THE CENTER FOR YOUTH & FAMILY SOLUTIONS
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2017

Annual Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan

Input to the 2017 Foster Parent Implementation Plan was provided by foster caregivers, foster care caseworkers, licensing workers, and the agency's leadership team.

CYFS Foster caregivers have reviewed and approved this plan.

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The founders of The Center for Youth and Family Solutions (CYFS) believe in the enduring strength, creativity, and perseverance of the human and community spirit-even when faced with seemingly insurmountable problems and crises.

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions uses a family centered, trauma informed, strength based approach to engage and serve children and families in need. This model ensures children and families are treated with dignity, compassion, and respect while building upon individual and community strengths to resolve life challenges together.

In keeping with the vision of The Center for Youth and Family Solutions and the Foster Care Program, The Center for Youth and Family Solutions is invested in upholding the Foster Parent Law (Public Act 89.19). Licensing staff take a copy of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan and the CYFS Grievance Policy to each foster home during the first monitoring visit of the calendar year**. Both documents are reviewed with the foster caregiver and any questions or concerns are addressed. The caregiver then signs off that they have received a copy of the plan so the agency can document all foster caregivers receive a copy with explanation each year.**

Copies of the Implementation Plan are available for foster caregivers at all of The Center for Youth and Family Solutions foster care offices as well as online at www.cyfsolutions.org.

Comments or suggestions can be made by contacting the Director of Licensing and Adoption, Mary Kay Collins at 309-323-6651 or mkcollins@cyfsolutions.org.

On May 25, 2016 the General Assembly passed a bill promoting increased "normalcy" for youth in care. It was signed into law on August 19, 2016 and becomes effective June 1, 2017. This law establishes foster caregivers may make decisions for youth in their care according to the standard that any "reasonable and prudent parent" would make regarding their own child. This is significant to everyone on the child welfare team as we anticipate that to the extent legally possible, the bill will eliminate some of the existing bureaucratic barriers to providing youth in care with normal childhood experiences. It will increase both the rights and the responsibilities of foster caregivers in some manner, however as with other responsibilities, the entire CYFS foster care team will be there to guide and support caregivers in this newly defined responsibility.

In our delivery of comprehensive family services that promote safety, stability and permanence for children, we are committed to implementing the Foster Parent Law in the following manner:

Foster Parents' Rights

1. Foster Parents have the right to be treated with dignity, respect, and consideration as a professional member of the child welfare team.

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions was established on the premise that all individuals deserve to be treated with dignity, compassion and respect. One way The Center for Youth and Family Solutions (CYFS) Foster Care Program carries out this mission is to ensure the partnership between foster caregivers and the agency is a professional one grounded in these core values.

Respecting the uniqueness of each caregiver and their family requires staff to take a very individualized approach to training and developing the relationship between the caregiver and the agency.

From the first contact inquiring about becoming a foster parent throughout the licensing process and beyond, workers are respectful and responsive to the applicant(s) needs. Licensing staff believe it is important not to rush through the first steps, but rather take as much time as needed to help the applicant(s) understand foster caregiving. While an information packet can be mailed to the applicant's home as a way to help them learn about the foster parenting experience, an initial face to face meeting with the licensing worker is suggested. This way staff can personally attend to each applicant's questions and help them gather information important to making a good decision for themselves and their families.

The licensing worker provides regular ongoing communication with each family throughout the licensure process. Becoming familiar with each other and each other's role on the child welfare team, helps the prospective caregiver and the worker develop a mutually respectful and positive relationship. This relationship, grounded in understanding and trust is extremely helpful during the foster caregiving experience. Understanding how valuable it is to learn from others who have "walked the walk," applicants are invited to participate in caregiver support groups and other opportunities enabling them to learn and network with seasoned foster caregivers as well as the CYFS foster care team.

Once licensed, caregivers are encouraged to continue to develop these relationships by regularly attending events and activities geared toward the ongoing needs of foster caregivers. Upon becoming licensed the CYFS foster caregiver receives a password to allow them access to our Foster Parent Resource page on the agency website. Along with our agency Connections newsletter, the resource page keeps caregivers informed of trainings, agency events, tips on parenting and licensing information. The newsletter also recognizes foster caregivers who have

gone above and beyond in their responsibilities as a caregiver. Throughout the year, names of those foster parents who have gone above and beyond are given to the Director of Licensing and Adoption who then sends the caregiver a thank you note and a Certificate of Appreciation.

Staff value the commitment and dedication of our foster caregivers. Appreciation events such as picnics, holiday parties, dinners, family outings and support groups for the foster caregivers show foster caregivers we care about them and their families as they provide fostering services. CYFS staff enthusiastically attend these events as they believe this is visible way to show appreciation, support and teaming with the caregivers.

Providing foster caregivers with information on the child prior to placement is another way we show respect to the caregiver. When the foster family is being considered for placement with a youth in care, the family is given as much information as possible about the child in order to make a decision regarding bringing the child into their home. The licensing worker, along with the foster care team, help the family consider the strengths and challenges of the placement. Through this coaching, the foster caregiver will make a decision about how they can help with the child or children needing their care. When a decision is reached to accept a child, the foster parent receives a placement packet providing them with information on the child including the names of other members of the CYFS foster care team that will be assisting the child. Working in partnership with the caregiver at this point, demonstrates our respect for their role in serving the child.

Because CYFS views the foster caregiver as an equal member of the foster care team, every effort is made to keep the foster caregiver's schedule in mind when planning important meetings such as home visits and Child and Family Team Meetings. Staff are trained to be respectful to foster caregivers when dealing with them on issues that need to be resolved. Coming to the table and being willing to listen to each other, have a meaningful discussion and work toward resolution, enforces our belief that foster caregivers are truly an equal part of the professional team. Even if we "agree to disagree," the simple fact that we come together to consider the best option for the child shows the professional teaming.

Being respectful of the caregiver's time and input, workers are trained to return phone calls within 24 hours of a foster caregiver leaving a message. Caseworkers and licensing workers can be reached by phone and/or email. If a caseworker or licensing worker does not return a call in 24 hours, the foster caregiver can call the worker's supervisor. Again, keeping open communication between the CYFS foster care staff and the foster caregivers illustrates the importance of this professional partnership in helping the child in care.

Being a valued member of the child welfare team, foster caregivers are given many opportunities to share their experiences. Specific to the child in care, foster caregivers are encouraged to meet with the foster care staff regularly to assess how the placement is going and to collaborate with the foster worker to improve the child's experience while in care. While foster care staff will be

in the home at least once a month or more often if necessary, they are always just a phone call away when it comes to assisting the foster caregiver. Caregivers are given the names and contact information of the foster care staff as well as after-hour's information of the foster care staff.

On a broader level, foster caregivers are encouraged to participate in their local Foster Care Advisory Board (FCAB). These boards provides a way for foster caregivers to work side by side with the agency's foster care leadership team to impact foster care services in their local area. These boards are open to any caregiver and give the caregiver a chance to "be heard" on issues that are at the heart of their caregiving experience. Each FCAB is as unique as their local area, so some meet monthly while others meet quarterly. Meetings allow foster caregivers to address ways to improve foster care services, consider ways to strengthen their local foster care experience, assist in the development and delivery of the Foster Care Implementation Plan and promote foster care awareness in their community.

The Licensing Supervisor and/or the Director of Licensing and Adoption attend FCAB meetings and take information from the caregivers back to the agency's Child Welfare Management Team and the Executive Director. This team respects the input and feedback provided by the foster caregivers. They know understanding the experience of the foster caregiver will assist in continuing to provide a quality experience for youth in care. Information gathered from the foster caregivers assists this team in sustaining and improving the day to day foster care services.

Satisfaction surveys are given regularly to foster caregivers to obtain their feedback. In addition to the written surveys, random phone surveys are done quarterly. Each survey style specifically asks foster caregivers if they feel they are treated respectfully and with dignity by the agency staff. Each survey style allows the foster caregiver to comment on the quality of the service, their satisfaction with the services and ways to improve the foster care service. Information gathered from the surveys is used to improve the foster care experience for both the caregiver and ultimately the youth in care.

As an agency, we honor and respect our foster caregivers by making sure our foster care workers receive ongoing training important to their role in foster care case management. Our foster caregivers deserve to have well trained and knowledgeable staff assisting them as they provide services for our children. In addition to participating in trainings provided by DCFS, the Foster Care staff participate in ongoing training within CYFS. CYFS has a Foster Care Training Specialist who works directly with foster care staff to further professional development and provided ongoing training. These trainings include but are not limited to; how to build and sustain collaborative relationships with all members of the child welfare team, understanding behavior and learning styles, the importance mediation, conflict resolution, developing trust and empathy and working with diverse populations.

Foster care staff are taught the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan is a working document which guides the professional role of the foster caregiver. The Implementation Plan is part of our internal on-line trainings which can be accessed through our network for any staff member.

Quarterly or as often as necessary, Licensing staff review specific sections of the Implementation Plan with foster care staff. This helps keep the plan connected to daily service delivery. Biannually the licensing staff presents the Implementation Plan in its entirety to the foster care staff for review and comment.

All of the agency's employees are trained on the important role our foster caregivers play in providing services to the children we serve. All new employees complete an online learning self-study on the Foster Parent Implementation Plan which includes information on the role of Foster Parents, their rights and responsibilities and how to work collaboratively with foster parents as part of the child welfare team.

All staff receive training on the importance of confidentiality. The expectation that all information pertaining to foster caregivers is to be handled in a confidential manner is another way to be respectful of the foster caregiver.

Finally, Foster Care Supervisors receive a quarterly *DID YOU KNOW…* email which they can forward to their staff or use in individual or group supervision. This email highlights one section of the Implementation Plan at a time and discusses how it relates to day to day foster care case work.

2. Foster Parents have the right to be provided standardized pre-service training and appropriate ongoing training to meet mutually assessed needs and improve the foster parents' skills.

CYFS understands the importance of training for all members of the foster care team. CYFS believes training is not a onetime event, but rather an ongoing process incorporating shared knowledge and hands on experience. Initial and ongoing training for all foster caregivers strengthens their skills and increases the likelihood of a more positive outcome for foster children placed in their care.

CYFS understands the importance of the foster caregiver being involved in identifying training needs. Through interaction with the caregivers during home visits, at monitoring visits, in support groups and at Foster Caregiver Advisory Boards, staff and caregivers can identify training needs. Using feedback and input from the caregiver, staff coach the caregivers to strengthen their parenting skills and ability to navigate the child welfare system.

Prospective traditional and specialized foster parents participate in a CYFS Foster Parent Orientation which welcomes them as an equal partner of a multidisciplinary child welfare team. The orientation introduces foster caregivers to various members of the foster care team and gives them an opportunity to learn how these roles work together to support the children in care. This orientation can be done on an individual bases or as a group. When done in a group setting, current foster caregivers, foster care workers and licensing workers co facilitate these

discussions. All new foster families applying for licensure are given the standardized Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2). This mutual assessment tool provides both the foster care staff and the caregiver with information on parenting strengths and growth areas. The AAPI Parenting Profile tool is beneficial in identifying additional areas for training, which can be useful to the foster caregiver. The assessment is also a valuable tool to use when considering the caregivers strengths and specific needs of the child during pre-placement.

DCFS and CYFS requires foster caregivers who apply for licensure to complete the 27-hour Foster/Adopt PRIDE curriculum if they wish to care for unrelated children. Foster caregivers may complete PRIDE through the Department of Children and Family Services or in networks with other agencies. The competency-based PRIDE curriculum focuses on expanding foster caregivers' knowledge and skills so they are prepared to protect and nurture children in a safe, healthy environment; meet the developmental and emotional needs of the children; maintain and promote a child's emotional attachment to his or her own family; protect and promote the child's cultural identity and heritage; and work toward permanency for children by connecting them to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime, preferably with their own family. PRIDE training uses a co-training approach in that one of the trainers is a licensed foster parent.

