

FOSTER PARENT LAW IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2021



Family Service Center

Family Service Center
Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction.....	3
II.	Annual Report.....	4-6
III.	Foster Parent Law Rights.....	7-25
	Foster Parent Law Responsibilities.....	26-38
IV.	Attachments.....	39-43
	a. Family Service Center 2020 Training Schedule	
	b. List of Names/Actual Signatures of Foster Parents Involved in Reviewing and/or Revising the Plan	
	c. Actual Signatures of Foster Parents Who Attest that They've Reviewed the Plan	
	d. Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure	
	e. Foster Parent Law Grievances for Calendar Year	
	f. Summary of Foster Parent Comments	
	g. Summary of Response to Foster Parent Comments	
	h. Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Plan	
	i. Photos	

Foster Care Staff:

Megan Fellows – Licensing Supervisor/Director of Foster Care

Pat Kaidell – Part-Time Director of Foster Care

Samantha Pearce – Licensing Specialist

Becky Caldwell – Part-Time Licensing Worker

INTRODUCTION

Fiscal Year 2020-2021 has been a challenging year for Family Service Center as it has been for many agencies due to COVID-19. We have had to adjust our services to make sure we are following the State guidelines for maintaining the safety of our staff, parents, children and foster parents. Staff has been working extremely hard keeping contact with all clients. They adapted well to utilizing Zoom meetings, FaceTime, phone contacts and personal contact using social distancing and masks to ensure that everyone was contacted and everyone's safety was monitored.

Our foster parents were contacted regularly by the licensing staff and foster care staff to ensure that they had food, clothing, school supplies and assistance with remote learning for children who were school age.

Our foster care program has experienced a lot of growth since July of 2020. We began the year with 101 children in our program and as of October 1, 2020 we have 130 children in our program. This has required our agency to hire additional caseworkers, an additional supervisor and additional case aides. We continue to have more than 60% of our cases being in relative foster care. Our licensing staff is meeting with new relative foster parents as soon as a case has been transferred to our agency.

Our agency lost one of our strongest advocates and supporters, Bob Church, this year. Bob facilitated our Halloween and Christmas parties for the past several years through the Elks Club and Lions Club. Bob had already scheduled our Christmas party this year before he passed. Bob will be greatly missed!

Due to what we have learned during this pandemic, our agency will be implementing Zoom meetings for foster parent trainings in addition to in-person trainings. This would allow us to expand our trainings to trainers outside our area.

Our agency is committed to providing our families, both biological and foster families, with the tools they need to meet the needs of their children.

ANNUAL REPORT FORM

1. Provide a general description of the process used to obtain foster parent input into your plan review/revision.
 - The Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan serves as a guide to Family Service Center staff and foster parents on successful service delivery and ensuring that all foster parents' rights and responsibilities are clearly communicated and addressed. It also serves as a tool to hold Family Service Center staff accountable when providing for the well-being of all members of the Child Welfare Team.
 - All foster parents licensed by Family Service Center are encouraged to attend monthly foster parent trainings where development of the Implementation Plan occurs. These trainings are announced through e-mail and mailings distributed to the foster parents. If a foster parent is unable to attend these meetings, they can access the plan through Family Service Center's website or by requesting it from the licensing department. They can then make suggestions for improvements directly to the licensing staff at any time during the year.
 - The Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan is made available to foster parents yearly upon its approval. There are several ways that foster parents can obtain copies of the plan. The plan is distributed to foster parents through the agency's foster parent e-mail list. If a foster parent does not have e-mail access, they can contact the licensing department to receive a copy of the plan in person or by mail. The Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan is always available for pick-up at monthly foster parent meetings. In addition, the plan is posted on the Family Service Center website at www.service2families.com.
 - This year we utilized various approaches to maximize input from our foster parents. 1) A small group of foster parents reviewed the Foster Parent Law and gave feedback to our Licensing Specialist, 2) Licensing workers and caseworkers discussed the Foster Parent Law with foster parents during monitoring and home visits, and 3) Our Licensing Specialist contacted foster parents by phone to get input on the Foster Parent Law related to their rights and responsibilities.
2. Describe the way direct service staff was involved in plan development and review.
 - Family Service Center views its staff members as valuable resources for information as they work most directly with foster parents and children. The Foster Parent Law as well as the 2020 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan was given to all direct service staff to review in

August. The Foster Parent Law was reviewed with direct service staff at a weekly staff meeting in September. Direct service staff was asked to provide input into how we could better meet our foster parents' needs as well as ensure that foster parents were fulfilling their responsibilities to the children placed in their homes.

