changes in service plan/permanency goal, including method of notification

Amendments to the service plan and permanency goals can be made any time throughout the life of the case. Any changes are disclosed to the involved parties including foster parents. The plan and goal are also reviewed every 6 months at the Administrative Case Review (ACR) and at court during permanency hearings. Foster parents are encouraged to attend Administrative Case Review (ACR)s and permanency hearings.

If foster parents are not present to obtain a copy of the plan and to learn firsthand about changes, caseworkers are obligated to inform the foster parents as soon as possible because a child's goal directly impacts the foster parents' role and obligations. The caseworker provides a copy of the child's plan to the foster parents via mail or in-person, so they are aware of the child's visitation plan and specific tasks and obligations scheduled for the next six months. Information can also be given to foster parents via telephone contact.

- Foster parent participation/input into plan for visitation/communication with the child's birth family

Caseworkers are expected to develop the child's visitation schedule portion of the service plan with foster parent's input because many of the child's service plan tasks are obligations that the foster parent must help fulfill. The visitation plan schedule must be done in coordination with the child's availability due to school and service obligations. Foster parents must ensure a child's availability and readiness for scheduled visitation at minimum but are being encouraged to more actively participate in family visitation and communication with parents.

Licensing workers, together with foster parents, must complete a Caregiver Self-Assessment as Reunification Prepared form at initial licensure and each renewal. The form informs and assesses foster parents' willingness to support family reunification and participate in family visits and activities.

6. Investigation of Alleged Licensing Violations

Be provided fair, timely and impartial investigations, including mediation and/or administrative review and explanations of decisions concerning licensing.

- Policy describing the investigation of alleged violations and demonstration of how the agency disseminates that information to foster parents

The purpose of a licensing complaint investigation in a licensed foster home is to determine if there has been a violation of licensing standards and/or the Child Care Act. A complaint may originate from any source and is routed to the licensing unit responsible for monitoring the home. When the Department is contacted by an individual through the State Central Register or Hotline number, the licensing supervisor is notified by the Central Office of Licensing in Springfield via electronic mail. The supervisor then assigns a licensing worker on her team to investigate the allegations.

In Cook Sub-Regions, the licensing worker assigned to complete the investigation is usually the same licensing worker that has been monitoring the home. The supervisor meets with the worker to discuss the complaint allegations and the plan of action to be taken.

The licensing worker is responsible for conducting and documenting non-accusatory, fact-finding interviews with all persons identified as having information relevant to the allegation(s). The licensing worker allows the licensee an opportunity to discuss the allegations and present his/her side of the story. Complaint investigations are documented on Licensing Complaint Report forms. When completing the investigation, the licensing worker must indicate every section of DCFS

licensing rules and/or the Child Care Act alleged to be in violation or to have been violated. Information should be specific and documented on the Complaint forms.

Depending on the nature of the allegations, an investigation can be a stand-alone licensing investigation or a concurrent investigation with the Division of Child Protection (DCP). A standalone investigation is where only violations of licensing rules are alleged. When the allegations are related to abuse or neglect, the licensing unit conducts their complaint investigation concurrently with DCP after the 15th day of the initiated DCP investigation.

Complaint investigations are addressed during the Pre-Service training. The professional panel members that participate in session 9 of the Pre-Service training usually include a licensing worker and a DCP investigator; first-hand information is given to foster parents at this time and questions answered. Also, licensing workers can answer questions regarding complaint investigations at any time. Additional information on complaint investigations can be found in the Foster Parent Handbook provided at Pre-Service training and available on the DCFS web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs).

Training on complaint investigations is to be conducted during one of the advisory council meetings in 2020-2021.

- Person of foster parent's choosing present during the investigation

When the foster parent is contacted by the licensing worker in relation to the investigation, the foster parent has the right to have a person of his/her choosing during the investigation interviews. The foster parent can delay the investigation interview up to 4 hours to arrange for the presence of a foster parent support specialist, other advocate or friend. The licensing worker and foster parent should agree on a time within the 4 hours when the licensing worker should return to complete the interview. The requested delay is limited to the interview and not the inspection of the home. The licensing worker shall request permission to enter and observe the premises when the complaint alleges children are at risk due to environmental conditions in the home.

Foster parent support specialists have experience with supporting and advising foster parents during complaint investigations and are available upon foster parent request.

- Specified time frames for investigation as required by DCFS rule

The licensing worker shall begin a stand-alone licensing complaint investigation within 2 business days of the Department having received the complaint. The worker shall complete the

investigation within 30 days; however, the investigation may be extended for an additional 30 days with supervisory approval.

In the case of a concurrent investigation that involves the Division of Child Protection (DCP), the licensing worker does not initiate a licensing complaint investigation until:

- DCP decides to unfound the allegations if done within 14 days or
- After the DCP investigation becomes formal, meaning 14 days later.

Licensing staff communicate with DCP staff and/or check the status of the investigation on the Department's computer database. Again, the licensing worker shall complete the investigation within 30 days from when it is initiated; however, the investigation may be extended for an additional 30 days with supervisory approval.

Upon completion of the complaint investigation, the licensing worker makes a finding of substantiated or unsubstantiated regarding each allegation of the complaint as they relate to licensing standards. All investigation documentation is submitted to the supervisor for review and approval. Within 5 days of supervisory approval of the findings, the licensing worker notifies the licensee in writing of each finding and if any follow-up action is required.

If the case was a concurrent investigation with DCP, licensing sends a *Notice to Guardian Ad Litem of Completed Foster Home Licensing Complaint Investigation* to the assigned Guardian Ad Litem of the involved child or children.

- Procedure for appealing negative results/corrective action plans

If a substantiated finding is made, the letter offers the foster parent the option of a supervisory review in which the licensee can meet with the licensing supervisor and worker to dispute the findings and/or the expectations of a corrective action plan. A corrective action plan lists the actions to be taken by the foster parent to correct the violations and the time frames for correcting them.

A supervisory review should be arranged:

- when the foster parent disputes that the violation(s) occurred;
- when the foster parent disagrees with the application or interpretation of a section of the Child Care Act or a licensing standard;
- When the licensing supervisor believes a review is needed to address ongoing issues.

The time frame for requesting a supervisory review is 10 days. The supervisor's name, telephone number and timeframe for requesting the review are listed in the letter that is mailed or hand delivered to the foster parent. If a review is requested, it will be scheduled within 14 days of the request. The licensing supervisor must review and approve all investigations and related correspondence. In cases involving a DCFS ward where the allegation has not been substantiated, the Guardian Ad Litem, by law, will have 10 days from the date they receive a copy of any investigation in which to ask for further review.