In addition to the required 6 hours of standardized training through DCFS, CYFS relative foster caregivers may participate in a 3 hour Relative Caregiver Training. Using a co training model, this training is facilitated by a licensing and foster care worker so relatives can become more familiar with others on their local foster care team. When available, a current relative caregiver is also a part of this training team. This training is best conducted in a group setting as it encourages networking between relative caregivers; however when a caregiver cannot attend the group, the training can be provided on an individual basis.

The number of ongoing training hours required of Traditional/Relative foster caregivers is 4 hours per year. Foster families who accept children served in our Specialized or Medically Complex programs must complete additional training designed to help them meet the special needs of these children. Sixteen additional hours are required each year for foster caregivers in the Specialized/Medically complex programs. CYFS has certified trainers who provide the updated Parent Skills Training, based on the original ABC (Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence) training, which addresses behavior management. These homes will be required to successfully complete the 9-week program. Traditional/Relative foster families will also be provided the opportunity to enroll and participate in the class.

Another training all foster caregivers receive is the Crisis Prevention Behavior Management training. This CYFS policy addresses the expectation that physical restraint with foster children, by a foster parent is NOT allowed. This policy discusses non-violent crisis intervention as well as details the levels of crisis development. At initial licensure caregivers sign documentation acknowledging the agency’s expectation that they have read, understood and agree to abide by this Behavioral Management Policy. All caregivers will be expected to re-sign this document at the time of license renewal. Workers are available to answer any questions regarding this

document. Foster caregivers are encouraged to call their caseworker, licensing worker, or set up a Child and Family Team meeting if they have questions regarding this policy. This CYFS Behavior Management policy follows the Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes Rule 402.

At least one licensed foster caregiver from each home must complete the 6-hour Education Advocacy Training within 12 months of a child being placed in their home or prior to renewing their license.

DCFS requires any caregiver who resides within 200 feet of a body of water on their property to complete CPR training and certification. While caregivers can take their CPR training when offered in their community, CYFS has made special accommodations to have our CYFS nurse provide the CPR training and certification. This may make it easier for the caregiver to participate in the classes as they are held at their CYFS office where child care may be provided.

Beyond the initial trainings, CYFS staff continues to provide additional training and resources for foster families. CYFS assist caregivers in receiving training specific to the needs of the children placed in their home. For example, if the child placed has medical needs, the CYFS nurse and the caseworker will provide one on one training to the caregiver.

Ongoing training opportunities are available throughout the year in classes or workshops facilitated by CYFS, as part of the CYFS support group, in conjunction with other community agencies, and DCFS. The Foster Care Recruiter/Educator is available to provide in home and individual training and coaching to caregivers. A calendar of upcoming trainings is available to caregivers via the CYFS website or from the family's licensing worker. The CYFS Connections Newsletters and Illinois Families Now and Forever provide foster caregivers with up-to-date information regarding available training in the community.

This year, CYFS has partnered with the online Foster Parent College to provide yet another option for training to our CYFS caregivers. FosterParentCollege.com® provides evidence-based training for caregivers, at their convenience, in the comfort of their own home. Courses provide audio, visual and interactive elements to engage caregivers and ensure real learning happens. Instructors for the course are respected professionals in the fields of social work, psychiatry, psychology, pediatrics and child development. In some cases caregivers may pay for their courses, however the CYFS staff is available to assist in using the FPC website and in identifying courses that could be helpful to the caregiver's specific situation.

CYFS also utilizes its Facebook page to highlight upcoming trainings for foster caregivers. CYFS has a limited library of training DVDs, videos and tapes that are loaned to caregivers to support them in developing their skills. The CYFS Foster Parent Resource page on the CYFS website provides online links for foster caregiver's trainings. CYFS also advocates for the use of the DCFS Training Unit in Springfield (1-877-800-3393). There are 9 Modules covering a variety of topics including Discipline and Sexual Abuse.

CYFS solicits input and feedback on training from caregivers in a variety of ways and uses this information to assist with identifying and providing training opportunities. The six month

monitoring home visits provides a time for mutual assessment for the caregiver and the CYFS staff. At the monitoring visits, licensing workers review the trainings foster caregivers have attended and discuss additional trainings that would be helpful to them in caring for the children currently placed in their home. Prior to this visit the licensing worker contacts any caseworker connected to the home to gather information on their experience with the caregivers and the children currently placed. A "Caseworker Questionnaire" is utilized to assist with identifying training areas and strengths of the home. This mutual assessment tool, gives the caseworkers the opportunity to suggest trainings they feel would be appropriate for this foster caregiver. Through this communication between the caseworker, the licensing worker and the caregiver, trainings are identified and discussed so the needs of the family and their foster children are met. Utilizing their local FCAB, caregivers in each site have an opportunity to express their needs for specific trainings. The FCAB shares identified needs with staff and together the local team assists in providing or finding the available trainings.

CYFS is accredited through the Council on Accreditation so trainings provided by the agency are pre-approved for training credit. A record of training credits for each foster caregiver is kept in each foster caregiver file as well as in the DCFS Virtual Training Center.

3. Foster Parents have the right to be informed as to how to contact the appropriate child placement agency in order to receive information and assistance to access supportive services for children in their care.

In pre-service training, caregivers receive training on the importance and appropriate use of the Office of the Inspector General, Advocacy Office, Hotline, Intensive Placement Services (IPS) and Screening, Assessment and Support Services (SASS). Foster caregivers receive a list of statewide numbers for the Inspector General, Advocacy Office, Hotline, IPS, SASS, and other community resources such as hospitals, schools, counseling agencies and public health providers.

The partnership between the foster caregiver and the foster care staff becomes even more significant when a child is placed in the foster home. The foster care caseworker is seen as being the first line of contact in assisting the family as they meet the specific needs of the child brought into their home, but it does not stop there. In addition to the foster care case worker, the caregiver has others on the foster care team to help. The foster care supervisor, licensing worker, parent educator, nurse, counselors, family advocates, the Foster Care Advisory Board members, support groups' members and current foster caregiver mentors, all help the caregiver as they assist the child with his or her transition into foster care.

When a child moves into a home, the foster caregivers are provided a placement packet. This packet contains information specific to the child as well as updated information on local community resources that could be helpful. For example, if the child being placed has a history

of running away, the caregiver is given very specific instructions about what to do and who to call. Caregivers are instructed to IMMEDIATELY call the following:

1) Local law enforcement agency;

2) Child's case manager/worker; and

3) Helpline of the Child Location and Support Unit for Missing Children (1-866-503-0184).Caregivers shall obtain the number of the missing person report from the law enforcement officer taking the report and provide the report number to the CLSU Helpline.

The packet ensures the caregiver understands there is staff available 24-7 for crisis, emergency or support. The Placement Packet includes but is not limited to:

- Emergency list of agency telephone numbers including information showing how to contact the caseworker and/or supervisor in crisis or emergency
- Office phone numbers and information on how to reach staff both during the day and after hours
- Emergency Medical Consent Phone number
- Community emergency phone numbers
- Information on the child such as temperament, personality characteristics, behaviors, specific concerns of the child and so on
- Information on local community resources that may be helpful

In the CYFS Connection newsletter and in the DCFS newsletter, Illinois Families Now and Forever, there is a section entitled ‘Important Numbers to Remember’ which includes the phone numbers for Adoption Preservation, Child Care Connection, Crisis Intervention, DCFS Advocacy Office, DCFS Hotline for Abuse/Neglect, Inspector General’s Office and Missing Kids Unit Hotline. On the Foster Parent Resource Page, located on the CYFS website, Important Numbers to Remember is also available.

The CYFS website also provides valuable information to the foster caregiver. The Foster Parent Resource page is a password protected page designed to give current foster parents information specific to CYFS foster care as well as information on community and online supportive services, parenting tips and more.

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

It is important to note traditional and relative foster parents are not paid for their services but rather reimbursed monthly for board (food, shelter, utilities etc.), clothing and allowances. Therefore reimbursements are not considered income and should not be recorded as such for state or federal income tax purposes. During the licensing process, foster caregivers are provided

information regarding the financial reimbursement for providing foster care services. When a child moves into their home, foster caregivers receive monthly reimbursement for care provided the preceding month. Rates are based on the specific level of care needed for the child and according to the **child's assigned DCFS program contract.** For example a child with special medical needs could be approved by DCFS for a higher rate of reimbursement than a child with traditional foster care needs. CYFS foster caregivers can access the current payment rate schedule on the CYFS Foster Parent Resource page that is specifically set up on the CYFS website for foster parents. Caregivers may also ask their licensing worker for a payment rate schedule. Checks are mailed on the 25th of each month (or earlier if the 25th falls on a weekend or holiday).

The CYFS Placement Agreement (CYFS 310) is signed by the foster caregiver when a child is placed in the home. Based on the specific needs of the child, this document clearly defines the amount of reimbursement a foster caregiver will receive. It also specifies the amount allocated for clothing and allowance for the child each month. The caseworker or the caregiver may request additional clothing funds under special circumstances. If this is the child's first experience in foster care there is an initial clothing voucher which is be used to help the caregiver provide the child with needed clothing. If the child is coming from a previous foster home, the caregiver and caseworker will review the child's clothing needs. Any clothes previously purchased for the child should come with the child. There are times when the caregiver can request an additional clothing voucher such as when the child has gained or lost a significant amount of weight, or when previous clothing was destroyed. This type of voucher is handled on a case-by-case basis.

Foster caregivers may be eligible for paid daycare services if caregiver is employed and these services are needed. DCFS has a maximum daycare rate. Many daycare facilities will accept the DCFS rate and caregivers can work with the child's caseworker to identify daycare options that meet the needs of the child and the foster caregiver. If the caregiver chooses a daycare provider with a rate that exceeds the DCFS rate, the caregiver will be responsible to pay the difference.

Specialized and Traditional Caregivers are also informed that reimbursement may be provided for the caregivers travel when the caregiver assists with sibling visitation. These visits are very important to a child and caregivers can work with the child's caseworker to identify this reimbursement option.

When foster children cause damage to a home or the contents within, licensing workers will assist caregivers in accessing the DCFS reimbursement program. The Foster Child Damage Reimbursement program acts as a secondary coverage (over and above any other valid and collectable insurance held by the foster caregiver) for damages or bodily injury caused by the child while the child is in the care of the foster caregiver. DCFS provides this coverage at no cost to the caregivers. As the claim process has specific guidelines and requirements, the caregiver is encouraged to discuss this with the child's caseworker or their licensing worker. Either can assist the caregiver with the claim process.

Reimbursements for respite, high school graduation and other onetime agency-approved items may also be available to the foster caregiver. The licensing worker or, in some offices, the assigned respite worker is available to assist the caregiver about reimbursements specific to the child or children in care.

CYFS staff work to provide timely reimbursement for special services. Through communication between the caregiver, caseworker and in some instances, the licensing worker, the potential for reimbursement for special services can be identified and discussed. Each case is very specific to the circumstances so it is important for the case worker to have all of the information on the service to provide the caregiver with timely reimbursement.

Caseworkers receive training on how to access special service fees including sibling visitation reimbursement, reimbursement for reunification activities and reimbursement for non-reoccurring events such as graduations supplies for foster caregivers. If it is a special payment reimbursement for a service, CYFS pays the caregiver when payment is made from DCFS or at the time of the monthly reimbursement check.

CYFS staff work diligently to provide timely reimbursement of special payments. Generally, if the payment is for the reimbursement of something the caregiver has paid for, the payment will be received within 14 days of receiving the receipt.