3. List the needs/deficiencies identified in our 2020 comments and how they were addressed in this plan.

- a. Please add more detail to the description of your use of the 14-day notice.

Foster parents are made aware of their rights at this time in regard to any youth in care placed in their home. They are informed that they can appeal the decision to move a youth from their home by contacting DCFS unless the youth is being moved for the purpose of sibling consolidation. The foster parents are informed about why the youth is being moved if the purpose is *not* sibling consolidation. Transitional visits are also discussed in order to make the transition smoother for the youth and reduce trauma. Licensing staff in involved in all placement changes. The 14-day notice is delivered to the foster parents in person; however, if an in-person meeting is needed to discuss the matter, the 14-day notice is given to the foster parents during this meeting.

- b. Document situations when you determine co-training is appropriate in Narrative #2. When would it be inappropriate?

Licensing staff holds trainings monthly and topics are discussed and approved by supervisors in advance. Wording for this narrative has been changed due to trainings always being topics linked to pertinent issues involving youth or foster parents. Co-training is always beneficial because it enhances the information being given. It is not always feasible and there are times one trainer is effective,

4. Describe how your Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure was developed or reviewed and approved by foster parents and how foster parents are notified annually that it is available for their use.

- Foster parents are given a copy of the Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure annually when they are sent the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan to review. The Licensing Specialist will give a copy of the procedure to any foster parent who requests it.

5. List ALL rights narratives that were revised this year.

Rights narratives 2, 7, 8, 10, and 11 were revised and strengthened for the 2021 plan.

6. List ALL responsibilities narratives that were revised this year.

Responsibilities narratives 1, 8 and 15 were revised and strengthened for the 2021 plan.

7. If no revisions were made, please explain why.

ANNUAL REPORT ATTACHMENTS:

- 1) List the names of the foster parents who had input into the plan.
- 2) Provide sign-off approval/endorsement from foster parents, including a clear statement of approval

Family Service Center

Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan 2021

Foster Parent Rights:

- 1. The right to be treated with dignity, respect, and consideration as a professional member of the child welfare team.**
- Family Service Center is “team oriented” and foster parents are considered critical members of the Child Welfare Team. Foster parents possess an intimate knowledge of the youth in their care and provide insight into a youth’s strengths and needs that others may not identify. Family Service Center staff places great importance on foster parents being involved in Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM), Administrative Case Reviews (ACR), Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, clinical staffings, court hearings and any other meetings that are critical to planning for the needs and best interests of the youth in their care. Foster parents are encouraged to participate in the development of service planning for the youth by suggesting services that may benefit the youth such as counseling, tutoring, mentoring or extracurricular activities.
 - In order to ensure that foster parents are able to attend meetings, letters, e-mails, texts, phone calls and/or notification at home visits are utilized to inform foster parents of upcoming events pertinent to the youth in their home. When a foster parent is unable to attend an event pertinent to the youth in their home, Family Service Center staff makes necessary accommodations for the foster parent to participate by phone. If the foster parent is unable to participate by phone, staff will provide timely documentation of what was discussed and allow foster parents the ability to offer input. The supervisor follows up with the caseworker during monthly supervision to ensure that proper documentation has occurred and that the foster parents were notified of important information.
 - Family Service Center strives to treat all of our foster parents with dignity and respect. Foster parents’ phone calls, texts and e-mails are returned in a timely manner. Family Service Center staff does their best to work around the foster parents’ schedule when arranging CFTM’s and home visits. The caseworkers and licensing specialist follow up at home visits with foster parents to make sure that they feel treated with dignity and respect. Dignity and respect is displayed to foster parents by talking calmly and respectfully, maintaining professionalism, arriving to scheduled appointments on time and treating the foster parents as professional

members of the Child Welfare Team. If the foster parents do not feel they are being treated as a member of the Child Welfare Team, the supervisor is notified to correct the problem immediately. The supervisor will contact the foster parent to resolve the concerns.