7. Additional Information about Children

Receive additional or necessary information relevant to the child's care.

- Caseworker training in ALL information to be disclosed

Information sharing is vital to ensuring that a child's needs are met, and the foster parent has the competencies to meet that child's needs. All DCFS caseworkers are trained in Foundation Training, Clinical Practice, and Specialized trainings on current rules and procedures that dictate required casework practices.

DCFS rules and procedures specify the need to share all appropriate information with the caregiver. Such information includes:

- History of psychiatric hospitalizations and/or serious mental health issues
- Known medical conditions & medications
- Other information necessary for the proper care of the child

Workers are notified of rule and procedure changes through computer announcements and email.

Confidentiality training for staff and foster parents has been completed within the Sub-Region's Foster Parent Advisory Council meetings in 2020-2021 to address the limitations on which information can be shared and with whom.

Foster parents receive additional information about the child during participation in child-related meetings such as Administrative Case Reviews (ACR)s, Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings, Clinical Staffing's, Child and Family Team meetings, IEP (Individualized Education Program) meetings, and court hearings.

- Description of how caseworkers are held accountable for sharing the information

Workers are required to document contacts and information sharing in the case record. Supervisory review and approval is routine and also addressed during individual and on-going worker supervision. Peer, Performance, and Federal Reviews monitor worker compliance. Chronic and critical reports from the Administrative Case Review (ACR) inform staff of missing documentation. Various meetings and reviews such as Child and Family Team Meetings, Administrative Case Review (ACR)s, court hearings and Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings are also opportunities for foster parents to share and receive information.

8. Information Given About Children at or Prior to Placement

Be given information concerning a child.

- DCFS has clear rules and procedures as to what information to share and how to share it with foster parents

DCFS rules and procedures specify the need to share all appropriate information with the caregiver and how and when this information is provided. Such information includes:

- o case information and history;
- o health and medical;
- o educational information and history;
- o placement history; and
- o Behavior/social information.

When all the information is not available at that time, the worker shall provide the information as it becomes available. As members of the child's team, foster parents will contact the caseworker and supervisor with additional information they have obtained or when required information has not yet been provided to them.

- Staff are trained in all pertinent policies and procedures

DCFS staff training is mandated and continuous. Much training is computer-based, including webinars and self-paced trainings on the virtual training web site. Staff are notified of all new policies and procedures through announcements made on the Department's internal web site and by e-mail. Supervisors ensure caseworker completion of mandated trainings and practice of new or changed procedures that dictate casework responsibilities.

- Description of how caseworkers are held accountable for sharing the information

Workers are required to document contacts and information sharing in the case record. Various meetings and reviews such as Child and Family Team Meetings, Administrative Case Review (ACR)s, court hearings and Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings are also opportunities for foster parents to share and receive information.

9. Notification of Scheduled Meetings

Be notified of scheduled meetings concerning the child and decisions made concerning the child. To have input concerning the plan of services for the child and to communicate with other professionals who work with the child.

- Foster parents are notified and encouraged to participate in all meetings/staffing about children in their care

Foster parents are encouraged to be active participants at court dates, Administrative Case Reviews (ACR)s, Clinical Staffing's, Individual Educational Planning (IEP) or other educational meetings, Child and Family Team meetings, Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings and any other consultations that involve children placed in their home.

For any meeting involving DCFS, foster parents are notified in person, via regular or certified mail and/or by telephone, usually by the worker or supervisor. The Administrative Case Review (ACR) division notifies foster parents of all Administrative Case Reviews via mail. Foster parents are notified of the Sub-Regional Foster Parent Advisory Council meetings each month by mail and/or by telephone by the foster parent support specialists. Licensing workers also notify foster parents who need In-Service training hours of the council meetings.

- Foster parents are informed of decisions made by agencies and courts

Foster parents are encouraged to attend all staffing, meetings, Administrative Case Reviews (ACR)s and court hearings. Caseworkers provide this information in person or by telephone. If foster parents are not present to learn firsthand about decisions made at staffing, meetings, Administrative Case Reviews (ACR)s or court, caseworkers and/or supervisors are obligated to inform the foster parents of the results, as soon as possible, to keep them abreast of pertinent information which directly impacts the child's service planning, permanency goal and any tasks which may impact the foster parents' role and obligations.

Caseworkers inform foster parents about the outcome of all court hearings and when the next court date is scheduled. Following an Administrative Case Review (ACR) where the foster parent has been unable to attend, the worker provides a copy of the child's plan to the foster parents via mail or in-person, so they are aware of the child's visitation plan and specific tasks and

obligations scheduled for the next six months. Information can also be given to foster parents via telephone contact.

If foster parents have any concerns about not receiving adequate information, they are encouraged to contact the casework staff and then if not satisfied, follow the agency's or Subregion's chain of command. For Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) staff (i.e. caseworker, supervisor, Area Administrator, and Regional Administrator).

- Foster parents are encouraged to give input into case planning and input is given full consideration

Foster parent input is located within the child's service plan as a task. Obligations for the foster parent must help fulfill, such as medical care, counseling or other services. The foster parent's input into child and family visitation schedules is crucial to ensure children are consistently visiting and maintaining appropriate relationships with biological family.

Foster parents are notified of the scheduled review by mail directly from the DCFS ADMINISTRATIVE CASE REVIEW (ACR) division. Foster parent presence is vital as a professional child welfare team member as they can provide invaluable insight into the child's day-to-day actions and behaviors.

10. All Necessary Information on Child/Family

Have any information the caseworker has about the child and his family that pertains to the child's needs and care.

- Foster parents are encouraged to communicate with all Child and Family Team members

Foster parent's input is invaluable as they usually have the closest contact with and perspective into a child's behaviors. Foster parents are informed that the primary contacts should be the caseworker and supervisor. Foster parents are also advised to contact their licensing worker or the foster parent support specialists for additional support or advice.

Notification of meetings and foster parent input is vital to ensure that a child's needs are met, and the foster parent has the competencies and opportunities to participate with the team to meet that child's needs.

- A description of information is given to foster parents at intake, and a prescribed method of disclosing information is utilized

Information sharing is vital to ensuring that a child's needs are met, and the foster parent has the ability to meet that child's needs. Confidentiality always applies. Information relevant to the proper care of the child is to be given to the foster at the time of the placement and should include:

- case information and history;
- health and medical;
- educational information and history;
- placement history; and
- Behavior/social information.
- Other pertinent background information that is essential to understanding the child's needs but that protects the rights of the child's family.