Licensed foster caregivers are encouraged to contact their caseworker or licensing worker if there is a delay, problem or question regarding their payment. The worker will respond within 24 hours and provide assistance in resolving the matter. The worker will discuss the issue with his/her supervisor and the foster care accountant to determine how best to correct or explain the circumstances. The worker will contact the foster caregiver within 10 business days of being informed of the matter with an explanation, clarification or resolution. If the foster caregiver is not in agreement with the outcome, the worker will inform the foster caregiver that they may follow the grievance process as outlined in the Grievance Procedures brochure.

When workers are assisting *unlicensed relatives* who are paid by the state and there is a concern about their monthly payment, the worker will encourage the foster parent to contact the DCFS Payment Unit at 1-800-525-0499, option #2 for assistance with the payment problem.

CYFS believes our foster parents come into foster care motivated by their wish to provide a stable home for children who are in need. While we believe it is important for children to feel part of the foster family and to be treated like any other child in the home, we acknowledge circumstances surrounding payments can sometimes get in the way. Our licensing and case workers assist foster caregivers in developing ways to address specific situations so no child will feel any different because their foster parent receives a payment for their care.

CYFS will continue to work in conjunction with foster caregivers and legislators in advocating for fair and timely compensation specific to the type of care provided.

5. Foster Parents have the right to be provided a clear, written understanding of a placement agency's plan concerning the placement of a child in their home. Inherent in this policy is the responsibility to support activities that will promote the child's right to relationships with his own family and cultural heritage.

DCFS often will identify a relative placement for a child when the child is first removed from their home. Sometimes, CYFS staff will locate an appropriate relative placement as they gather more information on the family. When a relative home is not available or not appropriate, the foster care staff may consider a fictive kin, a traditional or specialized foster home. CYFS also seeks to place sibling groups together whenever possible. The best interest of the child guides all placement decisions.

CYFS follows the regulations of MEPA/IEPA (Multiethnic Placement Act/Interethnic Placement Act) in making placement decisions. To provide connections to the child's culture, race, ethnicity and to minimize trauma on the child, careful thought goes into placement. CYFS considers the needs of the child when considering placement. CYFS attempts to:

- keep children in or as near as possible to their community of origin
- place in a home where cultural, ethnic, racial and religious needs can be met
- educate foster caregivers about the child' s culture, ethnic, racial and religious background so the family will be able to accommodate the child's needs

The Licensing and Foster Care staff informs caregivers of the above considerations when contemplating the home for a potential placement. Through pre-placement conversations, in person contacts, by phone, in writing and in the placement packet, foster caregivers are provided as much information as possible regarding the child's background and permanency goal.

Foster caregivers understand their role as part of a professional child welfare team is to support reunification of the child with their biological families whenever it is appropriate and possible. CYFS coaches caregivers to take an active role in such reunification efforts by participating in parent/child visitation, by supervising visits and by mentoring the biological families to model appropriate parenting skills. When biological and foster parents are able to have open communication about the daily care of the child, everybody benefits – especially the child.

Foster caregivers are provided opportunities to learn more about the child's cultural heritage so they can help the child maintain connections to their culture of origin. The CYFS parent educator, licensing, foster care and adoption staff are available to help caregivers with one on one or group coaching to support the caregiver in their efforts to incorporate their foster child's culture into the culture of the foster home.

Foster caregivers are provided information on the visitation plan for the child. CYFS workers provide the caregiver with information to understand and assist in development and implementation of the visit plan. The staff encourages the caregiver's participation in this process as it can provide some stability to the child during the visits. The caregiver is engaged in ongoing discussions about how visits should be managed to meet the child's needs. Coaching the caregiver at this point, also helps the caregiver consider how they can participate in or even facilitate the child's visits.

Foster caregivers are encouraged to participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of the Service Plan as it relates to placement. Because the foster caregiver has information on the day to day functioning of the child, their input into the service plan is valuable. Information gathered by the workers from the foster caregiver is incorporated into the service plan. This information includes how the child is adjusting, the child's needs in the area of education and medical care, insight into the child's emotional and social development and when appropriate, the child's needs regarding independent living skills.

Foster caregivers are notified and invited to participate in appropriate portions of Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs) where Service Plans are reviewed. If unplanned changes are made in the case plan and the caregivers are not present, the caseworkers will notify the caregiver in person, by phone or in writing of the changes as soon as possible.

If a child is going to be moved from a foster home, the foster caregiver is given a written Notice of Change of Placement (CFS-151 B) 14 days before the move is to take place, except in cases where a child has been determined to be at risk of harm. The foster caregivers will be informed of their rights to appeal the changed service plan or move of a child and given a copy of the appeal procedures. CYFS staff will assist foster caregivers in filing an appeal if foster caregivers need assistance. A Notice of Change of Placement is not to be given until the caseworker has staffed the situation with the supervisor and a critical decision made that a move is necessary.

6. Foster Parents have the right to be provided a fair, timely, and impartial investigation of licensing complaint issues and be provided the opportunity to have a person of their choosing present during the investigation and due process; the right to be provided the opportunity to request and receive mediation and/or an administrative review of decisions which affect licensing parameters; and the right to have decisions concerning a licensing corrective action plan specifically explained and tied to the licensing standards violated.

Licensing staff at CYFS are aware foster caregivers have the right to be provided a fair, timely and impartial investigation of licensing complaint issues.

Both licensing staff and foster caregivers are informed through initial and ongoing trainings that licensing investigations are necessary to assess whether there has been a violation of 402

Licensing Standards or the Child Care Act. Through a Licensing Complaint Investigation brochure, given at the initial training and at the onset of an investigation, caregivers are provided written information on the investigation process including the definition of Stand Alone or Concurrent Investigations.

During the initial licensing process, caregivers are provided information on the licensing investigation process. Foster caregivers are informed complaints may come from a variety of sources. One of which may be the State Central Register, when a Hotline call is made. Others may include a complaint coming as a result of a monitoring or caseworker visit to the home or a report from the school to the agency. Policies are reviewed verbally at the bi annual monitoring visits. An annual Investigations trainings takes place in each of the CYFS sites to help refresh and educate caregiver's understanding of the licensing complaint process.

Licensing workers also understand their obligation to adhere to the licensing investigation protocol per DCFS policy. Any violations that were investigated are reported to foster caregivers in writing, with specific mention of the licensing standard, the section number alleged to have been violated and any evidence supporting the alleged violation. CYFS has developed a brochure, which describes the investigation process and informs foster caregivers of their rights during the investigation including the right to request a Supervisory Review. Should the Director of Licensing and Adoption uphold the licensing violations and make the decision that the foster family's license be revoked, the foster caregivers will be provided a detailed description of reasons as well as all information needed regarding the next layer of appeal, which is the Informal Review with the Regional Administrator of Licensing.

Licensing complaint investigations are assigned to the licensing worker. If a foster caregiver is being investigated for an abuse/neglect report an investigation is conducted by the both the CYFS licensing worker and the DCFS investigator. DCFS will investigate the allegations of abuse and neglect while the CYFS licensing worker investigates any violation of the 402 Licensing Standards. This is called a concurrent investigation.

Licensing complaint investigations are initiated within 2 business days of receipt of the complaint. The licensing worker reviews the case, speaks to the foster care worker and supervisor to determine whether the incident is an ongoing or isolated event. The licensing worker will then contact the foster caregiver to arrange an interview in the home. Prior to the foster caregivers being interviewed, the licensing worker informs the foster caregivers of their right to have an advocate of their choosing present during the interview. The licensing staff understands that for many foster caregivers this process can be very intimidating and frightening. The worker will do as much as possible to support the caregiver through the licensing investigation process.

When the licensing worker interviews the foster caregiver, a brochure is provided to the foster caregiver which explains the process including timeframes and expectations. The brochure is verbally reviewed with the caregiver so they can be provided any necessary clarification. The

brochure informs the foster caregiver(s) of their right to request a Supervisory Review if they disagree with the violations and/or the Corrective Plan, and informs them of the need to respond within the specified time frame. It also informs the caregiver that when the investigation goes beyond 30 days, the caregiver will be given written notification.

When the interview of the foster caregivers is concluded, the licensing worker determines the need to interview others relevant to the situation. This may include the child, therapist, DCP investigator, or any other person identified as significant to understanding the complaint. When all documentation is gathered, the worker and the Licensing Supervisor review the information. This review includes assessing what can be done to assist the caregiver to improve or rectify the situation so that the expected quality of care can be maintained.

When a Corrective Plan is needed, the licensing worker receives input from the foster caregiver and the entire team in the development of the plan. The caregiver must sign the plan verifying it has been presented to them and they will work on making the corrections. Foster caregivers generally have 30 days to make the corrections. The CYFS staff will work with the caregiver to assist with meeting the corrections, when appropriate. The foster care staff will make unannounced home visits while the Corrective Plan is pending. CYFS has a foster parent educator who can assist with the Corrective Plans as needed and is able to provide additional coaching to an individual or family. If additional training is part of the corrective plan, CYFS may help the caregiver connect to the Foster Parent College educational training courses. The specific course will be identified to fit the training need identified in the corrective plan. If the foster caregiver is not able to make the necessary corrections, the agency may begin to enforce further licensing actions that may include placing the home on hold or revocation of the foster care license.

When the investigation is concluded, a letter is sent to the foster caregivers. The letter identifies the non-violations and/or violations noted. This letter will also detail how to go about requesting a Supervisory Review if there is disagreement regarding the findings.

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

Per DCFS policy, Subpart A of Rule 301.120, information is to be provided in a timely manner to the foster caregiver. CYFS believes this is more than a compliance issue. It is a way to ensure the relationships between the workers and the caregivers is one of mutual trust and respect. CYFS believes foster caregivers deserve open and regular communication with staff to ensure a quality experience for the children in care. Therefore, every opportunity is made to keep communication open between foster caregivers and CYFS staff which further supports their partnership. Supervisors and Assistant Directors work with case work staff to ensure intentional conversations are being held and information is being given to the caregiver in a timely manner.

They also ensure there is documentation to support the efforts of the caseworker to ensure communication is accurate and timely.

At the initial placement, in addition to verbally sharing important information regarding the child, the CYFS Placement Agreement (CYFS 310) provides written information critical to the child being placed. This agreement contains information about the child's medical needs, educational needs, as well as mental health issues for the child.

At the time of an initial placement, some information may be unavailable. Caseworkers are responsible for informing foster caregivers of new information, as it becomes known. This information may include updates on health or safety issues, school issues or issues surrounding visitation. Supervisors follow up with caseworkers to make sure the foster caregiver has the necessary information. This follow up is documented in a supervisory note.

Additionally because the licensing worker and the foster care worker work in tandem to assist with the placement, the licensing worker contacts the foster caregiver within 24 hours of the placement to make sure they have everything they need and to address any additional needs or questions. This information is then shared with the foster care team and any unmet needs are identified and resolved as quickly as possible. Supervisors or lead workers also review case notes to ensure documentation that the foster caregiver has received what was needed. It is also not uncommon for a lead worker or supervisor to randomly contact a foster caregiver to inquiry about how their experience is going. This would include making sure the caregiver is getting adequate and timely information.

Through on-going training and direct supervision, supervisors are responsible for caseworkers having the knowledge of what information should be shared with foster caregivers. Supervisors educate case workers in understanding, not only what can and cannot be disclosed, but how to disclose the information. The CYFS staff understands foster caregivers may desire some information that, because of confidentiality, cannot be shared with the caregiver. The staff works with the foster caregiver to help them understand and respect the importance of confidentiality in these situations. Supervisors and lead workers have an open door policy so staff can receive guidance, instruction and support whenever it is necessary. Structured supervision is done weekly for the first 45 days of a case and at least monthly after the first 45 days or as often as necessary. If it is found communication has not been as it should be, supervisors work with staff and caregivers to address barriers, provide one on one training on how to develop and maintain open communication and assist with building or strengthening the relationship between the caregiver and the staff.

