



# 2026 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan

*Input to the 2026 Foster Parent Implementation Plan was provided by foster parents and the entire child welfare team at The Center for Youth and Family Solutions.*

*CYFS Foster parents and staff have reviewed and approved this plan.*



THE CENTER FOR  
YOUTH & FAMILY  
SOLUTIONS  
cyfsolutions.org

Believing Change is Possible





THE CENTER FOR  
YOUTH & FAMILY  
SOLUTIONS  
cyfsolutions.org

Dear CYFS Foster Parent,

Thank you. These two words hardly seem enough to express the deep gratitude we feel for the extraordinary work you do every single day. Your unwavering commitment to our foster children and their families is nothing short of heroic.

We recognize that being a foster parent means making sacrifices—setting aside your own emotions and routines to create a safe, nurturing space where children can begin to heal from trauma. Your open heart and steadfast presence offer more than shelter; they offer hope, stability, and the powerful message that every child is worthy of love and protection.

Your strength during the most challenging moments—when saying “no” might have been easier—speaks volumes. It tells a child that they matter. That they are seen. That they are safe. You are a beacon of light in a time that may feel dark and uncertain for them.

To support you in this vital role, The Center for Youth and Family Solutions (CYFS) has developed our Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. This guide outlines your rights and responsibilities as a foster parent and explains how our CYFS foster care team partners with you to navigate the system. Think of it as your roadmap—there to clarify, inform, and empower.

We know there will be times when we get it right and provide everything you need. We also know there may be times when we fall short. In those moments, we promise to listen with respect, respond with dignity, and work diligently to make things right. Our commitment is to learn, grow, and continuously strive for the best outcomes—for our children and for you.

We encourage you to stay connected through our trainings, support groups, and the Foster Caregiver’s Advisory Board. You can find updates on your local Foster Parent Facebook page or by reaching out to your licensing worker.

Once again, thank you. We see you. We honor your heart. And we are endlessly grateful for the difference you make in the lives of our children and their families.

Warmly,

**Mary Kay Collins**

Director of Adoption, Licensing, Recruitment and Retention.

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions

[mkcollins@cyfsolutions.org](mailto:mkcollins@cyfsolutions.org)



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome Letter from the Director.....	1
Introduction	3
<b>FOSTER PARENT RIGHTS</b>	<b>4</b>
Dignity and Respect	4
Training	7
Contact & Agency Support	10
Timely Financial Reimbursement	12
Placement Plan	14
Licensing Investigation	15
Additional Information about Children	18
Information Given About Children	19
Notifications for Advocacy	21
Necessary Information on Child	22
Notification of Child is Moving	23
Notification of Court Hearing	25
Children Re-entering Care	25
Service Appeal System	26
Foster Parent Hotline	27
<b>FOSTER PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	<b>28</b>
Open Communication	28
Confidentiality	29
Advocating for Children	30
Treating Children & Families with Dignity & Respect	31
Foster Parent Strengths & Weaknesses	32
Foster Parent Associations & Networking	33
Foster Parent Training	34
Preventing Placement Disruption	35
Stress Management	37
Benefits and Promotion of Foster Parenting	38
Roles, Rights & Responsibilities of Fostering on Child Welfare Team.....	39
Mandated Reporter Responsibility.....	39
Administrative Case Reviews and Court Hearings	40
Appeals Systems	42
Accurate & Complete Records	42
Maintaining Connections	42
Cultural Sensitivity.....	43



THE CENTER FOR  
YOUTH & FAMILY  
SOLUTIONS  
cyfsolutions.org



At The Center for Youth and Family Solutions (CYFS), our founders hold a deep belief in the enduring strength, creativity, and resilience of the human and community spirit—even in the face of overwhelming challenges and crises. This belief is the foundation of everything we do.

CYFS embraces a FITS approach—Family systems, Inclusive, Trauma-responsive, and Strength-based—to engage and support children and families in need. This model ensures that every individual is treated with dignity, compassion, and respect. We focus on building upon the unique strengths of both individuals and communities to collaboratively overcome life’s obstacles.

In alignment with our vision and the mission of our Foster Care Program, CYFS is fully committed to upholding the Foster Parent Law (Public Act 89.19). This law affirms the rights and responsibilities of foster parents and guides our partnership with them.

To ensure transparency and support:

- Foster parent recruiters provide prospective foster parents with a copy of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan during the recruitment process. This helps them understand their role and rights as they consider joining our foster care community.
- Licensing staff bring a copy of both the Implementation Plan and the CYFS Grievance Policy to each foster home during the first monitoring visit of the calendar year.
- These documents are reviewed in detail with the foster parent, and any questions or concerns are addressed in a respectful and supportive manner.
- Foster parents then sign an acknowledgment confirming they have received and reviewed the materials, allowing CYFS to document that every foster parent is informed and empowered annually.

This process reflects our dedication to partnership, transparency, and continuous improvement. We are here to walk alongside our foster parents—offering guidance, listening with empathy, and working together to create safe, healing environments for children and families.

Copies of the Implementation Plan are available for foster parents at all of The Center for Youth and Family Solutions foster care offices as well as online at [www.cyfsolutions.org](http://www.cyfsolutions.org). The Implementation Plan is also periodically posted on the CYFS Facebook Foster Parent Support Group. Comments or suggestions can be made by contacting the Director of Child and Family Well Being – Adoption, Licensing and Recruitment, Mary Kay Collins at 815-223-4007 or [mkcollins@cyfsolutions.org](mailto:mkcollins@cyfsolutions.org).

*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

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

At The Center for Youth and Family Solutions (CYFS), we are rooted in the belief that every individual deserves to be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect. CYFS has formally identified four foundational pillars that

guide our mission and practice: **Family Systems, Inclusive, Trauma Responsive, and Strength-Based**—collectively known as the **FITS Approach**.

By integrating FITS into everyday foster care practice, we ensure every child, foster parent, and family member is met with empathy and understanding. This model allows us to build meaningful relationships honoring the unique strengths and needs of each individual.

Respecting the individuality of each foster parent and their family means tailoring our approach from the very first interaction. Whether someone is simply inquiring about foster care or actively pursuing licensure, our recruitment and licensing staff take the time to listen, respond, and guide with care. Initial contact may include mailing an information packet to help applicants explore the foster parenting experience. However, we strongly encourage a face-to-face meeting with a member of our team to personally address questions and provide deeper insight. This personalized approach helps applicants make informed decisions that are right for them and their families.

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions recognizes the diverse paths that lead individuals to foster care:

- Traditional foster parents are supported by recruitment workers who provide initial information and serve as guides throughout the early stages. These staff members collaborate closely with the licensing team to ensure consistent communication and support.
- Relative and kinship foster parents often step into their roles out of necessity. Our licensing and certification staff are specially trained to walk alongside these caregivers, helping them understand their responsibilities and offering compassionate guidance.

Regardless of background, the relationship between foster parents and CYFS staff is central to the success of the foster care experience. By fostering mutual respect and understanding, we create a collaborative environment where everyone feels valued and supported.

We believe in the power of shared experience. That's why we invite applicants to participate in foster parent support groups, training sessions, and networking opportunities with seasoned foster parents and CYFS team members.

Once licensed, foster parents are encouraged to continue building these relationships by attending ongoing events and activities designed to meet their evolving needs and the needs of their family.



These connections not only strengthen individual families, but they also enrich our entire foster care community.

CYFS believes supporting foster parents means more than just providing resources—it means building a community of care, connection, and appreciation.

Once licensed, CYFS foster parents receive a secure password granting access to the **Foster Parent Resource Page** on our agency website. This page serves as a central hub for:

- Training opportunities
- Parenting tips
- Licensing updates
- Agency events
- The Connections quarterly newsletter.

Moving into their third year, **Virtual Foster Parent Round Tables** offer open dialogue among caregivers. These monthly support groups are:

- Designed and led by Foster Parent Mentors—licensed foster caregivers themselves
- Held at two different times each month to accommodate varying schedules
- Focused on strength-based problem solving, shared experiences, and peer-to-peer support

While FCAB, licensing and retention teams provide suggested topics, discussions are largely free flowing, allowing foster parents to bring their own questions, concerns, and insights. These sessions have already led to the identification of specific training needs and fostered a deeper sense of community.

CYFS also hosts **Foster Parent Support Page** on Facebook, organized by location. These groups offer:

- A space to share ideas and experiences
- Updates on local events and trainings
- Opportunities for mini trainings on relevant topics

It's another way we help foster parents stay informed and connected with one another.

