

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) understands that your role as a foster parent is a significant contribution you are making in the life of a child(ren). You are opening your home, sharing your family and giving a piece of your heart to the child(ren) walking through your door. We remain grateful to you for commitment to ensuring our children receive the love, care and attention they deserve.

To ensure that all Illinois youth in care have their voices heard and their experiences considered and documented, the Illinois House of Representatives passed House Bill 4304, known as the **Foster Care Assessment and Rating at Exit (FARE)** interview, that became effective on January 1, 2023 and the department began implementing on August 14, 2023. This mandate requires that all children 5 years and older who exit a foster home complete an exit interview about their experiences. The interview is to take place with a qualified DCFS designee in a private setting outside the home they are leaving.

The information below is intended to serve as a brief overview. Your caseworker will be able to answer additional questions.

Thank you again for all you do to help our youth in care and for your patience as we implement this new mandate.



## FAQs

### What is a FARE interview?

It is vital that Illinois youth in care are safe, supported and loved while they are living with foster families. To ensure that their voices are heard, and their experiences are considered and documented, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is required to conduct exit interviews with every child 5 years and older who exits a foster home, unless determined to be clinically inappropriate. This requirement, known as the Foster Care Assessment and Rating at Exit (FARE) interview is a result of legislation ([House Bill 4304](#)) that became effective January 1, 2023 and has been incorporated into the Children and Family Services Act as of August 14, 2023.

### How is an interview to be conducted?

All children 5 years and older who are removed from their foster home are to be interviewed in a private setting and outside of the home they are leaving. The interviewer will ask the child approximately 27 questions and record their responses in a secure portal. If a child discloses any allegations of abuse or neglect, the interviewer will immediately contact the DCFS hotline and inform the licensing agency.

### Who conducts the interview?

A caseworker, mental health provider or clinician from the DCFS Division of Clinical Practice will conduct the FARE interview, outside of the home they have just left, within five days of the child's departure from the home.

### What kinds of questions does the interview ask?

The goal of the interview is to determine:

- How the child's basic needs were met in the home.  
*Was the child enrolled in school? Do they believe they had sufficient food and clothing and appropriate sleeping arrangements and supervision?*

- The child's ability to contact their caseworker, therapist or guardian ad litem (GAL) when needed or requested.
- The child's safety and comfort in the home.  
*How did the child feel living in the home? What made them happy or sad? Was the foster parent affirming of the child's identity and permanency goal?*
- Normalcy.  
*Did the child feel included in the family? Did the child participate in extracurricular activities if they expressed an interest?*

If the child discloses an allegation of abuse or neglect, the interviewer will immediately contact the DCFS hotline and inform the licensing agency.

### What is done with the information collected?

Documentation of the interview will be maintained in the foster parent's licensing file, in the child's case file and service plan and provided to the child's guardian ad litem (GAL) and attorney.

Exit interview data summaries containing non-identifying information will be aggregated and is based on the number of times a child moves to a new placement. Interview data will be published quarterly.

### Can I contest or respond to any of the responses that the youth formerly in my care provided?

Caseworkers can add case notes in the child's file with any comments or notations from foster parents.

### What if I have questions about the interview?

Foster parent support specialists (FPSS) are available to answer your questions about the FARE interview. You should also reach out to the child's caseworker or the supervisor regarding the child's placement.