There are many other avenues open to provide ongoing information to the caregivers. Caseworkers and/or supervisors encourage caregivers to attend court at the beginning of a case

as well as throughout the life of the case as much information about the case is shared during this process. Child and Family Team meetings take place throughout the life of the case. One purpose of the meeting is to allow an exchange of information about the child with the caregivers and others relevant to the child's case. This is done so everyone has information necessary to assist the child while in care and as they work toward permanency.

A Child and Family Team meeting will take place within 5 business days after initial placement. When a child moves from one foster home to another, the Child and Family Team meeting will take place within 10 days. Also, at any point during the case, caregivers are able to request information from the caseworker or the supervisor and request a Child and Family Team meeting if they believe they need to have additional information that is relevant to the care of the child.

8. Foster Parents have the right to be given information concerning a child (I) from the Department as required under subsection (u) of Section 5 of the Children and Family Services Act and (ii) from the child welfare agency as required under subsection (c-5) of section 7.4 of the Child Care Act of 1969.

The agency has clear rules and procedures for ensuring foster caregivers receive necessary information regarding a child. It also has confidentiality policies to ensure proper disclosure of information.

CYFS foster care staff are responsible for ensuring all information important to the care and needs of the child is shared with the caregiver. Effort goes into protecting the rights of the child's family and information will not be shared with the foster family if it not essential in providing care to the child. That being said, the foster caregiver is given as much information concerning the child as is known and able to be shared. Prior to the caregiver accepting the placement, the worker will share information with the foster caregiver to assess the appropriateness of the placement and determine if the caregiver's home is a viable resource for the child.

Caseworkers understand the importance of sharing information with the caregiver so the caregiver can best meet the needs of the child. This occurs prior to placement, at the time of placement or whenever there is updated information to be shared. Foster caseworkers and supervisors make certain foster caregivers receive information in writing regarding:

- the child's medical history
- the child's educational history
- the child's portion of the service plan
- the plan for visitations

- any other relevant background information about any behavioral problems including cursing, yelling or more serious behaviors like perpetration of sexual abuse, destructive behavior and/or substance abuse habits.

Per DCFS policy, within 10 days of placement, foster caregivers will have signed a Sharing Information with the Caregiver (CFS 600-4) verifying that the foster caregiver has received the above information in writing and this document will be forwarded to the child's guardian ad litem.

Child Family Team Meetings (CFTM) are another way caregivers can receive information on the child. These meetings provide an opportunity for caregivers to learn more about the child from the child's worker as well as from the biological parents and any other person significant to the child's care. Being part of the professional team, the caregiver does not need to wait to be invited to a CFTM but rather, when they feel they have the need to bring people together to discuss the child's needs, can request a CFTM be held.

Staff are held accountable for sharing pertinent information with the foster caregivers. This begins with staff training from the DCFS Foundations for Child Welfare Specialists, regarding policies and procedures. Staff also attend CYFS New Employee Orientation where they are schooled in the expectations and requirements of a CYFS Child Welfare Specialist. This includes education on the importance of confidentiality as well as full disclosure of information.

Supervisors train on and review pertinent policies and procedures with the case work staff during regular supervision to ensure the policies and procedures are correctly implemented. Feedback from foster caregivers is solicited at various stages of the case to ensure policy and procedures area being followed and that the caregivers are receiving information and support that they need. This is also a way to hold staff accountable for disseminating pertinent information and supporting the foster caregiver as they provide care to the foster child.

Regularly, foster care supervisory staff review relevant policies and procedures for assisting foster caregivers including the importance of ensuring foster caregivers have access to pertinent information such as:

- the child's medical history including any known medical problems, communicable diseases, immunizations, insurance and/or medical card information;
- a copy of the child's portion of the client service plan including visitation arrangements, case history of the child, how the child came into care, permanency goal, history of the child's previous placements and reasons for any placement changes (identifying information or location of any previous caregiver will be redacted);
- the child's educational history including individual educational plan (IEP), Individual Family Service Plan, and the 504 Educational Special Needs Plan (when appropriate);
- relevant background information on the child including, but not limited to, any prior criminal or behavior problems, substance abuse or habits, sexualized behavior or perpetration of sexual abuse and/or destructive behaviors; and

- the child's cultural and ethnic background.

In most offices, there are 1-2 lead case workers who function in a quasi-supervisor role. These workers provide an additional layer of supervision, training and mentoring to assist newer workers in learning and fulfilling their job duties.

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

In the best interest of all children placed with CYFS, it is the responsibility of all agency staff—caseworkers, therapists, licensing workers, family advocates and the leadership team to assist foster families in caring for our children. It is particularly critical that, before any decisions or recommendations regarding continuity or permanency are made, every team member, including the foster caregiver, has an opportunity to provide input and be given full consideration. Caregivers are informed of scheduled meetings and/or staffing's concerning the foster child. This is done during home visits, monitoring visits, by phone, at Child Family Team Meetings or by a letter. Caregivers are encouraged to participate in the decision making process regarding case planning and services needed. Because foster caregivers are viewed as integral team members who are responsible for the child 24/7, their input in case planning is vital and appreciated.

Caregivers have access to their licensing worker, the child's caseworker, supervisors and other members of the professional team to ensure the caregiver has necessary information as well as an opportunity to share their perspective on the care of the child. Caregiver's schedules are considered when arranging these meetings and when caregivers are unable to attend every effort is made gather information from the caregiver before the meeting so their input is available as decisions are made. The staff also follow up with the caregiver on the results of the meeting so the caregiver is kept current on the results of the meeting.

The caseworker is responsible for notifying the foster caregiver of all court appearances, Administrative Case Reviews (ACR) and visits. Foster caregivers are informed of their right to attend court and ACRs during pre-service training and through communication with their caseworker. This communication is generally done by phone or in person at home visits or Child Family Team Meetings. Additionally, in most offices, the foster care secretary is given a schedule of court dates so a formal letter can be mailed to the foster caregiver. The foster care secretary sends out a letter informing the caregiver of the date and time of any court hearings. This is just another way to ensure caregivers have information regarding court hearings. If the foster caregiver cannot attend a court hearing, the caseworker will keep the foster caregiver informed regarding the outcomes of the hearing through either a phone call or an in-person contact.

Periodically trainings are offered to caregivers regarding court, the Administrative Case Review process, and educational issues. Educational advocacy is offered by the Department from time to time and foster caregivers are encouraged to attend this training as often as needed. Caregivers must attend the Educational Advocacy training prior to renewing their foster care license, however it is strongly suggested that it be completed by the end of the first year of licensure.

Foster caregivers are very instrumental in requesting an IEP be held and have the right to ask their child's school in writing for an IEP to be held when they feel it is necessary. The supervisor and caseworker assist the caregiver in this process and they may consult with the DCFS Educational Liaison when necessary.

Supervisors meet with their casework staff on a regular basis to ensure all of the required duties of the caseworker are being fulfilled. Supervisors will also inquire as to how the foster caregiver is being involved in the case. Peer and supervisor reviews of client files are also completed on a regular basis, going above and beyond DCFS policy.

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

At the time of placement the licensed foster caregiver receives a placement packet which includes important information on the child's behaviors, emotional status, social, medical and educational situation as well as community resources or information that is specific to the age

and needs of the child. For example, information about local community resources to support a LGBT youth may be part of a packet given to a caregiver who accepts placement of a youth who identifies as LGBT.

At the time of placement or within 10 days of placement, a Placement Agreement (CYFS 310) is signed by the foster caregiver, which includes relevant information to the child being placed including the permanency goal.

The values, on which the CYFS foster care mission is based, strongly support promoting positive relationships between the foster family and the child's family in order to facilitate an open exchange of information, which promotes relationship continuity, placement stabilization, and minimizes the trauma of separation. Staff and foster caregivers receive training and supervision to guide them in determining appropriate information that is to be released and with whom information can be shared based on Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes, Section 402.24.

Child and Family Team meetings are a great venue for foster caregivers to learn and share information regarding the child. For that reason, caregivers are encouraged to attend these meetings. To support caregivers during these meetings, licensing workers can attend with the foster caregiver. It is important to note foster caregivers will NOT be invited to attend the portion of the Child and Family Team meeting that pertains to the biological parents situation or progress unless there is a positive biological parent/foster caregiver relationship AND the biological parents sign a consent to allow the foster caregivers to attend and receive this additional information.

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions encourages all foster families to attend court hearings whenever possible. Semi-annual ACRs are another opportunity for foster caregivers to meet biological parents and discuss the child’s progress. Foster caregivers are able to stay throughout the child’s portion of the review but may only stay throughout the rest of the ACR when biological parents grant permission. Information learned within the court proceeding and ACRs must also be treated as confidential.

Finally, caseworkers along with the supervisor consider the caregivers thoughts, beliefs and input when making a permanency plan for the child. The caregivers provide feedback into how best to meet the child’s needs in the future.

When the plan includes reunification with the biological family, the caregivers work with the caseworkers and when possible, the biological family, to make a thoughtful transition plan for everyone involved, but especially the child. Foster caregivers are given assistance on how to help

the child prepare for returning home as well as how to manage their own feelings regarding reunification.

When the permanency plan is guardianship or adoption, the foster family is introduced to the adoption conversion worker, who will help them understand either the adoption or guardianship option. When the caregiver does not wish to be considered as a permanent placement for the child, the foster care worker, licensing worker and adoption worker will consider information from the caregiver as to their perspective for the best possible home for the child in question. When the foster caregiver is not providing this resource for the child, the foster caregiver is encouraged to meet and share information with the prospective adoptive or guardianship family and when possible, begin to develop a positive open relationship with them. This is done to minimize trauma to the child as this transition unfolds.

11. Foster parents have the right to be given reasonable written notice of any change in a child's case plan or of plans to terminate the placement of the child with the foster caregiver and of the reasons for the change or termination in placement. Such notice should only be waived in cases of a court order or when the child is determined to be at imminent risk of harm.

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions believes it is in the best interest of any child in care to carefully consider the decision to disrupt a child's foster care placement. The foster care team, including the foster caregiver must ask themselves, "Have we done everything we can to stabilize this placement?" It is only through open and honest dialoging between the caregiver and the case management staff that decisions regarding a disruption should be made. Through worker's home visits, coaching from the parent educator, support from other foster care providers, therapists and other professionals on the team as well as utilizing the IPS and Clinical Intervention to Placement Preservation (CIPP) interventions, everything is done to stabilize the child's foster care placement. A plan to move a child becomes necessary only when:

a) All attempts to stabilize the placement have been unsuccessfully;

b) The child or others in the home are unsafe if the placement continues;

c) The placement cannot meet the needs of the child even with additional available resources;

d) Continuity or permanency for the child is facilitated by such a move;

e) The child is being placed with siblings. In the situations where placement changes are necessary, foster caregivers are to be included in the planning process.

Prior to any such move, the entire foster care team will review the plan ensuring everything has been done to stabilize the placement. If all efforts to stabilize the placement fail, the foster caregiver is given a written Notice of Change of Placement (CFS151B) which provides the

reason for terminating the placement as well as the process for the foster caregiver to appeal the decision. The Notice of Change of Placement (CFS 151B) is given 14 days before moving a child. This notice shall be given but the 14 days shall be waived in cases of a court order, at the foster parents request or when the child is determined to be at risk of harm. If the child is determined to be at risk of harm, an Unsafe Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol will be completed and placed in the child's file by the foster caseworker.

Should a critical decision be made and a situation warrants removal of a child either immediately or by the issuance of a 14 day notice, licensing workers provide the caregivers with information regarding the caregivers' right to appeal as well as assist the caregiver in the appeal process. Instructions regarding requesting a Clinical Placement Review (appeal) are detailed on the Notice of Change of Placement which includes faxing the request in to the Clinical Review Team at 1-800-733-3308 or by calling 1-866-225-1431. A licensing worker and/or case worker will provide assistance in this process by faxing the form in for the foster family if that is what they wish. The licensing worker and/or case worker will then prompt the foster family that they should also call the number to ensure their intentions to appeal are clearly expressed.