Every May, CYFS staff go all out to celebrate our foster parents during **Foster Parent Appreciation Month**. One highlight this year was our Foster Parent Coupon Book. Every foster parent at CYFS received a coupon with great deals from local vendors in their area. CYFS also publishes a **Foster Parent Appreciation Month Special Edition of the Connections** newsletter. This heartfelt publication highlights:

- Long-time foster parents
- Those who have gone above and beyond
- FCAB participants and contributors

It's our way of saying thank you and recognizing the incredible impact foster parents make every day.

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions (CYFS), respect for foster parents isn't just a value—it's a daily practice. Our staff are committed to building strong, collaborative relationships with foster families through thoughtful communication, meaningful engagement, and ongoing support.

Here are just a few ways we demonstrate that commitment:

### **Thoughtful Placement Process**

- Before placement, foster families receive comprehensive information about the child to help them make informed decisions.
- Once a placement is confirmed, families receive a placement packet with key details about the child and introductions to the CYFS foster care team members who will be supporting them.

### **Celebrating Milestones**

- Our Recruitment and Retention team sends Retention Reach Outs and Anniversary Cards to acknowledge the dedication of foster parents and celebrate their ongoing commitment. This year over 900 such reach outs happened to make sure our foster parents know just how much we appreciate them.

### **Respecting Time and Schedules**

- Staff are mindful of foster parents' busy lives when scheduling home visits and Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTMs), ensuring they can be present for important conversations.

### **Listening and Valuing Input**

- Foster parents are encouraged to share their thoughts, concerns, and feelings during CFTMs, home visits, or any interaction with staff.
- Staff are trained to engage in respectful, solution-focused dialogue, even when disagreements arise—reinforcing the idea that foster parents are essential members of the child welfare team.

### **Open and Timely Communication**

- Staff are equipped with cell phones to stay accessible while in the field.
- Foster workers are expected to return calls or emails within 24 hours.
- If a response isn't received within 24 hours, foster parents are encouraged to contact the worker's supervisor to maintain open lines of communication.

### **Feedback That Drives Improvement**

- Our Continuous Quality Improvement team gathers foster parent feedback through satisfaction surveys at key points in the fostering journey.
- In the most recent survey:
  - o 96% of foster parents agreed or strongly agreed they were treated with dignity and respect.
  - o 92% expressed satisfaction with the services provided by CYFS staff.
- This feedback helps us refine and elevate the quality of care for both youth and foster families.

### **Leadership Through the FCAB**

- The Foster Caregiver's Advisory Board meets monthly via virtual platforms, offering foster parents a voice in shaping foster care practices and policies.

- FCAB members collaborate with agency leadership, contribute to the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan, and promote foster care awareness in their communities.

## **Staff Training and Development**

- CYFS ensures foster care workers receive ongoing training to support their role in case management.
- Staff participate in DCFS trainings and internal CYFS sessions to stay informed and effective.
- All new employees complete the DCFS LDC Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan training, which covers foster parent rights, responsibilities, and collaborative practices.

## **Confidentiality as a Core Value**

- All staff are trained on the importance of confidentiality, ensuring foster parent information is handled with the utmost care and respect.

**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 views training as a continuous journey - not a one-event. Training needs are identified through active engagement with foster parents during:

- Home and monitoring visits
- Support Groups
- Round Tables
- Child Family Team Meetings
- Foster Care Advisory Board (FCAB) meetings.

This is done to ensure training remains relevant and responsive to real-life challenges.

Initial Training begins at orientation. Orientations are tailored to specifically meet the needs of foster parents in different roles.

- Traditional & Specialized Foster Parents receive personalized orientation from the recruitment and retention specialists. This allows for one-on-one individualized support and education.
- Relative or Kinship Foster Parents, either licensed or certified, are guided by the licensing and certification workers. This includes utilizing the DCFS LDC online Foster Relative Orientation as well as CYFS relative and fictive kin orientation. Certification for relative caregivers also includes an orientation specific to meeting the needs of the children in a home that will become certified.

All new foster families applying for licensure are given the standardized Adult- Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2.5). This mutual assessment tool provides both the foster care staff and the foster parent 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 parent. The assessment



is also a valuable tool to use when considering the foster parent's strengths and specific needs of the child during pre-placement.

CYFS uses a variety of models to assist foster parents in gaining knowledge and skills necessary to care for foster children. We utilize diverse training models that provide opportunities tailored to meet the evolving needs of the foster families. These include:

### **Standardized Training.**

- DCFS and CYFS require traditional foster parents to complete the 39-hour **Foster/ Adopt PRIDE** curriculum if they wish to care for unrelated children.
- Foster parents may complete PRIDE through the Department of Children and Family Services or in networks with other agencies.
- Relative or kinship foster parents are required to complete 6 hours of Relative or Kinship standardized training through DCFS.
- CYFS has a 3-hour **Relative Foster Parent Training** that is offered as needed to strengthen the relative or kinship foster parenting experience.
- Ongoing training hours required of Traditional/Relative foster parents is 4 hours per year. 16 additional hours are required each year for foster parents in the Specialized/ Medically complex programs.
- CYFS has certified trainers who provide **Parent Skills Training**, based on the original ABC (Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence) training, which addresses behavior management. Specialized homes are required to successfully complete this 9-week program, and it is suggested for traditional or relative foster parents. The trainings help foster parents understand how to promote healthy, loving relationships between themselves and the children in their care.
- CYFS Family Development Specialists provide trainings on younger youth with **The Incredible Years Program**. These trainings are between 9 to 12 weeks and cover age-appropriate milestones in physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development. This training also addresses common and complex issues such as attachment difficulties, social anxiety, aggression, and withdrawal.
- **Think Trauma** is a trauma informed training provided to our foster parents and agency staff. This training is led by certified trainers in our Specialized Behavior Program, Counseling Program, and our Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Program.
- **Birth to Three** training is required for any foster home who provides care for a child under the age of 3. The Birth to Three training includes such topics as safe sleeping, SIDS, water safety, and general infant and toddler care is presented.
- Along with a copy of the **DCFS Reasonable and Prudent Normalcy Policy**, foster parents received training on the policy and its implications.
- CYFS requires all foster parents to receive 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 foster parents sign documentation acknowledging the agency's expectation that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by this Behavioral Management Policy. All foster parents are expected to re-sign this document at the time of license renewal. Workers are available to answer any questions regarding this document. Foster parents 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 parent from each home must complete the 6-hour **DCFS Education Advocacy Training** within 12 months of a child being placed in their home or prior to renewing their license. Any foster home with an expanded capacity, which cares for several children at one time, will need to provide 9 additional training hours each year after the expanded capacity has been approved.
- All foster parents must complete the DCFS required LGBTQ Foster Parent Training.

### **Personalized Skill Development.**

- Foster parents may collaborate with our Parent Training Manager to create individual plans that target skills identified by both the caregiver and the child welfare staff.
- CYFS staff also provide additional training and resources of foster parents specific to the needs of the youth in their home. For example, if the child placed in their home has medical needs, the CYFS nurse and family worker will provide one on one training to the foster parent, ensuring the child's needs can be met.

### **Trauma Informed/Trauma Responsive Support.**

- Our Parent Training, Family Development Specialists and Retention Specialists provide guidance on understanding childhood trauma and the complex needs of children who have experienced abuse and neglect.

### **Peer Mentorship.**

- Experienced Foster Parent Mentors offer hands on support for specific challenges as they arise in the foster home. Providing real-time support and advice from someone who has lived experience as a foster parent can help strengthen the foster parents' knowledge, skills, and confidence.

### **Flexible Training Access.**

- 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. Many of these courses are offered virtually.
- A variety of CYFS staff can provide in home and individual training and coaching to foster parents. Foster Parents need only to contact their licensing worker or our Parent Trainer Manager to request these services.
- CYFS has a partnership with the online **Foster Parent College** to provide an on-demand option for training. FosterParentCollege.com® provides evidence-based training for parents, at their convenience, in the comfort of their own home. Courses provide audio, visual and interactive elements to engage foster parents and ensure real learning happens. Instructors for the course are respected professionals in the fields of social work, psychiatry, psychology, pediatrics, and child development. During this last year, CYFS had 246 foster parents and foster care staff enrolled in these courses. **92% of those participants found the courses to be helpful, increasing knowledge about caring for children and worth the time to take the course.** CYFS provides these courses free of charge to our foster parents. Our licensing staff can assist all new foster parents with registering on the FPC website.
- A calendar of upcoming trainings is available to parents via the CYFS website, the CYFS local Foster Parent Facebook page or from the family's licensing worker. The CYFS Connections Newsletters provide foster parents with up-to-date information regarding available training in the community.