- When a foster parent is struggling with a youth in their home, Family Service Center implements any possible interventions to maintain the placement. Family Service Center employs Behavioral Specialists for youth who receive specialized care and provide assistance during crisis situations. Along with the caseworker, the Behavioral Specialist can provide crisis management to deflect hospitalization and/or placement disruption or may simply provide the foster parents with a few hours of respite. The Behavioral Specialists are equipped with training to provide parenting suggestions and teach alternative parenting approaches that are geared toward a difficult youth. The Behavioral Specialist can also implement behavior management plans as well. In addition, Behavioral Specialists provide some training at monthly foster parent meetings.
- Family Service Center staff is available to the foster parents 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. During regular office hours, caseworkers, supervisors and licensing staff can be reached at (217) 528-8406 or by calling staff's individual work phone numbers. If there is an emergency after hours, the on-call worker is available using the assigned on-call phone number at (217) 685-8119. This phone will always be answered and is staffed by foster care staff on a rotating basis.
- In order to show foster parents that Family Service Center appreciates their commitment to the youth in their care, Family Service Center holds various appreciation events for foster parents, including a foster parent appreciation picnic in May during Foster Parent Appreciation Month, a Halloween Party in October and a Christmas Party in December. For the past three years Family Service Center has gotten a community donation to provide each school-age foster child with a book bag, lunch bag and all needed school supplies. Surveys are sent out to foster parents in May and October each year to inquire about components of the program that have been successful or changes the agency should implement to ensure that foster parents are being treated with dignity and respect as professional members of the Child Welfare Team. The Licensing Specialist communicates with foster parents on an ongoing basis in order to address any concerns or suggestions they may have to the Child Welfare Team.

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

- Foster parents licensed by Family Service Center attend PRIDE (Parents' Resource for Information, Development and Education) training, a 27-hour training for traditional foster parents, which is facilitated by the Department of Children and Family Services. This curriculum must be completed before a traditional foster parent is licensed. Foster parents who provide relative foster care/fictive kin foster care are to complete two training sessions. These can be completed either in the classroom or through videos provided by licensing staff that can be watched in their home. Online training is also now an option. In addition, foster parents are required to complete educational advocacy training, which is a six-hour course to provide information concerning the educational rights of foster children. This training is a requirement for the renewal of a foster parent license.
- Licensing staff assist foster parents in receiving a minimum of sixteen training hours over a four-year time period. Specialized foster parents are required to receive an additional twelve hours of training each year. They receive six hours of training through Trauma Informed Parenting and six hours of training related to the specific youth in their home. This training can include De-escalation Techniques, education on Reactive Attachment Disorder, Sexualized Behaviors in Children, etc. There are several training options that foster parents can utilize to accumulate required training hours, including training offered through the DCFS Office of Training, monthly foster parent meetings/trainings held by Family Service Center licensing staff and other community-based trainings that are approved by DCFS.
- Family Service Center holds monthly foster parent meetings, where training is led by Family Service Center licensing staff, foster parents or other qualified professionals. These meetings are held on Wednesdays once per month and the training topics are determined by foster parent requests and suggestions made by caseworkers and clinical staff members. In addition, new DCFS policies and procedures are reviewed with foster parents. Licensing staff assist foster parents in locating training material that will meet their needs. When appropriate, Family Service Center utilizes co-training, in which, alongside agency staff, an experienced foster parent works with newly licensed foster parents on specific matters relating to the foster parents' needs.