Licensing staff cover confidentiality during each monitoring visit and can answer questions. Respecting confidentiality is a licensing standard listed on the Family Foster Home Licensing Monitoring Record signed by foster parents and the licensing worker. Department staff and support specialists can also provide confidentiality information.

Additional information about confidentiality is found in the Foster Family Handbook and in the Foster Parent Law, both part of the PRIDE training materials and located on the DCFS web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs).

- Ongoing sharing of information that is pertinent to the health and well-being of the child

Caseworkers are accountable for providing necessary information to foster parents for the proper care of the child at the time of placement and thereafter. Caseworkers are to inform foster parents of pertinent information about a child in an ongoing manner. Foster parents should also inform caseworkers or their supervisors of pertinent information regarding the child's health and well-being.

Foster parent participation in staffing, Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP)s, Child and Family Team Meetings, Administrative Case Reviews (ACR)s and court hearings is encouraged because it reinforces foster parent input and ongoing information sharing.

The Foster Parent Visit form is distributed to foster parents with each year's implementation plan and upon request. The form lists various topics of discussion that the foster parent should

inquire about if the subject is not covered by the caseworker during in-home visits or telephone contacts. Examples include:

- Court issues—results of hearings, upcoming hearings, what is next?
- Recreational and social activities—child’s hobbies and interests, how to access activities and payment issues.
- Administrative Case Review—foster parent input and participation. Review date, time and location. Permanency goal progress/changes.

As part of the effort to support family reunification, more foster families and parents should strive to develop a positive relationship; when a positive relationship exists between the foster parents and the parents, the child’s family may consent to the disclosure of additional information or provide additional information themselves.

11. Written Notice of any Placement Changes

Receive written notice of any plans to end placement, along with the reason, and appeal information.

- 14-day written notice (Not applicable for movements involving imminent risk)

When the Department makes a critical decision to move the child from one out-of-home placement to another, it will inform the foster parent or relative caregiver that the child will be moved to another placement and why. Unless there are concerns for the child's safety, the Department will notify the involved parties at least 14 days prior to the proposed move. The caseworker removing the child will give the caregiver a copy of the *Notice of Change of Placement*. Copies must be sent to the child's family and the child (through the child's representative, the Guardian Ad Litem).

- Appeal information, including emergency review process (e.g. clinical reviews and hearings), is given to foster parents

If the foster parent or relative caregiver disagrees with the decision to change the child's placement, he or she may request a clinical placement review of the decision within three working days of the receipt of the *Notice of Change of Placement*. The clinical placement review can be requested by either phoning 312/633-3754 or faxing the *Notice* to DCFS at 312/633-4091. This information is included on the *Notice of Change of Placement*. Appeal process brochures explaining clinical placement reviews are available in the office lobbies, by request and on the

DCFS web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs) (attachment d). The brochures are also provided to foster parents annually along with the implementation plan.

The purpose of the clinical placement review is to evaluate the current placement, the reason for the disruption or change of placement, the child's needs and the appropriateness and stability of the proposed placement.

When in disagreement with the final clinical placement review decision, the foster parent or relative caregiver may request a fair hearing through the Department's service appeal process as addressed in right #14.

In the event the Department has reason to believe the safety of the child is at imminent risk, the child will be removed immediately. An emergency review allows the Department to make a temporary decision based on a concern that imminent risk of harm may come to a child while your case is proceeding through the appeal process.

12. Notification of Court Hearings

Receive timely notification of court hearings.

- Method for notifying foster parents of hearings and their right to be heard

Caseworkers are the primary providers of information regarding all scheduled court hearings, reasons for the hearing, the outcome and the following court date. Notification can be written or verbal.

Foster parents have a right to be heard. Foster parent input is vital as they are the primary caregiver for the child and have valuable insight. The Cook Sub-Regions have provided annual training on juvenile court and related issues at the advisory council meetings in the past. Juvenile Court training is included in the 2020-2021 advisory council training schedule to assist with foster parent awareness of court and the role that caregivers play in court hearings.

Any foster parent not receiving notice of court hearings can contact the caseworker, the supervisor, Foster Parent Lead Support Specialist. Foster parents can also call the Office of the Public Guardian at 312/433-4300 or DCFS Legal at 312/633-3400. Both numbers are included in the support directory (Attached).

- Description of how caseworkers are held accountable for notifying foster parents

Workers are required to document contacts and information sharing in the case record. Supervisory review and approval are routine and addressed during individual and ongoing

worker supervision. Peer, Performance and Federal Reviews monitor worker compliance. Various meetings and reviews such as Child & Family Team Meetings, Administrative Case Reviews (ACR)s, and Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings are also opportunities for foster parents to share and receive information.

13. Placement Option for Children Re-entering Care

Be considered as a placement option for foster children formerly in their care.

- Method for checking past placement records

If a child re-enters the foster care system, the previous foster parents should be considered a placement option. DCFS staff can access the child's entire placement history via the CM-07 screen in the Department's database. Staff can also interview the child about previous foster homes and contact licensing staff or utilize the database for contact information on foster parents. Staff can then contact previous caregivers to determine their availability and willingness to care for the child again.

- Process for determining best interest regarding placement decision

The best interest of a child is a guiding principle in all Department decisions. The assigned caseworker and supervisor assess a child's needs, how well the former foster parents met the child's needs in the past and the foster parents' ability to currently meet the child's needs. Subject to approval by the Department's placement clearance desk, a child can be approved for return to the former placement if deemed to be in the best interest of the child.

14. Timely Access to Service Appeal System

Have access to an agency's or DCFS's appeals process without retaliation.

- Documentation that an internal appeals system has been established and description of how it prohibits retaliation

The Department of Children and Family Services has a service appeal process. Service appeals are addressed in Pre-Service training and in the Foster Parent Handbook. If foster parents do not agree with a decision made or action taken by DCFS, they can challenge the decision or actions by filing an appeal.

Foster Parents or Relative Caregivers may appeal:

- Decisions that directly affect the caregiver, such as payments for the care of the child for whom the department is legally responsible
- Decisions about services for the benefit of the child for whom the department is legally responsible and is in their care, such as day care, medical, education or psychological services
- Failure to provide services as specified in the service plan for the benefit of the child. This does not include services for the biological family such as family therapy or counseling.
- A change in the child's substitute care placement, provided that the child has been placed in the home for at least 60 days. This does not include placements with the biological or adoptive parent(s), or sibling(s), placements for purposes of adoption as ordered by the court or return to an individual(s) with whom the child resided prior to entering substitute care.