Continuous foster parent feedback is essential to our ability to provide meaningful foster parent training. Methods to gather feedback include:

#### **Six Month Licensing Monitoring Visits.**

- These visits are key touchpoints for evaluating and planning training. Licensing staff and foster parents **mutually assess** past trainings and identify any future needs.
- Licensing workers consult with family workers prior to the monitoring visit to gather insight on how the foster home is doing and to identify any additional training or supportive needs of the home specific to the children placed there.
- Family Worker Questionnaire is provided to the licensing worker prior to the monitoring visit pinpointing strengths and areas for growth.

#### **Foster Parent Surveys.**

- CYFS regularly surveys foster parents to evaluate training effectiveness.
- In 2025, 92% agreed or strongly agreed they were satisfied or very satisfied with the training they received.
- These results reflect CYFS's commitment to delivering relevant, impactful training.

#### **Foster Care Advisory Board (FCAB).**

- Foster parents can express training needs through the FCAB, which works with CYFS staff to identify and provide appropriate training opportunities. This ensures that foster parent voices are central to the training process.

#### **Accreditation and Training Records.**

- CYFS is accredited by the Council on Accreditation, meaning all agency-provided trainings are pre-approved for training credit.
- Training records are maintained:
  - In each foster parent's electronic file
  - In the DCFS Learning and Development Center (LDC).

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

Before welcoming a child into your home, foster parents receive comprehensive training on key systems and resources designed to protect and support children in foster care. Topics include:

- **Office of the Inspector General:** Understanding oversight and accountability
- **Advocacy Office:** Ensuring children's rights and representation.
- **DCFS Hotline:** Reporting concerns and accessing emergency support.
- **Intensive Placement Services (IPS):** Navigating specialized placements.
- **Screening, Assessment and Support Services (SASS):** Accessing mental health evaluations and crisis intervention.

Foster parents are also provided with a statewide resource list, including contact information for:

- Hospitals and public health providers
- Schools and educational services
- Counseling and behavioral health agencies



- Community-based support organizations

Many of the above resources can be easily located by using one of two state resources that assist in locating resources for parents.

- **BEACON.** This is a centralized resource for Illinois families and youth to learn about behavioral health resources and state-funded programs that a child may be eligible to access. To learn more about BEACON visit <https://beacon.illinois.gov>
- **SPIDER.** This newly redesigned resource offers more modern and streamlined information on helpful services in your local area. To learn more about SPIDER visit <https://spider.dcf.illinois.gov>

CYFS takes a team-based approach to providing foster care to our children. Once a child is placed, the foster parent becomes a vital part of a collaborative care team. While the foster family worker serves as the primary point of contact, a broad network of professionals are available to support you as a foster parent.

This wraparound model ensures foster parents are never alone in meeting the needs of children in care. It reflects CYFS's belief that strong partnerships lead to stronger outcomes.

This includes:

Role	Support Provided
Foster Family Worker	Assistance and guidance to family and children
Family Support Worker	Practical assistance and family engagement
Foster Care Supervisor	Oversight and guidance for case management
Licensing/Certification Worker	Compliance, training, advocacy, support, and monitoring
Licensing Supervisor	Oversight and guidance on compliance, advocacy, support, and training
Recruitment and Retention Specialist	Ongoing support, training, and resource connection
Nurse	Health assessment and medical coordination for youth
Family Development Specialist	Training and Ongoing support youth in the Adopt Waiting Children Program
Counselor/Therapist	Emotional and behavioral support for youth
Foster Parent Mentor	Peer guidance and lived experience sharing
Parent Training Manager	Training and support
Foster Care Advisory Board (FCAB)	Advocacy, support, service delivery, and training feedback

When a child enters a foster home, CYFS ensures foster parents are prepared with a comprehensive **Placement Packet**. This packet provides essential information tailored to both the child and the foster family's local community, helping caregivers respond effectively and compassionately from the start.

The packet includes:

- **Child-Specific Information**
  - o Temperament and personality traits
  - o Behavioral patterns and known concerns
  - o Safety alerts (e.g., history of running away) with clear instructions on response protocols
- **Emergency Contact Details**
  - o Agency emergency phone list
  - o Direct lines to family workers and supervisors for crisis support
  - o Office contact numbers for daytime and after-hours assistance
  - o Emergency Medical Consent phone number
  - o Community emergency numbers (e.g., police, hospitals, crisis centers)
- **Local Community Resources**
  - o Hospitals, schools, counseling agencies
  - o Public health providers and support services
  - o Tailored recommendations based on the child's needs

Another resource for CYFS foster parents is the **Foster Parent Resource Page**. Located on the CYFS website, this page is password protected and designed to give our current foster parents information specific to CYFS foster care as well as information on community and online supportive services, parenting tips, calendar of events and more. One useful section on the site is titled “**Important Numbers to Remember**” with a quick access link to:

Resource	Purpose
DCFS Adoption Preservation	Post-adoption support services
Child Care Connection	Childcare referrals and assistance
Crisis Intervention	Emergency mental health support
DCFS Advocacy Office	Advocacy and right protection
DCFS Hotline	Reporting abuse or neglect
Inspector General's Office	Oversight and accountability
Missing Kids Unit Hotline	Support for runaway or missing children

This system ensures our CYFS foster parents are never left guessing in moments of urgency or uncertainty.

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

CYFS emphasizes treating foster youth like any other youth in the home. Staff help foster parents navigate reimbursements without disrupting the youth's experience.

It is important to know traditional, relative, and fictive kin foster parents are **not paid for their services**. Instead, they receive a **monthly reimbursement** to cover costs of:

- Food
- Shelter
- Utilities



- Clothing
- Child allowances

These reimbursements are **not considered taxable income** and should **not be reported on state or federal income tax returns**.

During the licensing process, foster parents receive detailed information about reimbursement procedures. Key points include:

- Reimbursement is provided for **care from the preceding month**.
- Rates are determined by the **child's level of care and the DCFS program contract**. For example, a child with special needs may qualify for a higher reimbursement rate than a child in traditional foster care.
- Reimbursement requests beyond the monthly reimbursement are reviewed monthly by the foster care administration, accounting, and business departments.

CYFS prioritizes prompt and accurate reimbursement to our foster parents. All reimbursements are processed within the appropriate timeframes. Reimbursement checks are **mailed on the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month**, or earlier if the 25<sup>th</sup> falls on a weekend or holiday. During 2026, CYFS will be exploring the option to utilize direct deposit for our foster parents. Your licensing worker will be able to keep you updated on this development.

Foster Parents can access the **current reimbursement rate schedule** by contacting their **licensing worker**.

When a child is placed in a foster home, the foster parent signs the CYFS Placement Agreement, which outlines:

- The monthly reimbursement amount **based on the child's specific needs**
- The designated **clothing and allowance amounts** for the child

Additional types of possible reimbursements include:

### **Clothing Support**

- If the youth is entering foster care for the first time, a prepaid card is issued at placement by the DCFS/DCP worker.
- If the child is transferring from another foster home, the foster parent and the child's family worker assess clothing needs. Previously purchased clothing should accompany the child to their new foster home.
- Additional clothing vouchers may be requested under special circumstances such as:
  - Significant weight changes
  - Clothing loss or damage – these requests are reviewed case-by-case

### **Paid Daycare Services**

- Foster parents who are employed may be eligible for DCFS funded daycare.
- DCFS sets a maximum reimbursement rate
- Many daycare providers accept this rate; however, if the provider charges more than the DCFS rate, the foster parent pays the difference.
- The foster family worker assists in identifying suitable daycare options.

### **Travel Reimbursement for Sibling Visits**

- Sibling visits are vital to a child's emotional well-being. CYFS may reimburse the foster parent for travel expenses when they assist with these visits.
- Foster parents should coordinate with the foster family worker to explore this option.
- Travel reimbursement applies to Specialized and Traditional foster parents.

### **Damage Reimbursement**

- **DCFS** may cover damage or bodily injury caused by the youth beyond any existing insurance.
- **Licensing or family worker** can assist the foster parent with the claim process.

### **Other One-Time Reimbursements**

- Respite care, high school graduation supplies, activity fees, or fees associated with camps, reunification activities **may be reimbursable**.
- CYFS has a ***Just Like Me*** fund which may also cover one-time expenses that DCFS may not cover.
- **Licensing workers or family workers** may be able to assist with identifying reimbursement options and the process required for each.

### **Reimbursement Process**

- CYFS staff are trained to access special service fees and to assist foster parents in identify and process reimbursement.
- Reimbursement for out-of-pocket expense typically are processed within 14 days of receipt submission.
- Monthly Checks: Some reimbursements may be included in monthly payments.

### **Reimbursement Challenges**

- When reimbursement concerns arise, the foster care worker has 24 hours to respond to the concerns.
- Within the next 10 days, foster parents can expect to receive an explanation of the next steps or resolution.
- If unsatisfied, the foster parent may follow the formal grievance procedure.