- Family Service Center mutually assesses training needs with the foster parents. Discussion is held regarding certain criteria, including, but not limited to: the type of care provided, age of the child, foster parent interest and areas of need identified by foster parents and/or agency staff.
- Family Service Center has a contractual nurse who is available to train foster parents on special medical needs that a youth may have. The nurse can also attend doctors' visits, assist with getting medical documentation and test results, and coordinate medical appointments/services.
- Family Service Center feels strongly that all foster parents need on-going training in stress management due to the stress fostering can place on a family, being trauma informed due to the significant trauma foster children have experienced and de-escalation techniques in order to equip foster parents with the tools to help address behavior issues that may arise in the home.
- Family Service Center feels that on-going training is needed on Juvenile Court proceedings, the foster care process and the Illinois Adoption Act so that foster parents can fully understand how a case can proceed to either reunification or adoption. Caseworkers attend a mandatory DCFS training related to Juvenile Court during the first year of their employment. The Foster Care Program Director attends monthly meetings of the Sangamon County Action Team which is led by juvenile judge, Judge Karen Tharp. During these meetings there are a variety of trainings held pertaining to Juvenile Court. The Program Director then shares this information with and provides trainings to foster care staff. The Assistant State's Attorney also provides training to foster care staff when requested. Information regarding Juvenile Court is also shared with foster parents in at least one training per year.
- Foster parents are also able to complete online modules for training credit and keep track of their training hours by utilizing the Virtual Training Center (VTC). This can be accessed on the internet at www.dcfstraining.org. For assistance in registering with the Virtual Training Center, foster parents can contact FSC licensing staff or the DCFS Office of Training at (877) 800-3393.
- The Licensing Worker will update foster parent transcripts and send out bi-annual letters informing foster parents where they stand for training hours before they are due for a renewal.

- 3. The right to be informed as to how to contact the appropriate youth placement agency in order to receive information and assistance to access supportive services for youth in care.**
 - The foster care caseworkers are the first line of contact in assisting foster families in providing specific services for the youth placed in their home. Additionally, foster parents have others on the Child Welfare Team to help assist such as the Foster Care Program Director, Foster Care Supervisor, Licensing Specialist, Counselors and other foster parents.
 - When a youth is placed in the foster home, the foster parent is given a Placement Packet (expandable file folder) filled with critical information for placement. The expandable file folder also serves as a way they can store important documents regarding the placement in their home. This packet includes the Placement Authorization form, emergency list of phone numbers, community resources, medication logs and behavior logs.
 - Family Service Center staff can be reached 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Staff members are available in the office Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at (217) 528-8406 or through each individual caseworker's work phone. In addition, every family that Family Service Center serves has access to foster care staff after office hours through the on-call phone at (217) 685-8119. This line is staffed 24 hours per day, 7 days per week by casework staff on a rotating basis. The on-call line is used for after-hours emergency calls only.
 - In the event of a psychiatric or behavioral emergency, foster parents should first contact the on-call worker. The on-call worker may direct the foster parent to call the CARES (Crisis and Referral Entry Service) hotline if the child is in need of a SASS (Screening, Assessment and Support Services) screening. SASS will come to the foster home or another appropriate location and screen the child to determine if there is a need for psychiatric hospitalization. A youth who is in specialized foster care may have a Behavioral Specialist assigned. The Behavioral Specialist may also be available to respond to emotional or behavioral emergencies.
 - Every attempt will be made to have a face-to-face meeting between the foster parents and a youth as well as pre-placement visits prior to placing a child in a foster home. The purpose of this meeting is for the youth to share important information about themselves and for the foster parents to describe their home, family and expectations.

- 4. The right to receive timely financial reimbursement with the care needs of the youth as specified in the service plan.**

- Family Service Center makes every effort to remit payments each month, in full and in a timely manner. Monthly board payments are mailed to licensed foster parents on the 25th day of each month. If a holiday falls on the 25th of the month, payment is then mailed on the 24th of the month. If the 25th falls on a Sunday, the checks will be mailed on the 26th. Foster parents have the option of receiving payment by direct deposit. This will ensure that foster parents receive payment in a timely and convenient manner.
- If a licensed caregiver has not received their payment within a week after the 25th of the month, they can call the Family Service Center bookkeeper at (217) 528-8406. If the provider is unlicensed, they can contact the DCFS payment hotline Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. through 11:00 a.m. at (800) 525-0499. Unlicensed providers are also asked to notify the caseworker or supervisor if assistance is needed in resolving the delay of their board payment.