Foster families will be kept informed on the status of the situation and in some cases, through the appeal system, foster children may be returned to the foster home. While a foster home is appealing the decision, supervised visitation with the child may be granted depending on the situation. Typically in those situations where children are removed from a foster home in order to be reunited with a sibling or siblings, foster parents are not granted an appeal through the Department. According to DCFS policy, placement with siblings is not appealable.

If the family has requested a Clinical Placement Review and the Reviewer does not believe the child should be returned to the home, the foster caregiver can request an appeal through an Administrative Law Judge. The paperwork for this process is given directly to the foster family from the Clinical Placement Review when she/he renders a decision.

Workers will support foster families throughout the investigative and/or appeal process and share information within Department rules and procedures. Workers understand that going through an investigation or appeal can be a difficult process so they will assist families and provide support during this time.

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

CYFS caseworkers are responsible for notifying foster caregivers of upcoming court hearings and providing the available information regarding the date, time, and location of the court hearing. Notification is given to the caregivers at home visits, by phone, in person or in Child Family Team Meeting. Additionally, in some offices, the foster care secretary may send a letter to the caregiver with all of the court information. In this way the caregiver has multiple ways to be notified about the court hearings.

Because CYFS deals with many different court systems, the foster care caseworker will also help the caregiver understand their role and responsibilities when in court. Foster families are given the name of the judge and/or hearing officer hearing the case. Caseworkers are responsible for sharing recommendations or court orders that involve the foster family. Upon licensure, foster caregivers are given information regarding the court process. Caregivers are also encouraged to review their DCFS Foster Family Handbook which has an entire section dedicated to the Juvenile Court process. This also includes the rights and responsibilities of the caregiver while in court. This handbook can be found on the DCFS website. Periodically CYFS will provide training regarding the court process.

Caregivers have the right to be heard in court proceedings; however, any time a judge wishes to clear the courtroom, it is within his/her right to do so.

Through discussion, case note reviews and regular supervision, the foster care supervisor ensure the case worker is notifying the caregivers of court hearings and encouraging them to attend.

13. Foster parents have the right to be considered as a placement option when a foster child who was formerly placed with the foster caregivers is to be reentered into foster care when such placement would be consistent with the best interest of the child and other children in the home.

In an effort to minimize stress and trauma to the child, and to ensure as much continuity in the child's life as possible, if re-entry into placement occurs, it is expected DCFS along with the CYFS staff and any other members of the multidisciplinary team, will first explore the available case history to identify the appropriateness of any previous placement that may serve the child's best interests.

Beginning in June of 2015, previous foster care homes can be considered a fictive kin to the child. The definition of fictive kin is any individual, unrelated by birth or marriage who is shown to have a close personal or emotional ties with the child or the child’s family prior to the child’s placement with individual. [20ILCS 505.7 (b)].

Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System assists in obtaining information about a child’s prior placements. If the child was a youth in care, CYFS licensing workers will access the TIER system for records management and find the name of the foster parent where the child was last placed. A review of the child’s current needs as well as a review of the foster caregiver’s

current skill set will assist with this assessment. If the child is old enough to be verbal, agency staff are expected to obtain some assessment of the child's attachment or feeling about the prior placements. When appropriate, the child's caregivers may also be asked their feelings about the prior placement. Completion of the Matching Tool (CFS 2017) also helps support whether the placement is consistent with the best interest of the child.

14. Foster parents have the right to have timely access to the existing appeals process with the child placement agency. The assertion of the right to appeal will be free from acts of harassment and retaliation.

In order to support positive relationships between staff and foster caregivers, both are trained in the importance of mutual respect for all members of the team, roles are defined and the goals of continuity and permanence in the best interest of the child are stressed. CYFS has formalized an internal appeal process. At no time and under no circumstance will CYFS tolerate harassment or retaliation directed towards foster caregivers who have requested to appeal a service decision. If a foster caregiver feels he/she has been a victim of harassment or retaliation he/she may use the agency's grievance process going directly to step two.

When conflict or disagreement occurs, foster caregivers are asked to immediately discuss and attempt to resolve the issue with the staff involved. If a resolution cannot be reached, the foster caregiver should contact the worker's supervisor. If resolution still cannot be reached, the foster caregiver should contact the foster care site supervisor. If a resolution is still unable to be reached, the Director of Child Welfare services should be the next step. If attempts at resolution have been unsuccessful, the foster caregiver will be given the opportunity for mediation through the agency's Quality Assurance Unit. All foster caregivers are given a copy of the grievance procedures along with the Implementation Plan each year. This process does not waive the foster caregiver's right to access the DCFS Service Appeal Process or other community-based mediation processes.

Foster caregivers are informed of the DCFS appeal process during PRIDE training. They are also informed of their rights through CYFS and DCFS newsletters. Licensing workers and/or case workers assist foster caregivers in exercising their appeal rights. Workers will explain to the caregiver what they need to do including the need for the appeal to be submitted within 3 days. Workers will assist in the submission of the appeal when requested. Instructions regarding requesting a Clinical Placement Review (appeal) are detailed on the Notice of Decision (CFS 151) which includes faxing the request in to the Clinical Review Team at 1-800-733-3308 or by calling 1-866-225-1431.

Foster caregivers may also call the Department of Children and Family Services Advocacy Office at 800- 232-3798 if there is still no resolution to the concern.

15. Foster parents have the right to be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline established under this Act and all of the rights accorded to foster parents concerning reports of misconduct by Department employees, service providers, or contractors, confidential handling of those reports, and investigation by the Inspector General.

Foster caregivers are provided education during the initial licensure, as well as through ongoing trainings, on the DCFS Foster Parent Hotline and the role of the Office of the Inspector General. Foster caregivers are given the number to the Foster Parent Hotline in the newsletter provided by the Department, entitled Illinois Families Now and Forever. It is also located in our CYFS newsletter, The Foster Parent Connection and on our Foster Parent Resource page on the CYFS website.

The Foster Parent Hotline is a referral service where foster families can get information not only on where to go to get licensed, but on matters involving the adoption of children. This Hotline will refer complaints of a more serious nature to the Advocacy office. The Advocacy office will review such things as a foster family having an issue with a caseworker or frustrations involving casework decisions. They will contact the agency staff and assist with a resolution. The Inspector General's office will look into complaints of a more serious nature and those complaints where a worker may have been involved with criminal misconduct. The number for the Inspector General's office is also included in the newsletters from the Department and CYFS.

The number for the Foster Parent Hotline is 1 (800) 624-5437, the number for the Advocacy Office is 1 (800) 232-3798, and the Inspector General's phone number is (800) 722-9124, 8:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Monday through Friday.

Foster Parent Responsibilities

16. (1) Foster Parents have the responsibility to openly communicate and share information about the child with other members of the child welfare team.

From the first inquiry through each foster child placed in their care, foster caregivers learn they are an important part of the child welfare team and as such not only have the right to open communication but also the responsibility to participate in open communication with others significant to the care of the child. This includes but is not limited to foster care workers, supervisors, licensing workers, and therapists.

Through PRIDE and ongoing training from The Center for Youth and Family Solutions, foster caregivers learn about different styles of communication and how to build a relationship that fosters honest communication between the caregivers and the child's workers.

Ongoing training from the foster care caseworker and licensing workers help caregivers understand the expectations to:

- share openly and honestly with the worker about the child's experience while in care. This includes information about progress with school, therapy, as well as adjustment in their foster home;
- inform the child's caseworker of any unusual incidents or emergencies that come about while the child is in care;
- provide the caseworker and others of ongoing or newly discovered needs of the child including updates on physician's recommendations for medical treatment and any recommendations that would enhance the child's well-being both while in care and in the future;
- maintain records on each child's care including documenting the child's medication and any unusual or extreme behavior so that others may follow up and/or provide continuity of care for the child.

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions provides caregivers with tracking forms to record the child's needs while in the home. To assist the foster caregiver, many of these forms can be found on the CYFS website.

To assist with keeping the lines of communication open, foster caregivers are provided the contact information for their licensing worker, the child's caseworker, after hours and supervisors. Foster parents are encouraged to call whenever they feel they need input or assistance from the staff.

17. (2) Foster Parents have the responsibility to respect the confidentiality of information concerning foster children and their families and act appropriately within applicable confidentiality laws and regulations.

In addition to the training provided through PRIDE, the CYFS Foster Caregiver trainings stress the importance of honoring the confidentiality of the children and families in foster care. Through discussions, caseworkers and licensing staff assist the caregiver in understanding the laws and regulations surrounding confidentiality, including those described in the Child Care Act as well as those protected in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. Licensing workers review and discuss issues surrounding confidentiality as it is presented in the Foster Home Licensing Standards (402.24) at each monitoring visit. This includes conversations regarding how to safeguard confidential information from court, school, medical or behavioral therapies.

Foster caregivers are encouraged to contact their caseworker if they are uncertain as to the appropriateness of releasing specific information. Foster caregivers are given a folder at the time of placement for which all written documentation regarding the child is to be placed. Caregivers are to keep this folder in a confidential place in the home.

18. (3) Foster parents have the responsibility to advocate for children in their care.

Foster caregivers are taught the importance of strong advocacy skills from the very beginning of their training in the DCFS PRIDE classes. By keeping caregivers aware of the various proceedings important to the child's case, such as ACR, Integrated Assessments, Child and Family Team Meetings, Individualized Education Planning, Therapeutic meetings including the writing of Behavior Management plans, Clinical Intervention to Placement Preservation, and court hearings, the CYFS foster staff helps caregivers participate and advocate for the children in their care.

Educational Advocacy training is offered to all foster caregivers with at least one licensed foster caregiver required to attend during the first four years of licensure. Foster caregivers are informed of the requirement to complete Educational Advocacy training. CYFS staff assist caregivers in identifying Educational Advocacy trainings available to them and by helping them register for the training.

Caregivers are important advocates for children in the schools. CYFS staff assist caregivers in understanding how to navigate the school system including IEP and parent/teacher conferences so the children will have the most optimal experience. Staff may go with the parent on the first few visits or on critical meetings to provide information and support to the foster caregiver. This is also true of the medical system. It is the caregiver who knows best how the child is managing on a day to day basis and can convey that to the physician so the best medical plan can be implemented. Again, staff prepare the caregiver for these visits, ensure the medical card will be accepted and when necessary attend the visit with the caregiver to offer support and assistance.

Staff also provide caregivers with information on DCFS and other trainings in the community that help them more fully understand the legal and educational systems and how to advocate for the children in their care. Foster caregivers can access other persons who are also responsible for advocating for the children, such as the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), Guardian Ad Litem, and agency staff. Throughout the region, CYFS offers training on CASA and the court experiences so foster caregivers have a clear understanding of how these function to assist the child in care.

Foster caregivers receive service appeal brochures and training on how to access the appeal process to secure needed services for children in their care, from the licensing and foster care

caseworkers. Periodically, the licensing staff and the parent educators provide one on one or group training on these processes as well.

Foster caregivers are encouraged to attend Foster Care Advisory Board meetings where they can work with other caregivers and staff to advocate for all children who are receiving local foster care services. It is not uncommon for caregivers to brainstorm on how to get a specific service or to identify community resources to assist with a particular foster family need. CYFS keeps foster caregivers informed of any trainings within the community that would assist them in advocating for children in their care.

19. (4) Foster parents have the responsibility to treat children in their care and their families with dignity, respect, and consideration.

All foster caregivers at CYFS are expected to embrace the agency's mission statement, which ensures each person is treated with dignity, compassion and respect. This goes beyond the compliance of the Foster Home Licensing Standards (CFS 402), which state children in the foster homes need to be treated equitably. It encompasses how foster caregivers conduct themselves when working with the children and how their demeanor must be supporting and accepting when addressing the child's culture, ethnicity, religion, and connectedness with the child's family.