- **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.**

### **Initial Placement Priorities**

- Relative placement is prioritized when a child is first removed from their home.
- If no suitable relative is available, fictive kin, traditional, or specialized foster homes are considered.
- Sibling groups are placed together whenever possible.
- All decisions are guided by the best interest of the child.

### **Family Finding Resource Specialists**

- CYFS employs specialists to expand family and kinship networks.
- Family Findings involves intensive searches for extended family, fictive kin, and supportive adults.
- These connections offer respite care, meaningful relationships, and permanency.



## **Cultural and Legal Considerations**

CYFS adheres to 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 close to their community of origin
- Ensure homes meet cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious needs
- Educate foster families about the child's background to support identity and minimize trauma

The Licensing and Foster Care staff informs parents of the above considerations when contemplating the home for a potential placement. Licensing and foster care staff engage and support foster parents in the following ways.

## **Pre-Placement Communication**

- Foster parents receive detailed information about the child's background and permanency goals.
- Communication occurs through conversations, written materials, and the CYFS 310 Placement Agreement, which outlines agency and foster parent roles.

## **Supporting Reunification**

- Assists foster parents in understanding the reunification process and how they can help.
- Acknowledging foster parents are part of the professional child welfare team and assisting them in the expectation that they will:
  - Respect and speak kindly about biological families.
  - Actively support reunification through supervised visits and mentoring.
  - Encourage open communication with biological parents to benefit the child.

## **Cultural Connection**

- Providing resources to help foster parents honor and integrate the child's cultural heritage.
- Support includes one-on-one and group coaching from CYFS educators, mentors, and staff.

## **Visitation Planning**

- Informing foster parents about and involving them in the child's visitation plan.
- Encouraging participation in visits to provide stability and continuity for the child.
- Providing ongoing coaching to foster parents which helps manage and facilitate visits effectively.

## **Service Plan Involvement**

Foster parents contribute valuable insights to the child's Service Plan, including:

- Adjustment progress
- Educational and medical needs
- Emotional and social development
- Independent living skills (when appropriate)

## **Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs)**

- Foster parents are invited to relevant portions of ACRs.
- If changes occur and foster parents are absent, CYFS promptly informs them via phone, in person, or in writing.

CYFS takes moving children very seriously. To reduce trauma and promote healing, any move is carefully and thoroughly assessed.

If a **child is going to be moved** from a foster home, the foster parent 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 parents 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 parents in filing an appeal if foster parents need assistance. A **Notice of Change of Placement** is not to be given until the **family worker has staffed the situation** with the supervisor, reviewed the steps in the New Beginning process and a **critical decision made** that a move is necessary.

- **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 parents have the right to be provided a fair, timely and impartial investigation of licensing complaint issues.

Both licensing staff and foster parents 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, foster parents are provided written information on the investigation process including the definition of Stand Alone or Concurrent Investigations.



## **CYFS Licensing Investigation Training Process Overview**

### **Initial Licensing Education**

- Foster parents are informed early on about the licensing investigation process.
- They learn complaints may originate from:
  - The State Central Register via Hotline calls
  - Monitoring visits by CYFS staff
  - Reports from schools, counselors, or other professional

### **Ongoing Policy Review**

- Licensing policies are verbally reviewed during biannual monitoring visits.
- This ensures foster parents remain informed and compliant with current standards.

### **Annual Training**

- CYFS conducts a virtual Licensing Investigations training each year.
- The training refreshes and deepens foster parents' understanding of:
  - The complaint process
  - Their rights and responsibilities
  - How investigations are conducted and resolved

Licensing workers also understand their obligation to adhere to the licensing investigation protocol per DCFS policy.

## CYFS Licensing Investigation Process

### Investigation Protocol

- Licensing workers follow DCFS policy and investigation protocols.
- Foster parents receive **written notice** of any alleged violations, including:
  - Specific **licensing standard and section number**
  - Supporting **evidence**
- A brochure is provided outlining:
  - The investigation process
  - Foster parent **rights**, including the right to request a **Supervisory Review**

### Concurrent Investigations

- If abuse/neglect is reported:
  - **DCFS** investigates abuse/neglect allegations.
  - **CYFS licensing worker** investigates violations of **402 Licensing Standards**.

### Investigation Timeline

- Initiated within **2 business days** of complaint receipt.
- Licensing worker:
  - Reviews case with foster family worker and supervisor
  - Conducts unannounced home visit
  - Offers foster parents the right to have an **advocate present**

### Interview & Documentation

- During the interview:
  - Brochure is reviewed with foster parents
  - Clarifies **timeframes, expectations, and rights**
- If investigation **exceeds 30 days**, foster parents are notified in writing.
  - Additional interviews may include:
    - Child, therapist, DCP investigator, or other relevant individuals

### Corrective Plan Process

- Developed collaboratively with input from foster parent and team to determine what can be done to correct the situation so the expected quality of care can be maintained.
- Foster parent signs the plan and has **30 days** to make corrections
- CYFS provides support through:
  - **Unannounced visits**
  - **Foster parent educators and mentors**
  - **Training courses** via Foster Parent College and **coaching opportunities** with the foster parent trainer, mentor, retention specialist (if needed)
- If corrections aren't made:
  - CYFS may place the home **on hold or revoke the license**

### Conclusion & Appeals





- A final letter is sent detailing:
  - Violations and non-violations
  - Detailing the Appeal Process including instructions for requesting a Supervisory Review
- If license revocation is necessary:
  - Foster parents receive a detailed explanation of revocation
  - Written evidence and licensing standards reference
- Information on the next appeal process including Informal Review with the Regional Administrator of Licensing

- **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 parent. CYFS believes this is more than a compliance issue. It is a way to ensure the relationships between the workers and the foster parents is one of **mutual trust and respect**.

CYFS believes **foster parents 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 parents and CYFS staff. Foster care leadership, including coordinators and supervisors, work with staff to ensure intentional conversations are being held and information is being given to the foster parent in a timely manner.

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 of the child**.

At the time of an initial placement, **some information may be unavailable**. Foster family workers are responsible for informing foster parents 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 family workers to make sure the foster parent has the necessary information. This follow-up is documented in a supervisory note.

Additionally, because the licensing worker and the foster family worker work in tandem to assist with the placement, the **licensing worker contacts the foster parent 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 parent has received what was needed. It is also common for a **lead worker or supervisor to randomly contact a foster parent to inquire about how their experience is going**. This would include making sure the foster parent is getting adequate and timely information.

Through on-going training and direct supervision, supervisors are responsible for family workers having the knowledge of what information should be shared with foster parents. **Supervisors educate family workers to understand, not only what can and cannot be disclosed, but how to disclose the information.** The CYFS staff understands foster parents may desire some information that, because of confidentiality, cannot be shared with the parent. The staff works with the foster parent 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 parents to address barriers, provide one on one training on how develop and maintain open communication and assist with building or strengthening the relationship between the parent and the staff.

There are many other avenues open to provide ongoing information to the parents. Family workers and/or supervisors encourage parents 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 parents 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.

Per Procedures 315, an **“ice breaker” meeting** with the biological parents, foster parents and staff takes place within 48 hours of the initial placement. Ideally, 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, foster parents are able to request information from the family worker 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.

- **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 parents 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 parent. 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 parent is given as much information concerning the child as is known and able to be shared.

### **Confidentiality and Disclosure**

- Only information essential to the child's care is shared with the foster parent.
- Sensitive details unrelated to caring for a child are withheld to respect the child's family.
- Information is shared when it is relevant to assess placement stability.

## Written Information Provided

Foster parents receive information documentation on:

- **Medical History:** Known conditions, communicable diseases, immunizations insurance/medical card.
- **Educational History:** Individual Educational plan (IEP), Individual Family Service Plan, and the 504 Educational Special Needs Plan (when appropriate).
- **Service Plan:** 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 parent will be redacted).
- **Behavioral Background:** Any behavioral problems including but not limited to cursing, yelling or more serious behaviors like perpetration of sexual abuse, destructive behavior and/or substance abuse habits or any criminal involvement.
- **Cultural and Ethnical Background:** Any specific information about cultural or ethnic specific to the youth.

Per DCFS policy, within 10 days of placement, foster parents will have signed a **Sharing Information with the Parent (CFS 600-4)** verifying the foster parent 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 parents can receive information on the child. These meetings provide:

- An **opportunity for parents 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.
- **Foster parent can request a CFTM at any time.** Being part of the professional team, the foster parent does not need to wait to be invited to a CFTM can request a CFTM be held when it would provide assistance in caring for the child.

## Staff Training and Accountability to Provide Information

CYFS believes we demonstrate respect for our foster parents by ensuring our foster care staff is trained in both DCFS and CYFS policies and procedures. This includes how we share information with the foster parents.

Staff are held **accountable for sharing pertinent information** with the foster parents. 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**.