What May Not Be Appealed

Foster Parents may not appeal some decisions or actions by the department through the Service Appeal Process. These are:

- Adjustments made in services by change in state or federal law
- Issues already determined through the department's Service Appeal Process
- When the issue is not defined as a service under specific department rules. (Foster parents may find they can appeal these issues under other appeal processes within the department and the appeal will be routed to the appropriate process.)
- Services offered to department clientele for which the department is not responsible, but another state or federal agency is solely responsible for carrying out these services, such as medical assistance
- When a court has made a judicial determination or issued an order on the issue being appealed

How to Request an Appeal through the Service Appeal Process

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 and 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. If they do not agree with the decision made in a clinical placement review regarding the change in placement of a child in your care, request an appeal within 10 days from the clinical placement decision.

Foster Parents should 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 a foster parent, is unable to

submit a written request, contact they should contact their local office and someone from the department will assist in preparing a written request.

The appeal/written request should be submitted to: Administrative Hearings Unit, DCFS, 406 E. Monroe, Station 15, Springfield, IL 62701, 217/782-6655. The request should include the foster parent's name, address, telephone and a brief summary stating their position on the department's decision or action the foster parent is appealing. The foster parent may also include any other information they feel the department should consider when reviewing its decision.

The service appeals brochures are distributed annually to foster parents along with the implementation plan, provided at the conclusion of each Administrative Case Review (ACR), available in the office lobbies, available on the DCFS web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs) and by request. Foster parent support specialists are available to assist foster parents with obtaining and filing service appeals information.

DCFS offers an internal grievance procedure to attempt to resolve problems not covered by the Service Appeal Process such as a lack of communication, lack of services or a violation of foster parents' rights and responsibilities. The foster parent grievance process is handled by a mediation committee, consisting of management and administrative staff.

Brochures on the grievance process are available in the office lobbies, at foster parent advisory meetings, and by request (attached). A copy of the grievance brochure is attached to the Implementation Plan when distributed to foster parents each year. Awareness of the grievance procedure is annually covered in training at the Advisory Council meeting. The grievance process brochure was updated, discussed and accepted by the foster parents.

- Process for accessing the external DCFS appeals system when necessary

The foster parent is to be treated with respect and dignity in all situations. If a foster parent feels they are being retaliated against, they should report this to the caseworker's supervisor or higher up the chain of command. Foster parents can also contact the DCFS Advocacy Office at 800-232-3798 for assistance. The Office of Affirmative Action can be contacted in cases of alleged discrimination.

15. Foster Parent Hotline Information

Be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline and information on reporting staff misconduct.

- Training/brochures available on the Foster Parent Hotline and Office of Inspector General

The support directory that is distributed to foster parents annually includes the telephone number for the Office of Inspector General (OIG) (Attached). The OIG handles reports on staff misconduct that should be investigated. This resource is addressed in the Foster Parent Handbook given to foster parents during Pre-Service training.

The support directory also includes the numbers for the general information Foster Parent Hotline (800/624-KIDS or 800/624-5437). The Advocacy Office assists with a broader range of problems or complaints, and their number is also listed on the telephone log (800/232-3798 or 217/524-2029).

Office of the Inspector General and Advocacy Office brochures are available in the Sub-Region's office lobbies. The brochures, information and telephone numbers are listed in the Foster Parent Handbook, on the DCFS web site (www.state.il.us/dcf) or by request to Department staff.

Foster Parent Responsibilities

1. Open Communication

Openly communicate and share information about the child with the child welfare team.

2. Confidentiality

Respect the confidentiality of information about foster children and their families.

3. Advocating for Children in Care Advocate for children in their care.

4. Treating Children & Families with Dignity and Respect

Treat children in their care and their families with dignity, respect and consideration.

5. Foster Parent Strengths & Weaknesses

Recognize their own strengths, limitations and support needs when considering placement of a child.

6. Affiliations with Foster Parent Associations

Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent groups in improving the quality of care.

7. Foster Parent Training Needs

Assess their on-going individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.

8. Strategize to Prevent Placement Disruption

Develop and implement strategies to prevent placement disruptions, and to provide support if preventative strategies fail and disruption occurs.

9. Acknowledge & Minimize Stress

Know the impact that foster parenting has on individuals and the family and minimize the resulting stress as much as possible.

10. Promote Foster Parenting Positively

Know the rewards and benefits of foster parenting and promote the experience in a positive way.

11.Roles, Rights & Responsibilities of Child Welfare Team

Know the roles, rights and responsibilities of foster parents, other child welfare professionals, the child and the child’s family.

12.Mandated Reporter Responsibility

Know their role as a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse/neglect. Know the policy regarding allegations against foster parents.

13.Administrative Case Reviews and Court Hearings

Understand the purpose of and participate in Administrative Case Reviews, service plans and court processes, according to their designated role.

14.Appeals Systems

Know the child welfare agency’s appeal procedure for foster parents and their rights.

15.Maintain Accurate & Complete Records

Maintain accurate and relevant records regarding the child’s progress and history and follow agency procedures and regulations.

16.Communication with Subsequent Caregiver

Share information about the child’s adjustment with a subsequent caregiver, whether it is the parent or another substitute caregiver.

17.Cultural Sensitivity

Respect and maintain a child’s cultural needs and support relationships with his own family.

FOSTER PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES – PLAN NARRATIVES

1. Open Communication

Openly communicate and share information about the child with the child welfare team.

- Training on type of communication and importance

Working as a Member of a Professional Team is addressed in session 1 of the Pre-Service training. *Working as a Professional Team Member* is one of the In-Service training modules offered. The training addresses team roles and how to advocate for a child in care.

Foster parents' input is invaluable as they usually have the closest contact with and perspective into a child's behaviors. Open communication is encouraged by the staff. Foster parents are invited to staffing, meetings, reviews, hearings and trainings to solicit their input. The support directory provided to foster parents assist and encourages open communication and access to any of the team members (Attached).

2. Confidentiality

Respect the confidentiality of information about foster children and their families.

- Initial and ongoing training on the importance of confidentiality

Confidentiality is addressed in the initial PRIDE training and by licensing staff during the licensing process and each monitoring visit. Respecting confidentiality is a licensing standard discussed with foster parents during semi-annual monitoring visits.