Through initial and ongoing training at CYFS, caregivers gain an understanding of how this expectation plays out in everyday situations. For example, children shall not be deprived of family or sibling visitations or other family contact as a punishment for misbehavior. Foster caregivers are encouraged to facilitate visitation and positive bonding between the child and his/her biological families. Additionally, foster caregiver support groups and Advisory Board Meetings provide an opportunity for ongoing training and discussion about how to ensure the children that come into care are being treated respectfully in every consideration.

CYFS monitors this responsibility in a variety of ways. First, by providing caregivers with additional training, beyond the initial PRIDE training, caregivers receive more face to face time with our caregiving team. This reinforces the CYFS philosophy and vision surrounding the caregiving experience while strengthening the working relationship between the caregiver and the rest of the child welfare team.

Licensing workers and caseworkers visit the foster home, when a child is placed, to make sure things are going as expected. If there are concerns or unmet needs, these are addressed. The foster caseworkers will continue to monitor and support the foster caregivers at least monthly throughout the life of the case. While the licensing worker is required to be in the home every six months, they are available to assist the foster family whenever needed.

Child and Family Team Meetings are held quarterly by CYFS. Foster caregivers are asked to attend these meeting so they will have a better understanding of how to meet the child's needs.

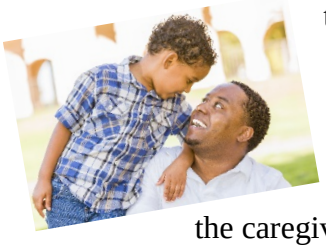
This also may provide the caregiver an opportunity to meet the child's parents and learn about family customs and traditions. Foster caregivers may have the opportunity to ask the child's parents questions in order to assist the child make the transition into foster care. These meetings also can give the caregiver more information from others on the team about how to successfully parent the child in their home. This dialog can give testimony to the caregiver's commitment to treating the child and the child's biological family with respect and dignity.

Another way to monitor the treatment of children in the foster home is to simply talk to and observe the children in the home. Caseworkers and licensing staff are trained in how to assess the child's behavior when considering safety and well- being in the foster home. Talking to the children about their experience can provide information to both the staff and the caregiver about how the child feels in regards to the foster home. If there are any concerns they are not being treated with dignity and respect, the caseworker will address the concern with the foster caregiver and the licensing worker so these can be clarified or corrected. If the concern continues, it may result in a licensing complaint investigation through the licensing department. Additionally, satisfaction surveys given to foster children over the age of 12 monitor this expectation and provide good feedback from the child's point of view.

20.(5) Foster parents have the responsibility to recognize their own individual and familial strengths and limitations when deciding whether to accept a child into care, recognize your own support needs, and utilize appropriate supports in providing care for foster children.

Foster caregivers are encouraged during PRIDE, the licensing assessment process, and on an ongoing basis, to continually develop their self-awareness. Knowing their strengths and limitations is essential when deciding whether to accept a child into their care. In order to prevent subsequent placement changes for children and provide the best placement possible, foster caregivers are expected to work with the caseworker, licensing worker, supervisors and any other member of the child welfare team in assessing the potential placement. This strength based approach includes candid discussions about the caregiver's strengths and limitations with regards to the specific child. It also includes an assessment by the foster care and licensing staff of supports and resources the caregiver may need to best meet the needs of the child in question. The Child Caregiver Matching Tool (CFS 2017) is a helpful tool used to assist staff and foster caregivers in mutually assessing the foster caregivers' capability to care for a particular child.

Information gathered from the AAPI-2, which all caregivers have taken, is another way to assess the parenting strengths and weaknesses of the foster caregiver. The AAPI-2 Parenting Profile is beneficial in assessing the need for additional training which may be helpful for the foster caregiver. When the tool identified specific areas for additional training, the CYFS parent trainer can utilize the home visit coaching model to meet the caregivers need and prepare the caregiver for a specific placement.



When a foster caregiver is approached to care for a child with more intense needs (such as sexual behavior problems or extreme behaviors); CYFS provides additional training to the foster caregiver to assist them in caring for the child. Parent Skills Training is a 9 week program, 27 hours in length that directly assists parents in behavior management techniques. This training helps foster families understand trauma and the importance of the foster parent/ child relationship.

The Caseworker Contact Worksheet and the semi-annual monitoring visits are all tools that assist in evaluating strengths and limitations for the foster home. The Caseworker Contact Worksheet is a questionnaire each caseworker working in the home completes before the licensing worker visits the home for the semi-annual monitoring visit. One of the questions ask whether the caseworker believes additional training may be warranted. The licensing worker will discuss the questionnaire with the foster family. Feedback gathered from the case workers and foster caregiver will then assist in finding trainings identified as beneficial.

When a child is placed with a relative, the CYFS staff makes a special effort to assist relative caregivers with realities of relative foster care. In addition to the required DCFS Relative Caregiver training, which is required for licensure, CYFS provides a two hour Relative Caregiver Training which reinforces what was learned through the DCFS training and also allows the caregiver to revisit their specific caregiving needs. Relative caregivers are provided the opportunity to attend support groups and participate in the Foster Caregiver Advisory Boards, which will help them develop a better understanding of the foster care process and how to access resources and supports when needed while helping them network with other caregivers.

In Peoria, a residential step-down facilitator meets with the residential professionals to learn more about the child's needs. This facilitator will meet with potential foster families and provides detailed information about a possible placement for specialized children. These two meetings are done so an appropriate match can be made between the child and the foster family. It also provides time to help the prospective foster parents realistically prepare for the placement. Pre-placement visits occur and the facilitator works with the family to determine training needs and any additional supports the family may need to help ensure a successful placement. The residential step-down facilitator is in our Peoria office but is available to assist CYFS foster families in other areas when needed.

CYFS has implemented the Caregiver Self-Assessment for Reunification Prepared (CFS 250A) and foster families can earn additional reimbursement for their participation in reunification activities by completing the Family Reunification Support Special Service Fee Log (CFS 1042L). DCFS must approve this process.

21.(6) Foster parents have the responsibility to be aware of the benefits of relying on or affiliating with other caregivers and foster parent associations in improving the quality of care and service to children and families.

During training, licensing, and semi-annual monitoring visits, agency staff encourages and informs foster caregivers of various types of support groups, Foster Caregiver Associations, the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and special events that will promote their affiliation with other foster caregivers. Foster caregivers are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities within CYFS as well as local opportunities to develop networking opportunities, establish "mentor" relationships with experienced foster caregivers, and learn of local resources. Foster caregivers are made aware of these internal and external events and opportunities in the foster caregiver newsletter, through mailings and through the use of social media such as Facebook and our agency website. Additionally, licensing and foster care workers will also make phone calls or mention the upcoming events, at home visits.

Local FCAB were established in each of the CYFS sites. This was a direct result of the agency's desire to ensure foster caregivers have the opportunity to actively participate in the implementation of foster care services. Because CYFS covers a large geographic area, local boards eliminated some of the barriers that could prohibit involvement while encouraging foster caregiver participation. Foster care family workers, supervisors, licensing staff as well as upper management are invited to attend the boards as well. In this way, foster caregivers' "voices" can be heard by all staff. This is also positive way for caregivers and CYFS staff strengthen their working relationship and work together to build a stronger foster care experience for everyone.

The local FCABs have taken on the role of guiding support services to local foster caregivers.

Boards have been responsible for:

- spearheading special events for foster families such as picnics, back to school events and holiday gatherings;
- identifying additional training needs;
- organizing mentoring programs for newly licensed foster parents;
- creating community awareness of the need for more foster parents;
- identifying and assisting with implementing ways to meet the specific needs of each community support;

- reviewing and participating in the development of the Foster Care Implementation Plan as a viable working document reflective of the services to and for foster caregivers and the children they serve;
- encouraging foster caregivers to utilize the CYFS Facebook and website to stay in touch with available resources ;
- providing information to the agency staff on how to make the agency website more of a working tool for caregivers; and
- reaching out to other foster caregiver groups and associations in the community to encourage collaboration.

22. (7) Foster Parents have the responsibility to assess their ongoing individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.

Case workers, licensing workers and the foster caregivers assess the needs of the foster care home on an ongoing basis. During the initial licensing process the licensing workers uses the Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI) as a tool to identify parenting skills that may need to be reinforced to assist the caregiver in parenting foster children. Using this knowledge and a strength based approach, staff helps the foster caregiver identify areas that may need additional attention. The staff provides caregivers with the opportunity to receive such training. This may be in conjunction with a group training or may require contact with the agency's parent trainers to provide individual training in the home.

Regularly at foster care staff meetings or when the need arises, licensing workers and foster care workers along with supervisors consider the strengths and the needs of the caregiver in providing services to a child in need of a placement. Prior to a child entering foster care, there are several tools (Integrated Assessment, Child/Caregiver Matching Tool, CYFS Replacement Matching Tool) to assist in identifying the child's needs so the agency will know how to assist the caregiver in helping the child. In this way the agency and the caregiver can assess if additional training is needed prior to or shortly after the child is placed.

At six month monitoring visits (402.12) with foster caregivers, licensing workers review the trainings they have attended and what additional training would assist them in caring for their foster children. The Foster Home Utilization Assessment, completed by licensing workers annually (at minimum) can offer insight into relevant training needs of the caregiver. Specific training may be requested by the caregiver or recommended by the worker based on the children who are placed or being considered for placement in the home. The DCFS Virtual Training Center can be utilized to assist the foster caregiver in training needs as well as tracking training hours. There are times with a foster home may have a licensing violation which is substantiated. As part of the corrective plan, CYFS may identify specific trainings to help the caregiver not only correct the violation but also gain knowledge into how to manage fostering with a better outcome. For example, if the foster home has a licensing violation surrounding corporal punishment, the corrective plan may require the foster parent to redo the DCFS PRIDE module

on discipline. CYFS may also provide a parent trainer to go into the home and help coach the caregiver on how to improve parenting the child that is currently in their home.

CYFS collaborates with other child welfare agencies to increase the number of trainings offered to foster caregivers. CYFS has provides support groups/training opportunities on a regular basis to assist caregivers with their training needs. Many of the identified topics for these trainings come directly from the foster caregiver input at the Foster Caregiver Advisory Boards and from the Foster Parent Surveys.

Foster caregivers are informed of training modules and other relevant trainings through CYFS and DCFS newsletters, through the CYFS Facebook, the CYFS website and through their foster care caseworker and licensing worker. Online trainings have been developed and are available to foster caregivers as well as trainings that are on CD's and can be accessed through calling the DCFS Training Department in Springfield (1-877-800-3393). CYFS has a small lending library in each site which foster caregivers can access and the DCFS Training Department also has books and tapes that can be checked out in order to receive the required training.

23. (8) Foster Parents have the responsibility to develop and assist in the implementation of strategies to prevent placement disruptions recognizing the traumatic impact of placement disruptions on a foster child and all members of the foster family and to provide emotional support for the foster children and members of the foster family should preventative strategies fail and placement disruption occur.

The very first step in preventing placement disruption begins before the child is ever placed in the caregiver's home. During PRIDE and the initial CYFS foster caregiver training, the foster caregiver is educated on the importance of self-awareness, open and honest communication with the foster care staff, realistic expectations of the behaviors and situations caregivers face when dealing with children who have experienced trauma. They are also made aware of and trained on services that are available if situations escalate such as counseling or Intensive Placement Services (IPS).

All caregivers are provided training on the CYFS Foster Care Program Crisis Prevention Behavior Management Policy. Foster caregivers are responsible for following the CYFS Foster Care Program Crisis Prevention Behavior Management Policy. This document elaborates on our general policy regarding physical restraint as well as provides information on non-violent crisis intervention. The policy explains the levels of crisis development as well as gives some guidelines for the caregiver.