## Supervision and Feedback

- Staff receive **training on policies and procedures during regular supervision** to ensure these are correctly implemented.
- Foster parent **feedback is solicited to ensure compliance and support**.
- Feedback is gathered:
  - o Regularly by foster family worker, licensing worker, foster parent mentor, parent training

- manager at home visits, or other modes of communication.
- o Through foster parent bi-annual foster parent surveys.
- o At Foster Parent Round Tables, Advisory Boards or in trainings.

The agency utilizes the CYFS Field Support Specialist to provide training on DCFS policy and procedure for foster care case management. This is an additional layer of supervision, training and mentoring to assist newer workers in learning and fulfilling their job duties.

- **Foster parents 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.**

It is the responsibility of all agency staff, family workers, family support workers, therapists, licensing workers, and the leadership team to assist foster families in caring for our children. It is particularly critical, before any decisions or recommendations regarding continuity or permanency are made, every team member, including the foster parent, has an opportunity to provide input and be given full consideration.

Foster parents 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, by email, or by a letter. Foster parents are **encouraged to participate in the decision-making process** regarding case planning and services needed. Because foster parents are viewed as integral team members who are responsible for the child 24/7, their input in case planning is vital and appreciated.

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



The **family worker is responsible for notifying the foster parent of all court appearances, Administrative Case Reviews (ACR)**, completing the CRMR reports for DCFS to generate notification letters, and visits. Foster parents are **informed of their right to attend court and ACRs** during pre-service training and through communication with their family worker. This communication is done by phone or in person at home visits or Child Family Team Meetings. If the foster parent cannot attend a court hearing, the



family worker will keep the foster parent informed regarding the outcomes of the hearing through either a phone call or an in-person contact.

Periodically **trainings are offered to parents regarding court, the Administrative Case Review process, and educational issues. Educational Advocacy is offered** by the Department from time to time and foster parents are encouraged to attend this training as often as needed. Parents 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 parents 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 parent in this process, and they may consult with the **CYFS Educational and Life Skills Coordinator** or **DCFS Educational Liaison** when necessary.

**Foster parents have the right to be provided, in a timely and consistent manner, with any information a case worker has regarding the child and the child's family which is pertinent to the care and needs of the child and to the making of a permanency plan for the child. Disclosure of information concerning 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 parent receives a **placement packet** which includes important information on:

- Child's behaviors, emotional status, social, medical, and educational situation
- Community resources or information specific to the age and needs of the child. For example, LGBTQ youth supports.

At the **time of placement or no later than 10 days of placement**, a **Placement Agreement (CYFS 310)** is signed by the foster parent, which includes relevant information to the child being placed including the permanency goal.

### **Relationship Building and Trauma Reduction**

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.

Following **DCFS procedures 315** an introductory meeting, sometimes, called the **"icebreaker" meeting**, brings together the child's biological parents, parents/relative parents, and caseworkers **within in the first 48 hours of a new placement**. The goals of this meeting are:

- Reduce trauma by building a healthy relationship between all the adults responsible for providing for the child.
- Promotes positive supports to the biological parents as they work toward reunification.
- Encouraging biological parent and foster parents to take an active role in helping the child's family regroup.



Staff and foster parents 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 parents to learn and share information regarding the child. For that reason, **foster parents are encouraged to attend these meetings**. To support foster parents during these meetings, licensing workers can attend with the foster parent. It is important to note foster parents will **NOT be invited to attend the portion of the Child and Family Team meeting that pertains to the biological parent's situation or progress** unless there is a positive biological parent/foster parent relationship, and the biological parents sign a consent to allow the foster parents 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 parents to meet biological parents and discuss the child's progress. Foster parents 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.

When the plan includes **reunification with the biological family**, and when appropriate, **the foster parents work with the family worker** and when possible, the biological family, **to make a thoughtful transition plan for everyone involved, but especially the child**. Foster parents are given assistance on how to help the child prepare for returning home as well as how to manage their own feelings regarding reunification.

11. 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 foster parent does not wish to be considered as a permanent placement for the child, the family worker, licensing worker and adoption worker will consider information from the parent as to their perspective for the best possible home for the child in question. When the foster parent is not providing this resource for the child, the foster parent 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. 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 care giver 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 decisions around placement disruption. The foster care team, including the foster parent must ask themselves, ***"Have we done everything we can to stabilize this placement?"***

### **Placement Stability and New Beginnings**

- **Purpose:** Prioritize stabilizing placements and only consider moves after exhaustive efforts to preserve placement.
- **New Beginnings:** Ensures the placement process is family centered, trauma, inclusive and strength based (FITS).
- **Stabilization Supports:** Worker home visits, parent educator coaching, foster parent peer mentors, IPS, Clinical Intervention to Placement Preservation (CIPP), clinical interventions, therapists, and other professionals.

### **When a Move Is Considered**

A move is authorized only when at least one of the following applies:

- All stabilization attempts have failed.
- The child or others in the home are unsafe if the placement continues.
- The placement cannot meet the child's needs even with additional resources.
- A move facilitates continuity or permanency for the child.
- The move places the child with siblings.
- A foster parent gives a 14-day notice.

In its third year, **CYFS Foster Parent Peer Mentor Program** has proven itself valuable in promoting placement stability and support to foster parents. Through this program, foster families receive support and resources from **other trained CYFS foster parents** to **better meet the needs of the child** in their home. Among its primary objectives, the program seeks to assist with placement stabilization, promote permanency when reunification is not an option.

### **Notice, Removal and Risk Protocols**

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 parent to appeal the decision. The **Notice of Change of Placement (CFS 151B)**:

- Given 14 days before moving the youth
- Written notice with reason for the move and instructions for appeal is provided by the licensing worker
- Can be waived for court orders, foster parents request or when the youth is at risk of harm.
- If the risk of harm is determined, an Unsafe Child Endangerment Assessment Protocol is completed and placed in the file.

### **Appeals, Reviews and Support.**

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 parents with information regarding the parents' right to appeal.

- **How to request:** Instructions are on the CFS151B; requests can be faxed to the Clinical Review Team at 1-800-733-3308 or by calling 1-866-225-1431.
- **Possible outcomes:**
  - Child may be returned pending appeal; supervised visitation may be granted.
  - If the family requests a Clinical Placement Review and the Reviewer does not believe the child should be returned to the home, the foster parent can request an appeal through an Administrative Law Judge
  - When children are removed from a foster home to be reunited with a sibling or sibling group, the removal is not appealable.
- **Worker support:**
  - Licensing workers will support foster families throughout the investigative and/or appeal process and share information within Department rules and procedures.
  - Licensing Workers understand going through an investigation or appeal can be a difficult process so they will assist families and provide support during this time.

- **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 family workers are responsible for notifying foster parents of **upcoming court hearings** and providing the available information regarding the **date, time, and location of the court hearing**.

Notification is given to the foster parents at home visits, by phone, in person or in Child Family Team Meeting.

Because CYFS deals with many different court systems, the **foster care family workers** will also **help the foster parent understand their role and responsibilities** when in court. Foster families are given the name of the judge and/or hearing officer associated with the case. Family workers are responsible for sharing recommendations or court orders that involve the foster family.

Upon licensure, **foster parents are given information regarding the court process**. Foster parents 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 foster parent while in court. This handbook can be found on the DCFS website.

Periodically **CYFS will provide training regarding the court process**. Foster parents 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 ensures the family worker is notifying the foster parents of court hearings and encouraging them to attend.

- **Foster parents have the right to be considered as a placement option when a foster child who was formerly placed with the foster parents 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 foster care occurs, it is expected DCFS along with the CYFS staff and any other members of the multidisciplinary team first explore the available case history to **identify** the appropriateness of **any previous placement** that may serve the child's best interests.

**Family Finding Resource Specialist** may already have a list of potential resources from previous foster care experiences to explore and are brought in to update that list with viable relative or fictive kin options. Previous foster care homes can be considered fictive kin to the child. The **definition of fictive kin** is a person who is unrelated to a child by birth, marriage, tribal custom, or adoption who is shown to have significant and close personal or emotional ties with the child or the child's family. (20ILCS 505/4d)

**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 **CYFS data**

**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 parent'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 foster parents 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.

- **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 parents**, both are trained in the importance of **mutual respect** for all members of the team, roles are defined and the goal of providing for the best interest of the child is the common ground for working out differences and accepting each other's rights. Through supervision and ongoing training, staff are provided information on the importance of supporting CYFS foster parents and working collaboratively with them even when there is disagreement or conflict. Foster parent round tables and advisory board, as well as our Foster Parent Peer Mentoring program give foster parents opportunities to inform the agency if they feel there is any type of harassment or retaliation. **At no time and under no circumstance will CYFS tolerate harassment or retaliation directed towards foster parents who have requested to appeal a service decision.** If a foster parent 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 with foster care staff, foster parents are asked to immediately discuss and attempt to resolve the issue with the foster care staff involved.