Additional information about confidentiality is found in the Foster Family Handbook and in the Foster Parent Law, both part of the PRIDE training materials and both located on the DCFS web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs). Department staff and support specialists can also answer questions about confidentiality.

- Laws and regulations available to foster parents

Confidentiality is a licensing standard (section 402.24) that is discussed by the licensing workers during the initial licensing process and again at each monitoring visit. It is one of the standards listed on the *Foster Home Licensing Monitoring Record* signed by the licensing worker and foster parent at each visit.

Foster parents can access state laws, Department rules and confidentiality information on the DCFS web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs) and in the Foster Family Handbook (provided at PRIDE training and available on the web site). The telephone log (attachment a) also has the numbers for the DCFS legal department and the Advocacy Office if foster parents have questions about confidentiality.

3. Advocating for Children in Care

Advocate for children in their care.

- Educational Advocacy training available

The *Educational Advocacy* training is offered year-round in a variety of locations both on the west side of the city and in the nearby western suburbs such as Oak Park and River Forest. Weekday and weekend schedules are available. Foster parents can obtain the schedule from their licensing worker, support specialist, or the DCFS web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs). Foster parents can also contact the DCFS training unit directly at 877/800-3393.

Completing *Educational Advocacy* training is a licensing requirement for license renewal. At least one foster parent in each licensed home is required to complete the *Educational Advocacy* training.

Educational Advisors provide trainings and information on educational issues at some of the advisory council meetings. They also provide monthly educational trainings at the Cook South DCFS office at 6201 S. Emerald. These trainings are open to foster parents, service providers and Department staff. Educational Advisors are listed on the telephone log and can be contacted by foster parents for assistance or to answer questions. For assistance with registration for any Virtual Training Center class, Cook foster parents should contact one of the Cook Regional Training Managers at 773/371-6000.

- Court training available

Juvenile court routinely provides court-related trainings throughout the year. This information is being shared at the Sub-Region's monthly advisory council meetings to encourage foster parent participation.

Juvenile Court Process and Court Personnel training has, in the past, been provided in the Sub Region Foster Parent Advisory Council meetings. Court training will be provided to Cook County Foster Parents in 2021.

- Service appeal brochures and training available

The Department has a service appeal process brochure (attached). The brochure is available in the Sub-Region's office lobbies, given out at the service appeal training, at the conclusion of each Administrative Case Review (ACR), and with the Foster Parent Implementation Plan when distributed to foster parents each year. The brochure is also found on the Department web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs). Foster parents can also request a copy of the brochure from Department staff.

The appeals system is annually covered in training at the Advisory Council meeting.

- Encouragement to participate in all staffing, including Administrative Case Review (ACR)s, Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings, IA activities, case conferences and court hearings

Foster parents are encouraged to be active participants at court hearings, Administrative Case Reviews (ACR)s, clinical staffing, Individual Educational Planning (IEP) or other educational meetings, Child and Family Team meetings, Integrated Assessment (IA) activities, Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings and any other consultations that involve children placed in their home.

The importance of participating in the various scheduled events is reinforced by staff, foster parent support specialists and the advisory council meetings. Foster parents are equipped with relevant Sub-Regional telephone numbers to encourage accessible communication with any child welfare team members.

The following in-service trainings were offered during the past year through the Foster Parent Advisory Council: ***Tax assistance, Foster Parent Implementation Plan, Administrative Case Review, Educational Advocacy, De-escalation Training, Trauma Informed Parenting Training, Adoption/Guardianship Updates.***

4. Treating Children & Families with Dignity and Respect

Treat children in their care and their families with dignity, respect and consideration.

- Initial and ongoing training on this topic

The need to treat children and their families with dignity, respect and consideration is addressed in the initial PRIDE training and the In-Service training modules 2 and 5:

Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs and Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families.

This need is also addressed by the licensing staff during the initial licensing process and each monitoring visit. Staff can answer foster parents' questions or concerns regarding this topic.

- Monitoring by staff charged with case management

Caseworkers communicate with children in care to determine how they are being treated and to ensure there are no violations of dignity, respect and consideration.

5. Foster Parent Strengths & Weaknesses

Recognize their own strengths, limitations and support needs when considering placement of a child.

- Ongoing mutual assessment method

Together foster parents and the licensing worker review at least annually the license capacity and age range based on the foster parents' preferences, capabilities and utilization. Cook Sub-Region's licensing staff developed a *Foster Home Utilization Assessment* as an ongoing mutual assessment tool to track the types of children that were being placed in the home.

The licensing supervisor requires that the utilization form be completed at the annual monitoring visits and requires supervisory review and signature. The form can also be completed during semi-annual visits if there have been changes in placements. Requests for changes in license age range and capacity can occur at any time. License provisions are guided by licensing standards, but also by foster parent ability and interest.

- Training (offered/recommended) based on assessments

The utilization form addresses the children currently in placement and their adjustment behaviors. Specific training may be requested by the foster parent or recommended by the licensing worker based on a child's adjustment and behaviors in that home. Because renewal training is discussed at each monitoring visit, the utilization assessment can offer ideas on relevant training for the foster parent.

- Placements based on strengths

Placements should be based on the foster parents' strengths—a combination of their capabilities and preferences. During the initial and ongoing licensing process, the foster parent's capabilities, preferences and utilization are addressed. The license capacity and age range are based on the assessment.

We attempt to make good matches between children and foster parents to help ensure stable and long-term placements. This effort is best served when placements are made based on foster parent strengths and foster parent insight into their respective limitations. This information helps guide the foster parent's decision whether to accept a child with a set of needs.

- Support needs addressed

Foster parents are continuously informed of the support resources available to them through Sub-Regional staff, foster parent support specialists, trainings, informational mailings, the monthly advisory council meetings, the statewide foster parent newsletter and the DCFS web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs).

The utilization form helps licensing staff and foster parents determine possible support needs based on the adjustment and behaviors of the children in the home. Licensing staff are also required to contact the caseworkers who have a child in the home before each monitoring visit to help ensure the foster parent is meeting the child's needs.

Any licensing or child welfare staff as well as the support specialists can assist foster parents with accessing needed supports.

6. Affiliations with Foster Parent Associations

Be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent groups in improving the quality of care.

- Internal support groups encouraged, and information is provided to foster parents

Foster Parent Advisory Council meetings are held each month except December—all foster parents and staff are encouraged to attend. The meetings serve as a support group where foster parents can raise issues, ask questions and network with other foster parents and staff.