Caregivers who provide a home to specialized children receive Parent Skills Training (PST) which specifically prepares them with parenting strategies when dealing with children who display more complicated behavioral needs.

Prior to placement, communication between the caregiver and the staff includes considering what supports will be needed for the home and with the child to ensure a stable placement. This discussion includes:

- considering what was successful with previous placements in the home;
- the impact this placement will have on all current foster family members;
- specific needs of the child being considered for placement;
- training and strengths of the foster caregivers in dealing with specific issues;
- review of the caregivers understanding of the impact of trauma on children who come into care; and
- availability of resources to assist the foster home if challenges arise.

Once a placement is made, it is the caregiver's responsibility to be proactive in informing the CYFS staff of any emergencies, changes in behavior or mood, or anything unusual occurring regarding the child. In this way CYFS staff can assist the caregivers in seeking out support to help the child and maintain the placement.

CYFS supports the foster caregiver in this responsibility by responding to their requests in a timely manner and advocating for particular services. Foster care and licensing staff are trained to recognize signs and symptoms of extreme stress within the foster care family. CYFS caseworkers provide foster caregivers with appropriate contact information so they will always have access to a worker or supervisor. CYFS staff monitors the home and staff are trained to recognize when foster caregivers may benefit from respite to help stabilize a placement. A focus of the CYFS Foster Care Program is to improve stability by providing responsive services to meet the particular needs of a child or family. These services are implemented to prevent disruption and include casework services, Child and Family Team meetings, counseling, engaging school social workers or medical or psychological assessments to name a few.

When challenges to the placement become known, CYFS has its own resources, such as counseling, in home parent training and mentoring to assist the family and stabilize the placement. CYFS may also seek services from the community such as SASS, IPS, CIPP and/or counseling to ensure the best possible outcome for the child. Respite services may be used to help the family regain their sense of balance and be planful in continuing to provide care to the child.

If a child's behavioral or emotional needs become difficult to manage and the safety of the child or others becomes a concern, the foster family should call the CARES line as well as the agency worker's on-call after-hours number. Once the CARES lines has been contacted and when they determine a SASS screening is warranted, a worker from SASS, as well as the agency will be sent out to screen the child and decide if a hospitalization is necessary.. SASS may make a referral to IPS. In this case, a Child and Family Team meeting should be done to ensure all necessary services are in place. IPS should be accessed when the stability of a child's placement is at risk or when a child's needs cannot be met through traditional foster care.

When a placement cannot be stabilized, the entire child welfare team works together to plan the transition process. As a member of the team, the foster caregivers are encouraged to recognize the effect of the disruption and assist the team in decisions regarding the most planful way to move the child. Foster caregivers are expected to follow the 14 day notice of decision when expecting a child to move at their request. This notice allows the entire foster care team to review the current placement and assess any ways to stabilize the placement but if that is not possible, allows time to put a thoughtful transition plan in place.

Caseworkers, therapists, and licensing workers provide emotional support to foster families and foster children when a placement disruption cannot be prevented. Once the transition occurs and the child is in a stable placement, the entire child welfare team, including the foster caregivers will assess the situation to determine what might be done differently in the future to avoid replacement. Both the foster caregivers and the child may be referred to a counselor if needed.

24.(9) Foster parents have the responsibility to know the impact foster parenting has on individual and family relationships, and endeavor to minimize, as much as possible, any stress that results from foster parenting.

PRIDE pre-service training as well as the CYFS foster caregiver trainings addresses the impact foster parenting may have on individuals and families. CYFS staff works with foster caregivers to continually assess how they are coping with stress and to help them recognize the needs for extra support. CYFS licensing staff and parent trainers provide support groups and trainings on how to manage stress. Foster caregivers receive training to recognize signs of stress and other related signals that suggest when a placement has or is about to negatively impact the foster family and lead to the possibility of disruption.

During in-home visitation with the child and their caregiver, workers assess the impact foster children have on the foster family. When necessary, conversations regarding interventions to reduce stress may be necessary. Licensing workers also assess stress levels at their monitoring visits or when in contact with the family. They will help refer the foster family for additional services if needed. When warranted licensing workers may enlist the help of a mentor foster family or a more experienced veteran foster caregiver to provide support and encouragement.

Counseling services may be available to assist the foster family in coping with specific concerns surrounding the children in their home.

Foster caregivers are encouraged to attend regular support groups or trainings which help them network with other foster caregivers. This networking can help caregivers find support and empathy from others who understand the challenges of foster caregiving. The importance of attending special events such as back to school gatherings, appreciation picnics or holiday events is also discussed with foster caregivers as this is a way to connect the entire family with other families who provide foster care. Getting out as a family, enjoying each other with families who understand the fostering experience can be a strong, proactive way to minimize the stressors of foster caregiving.

Foster caregivers are encouraged to consider self-care, including marital or family counseling, as needed, during periods of high stress, separation, or family conflict. CYFS has counseling services available that foster caregivers can access. Licensing workers also assist in the process by providing information regarding various services. Foster caregivers are encouraged to request intervention strategies such as respite before a crisis occurs.

Respite care is available and can be utilized when a family feels they need a break or when an unexpected event or emergency occurs putting additional stress on the family. Respite care is designed to help the caregiver regain a sense of balance, stability and resilience. CYFS follows DCFS policy and procedures for respite service. Respite care can be requested by contacting the licensing worker or foster caseworker.

When considering respite placements the licensing worker coordinating the respite, interviews the current caregiver to assess any of the child's special needs and to discuss the child's current situation. The foster caregiver will be asked to identify any potential respite provider they have used in the past or that has a pre-existing relationship with the child as to minimize stress on the child. In many cases, when foster caregivers attend support groups or events and meet others who are providing foster care services, these relationships lend themselves to identifying caregivers who may be a respite resource. If the caregiver does not identify a viable respite caregiver, the licensing worker will seek out potential respite providers. The licensing worker also contacts the child's caseworker to discuss the needs of the child and get input from the worker on what might be the best options for the child. The licensing worker and the child's caseworker will ensure the respite home is aware of any health or safety concerns.

Respite care is provided to all specialized children at a minimum rate of 15 hours per month and these respite hours are paid directly from the agency to the respite provider. The agency is then reimbursed by DCFS. Respite care can also be utilized by foster homes who are providing care to relative, traditional and medical specialized children but this payment is not covered by the DCFS. Payment for these types of respite care are paid by deducting the amount of the respite from the current foster parent and paying that amount to the respite provider.

To be proactive, the case worker and the caregiver develop a respite plan within 30 days of the child's placement and review the plan at least every six months. The identified respite caregiver will be familiar with the children and willing to provide for the child's care as well as any of the child's special needs. If the child has a supervision plan, a copy will be provided to the respite caregiver.

When foster caregivers believe they need a break from caregiving but do not wish to close their license, they have the option of requesting a Voluntary Hold. The caregiver must complete and sign a DCFS form stating they are requesting to be placed on "Non-active Status". The licensing worker will ensure through discussion that the family has no immediate intentions of fostering. The caregiver must also be willing to remain in compliance with Licensing Standards but will not be called upon on for placements during this period. The benefit of this for the caregiver is that monitoring visits to the home need not be completed during this time period. At any point the caregiver wishes to return to "Active Status", the licensing worker will complete a monitoring visit to assess compliance with the Licensing Standards and the hold through Placement Clearance Desk will be lifted. Once the Placement Clearance Desk has lifted the hold the home may be again utilized. Licensing workers will discuss this topic with caregivers at monitoring visits.

25 (10.) Foster parents have the responsibility to know the rewards and benefits to children, parents, and society that come from foster parenting and promote the foster parenting experience in a positive way.

Research, agency staff and foster parents identified the most effective foster parent recruitment tool is the foster parents themselves. In efforts to improve the public image of foster caregivers, as well as to carry out the mission of The Center for Youth and Family Solutions, foster caregivers are encouraged to promote the foster experience in a positive way at every opportunity, and are asked to actively participate in our recruitment efforts.

The Foster Caregivers Advisory Boards in all of the CYFS sites have identified assisting with recruitment and retention of foster parents as one of their main objectives. These boards believe foster caregivers are the most appropriate people to speak on the foster care experience, so many of them have made themselves available to speak at public forums on the need and experience of foster parenting.

Foster caregivers can work with businesses and the community for greater public support and recognition. Foster caregivers are encouraged to participate in activities and events that support and recognize the importance of foster caregivers as members of the child welfare team. CYFS staff partner with foster caregivers to create community awareness and recruit foster parents in a wide variety of ways. CYFS staff and caregivers have participated in such family and community centered events such as but not limited to 4th of July and Labor Day Parades, UP Center and PRIDE Festival, Child Abuse Prevention Month Media

Launch in Springfield, McKids Day in McLean County and have presented community presentations for local libraries, churches and civic groups. Licensing staff hold monthly informational meetings which provide an opportunity for individuals to get together and learn more about foster care. Current foster caregivers are invited to attend these to lend a voice on the experience of fostering.

In 2017, Foster Care Advisory Boards, caregivers will be given talking points as well as CYFS business cards to assist with foster parent community awareness. These talking points as well as some general training on the public relations aspect of foster caregiving will be posted on the CYFS Foster Parent Resource page on the CYFS website. This was a result of the Foster Care Advisory Boards requesting more information on how to present foster parenting in the community.

26. (11) Foster parents have the responsibility to know the role, rights, and responsibilities of foster parents, other professionals in the child welfare system, the child and the child's own family.

Foster caregivers are first introduced to the roles, rights, and responsibilities during PRIDE training and the CYFS Foster Caregiver homestudy process. During these pre service trainings caregivers are informed they have the right to receive training pertinent to their role and the responsibility to not only attend but to participate in training provided to them. Foster caregivers are encouraged to attend trainings specific to understanding how the child welfare system works and what role they have in being a valued member of the child welfare team. Like any new role, caregivers need training and experience to become skilled foster parents. CYFS staff supports caregivers in this effort by informing them in advance of any community or in house trainings useful to developing their understanding and skill surrounding their rights and responsibilities as a foster caregiver. By discussing specific needs of the caregiver at monitoring and home visits or whenever necessary and then supplying caregivers with resources to meet these training needs, CYFS hopes to support the caregiver as they fine tune their fostering abilities.

During the licensure process, caregivers have the opportunity to hear more about the roles, rights and responsibilities. At our initial and ongoing caregiver trainings and incorporated into our support group model, caregivers are given the opportunity to learn more about their role from current caregivers. They also have an opportunity to learn about the roles of other team members. Using this co-training model, various team members and seasoned foster caregivers help introduce their duties and demonstrate how the teaming works in caring for the children. It should also be noted that when a specific need is identified, the staff and the caregiver may receive training together. In those cases where it is appropriate, the biological parent or family member may also participate in these trainings. This is done to ensure the child’s needs are being met in a consistent fashion. A bonus to this co

training effort is that the adults in the case have an opportunity to get to know each other and utilize each other as they all care for the child.

Foster caregivers are a part of the professional team serving the child and are included in Child and Family Team meetings, ACRs, Court, and any other meetings that address case planning and decision making regarding children in their care. CYFS supports the caregiver's involvement in these meetings by making sure the caregivers are informed of the meetings and have ample time to prepare for the meeting. In some cases caregivers may need support from the CYFS team to participate in the meetings. When a caregiver feels they need additional support from the foster care staff, the staff is there to help. This may mean going with the foster parent to the child's school, meeting them at the courthouse to help them find their way or listening to them as they "practice" what they want to say at an ACR. Helping the caregiver feel confident in their role as a caregiver and advocate is an important role of the CYFS staff.