LICENSED, NON-SPECIALIZED FOSTER CARE

Youth's Age	Total	Board	Clothing	Allowance
0-11 mos	\$453	\$396	\$42	\$15
1-4 years	\$461	\$398	\$47	\$16
5-8 years	\$482	\$402	\$63	\$17
9-11 years	\$511	\$410	\$73	\$28
12 years +	\$554	\$421	\$84	\$50

The specialized rate is \$46.82 per day

- Family Service Center accesses funds from the DCFS one-time non-re-occurring activity fee provided for each youth per the annual contract, agency funds, community resources, donations and in-kind donations to pay for additional services a youth may need. An assessment of the need for additional services is done by foster care and clinical staff primarily; however, if a service provider for the youth recommends a service, the agency follows that recommendation when appropriate. If needed, Family Service Center will contact DCFS to request an exceptional payment to provide a service that a youth needs.

- A Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) is requested when a youth's needs meet the level of specialized foster care or if a youth requires a residential placement.
- 5. The right to be provided clear, written understanding of a placement agency's plan concerning the placement of a youth in the foster parent's home.**
- Case referrals are made through three venues – 1) through DCFS/CAPU following an investigation where it is determined the youth must be taken from their biological home due to safety issues, 2) through DCFS when they are carrying a case where the youth needs a placement option not provided by DCFS such as a relative placement or a specialized foster care placement, 3) through a transfer from one private agency to another, or 4) if Family Service Center already has a family case and another youth of the same family comes into care. Family Service Center follows the “No Decline” policy for relative cases when the parent and youth are within 100 miles of each other.
 - Procedure 315, specifically Family Finding, requires that family placements are found whenever possible and that siblings are placed together unless there is a determination that it is in the best interest of a youth not to do so. When a relative or fictive kin placement is not possible, a traditional or specialized foster home is located. It is critical to provide connections to the youth's culture, race and ethnicity. Family Service Center focuses on keeping siblings together, keeping youth in or near their community of origin and placing youth in homes with similar cultures when making placement recommendations.
 - Caseworkers hold case transfer staffings with the agency transferring the case to Family Service Center. Information obtained from this case staffing regarding the youth is shared with prospective foster parents. All information known at the time of the staffing is shared. As additional information becomes available, that information is shared with the foster parents as well.
 - Information from the service plan pertinent to the foster parents is reviewed with them – the visitation plan, the permanency goal, the youth's tasks and the youth's summary review. A task page is not set up for the foster parents unless they are unlicensed. When they are unlicensed, a single task related to the well-being of the youth is added for the foster parents. When the foster parents become licensed, this task page is discontinued.

- Foster parents are asked to provide information regarding the youth in their care on a regular basis. Such information would include a youth's behaviors prior to or following visits, a youth's questions about their case, a youth's educational progress, and a youth's progress in additional services such as counseling, etc.
 - Caseworkers will discuss with the foster parent monthly at home visits the youth's portion of the service plan to determine how well the youth is doing and to keep the foster parent and agency working as a team.
 - This information is obtained at a regularly scheduled home visit or through in-person or phone contact with the caseworker. Foster parents are encouraged to attend the semi-annual DCFS case reviews (ACR's) to share their information regarding the youth in their home. They are also encouraged to attend court hearings to learn more information about the permanency goal for the youth in their home.
 - Foster parents are invited to all Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM's) so that they can share information about the youth in their home. Foster parents are also invited to attend court hearings, administrative case reviews, CIPP's and clinical staffings so that their input can be utilized to best meet the needs of the youth in their care.
 - When a youth's goal becomes adoption and the foster parents are an identified adoptive resource, the foster parents will have a task added to the service plan related to obtaining an attorney, completing the adoption conversion classes, completing the home study assessment and finalizing the adoption.
 - Foster parents are notified immediately when the youth's visitation plan is changed. As soon as there is a change in visitation, a new visitation plan is completed and the foster parents are given a copy of the new plan.
- 6. The right to be provided a fair, timely, and impartial investigation of complaints concerning the foster parents' licensure, to be provided the opportunity to have a person of the foster parents' choosing present during the investigation, and to be provided due process during the investigation; the right to be provided the opportunity to request and receive mediation and an administrative review; and the right to have decisions concerning a licensing corrective plan specifically explained and tied to the licensing standards violated.**
- When a licensing complaint is received, the licensing worker will immediately begin a licensing investigation. An unannounced visit will be made within two business days of the complaint to discuss the complaint with the caregiver. At this time, the foster parent will be informed of their