Reminders of the meetings are mailed to all caregivers each month and support specialists regularly call foster parents in need of training hours to encourage their participation.

- Affiliations with foster parent associations are encouraged and facilitated

Foster parents are encouraged to attend caregiver conferences and other child welfare-related conferences and institute days. Registration information is mailed to caregivers and staff. Foster Parent Lead Support Specialists also inform foster parents of the conferences. The Department pays for travel expenses and for lodging expenses if the conference is more than 35 miles away.

7. Foster Parent Training Needs

Assess their on-going individual training needs and act to meet those needs.

- Method and tool for assessing general training needs of foster parents

Licensing workers discuss the training requirement at each monitoring visit per licensing standard 402.12 as listed on the monitoring form that is initialed and signed by foster parents and the licensing worker. The *Foster Home Utilization Assessment* completed by licensing workers annually at minimum can offer ideas on relevant training needs for the foster parent. Specific training may be requested by the foster parent or recommended by the licensing worker based on a child's adjustment and behaviors in that home.

- Process for providing for identified needs

The licensing workers can provide class schedules, DVDs and the Lending Library catalog to foster parents. The information is also available on the DCFS website (www.state.il.us/dcfs), in the Department newsletters that are mailed to caregivers and through foster parent support specialists.

Foster families can register themselves for In-Service training by contacting the DCFS Training Unit at 877/800-3393 or ask for assistance from their licensing worker or support specialist.

8. Strategies to Prevent Placement Disruption

Develop and implement strategies to prevent placement disruptions, and to provide support if preventative strategies fail and disruption occurs.

- Method of early identification of children at risk of disrupting or creating disruption in the family

Proactive and consistent communication between the foster parent and staff helps identify behaviors, incidents and issues of concern that may lead to disruption. Foster parents should promptly share information of any significance or unusual incident. Behavior logs, provided by licensing staff and available upon request, help caregivers document behaviors and incidents.

Methods to prevent disruption vary. Assessment of concerns is ongoing by staff during in-home visits and other contacts with children and caregivers. Foster parents should seek advice from staff, including caseworkers, supervisors, foster parent support specialists, licensing workers and other staff such as the educational advisors, nurses, etc. to help stabilize a placement. Foster parent support specialists are available 24-hours a day. Respite care can also be approved to provide the caregiver with a break.

If there are signs that a placement is beginning to disrupt, the caseworker will initiate an immediate referral for System of Care (SOC) services to provide early intervention and stabilization services, i.e. SOC or Supportive Assistance Stabilization Services (SASS). Caregivers who are already receiving SOC services can call the SOC hotline (800/345-9049) for crisis intervention 24 hours a day.

Other intervention efforts include requesting Child and Family Team Meetings, clinical staffing, and/or CLINICAL INTERVENTION FOR PLACEMENT PRESERVATION (CIPP) meetings.

Foster parents are expected to give a 14-day notice in writing to the case management team prior to the removal of a child/youth from their home. The notice allows time for the team to implement preventative strategies and services to avoid a placement disruption. If the disruption cannot be remedied, the 14-day period allows time to locate an alternative placement.

- Support for foster children and family members if preventative strategies fail

If preventative strategies fail, the child will be moved to an alternative placement.

The foster parents' licensing capacity, capabilities and preferences are mutually reassessed with the licensing worker to determine the number, types and ages of children to care for in the future to avoid placement disruptions.

When preventative strategies fail, pertinent information needs to be shared with the new caregiver. Continued contact between the former and current foster parent and the child and previous family members is encouraged when appropriate.

- Training in purpose and availability of stabilization services through SOC

Pre-Service training addresses some of the support services available to children and families and that information can be found in the Foster Parent Handbook provided at Pre-Service training and on the DCFS web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs). In-Service classes and materials provide a variety of trainings on stabilization service resources: *Managing the Fostering Experience* addresses minimizing stresses and what supports are available; and *Working as a Professional Team Member* includes how to advocate for children in your care. Department staff can also be asked about what services are available and how to access them.

9. Acknowledge & Minimize Stress

Know the impact that foster parenting has on individuals and the family and minimize the resulting stress as much as possible.

- Training/methods to recognize and minimize stress factors

Foster parents are encouraged to participate in the monthly Foster Parent Advisory Council meetings for networking, support and to hear and be heard by other caregivers and child welfare staff.

The goal is to develop strategies to increase foster parent attendance to the advisory council meetings. Other efforts include organizing a foster parent roundtable for caregivers to share their experiences.

Pre-Service training attempts to help prepare foster parents for many of the experiences and stresses of foster parenting. Foster parents need to learn to recognize their preferences and abilities to foster specific types, ages and numbers of children. Caseworkers, licensing workers and support specialists communicate with one another to raise issues of concern and to support foster parents. Foster parents should be comfortable in raising issues of concern to staff's attention for these concerns to be addressed and support provided.

In-Service classes also encourage discussion and may assist foster parents in learning methods to relieve stress. Module 9 is available in the community or on DVD: *Managing the Fostering Experience* addresses minimizing stresses and what supports are available to foster parents.

- Respite available

Respite care is available and can be requested by contacting the caseworker, licensing worker or support specialist. The support specialists will assist the foster parent in completing the necessary paperwork. This process is simplified if the foster parent has identified caregivers in advance for

potential emergency situations. The pool of licensed foster parents can also be used as respite resources.

- “Voluntary hold” methods explained and understood

There are two types of voluntary hold options for foster parents who may want temporary relief from foster parenting. Foster parents can ask their licensing worker to place them on voluntary hold so that they are not contacted for placements until the foster parent wants to be available again. Licensing monitoring visits continue bi-annually.

A foster parent can also ask their licensing worker to put them on voluntary non-active hold status. The home must be in good standing, have no foster children in placement and maintain compliance with licensing standards, but will not receive licensing monitoring visits during the non-active hold. The foster parent can request that their license and availability for placements be reactivated at any time.

- Counseling and other supports available

The support directory lists a variety of supports available to foster parents, i.e. education advisors, nurses, etc. Foster parents should contact staff for assistance. When foster parents have ongoing conversations with workers, support specialists or other staff, appropriate interventions can be put in place for support. Supports include counseling, respite care, recreational activities and tutoring or educational activities (See Appendixes A and B).

Supportive Assistance Support Services (SASS) can be contacted 24 hours a day for crisis concerns or assessment of a child in care. SASS services often result in counseling. There is also access to the Emergency Resource Center (ERC) 24 hours day (773-538-8800). The Foster Parent Hotline or Advocacy Office is available during business hours to answer questions.