Foster Caregivers are given a copy of the CYFS Implementation Plan before they are licensed and the caregiver is asked to sign that they have received a copy and understand its contents. Caregivers are also given a new copy at the first monitoring visit of each calendar year; however, the caregiver's responsibility goes far beyond just reading and documenting they have received the Implementation Plan. CYFS take this plan very seriously as it is a tool used to build and guide the partnership between the caregivers and the agency. This belief is shared with the caregiver in hopes to inspire their active involvement ensuring the plan is reflective of the work of the entire child welfare team. Each time the caregiver receives the plan, it is explained both the agency staff and the caregiver have the responsibility to ensure it reflects their actual work as part of a professional child welfare team. Along with this and because it is a way to help caregivers understand how their voice is heard in the agency, there is an explanation of many ways the caregiver can participate as an active team member.

One of those ways is to participate in the Foster Caregivers Advisory Boards. Foster caregivers are informed that:

- Foster Caregivers Advisory Board in each CYFS office is a board made up of caregivers, to assist caregivers. Any caregiver who desires may participate on this board.
- The Licensing staff – workers, supervisors and the Director of Licensing participated in the board meetings to assist the caregivers in carrying out their wishes, helping support their efforts and to take their feedback to the foster care program management team and the CYFS administration.
- Foster care family workers and family advocates as well as supervisors are encouraged to attend the meetings as well. Again, this is done so staff and the caregivers can work together to resolve issues, brainstorm ways to improve services and support each other as equal partners on the child welfare team.
- Each CYFS office has a Foster Caregivers' Advisory Board. Each board tailors their efforts to the specific needs of their local foster caregivers. Therefore, some boards meet

monthly, while others meet quarterly. All boards have planned foster caregivers activities such as picnics, field trips, community awareness events and family activities. These events are very focused on supporting the caregivers and caregiver's families in the local community.

- Activities and upcoming Foster Caregivers Advisory Board meetings are shared with caregivers through the CYFS Foster Connections newsletters, Facebook and website. Additionally flyers are distributed either in person or by mail when events are scheduled.

27. (12) Foster parents have the responsibility to know, and as necessary, to fulfill the foster parent's responsibility to serve as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse/neglect under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, and to know the child welfare agency's policy regarding allegations that foster parents have committed child abuse or neglect and applicable Administrative Rules and Procedures governing investigations of such allegations.

Foster caregivers and foster care staff understand the ultimate goal for any child in foster care is of course permanency and forever families. However, even more basic is the reality that our purpose as a child welfare team, including foster caregivers, is to make sure any child serviced by our program does not experience any further abuse or neglect while in care. To that end, caregivers receive training and support to help them as they provide for the children. Caregivers learn through their training and partnering with our staff that they are mandated reporters. Their responsibilities regarding this are spelled out in PRIDE as well as in the CYFS initial and ongoing trainings.

Caregivers are also required to read and sign a statement (CFS CANTS 22B Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status) acknowledging their understanding of requirements associated with being a mandated reporter prior to being licensed. The licensing worker reviews this form in detail with the caregiver at the time of licensure. Foster caregivers are given the DCFS hotline number to report any abuse. This number is in training materials and in the Foster Family Handbook, which they receive during their PRIDE training. The number is 1-800-252-2873. Periodically, foster caregivers are reminded of their mandated reporter status in DCFS and CYFS newsletters. Foster caregivers are also informed that their licensing worker can support them if and when they need to make a call.

In addition to attending pre-service training, foster caregivers are responsible for attending training regarding the behavioral issues of their foster child. The materials presented at these trainings can help the foster caregiver to understand the reasons behind the child's unique behaviors. With this understanding, foster caregivers may be able to alter their responses to the behaviors thereby reducing the likelihood of an investigation.

To increase foster caregivers understanding of the investigation process both through DCFS and CYFS, foster caregivers are encouraged to attend additional trainings prepared by the CYFS licensing staff on licensing investigations and allegations against foster parents.

Should a caregiver be facing an allegation of mistreatment of a foster child, the licensing and/or case worker may be unable to share with the foster family information regarding a pending investigation until the Department's Child Protection worker has either interviewed all parties and/or has given the agency permission. Licensing workers and/or caseworkers will support caregivers when going through an investigation through phone calls and/or home visits.

Foster caregivers who are alleged to have violated a licensing standard will be investigated by their licensing worker. This process is detailed in the Licensing Investigation brochure and will be offered to the family if investigated. This brochure is available to all foster families at initial licensing and upon request.

28.(13) Foster parents have the responsibility to know and receive training regarding the purpose of administrative case reviews, client services plans, and courts processes, as well as any filing or time requirements associated with these proceedings, and actively participate in the foster parent's designated role in these proceedings.

PRIDE and CYFS training stresses the importance of foster caregivers being active participants in planning for the child. This begins when the home is being considered for placement. By engaging caregivers as equal partners in services provided to the child, the entire child welfare teams, including caregivers, assess how best to meet the child's needs and plan for the future. Through initial training provided by CYFS and the PRIDE training, foster caregivers can develop their understanding of how they are responsible for taking an active role in planning for the permanency goal through the Integrated Assessment which is completed when a child is brought into foster care.

Foster caregivers are responsible for continually developing their knowledge of ACRs and court procedures so they are aware of current policy, practice, and responsibilities. CYFS staff encourages foster caregivers to participate in these proceedings. Because the caregiver has valuable information on the child's day to day functioning and needs, CYFS also encourages families to be part of the service planning process. It is also important for caregivers to keep caseworkers informed regarding the child's progress toward meeting the service plan goals. Children who are 14 and above need to be working on independent living skills as part of their service plan in order to be able to successfully leave the foster family home and enter into the adult world. Foster families need to be actively working with these teenagers regarding the goals contained in the service plan.

CYFS individually, and in collaboration with other foster care agencies in the community, offer ongoing training on court processes to assist foster caregivers in fulfilling this responsibility. CYFS has asked the DCFS Court monitor, CASA and Guardian ad litems to attend foster caregiver support groups in order to help caregivers learn more about the court system. In 2014, a new brochure detailing the various hearings and court proceeding along with the expected caregiver involvement is available to foster caregivers.

Caseworkers have also given trainings on the Administrative Case Reviews to foster caregiver support groups.

29. (14) Foster parents have the responsibility to know the child welfare agency's appeal procedure for foster parents and the rights of foster parents under the procedure.

Foster caregivers receive a copy of the CYFS appeal process along with the Implementation Plan at the time of licensure or at any time it is requested. A brochure has been developed to assist foster caregivers in their understanding of the agency's appeal procedures.

Foster caregivers are informed of their appeal rights when they receive a Notice of Change of Placement (CFS 151B) at the time a child is moved. Instructions regarding requesting a Clinical Placement Review (appeal) are detailed on the Notice of Change of Placement which includes faxing the request in to the Clinical Review Team at 1-800-733-3308 or by calling 1-866-225-1431. Licensing workers/case workers will assist foster caregivers with the appeal process if needed.

Caregivers will also receive a Licensing Complaint brochure when there is a licensing complaint investigation in their home. This brochure contains information in appealing a Substantiated Licensing Complaint.

Foster caregivers are also aware of the Advocacy Office which will handle complaints from foster caregivers once all appeals have been exhausted.

30.(15) Foster parents have the responsibility to know and understand the importance of maintaining accurate and relevant records regarding the child's history and progress and be aware of and follow the procedures and regulations of the child welfare agency with which you are licensed or affiliated.

PRIDE and ongoing training in "Records to be Maintained," (Rule 402.26) stress the importance of accurate documentation. In addition, the worker's expectations for upkeep of specific records are explained at the onset of placement, semi-annually at each monitoring visit and periodically in the agency newsletter.

When a child is initially placed in a CYFS foster home, the foster caregivers are given a folder to keep all of the child's records. In the placement packet there is a checklist which helps the foster caregiver remember what documents need to be maintained and what the expectation is in regards to record keeping. At monitoring visits or whenever necessary, licensing workers will review this folder to ensure records are being maintained. Caseworkers and their supervisors are responsible for ensuring that foster caregivers have all required information such as medical and educational information. If the foster caregiver feels they need more information, they need to talk with staff to determine what information would be helpful to assist the child in their care. Often this is information from previous caregivers on some of the day to day experiences of the child. Foster caregivers need to ensure all paperwork is kept in a confidential place in the home. Some children will require medication logs, behavioral logs, and/or supervision plans in addition to the other required documents.

Every child coming into CYFS foster care receives a life book. Life books are a way to help the child keep information about their childhood. They capture special moments or experiences for a foster child that may otherwise be lost. Life books may be used by counselors or casework staff to help the child make sense of their childhood experiences. CYFS caregivers are provided information on the importance of developing and maintaining life books for each child in their care. It is an expectation of caregivers to maintain and use the life books to track the child's time while in their home. Case work staff assist the caregiver in this responsibility by providing photos or other pieces of information for the child. CYFS staff also provide annual life book trainings to help the caregiver be creative and make the life book experience one that is not only useful but enjoyable to the child.

31. (16) Foster parents have the responsibility to share information through the child welfare team regarding the child's adjustment in your home with the subsequent caregiver, whether the child's caregiver or another substitute caregiver.

The foster caregiver receives training both at the PRIDE and CYFS licensure trainings on the importance of open communication about the child's progress or adjustment in the home. Additionally support group trainings and discussions at the FCAB reinforce the importance of the caregiver being open and honest about the child's experience, especially if it becomes necessary for the child the child to move from one home to another. Caregivers and staff are learn from each other. This not only happens when they attend trainings or meeting together, it also happens when they work with each other to make sure the child is getting what is needed from the foster care experience.

Whenever children need to be moved from one home to another, information regarding the child will be shared with the new provider. When appropriate a Child Family Team Meeting between both families may be held in order to share pertinent information and plan how best to assist the child during the transition. When appropriate, the previous foster caregivers may assist in the

move of the child to the new family. When appropriate, contact and/or visits may continue with the previous foster family.

Foster caregivers provide important information that is incorporated into the Matching Tool which is shared with the new foster caregiver. Foster caregivers also assist subsequent caregivers by maintaining good records and documentation in each child's folder that gets passed on to subsequent caregivers.

Agency staff assists in providing ongoing connections between foster caregivers and subsequent caregivers.

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

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions works very hard to keep foster caregivers informed of resources regarding multicultural issues. The PRIDE Module #7 Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity provides foster caregivers with training in this area. CYFS provides ongoing individual or group trainings to caregivers on these topics as well. The CYFS parent educators can work one on one with families in their home to help strengthen their understanding of multicultural issues. When possible, foster caregivers and biological family members can work together to help sustain important cultural connections as well.

The CYFS Foster Parent Resource page on the web has several articles and links to assist caregivers with strengthening their understanding of diversity as it relates to the children they serve. If caregivers cannot participate in face to face trainings, CYFS also has several DVD and CD presentations available as well as training opportunities through the Foster Parent College.

Because each of our 10 CYFS offices reside in different communities, our staff uses a local approach to collaborating with resources to assist both youth in care and the foster families that serve them. This includes seeking out resources that may help the caregiver support the child's cultural heritage. Foster caregivers are made aware of community resources and trainings addressing these issues through agency newsletters, our Facebook page and website. The list of available training materials is also on the DCFS website - www.state.il.us/dcfs.

Child and Family Team meetings provide another opportunity for families to share cultural and religious information in regards to their children. Foster caregivers have an opportunity at these meetings to ask questions regarding cultural and religious information that will assist them in caring for the foster children. Foster caregivers are encouraged to seek opportunities to increase their cultural competence.

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THE CENTER FOR YOUTH & FAMILY SOLUTIONS
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IMPLEMENTATION PLAN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I, _____ have received a copy of

(print foster parent(s) name)

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan for 2017 and a copy of The Center for Youth and Family Solutions Grievance Process.

_____

(foster parent signature)

_____

(foster parent signature)

_____

(date)