right to have a person of their choosing present during the investigation. That person will be allowed four hours to arrive at the home.

- The licensing worker will complete the licensing investigation within 30 days of receipt of the complaint, unless extenuating circumstances prevent its timely completion. If an extension of this timeline is necessary, the foster parent will be informed of this by licensing staff.
- If the allegation involves a hotline report, a concurrent investigation completed by DCFS will take place. A DCFS Child Protection Service Investigator and Family Service Center licensing staff will investigate the allegations together and prepare separate reports. Sometimes youth are removed from the foster parents' home while the investigation is taking place and foster children cannot have contact with the alleged perpetrator.
- The Family Service Center Executive Director and Foster Care Program Director will determine if the youth can return to the home when the investigation is completed. Written notification will be provided to the foster parent concerning the move of the youth as well as the decision to place the youth back into the home or the reason why they cannot return. This information will be provided in a Notice of Decision form (CFS-151) and a Change of Placement form (CFS-151B).
- If licensing violations are found and the foster parent is willing and able to make corrections in a short period of time, a written corrective action plan will be developed with the foster parents. The corrective action plan will contain three parts; the exact licensing violations that were found, a clear statement of what is expected in correcting the violations, and a specified time frame for completion of tasks to remedy the violation.
- After the licensing investigation is completed, it will be submitted to DCFS. Within 5 business days of approval by DCFS, licensing staff will send a letter to the foster parent summarizing the findings of the investigation. Foster parents have a right to appeal the findings of an investigation by requesting an informal supervisory review of the decision. This request must be made within ten business days of the post-marked date of the letter. An informal appeal meeting will be scheduled upon receipt of the foster parents' written request.
- The licensing worker, Foster Care Program Director, and foster parents are required to attend this meeting. The foster parent may bring an attorney or representative to this meeting. Foster parents may share relevant additional information at the meeting. After an informal supervisory review, the licensing decision will either be upheld or overturned.

- The process stops if the decision is overturned at informal supervisory review. If the decision is upheld, the licensing enforcement process begins and an administrative hearing may be held. During the investigation process, the foster parent may decide to voluntarily surrender their license. If this decision is made, the request to close the license should be put in writing with a signature and mailed to the licensing worker.

7. The right, at any time during which a youth is placed with the foster parent, to receive additional information that is relevant to the care of the youth.

- At the time of placement, foster parents should receive information concerning the youth's health, behaviors, education, visitation schedule and any other pertinent information needed to properly care for the youth.
- Caseworkers are to provide the foster parents with Section VI, which contains all child-specific information.
- Caseworkers are to complete a Sharing Information with Caregiver form (CFS 600-4) to ensure that all proper information is shared with the caregiver when the youth is placed. Family Service Center does peer reviews for all of our foster care case files on a monthly basis. Each case file is reviewed a minimum of every six months. The CFS 600-4 forms are to be in the case file at the time of the monthly reviews. If the form is not in the case file, the caseworker is given 30 days to get the form completed. At the end of the 30 days, the file is checked to ensure that this has been done. Case notes are reviewed to ensure that any information shared with foster parents is documented, i.e. texts, e-mails, phone calls and in-person contacts with foster parents.
- When a foster parent attends an IEP meeting, a Clinical Staffing or a CIPP, the foster parent is given a copy of the IEP or the Action Plans developed at the Clinical Staffing or CIPP.
- Foster parents and caseworkers are to sign the CFS 600-4 form to acknowledge that this information is provided to the foster parent.
- At any time after placement occurs, a foster parent has the right to request additional information concerning the youth. In order to protect the biological parents' rights and confidentiality of information, this information will be provided to the foster parent whenever it is essential to meet the youth's needs.
- It is the foster care Program Director's responsibility to ensure that caseworkers are aware of what information is appropriate to share with foster parents. This is reviewed in monthly supervisions as well as during