10. Promote Foster Parenting Positively

Know the rewards and benefits of foster parenting and promote the experience in a positive way.

- Foster parents are encouraged to participate in events/activities that acknowledge and support foster parents.

Events that acknowledge and support foster parents include the monthly advisory council meetings, Lifebook Workshops throughout Cook County, annual celebrations of Foster Parent Appreciation month each May, family tickets to the annual state fair, Christmas gift giveaways,

invitations to caregiver and other child welfare related conferences and on occasion, tickets to professional baseball games, the zoo, community fairs and other family-oriented events.

The 2020 Foster Parent Appreciation month events were postponed due to the Pandemic -COVID 19. We were able to provide each licensed foster parent with a Certificate of Appreciation via the mail.

- Training in the public relations aspect of foster parenting is made available

Foster parents represent themselves and their roles daily to their neighbors, community and the broader child welfare community. They are recognized as being the best resource for recruiting additional foster parents by sharing their knowledge and experience as well as through expressing the rewards and benefits of foster parenting.

Current foster parents serve as role models to current and future applicants when they represent themselves in various roles: as PRIDE and In-Service training instructors; as members of the child welfare professionals panel during PRIDE training session 9; as attendees and panel members at the various child welfare conferences; as support specialists; as members of the regional and statewide advisory councils; as co-trainers with department staff and as caregivers to children.

11. Roles, Rights & Responsibilities of Child Welfare Team

Know the roles, rights and responsibilities of foster parents, other child welfare professionals, the child and the child's family.

- Training and co-training with staff is required

The monthly advisory council meetings are attended by foster parents and staff. The meetings serve as a support group where foster parents learn about the roles, rights and responsibilities of foster parents, child welfare professionals and the child and the child's family. Trainings are offered at each meeting that benefits both foster parents and staff. Staff and foster parents are also attendees and panel members at the various child welfare conferences.

- Regular meetings with other team members are held and encouraged

The monthly advisory council meetings are attended by foster parents and staff for information sharing, support and training. Foster parents are notified by mail each month of the standing schedule.

Foster parents are encouraged to be active participants at meetings, staffing and any other consultations with other team members that involve children placed in their home. Foster parents are notified in person, by mail and/or by telephone.

- Foster parents have a recognized voice within the agency's management organization

The foster parents are members of the regional advisory council and two of them serve on the Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Council and actively participate in those meetings and activities. The council is mandated by the Foster Parent Law and provides foster parent input to DCFS. Statewide council members attend the advisory council meetings to report on current issues and obtain feedback.

Foster parents take ownership of the Foster Parent Advisory Council through membership and participation. The Sub-Regional advisory council facilitates communication to the statewide council and statewide members, especially during the monthly meetings.

The Lead Foster Parent Support Specialist is included in supervisory meetings where all levels of Sub-Regional management are in attendance. She reports on matters relevant to the foster parents.

Foster parents are invited and encouraged to participate in the development of the annual implementation plan. All foster parents were invited to the advisory council meetings for their input and review of this year's implementation plan. They were all asked to provide written comments regarding the meeting and plan.

Additionally, foster parents are encouraged to use the telephone directory to contact the management staff as necessary.

12. Mandated Reporter Responsibility

Know their role as a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse/neglect. Know the policy regarding allegations against foster parents.

- Training—initial and ongoing—including mandated reporter responsibilities

Pre-Service PRIDE training addresses mandated reporter responsibility as a legal obligation for all licensed caregivers.

Mandated Reporter training is currently available online training through the DCFS web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs).

- Written foster parent acknowledgement/contract

All foster parents must sign the Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status form for their licensing worker during the initial licensing process and with each license renewal. Licensing workers explain that foster parents are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect. Foster parents should read and sign the form acknowledging understanding of this requirement.

A signed Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status form is required to be in each licensing file in the Sub-Region for every 4-year licensing period. Completion of the form is reviewed by the supervisor prior to approving licensing recommendations such as initial licensure and renewals and during quarterly peer reviews.

- Training involving allegations against foster parents and the applicable rules and regulations which govern the investigation of the allegations

Pre-Service training informs foster parents of the rules and regulations that govern investigations of alleged child abuse/neglect and alleged violations of rule against foster parents. The professional panel members that participate in session 9 of the Pre-Service training usually include a licensing worker and a DCP investigator; first-hand information is given to foster parents at this time and questions answered.

Also, licensing workers and foster parent support specialists can answer questions regarding complaint investigations at any time. Additional information on complaint investigations can be found in the Foster Parent Handbook.

13. Administrative Case Reviews and Court Hearings

Understand the purpose of and participate in Administrative Case Reviews, service plans and court processes, according to their designated role.

- Training on the importance of participating
- Emphasis on foster parents taking an active role in planning for permanency goal through court hearings, Administrative Case Reviews, Integrated Assessments, etc.

Pre-Service training focuses on foster parents being a member of the professional child welfare team and session two of PRIDE training is *Teamwork Toward Permanence*. Teamwork includes active participation by the foster parents in the service planning, meetings, staffing and court processes for the child.

Foster Parent Visit form lists various topics of discussion that the foster parent should inquire about if the subject is not covered by the caseworker during in-home visits or telephone contacts. Inquiring about Administrative Case Reviews and court hearings are two of the topics that foster parents should actively pursue.

Caseworker accountability is dictated by policy guides and is reviewed during supervisory review and approval of forms, reports and case notes. Accountability is also demonstrated through preparation, documentation and information sharing during case reviews and court hearings.

14. Appeals Systems

Know the child welfare agency's appeal procedure for foster parents and their rights.

- Awareness of the Department's internal appeals systems and its utilization

Service appeals are addressed in Pre-Service training and in the Foster Parent Handbook. If foster parents do not agree with a decision made or action taken by DCFS, they can challenge the decision or actions by filing an appeal. The most common service appeals in the Sub-Region address removal of a child from a foster parent.

Foster Parents or Relative Caregivers may appeal:

- Decisions that directly affect the caregiver, such as payments for the care of the child for whom the department is legally responsible
- Decisions about services for the benefit of the child for whom the department is legally responsible and is in their care, such as day care, medical, education or psychological services
- Failure to provide services as specified in the service plan for the benefit of the child. This does not include services for the biological family such as family therapy or counseling.
- A change in the child's substitute care placement, provided that the child has been placed in the home for at least 60 days. This does not include placements with the biological or adoptive parent(s), or sibling(s), placements for purposes of adoption as ordered by the court or return to an individual(s) with whom the child resided prior to entering substitute care.