### **Resolving Conflicts with Foster Care Staff**

Step-by-Step Path to Resolution:

1. Discuss directly with the foster care staff involved.
2. Contact the staff members' supervisor.
3. Reach out to the foster care site supervisor.
4. Contact the Regional Coordinator.
5. Contact the Associate Director of Child Welfare Services.
6. Contact the Director of Child and Family Well Being.
7. If unresolved, request mediation through the Quality Assurance Unit.

**Annual Distribution:** Foster parents receive grievance procedures and the Implementation Plan each year. This process does not limit access to the **DCFS Service Appeal Process** or community-based mediation.

### **Resolving Conflicts with Licensing Staff**

Step-by-Step Path to Resolution:

1. Discuss directly with the licensing staff involved.
2. Contact the licensing worker's supervisor.
3. Reach out to the Licensing Coordinator.
4. Contact the Director of Child and Family Well Being – Licensing.



## Appeal Rights & Support

Foster parents learn about the DCFS appeal process during PRIDE training and through newsletters.

- Staff Assistance: Licensing and family workers help foster parents understand and submit appeals.
- Submission Deadline: Appeals must be submitted within 3 days.
- Clinical Placement Review (CFS 151): Fax: 1-800-733-3308 or call: 1-866-225-1431
- Additional Support: Foster parents may contact the DCFS Advocacy Office at 800-232-3798.

Workers 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 into the Clinical Review Team at 1-800-733-3308 or by calling 1-866-225-1431.

Foster parents 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.

## Satisfaction & Accountability

- Survey Results (2025):  
92% of foster parents agreed or strongly agreed that issues were resolved fairly and promptly

- **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 parents 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 parents are given the number to the Foster Parent Hotline in the CYFS newsletter, and it is 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 case worker or frustrations involving casework decisions. They will contact the agency staff and assist with a resolution.

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 Parents' 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 parents 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 family workers**
- **Family support workers**
- **Supervisors**
- **Licensing workers**
- **Counselors**
- **Parent Trainers or Coaches**

Through PRIDE and ongoing training from The Center for Youth and Family Solutions, foster parents learn about different styles of communication and how to **build a relationship that fosters honest communication** between the parents and the child's workers. Ongoing training from the Family Development Specialists, Retention Specialists, Licensing Workers, and Parent Trainers help parents **understand 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 family worker of any unusual incidents or emergencies that come about while the child is in care.**
- **Provide the family workers and others as is appropriate 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 foster parents with tracking forms to record the child's

needs while in the home. Foster Parents can also find these forms on the **CYFS Foster Parent Resource Page** on the CYFS website.

To assist with keeping the lines of communication open, foster parents are provided the contact information for their licensing worker, the child's case worker, after hours and supervisors. As an additional support, CYFS employs **Foster Parent Peer Mentors** to **coach and model** open communication between foster parents and staff when needed. Foster parents are encouraged to reach out 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 parent trainings** stress the **importance of honoring the confidentiality** of the children and families in foster care. Through discussions, family workers, family support workers, and licensing staff assist the parent 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**.

The development and use of **AI- Artificial Intelligence** is ever increasing, and while its ability to assist foster parents with certain tasks, it is important to ensure these tools and resources are being utilized safely and securely. Because there is still so much unknown about the security and confidentiality of AI and in an effort to protect our foster parents and the children they serve, the use of **AI, in any form is prohibited**. This includes using it to take notes during in person and virtual CFTM's.

Licensing workers review and discuss issues surrounding confidentiality as it is presented in the **Foster Home Licensing Standards (402.24)**. According to Foster Home Licensing Standard 402.24,

*Confidentiality of Information All personal or identifying information concerning a foster child, including but not limited to, his background, his family, and the identity and location of all other persons or families with whom he has been, or will be placed, shall be treated as confidential by all persons involved with the child. (Source: Amended at 11 Ill. Reg. 4292, effective March 1, 1987).*

During the initial home study process, the discussion and expectations regarding confidentiality are documented in writing on the **CFS 590, Foster Family Home License Compliance Record**. This includes conversations regarding how to safeguard confidential information from court, school, medical or behavioral therapies. At the semi-annual monitoring visit this discussion including the expectations are documented in writing on the **CFS 597 Foster Family Home Licensing Monitoring form**.

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

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

Foster parents are taught the importance of strong advocacy skills from the very beginning of their training in the **DCFS PRIDE** classes. By keeping foster parents 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**

The CYFS staff helps foster parents participate and advocate for the children in their care.

### **Advocacy Support for Foster Parents through CYFS and DCFS**

#### **School Advocacy:**

- **Educational Advocacy** training is offered to all foster parents with at least one licensed foster parent required to attend during the first four years of licensure. Foster parents are informed of the requirement to complete Educational Advocacy training. CYFS staff assist foster parents in identifying Educational Advocacy trainings available to them and by helping them register for the training.
- **CYFS Educational and Life Skills Coordinator** and **DCFS Liaisons** assist with navigating the school system including **IEPs and conferences**.
- **CYFS Educational and Life Skills Coordinator** or the child's worker may go with the foster parent on the **first few visits or to critical meetings** at the school to provide information, modeling, and support to the foster parent.

#### **Medical Advocacy:**

- **CYFS has nursing services** to assist the foster parent in understanding and navigating the medical systems.
- **The CYFS Foster Family Worker** may also assist the foster parent by reaching out to medical providers to convey the **day to day needs of the youth** from the perspective of the agency and the foster parent.

For example, if the child placed has significant medical needs and is considered "med spec", a CYFS consulting nurse and/or the family worker will connect the caregiver to required trainings prior to and/or upon placement occurring, if needed. The CYFS consulting nurse will provide ongoing competency supports related to caring for the youth's medical needs as well.

#### **Legal and Community Advocacy:**

- CYFS staff provide foster parents with **information on DCFS and other trainings in the community** that help them fully understand the legal and educational systems and how to advocate



for the children in their care.

- Foster parents 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 parents have a clear understanding of how this function to assist the child in care.
- Foster parents 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 family worker. Periodically, the licensing staff and the parent educators provide one on one or group training on these processes as well.
- Foster parents are encouraged to attend **Foster Care Advisory Board** meetings where they can work with other foster parents and staff to advocate for all foster children. It is common for foster parents 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 parents 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 parents at CYFS are **expected to embrace the agency's mission statement**, and FITS approach 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 parents 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, parents 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 parents are encouraged to **facilitate visitation** and positive bonding between the child and their biological families. Additionally, foster parent support groups, Round Tables and FCAB's 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 parents with additional training**, beyond the initial PRIDE training, foster parents 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 foster parent and the rest of the child welfare team**.

Licensing workers, family workers, and family support workers **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 family worker will continue to monitor and support the foster parents 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 parents are asked to **attend these meetings so they will have a better understanding of how to meet the child's needs**. This also may provide the foster parent an opportunity to meet the child's parents and learn about family customs and traditions. Foster parents may have the opportunity to ask the child's parents questions in order to assist the child in making the transition into foster care. These meetings also give the foster parent **more information from others** on the team about how to successfully parent the child in their home. This dialog can give testimony to the foster parent'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**. Family workers 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 foster parent about how the child feels in the foster home**. If there are any concerns, the family worker will address these with the foster parent 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 parents are encouraged during PRIDE, the licensing assessment process, and on an on-going basis, to continually develop their self-awareness. **Knowing their strengths and limitations is essential** when deciding whether to accept a child into their care. Foster parents also have the **responsibility to understand their own experience with trauma** so they will be able to use this understanding to help them understand how best to help the children in their care. This information is shared with the licensing worker for the pre-service home study and as a part of a mutual assessment process between the licensing worker and the foster parent.

Information gathered from the **AAPI-2.5**, which all foster parents complete, is another way to assess the parenting strengths and weaknesses of the foster parent. The AAPI-2.5 **Parenting Profile** is beneficial in assessing the need for additional training which may be helpful for the foster parent. When the tool identified specific areas for additional training, the **CYFS parent trainer can utilize the home visit coaching model** to meet the need and prepare the parent for a specific placement.

Together, the foster parent, the recruitment specialist, and the licensing worker complete the CYFS foster parent training and home study process.

In order to **prevent subsequent placement changes for children** and provide the best placement possible, foster parents are expected to work with the family worker, family support worker, 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 foster parent's strengths and limitations**



with regards to the specific child. It also includes an assessment by the foster care, licensing, retention and training staff of support and resources the foster parent 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 parents in mutually assessing the foster parents' capability to care for a particular child.