What May Not Be Appealed

Foster Parents may not appeal some decisions or actions by the department through the Service Appeal Process. These are:

- Adjustments made in services by change in state or federal law
- Issues already determined through the department's Service Appeal Process
- When the issue is not defined as a service under specific department rules. (Foster parents may find they can appeal these issues under other appeal processes within the department and the appeal will be routed to the appropriate process.)
- Services offered to department clientele for which the department is not responsible, but another state or federal agency is solely responsible for carrying out these services, such as medical assistance
- When a court has made a judicial determination or issued an order on the issue being appealed

How to Request an Appeal through the Service Appeal Process

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 and 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. If they do not agree with the decision made in a clinical placement review regarding the change in placement of a child in your care, request an appeal within 10 days from the clinical placement decision.

Foster Parents should 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 a foster parent, is unable to submit a written request, contact they should contact their local office and someone from the department will assist in preparing a written request.

The appeal/written request should be submitted to: Administrative Hearings Unit, DCFS, 406 E. Monroe, Station 15, Springfield, IL 62701, 217/782-6655. The request should include the foster parent's name, address, telephone and a brief summary stating their position on the department's decision or action the foster parent is appealing. The foster parent may also include any other information they feel the department should consider when reviewing its decision.

The appeal should be a written request and submitted to: Administrative Hearings Unit, DCFS, 406 E. Monroe, Station 15, Springfield, IL 62701, 217/782-6655. The request should include the foster parent's name, address, telephone and a brief summary about what is being appealed. If

the appeal stems from the receipt of a Notice of Change of Placement the foster parent can call the telephone number on the letter or fax the notice to request a review.

The service appeals brochures are distributed annually to foster parents along with the implementation plan, provided at the conclusion of each Administrative Case Review (ACR), available in the office lobbies, available on the DCFS web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs) and by request. Foster parent support specialists are available to assist foster parents with obtaining and filing service appeals information.

- Rights of foster parents are documented and shared

The rights of foster parents are included in the annual implementation plan. Foster parent rights are discussed at advisory council meetings during the months the plan is being revised. The rights can also be found in the foster parent handbook and on the DCFS web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs) or by request to staff.

15. Maintain Accurate & Complete Records

Maintain accurate and relevant records regarding the child's progress and history and follow agency procedures and regulations.

- Training is provided on the importance of maintaining complete records

The need to maintain complete records as one of the licensing standards and expectations is addressed in Pre-Service training. The licensing workers also regularly address this need as part of the initial licensing process and ongoing at each annual and semi-annual monitoring visit with foster parents.

- Regulations/expectations are available in writing

Maintaining records of each child is a licensing standard (section 402.26) that is required of foster parents and is discussed during the initial licensing process and at each licensing monitoring visit. *Records to be Maintained* is one of the standards listed on the Family Foster Home Licensing Monitoring Record signed by the licensing worker and foster parent at each monitoring visit. Discussion of this topic is confirmed by the foster parent's initials and signature on the monitoring form during monitoring visits. The licensing workers may physically confirm that records are being maintained during visits. Folders to maintain records are distributed to foster parents after the Advisory Council Meetings.

The expectations are detailed in Part 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes that is provided to foster parents with their application for licensure and is part of the Pre-Service training materials. The information can also be found on the DCFS web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs) or by request to Department staff.

- Agency provides folder, notebook or case record for the storage of records

The licensing workers provide an expanding file folder to each foster parent applicant during the licensing process to reinforce the importance of keeping a child's records together and organized. The folder also includes an insert to encourage the foster parent to keep important contact numbers in the folder such as caseworker, supervisor, foster parent support specialist and licensing worker (Attached).

16. Communication with Subsequent Caregiver

Share information about the child's adjustment, through the child welfare team, with a subsequent caregiver, whether it is the parent or another substitute caregiver.

- Training on this expectation is offered

Information sharing is addressed in the Pre-Service PRIDE training. Foster parents are expected to share information on a child's daily living, behavior, education and other relevant information during contacts with staff and other child welfare team members. Staff is then equipped to share adjustment and needs information with subsequent caregivers based on what has been learned about the child. The support specialists also facilitate information sharing with subsequent caregivers.

The PRIDE training encourages foster parents to help the child create a life book with photos and other items that are reflections of the child's past and present.

Organized record keeping is a licensing standard addressed in training and routinely discussed at licensing monitoring visits.

All relevant documentation about the child, including his life book, should follow him to subsequent placements whether it is another foster family or a return home to the parent.

17. Cultural Sensitivity

Respect and maintain a child's cultural needs and support relationships with his own family.

- Initial and ongoing training is encouraged and made available

Learning how to support a child's cultural identity and connections to family, community and culture are addressed in the Pre-Service PRIDE training as these are foster parent obligations related to licensing standards and vital to a child's well-being.

Two In-Service trainings are regularly offered in the Sub-Region that addresses cultural sensitivity: *Transcultural Parenting* and *Promoting Children's Personal & Cultural Identity*. The lending library catalog also offers training materials about cultural diversity and supporting relationships.

Foster parents also participate on the Permanency Enhancement Action teams to address cultural sensitivity issues.

- Internal and external resources are made accessible or available

The Pre-Service PRIDE training promotes exposing a child to their culture at every opportunity. A primary factor to this exposure is through supporting family relationships. Much of this is done through active participation in child-family visits and other in-person contacts such as shared parenting activities: attending medical appointments, school conferences and Child & Family Team meetings together. Relationships are also supported when family members and children write letters, receive phone calls and share pictures.

Foster parents can use external methods to develop cultural sensitivity as well. Learn together about the child's culture through books, museums, music, food and community events. Expose the child to members of his community of origin. Opportunities to develop foster parent cultural sensitivity and a child's cultural identity are many.

One of the Regional assets is the bicultural, bilingual staff from different ethnic backgrounds, who are readily available to provide insight from their own cultural background and perspective. This may be offered, not only directly to foster parents but to their co-workers who may be the caseworker for a case. Another effective communication tools and supports offered to staff is access to a language translation line which assists all parties with understanding one another. This service is available throughout the life of the case. Effective communication among foster parents, caseworkers, family and other stakeholders directly impacts service delivery to the families served.

The Cook Sub-Regional offices are in diverse neighborhoods to provide opportunity for increasing partnerships with community agencies offering culturally supportive resources and services that address the needs of families and children as well as foster parent partners caring for children.