When a foster parent is approached to care for a child with more intense needs (such as sexual behavior problems or extreme behaviors); **CYFS provides additional training** to them to assist 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.

In 2025, CYFS Parent Training Program expanded beyond the Parent Skills Training program, to include the **Incredible Years Parent training program** and the **Think Trauma Training program**. In each of these new programs, foster parents are given the opportunity to look at their own skills, knowledge and assess their strengths as well as limitations. This level of self-awareness helps the foster parent better understand their own behavior as it relates to the children in their home.

The **Family Worker Questionnaire** and the **semi-annual monitoring visits** are all tools that assist in evaluating strengths and limitations for the foster home. The **Family Worker Questionnaire** is a questionnaire each family worker 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 family worker believes **additional training may be warranted**. The licensing worker will discuss the questionnaire with the foster family. **Feedback gathered** from the family worker and foster parent 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 parents with realities of relative foster care. **Foster Parent Peer Mentors** may be assigned to relative care givers to support them while they learn how to be a foster caregiver. This also provides a good opportunity to **coach relative caregivers** on updated child development and strength-based parenting. Relative foster parents are provided the opportunity to **attend support groups** and participate in the **Foster Parent 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 parents.

CYFS has implemented the **Parent 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 (CFS1042L)**. DCFS must approve this

**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.**

process.

### **Building Connections from Day One**

During training and semi-annual license monitoring visits, CYFS staff introduce foster parents to:

- **Support groups**
- **Round Tables**



- **Foster Parent Associations**
- **Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council**
- **Special events for networking and collaboration**

Foster parents are encouraged to:

- **Build mentor relationships with experienced caregivers**
- **Explore local and CYFS-sponsored resources**
- **Stay informed via newsletters, mailings, Facebook, and the CYFS website**
- **Receive updates through home visits and phone calls from staff and mentors**

### **CYFS Foster Caregiver Advisory Board (FCAB)**

#### **Mission:**

To empower foster parents to support one another and collaborate with CYFS staff to strengthen the foster care community and improve the foster care experience.

#### **Monthly Virtual Meetings:**

Held online to remove barriers like childcare and transportation, and open to foster care workers, supervisors, licensing staff, and CYFS leadership.

#### **Key Responsibilities:**

- Organize family events (picnics, back-to-school, holidays)
- Identify training needs
- Launch mentoring programs for new foster parents
- Promote community awareness of foster care needs
- Review and shape the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan
- Encourage use of CYFS digital platforms for resources
- Collaborate with other foster parent groups and associations

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

Foster family workers, licensing workers, retention specialists, foster parent mentors, and the foster parents **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 foster parent in parenting foster children. Using this knowledge and a strength-based approach, staff helps the foster parent identify areas that may need additional attention. The staff provides foster parents 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 or retention specialists 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 foster parent in providing services to a child in need of a placement.

Prior to a child entering foster home, the following tools are used to assist in identifying the child's needs so the agency will know how to best assist the foster parent in helping the foster child.

- **Integrated Assessment**
- **Child/Caregiver Matching Tool**

- **CYFS New Beginning Tool**

In this way the agency and the foster parent 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 parents, 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 foster parent. Specific training may be requested by the foster parent or recommended by the worker based on the children who are placed or being considered for placement in the home.

The **DCFS Learning Development Center (LDC)** can be utilized to assist the foster parent 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 foster parent 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 foster parent** on how to improve their parenting of the child currently in their home.

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

CYFS provides foster parents with **free on demand training** through the **FosterParentCollege.com**. These trainings are evidence based and can be tailored to the specific needs identified by the foster parent, or any CYFS staff.

Foster parents are **informed of training modules** and other relevant trainings through **CYFS newsletters**, through the **CYFS Facebook**, the **CYFS website** and through their **foster family worker** and **licensing worker**. Online trainings have been developed and are available to foster parents as well as trainings that can be accessed through the DCFS Training Department.

- **(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 foster parent's home.

# CYFS Placement Stability & Crisis Prevention Framework

## **Pre-Placement Preparation:**

- Training during PRIDE & CYFS onboarding:
- Emphasis on self-awareness, trauma-informed care, and realistic expectations
- Importance of open communication with staff
- Introduction to support services like counseling and Intensive Placement Services (IPS)

## **Crisis Prevention Behavior Management Policy:**

- All foster parents are trained on non-violent crisis intervention and physical restraint guideline.
- Specialized homes may receive Parent Skills Training (PST) for complex behavioral needs.

## **Pre-Placement Planning Discussions:**

- Review of past placement successes
- Impact on current household members
- Child's specific needs and foster parent strengths
- Trauma awareness and resource availability

## **Post-Placement Responsibilities & Support**

- Foster Parent Role:
- Proactively report emergencies, behavioral changes, or concerns
- Follow the 14-day notice protocol for planned transitions

## **CYFS Support System:**

- Timely response to foster parent concerns
- Staff trained to recognize stress and recommend respite
- Assignment of Foster Parent Mentors for added support
- Access to casework services, counseling, school, and medical assessments

Once a placement is made, it is the foster parent'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 foster parents in seeking support to help the child and maintain the placement.

CYFS supports the foster parent 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 family. CYFS family workers provide foster parents with appropriate contact information so they will have access to a worker or supervisor. CYFS staff monitors the home, and staff are trained to recognize when foster parents may benefit from respite to help stabilize a placement. Foster Parent Mentors may be assigned to a home that might need extra support and coaching. 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 have 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 CFTM 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.

Foster parents 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.

Family workers, family support workers, foster parent mentors, retention specialists, 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 parents will assess the situation to determine what might be done differently in the future to avoid replacement. Both the foster parents 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.**

## **Foster Parent Support & Stress Management**

### **Training & Education**

- **PRIDE Pre-Service Training** and **CYFS foster parent trainings** address the emotional and practical impact of foster parenting.
- Foster parents are trained to recognize signs of stress and placement-related strain.
- **Dr. Christy Schmidt's "Cost of Caring" workshop** is offered annually to build resilience among foster parents and staff.

### **Ongoing Support**

- CYFS staff (retention specialists, mentors, trainers, licensing workers) provide:
- Support groups
- Stress management training
- Counseling services
- In-home visits assess the impact of foster children on the family and may lead to referrals for additional services including Foster Parent Peer mentors.

### **Community & Connection**

- Foster parents are encouraged to:
- Attend support groups and trainings
- Participate in events (e.g., school gatherings, picnics, holiday celebrations)
- Engage in self-care and family counseling during high-stress periods

## **Respite Care Services**



## Purpose & Access

- Designed to help foster families regain balance during stress or emergencies.
- Can be requested via the licensing worker or foster family worker.
- CYFS follows DCFS policy for respite services.

## Planning & Coordination

- Licensing workers assess child's needs and help identify suitable respite providers.
- Foster parents may suggest providers with existing relationships to reduce child stress.
- Respite plans are ideally created within 30 days of placement and reviewed every 6 months.

## Reimbursement

Type of Child	Minimum Respite Hours	Reimbursement Source
Specialized	15 hours per month	Paid by the agency
Relative, Traditional, Medical Specialized	Varies	Deducted from foster parent's stipend and paid to the respite provider.

## Voluntary Hold Option

- Foster parents may request **Non-active Status** without closing their license.
- Must sign a DCFS form and remain compliant with licensing standards.
- No monitoring visits during hold.
- To return to **Active Status**, a monitoring visit is required, and the **Placement Clearance Desk** must lift the hold.

**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 parents, as well as to carry out the mission of The Center for Youth and Family Solutions, **foster parents promote the foster experience in a positive way at every opportunity** and are **asked to actively participate in our recruitment efforts**.

Foster parents receive training that specifically addresses the importance of providing youth in care a safe and nurturing home while their biological family is regrouping. Trainings on childhood trauma also help foster parents develop a better understanding on the benefits of foster parenting to assist with dealing with the trauma and being able to heal from it.

The **Foster Caregivers Advisory Board** has identified assisting with recruitment and retention of foster parents as one of their main objectives. The **board believes foster parents and foster parent mentors 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.

During the past year, our **foster parents** and foster parent mentors have **worked with our recruitment and retention specialists to support our current foster parents** and to reach out into the community to create an awareness of the need for foster parents and for support for foster parents.

Foster parents can work with businesses and the community for greater public support and recognition. Foster parents are encouraged to participate in activities that support and recognize the importance of foster parents as members of the child welfare team.

CYFS staff **partner with foster parents to create community awareness and recruit foster parents** in a wide variety of ways. **FCAB members received business cards and t-shirts that identify them as a CYFS Foster Caregiver Advisory Board Member.** Their hope is, as they participate in the community, they will be able to **increase a positive community sense** of foster parenting. This may also help our recruitment staff identify potential new foster homes.

### **CYFS Community Engagement & Recruitment Highlights**

#### **Family & Community-Centered Events**

CYFS staff and foster families actively participate in events that celebrate and support the fostering community, including:

- **Pride Fest**
- **Back to School Bash**
- **Trunk or Treat**
- **Elevate Night**
- **Easter Egg Hunt in Washington**
- **Plus, many other local community gatherings**

These events foster connection, appreciation, and joy among foster families and the broader community.

#### **Recruitment & Outreach**

CYFS recruitment staff engage with the public through:

- **Presentations at local libraries, churches, and civic groups**
- **Virtual quarterly Q&A sessions** to educate and connect with prospective foster parents

Current foster parents are invited to attend these sessions to share their lived experiences and offer authentic insight into the journey of fostering.

**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 parents and foster care staff understand the **ultimate goal for any child in foster care is of course**

**permanency.** However, even more basic is the reality that **our purpose as a child welfare team**, including foster parents, is **to make sure any child in care feels safe and does not experience any further abuse or neglect** while in care. To that end, foster parents receive training and support to help them as they provide for the children. **Foster parents learn** through their training **they are mandated reporters.** Their responsibilities regarding this are spelled out **in PRIDE** as well as in the **CYFS initial and ongoing trainings.**

**Foster parents** 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 foster parent licensing workers reviews this form in detail with the foster parent at the time of licensure. Foster parents 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. Periodically, foster parents are reminded of their mandated reporter status in DCFS and CYFS newsletters. **Foster parents are also informed their licensing worker can support them if and when they need to make a call.**

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

To increase **foster parents** understanding of the investigation process both through DCFS and CYFS, foster parents are **encouraged to attend additional trainings prepared by the CYFS licensing staff on licensing investigations and allegations against foster parents.** This training educates the foster parent on their responsibilities and rights when facing any type of investigation including a licensing referral.

Should a foster parent be facing an allegation of mistreatment of a foster child, the licensing and/or family 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 family workers will support foster parents when going through an investigation.

Foster parents 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 handout.** These documents 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 stress the importance of foster parents being active participants in planning for the child.** This begins when the home is being considered for placement. By **engaging foster parents as equal partners** in services provided to the child, the entire child welfare teams, including foster parents, 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 parents 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 parents 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 parents to participate in these proceedings. To learn more about the roles of the courts, **CASA and other community resources** foster parents can utilize the **DCFS Foster Parent Handbook** or attend **CYFS trainings** on these topics. CYFS individually, and in collaboration with other foster care agencies in the community offer ongoing training on court processes to assist foster parents in fulfilling this responsibility. There are trainings available through the **FosterParentCollege.com** that can also help foster parents increase their knowledge on these topics.

CYFS has invited the **DCFS Court monitor, CASA, and Guardian ad litem**s to **attend foster parent support groups** in order to **help foster parents learn more** about the court system.

Because the **foster parent 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 foster parents to **keep family workers 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** to be able to successfully leave the foster family home and enter into the adult world. In their role as a foster parent, **our foster parents need to be actively working with these teenagers regarding the goals contained in the service plan**. CYFS has an **Educational and Life Skills Service Coordinator** who assists youth and their foster parents in **developing and implementing a plan to prepare the youth for life beyond foster care**. CYFS foster parents are also encouraged to support any youth, 14 and older to participate in the **CYFS Youth Advisory Council**. The council is a way for **the youth to network with other youth in care** as they develop life skills and prepare for their future.

**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 parents 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**. CYFS has developed a brochure to assist foster parents in their understanding of the agency's appeal procedures.

If a **child is going to be moved** from a foster home, the foster parent 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 parents 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 parents in filing an appeal if foster parents need assistance. A **Notice of Change of Placement** is not to be given until the **family worker has staffed the situation** with the supervisor, reviewed the steps in the New Beginning process and a **critical decision made** that a move is necessary.



Foster parents 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 to the Clinical Review Team at 1-800-733-3308 or by calling 1-866-225-1431. Licensing workers/case workers will assist foster parents with the appeal process if needed.

Foster parents also have the right to appeal a Licensing Complaint. Foster Parents 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 parents are educated on the role of the **DCFS Advocacy Office** which will handle complaints from foster parents 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 parents are given a folder** to keep all of the child's records.

At monitoring visits or whenever necessary, licensing workers will **review this folder to ensure records are being maintained**. **Family workers** and their supervisors are responsible for **ensuring foster parents have all required information** such as medical and educational information. If the foster parent 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.

**Foster parents 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. **Counselors or casework staff may use life books to help the child make sense of their childhood experiences.**

CYFS foster parents are provided information on the **importance of developing and maintaining life books** for each child in their care. It is an **expectation of foster parents to maintain and use the life books to track the child's time** while in their home. Case work staff assist the foster parent 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 foster parent be creative and make the life book experience one that is not only useful but enjoyable to the child.



- **(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 parent, whether the child's caregiver parent or another substitute caregiver parent.**

## **Foster Parent Communication & Transition Support**

### **Training & Mentorship**

- Foster parents receive training through PRIDE and CYFS licensure programs emphasizing:
- Open communication about the child's progress and adjustment.
- Honest sharing of the child's experiences, especially during transitions.

### **Additional reinforcement comes from:**

- Support group trainings
- Mentor discussions
- Family Support Workers
- Foster Care Advisory Board (FCAB) members

### **Collaboration & Learning**

- Foster parents and staff learn from one another not only in formal settings but also through day-to-day collaboration.
- The shared goal: ensuring each child receives the best possible care and support.

### **Transitioning Between Homes**

- When a child moves to a new foster home:
- **Pertinent information** is shared with the new provider.
- A **Child and Family Team Meeting** may be held to plan the transition.
- The previous foster family may assist with the move and, when appropriate, maintain contact or visits.

### **Documentation & Matching**

- Foster parents contribute to the Matching Tool, which helps align children with suitable placements.
- They also maintain organized records in each child's folder, ensuring continuity of care and support for future placements.

- **(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** uses a family system, inclusive, trauma responsive, strength based or FITS approach to **ensure the child's needs are met**. This model ensures children and families are **treated with dignity, compassion, and respect**. Using the FITS approach helps the foster parents remember the importance of **recognizing and supporting the child's cultural identity and biological family connections**.

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions works extremely hard to keep foster parents informed of resources regarding multicultural issues. The **PRIDE Module #7 Promoting Children's Personal and**

**Cultural Identity** provides foster parents with training in this area. CYFS provides **ongoing individual or group trainings** to foster parents on these topics as well. When possible, foster parents and biological family members can work together to help sustain important cultural connections as well.

The **CYFS Foster Parent Resource page** on the CYFS web has several **articles and links to assist care-givers with strengthening their understanding of diversity** as it relates to the children they serve. If foster parents 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 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 who serve them**. This includes seeking out resources which may help the foster parent support the child's cultural heritage. Foster parents are **made aware of community resources and trainings** addressing these issues through **agency newsletters**, our **Facebook page**, **contact with CYFS staff** and **our website**. The list of available training materials is also on the **DCFS website - [www.state.il.us/dcfs](http://www.state.il.us/dcfs)**.

**Child and Family Team Meetings** provide another **opportunity for families to share cultural and religious information in regard to their children**. Foster parents 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 parents are encouraged to seek opportunities to increase their cultural competence.

## Index

Advocacy	8, 10, 11,12, 21, 27, 30, 41
AI Artificial Intelligence	29
Annual Case Review (ACR)	15, 21, 23, 30, 40, 41
Appeal	17,21,23,30,40
CASA	30,40
Child and Family Team Meeting	6,7,20,21,25,29, 36
Confidentiality	7,18,19,20,29
Court	10,21,23,24,25,29,30,40,41
Critical Decision	16,24,41
FITS	3,4,23,31,43
Foster Caregiver Advisory Board (FCAB)	7,10,11,31,33,43
Grievance	3,14,26
Incredible Years Parent Training	10, 35
Investigation	15,16,17, 24,27,32,39,40,
Monitoring	
3,7,9,10,11,16,21,29,33,34,38,42	
MEPA/IEPA	14
Notice of Change of Placement	15,24,41
Normalcy	8
Nurse	9,30
Orientation	7, 20
Parent Skills Training	8,32,33,36
Placement Packet	6,11,22
Reimbursement	12,13,14,38
Relative	4,7,8,12,14,22.25.33,38
Resource Page	5,12,13,27,28,43



Respite	13,14,36,37,38
Reunification	14,15,22,23,24,33
Service Plan	12,15,19,41,21
Support Groups	3,4,5,9,31,33,35,37,41,42
Survey	6,10,20,27,32,35
Training	8,9,11,17,29,32,33,36,37,43
Visitation	8,15,19,24,31
Voluntary Hold	38