weekly Foster Care Team meetings. Foster parents will also receive training on confidentiality and what is and is not appropriate information to share. The Licensing Specialist reviews confidentiality at semi-annual monitoring visits and answers any questions the foster parent may have on information they can and cannot share.

- Per DCFS policy, Subpart A of Rule 301.120, information is to be provided to foster parents in a timely manner. Caseworkers are required to complete a case note that documents any information shared with the foster parents. These case note documents become part of the youth's case file. Supervisors review the case notes monthly to ensure that documentation has occurred. Supervisors also discuss information shared with caregivers at monthly supervision. Additionally, the supervisors discuss all relevant issues occurring in the foster home at monthly supervision and attend home visits randomly to ensure that the foster parent is being treated fairly and as a professional member of the Child Welfare Team.
 - Case aides will provide the foster parent with information about the visit that pertains to the youth; when they were last changed, if they ate, or slept, etc.
 - These policies, as well as other pertinent policies, are reviewed with caseworkers at weekly staff meetings. Caseworkers are trained in HIPAA laws related to information sharing through annual HIPAA trainings.
 - Family Service Center will conduct quarterly trainings for staff, to provide the correct information and paperwork to foster parents when it is in the best interest of the youth.
- 8. The right to be provided, prior to or at the time of placement, available information in writing about the youth necessary for the proper care of the youth, including medical history, educational history, the youth's portion of the client service plan and other relevant background information.**
- To ensure that appropriate information is shared with the caregiver at the time of placement, the caseworker will complete a Sharing Information with Caregivers form (CFS 600-4), discuss the information with the foster parent, and sign the CFS 600-4 form together.
 - The foster parent will then receive a packet of information that includes the youth portion of the service plan (due within 45 days of case opening), medical history (may not always be available at initial case opening), educational history, and any other relevant background information.

- In cases when a youth is placed on an emergency basis, the caseworker will share the information with the caregiver verbally and will provide the foster parent with the CFS 600-4 and other available information within ten days.
 - The CFS 600-4 form will be reviewed by the foster care supervisor at the time of placement to ensure that all important information is relayed to the foster parent.
 - Family Service Center has established rules and procedures for sharing information with foster parents to ensure compliance with HIPAA regulations and DCFS Rule 340, Section 340.40. The foster care staff participates in weekly staff meetings where guidance and training is provided to staff on these rules and procedures, as well as proper completion of the CFS 600-4 form. Caseworkers are required to include any information discussed with caregivers in a case note.
 - When youth are placed with foster parents for respite purposes, Family Service Center supplies pertinent information for caring for the youth on a short-term basis. The caseworker completes an internal form that details information about the youth such as medications, behaviors, special needs, etc. The youth's medical card, medication, clothing and needed supplies are sent with the youth to the respite foster home.
 - Family Service Center does peer reviews for all of our foster care case files on a monthly basis. Each case file is reviewed a minimum of every six months. The CFS 600-4 forms are to be in the case file at the time of the monthly reviews. If the form is not in the case file, the caseworker is given 30 days to get the form completed. At the end of the 30 days, the file is checked to ensure that this has been done. Case notes are reviewed to ensure that any information shared with foster parents is documented, i.e. texts, e-mails, phone calls and in-person contacts with foster parents.
 - Family Service Center assembles binders for each youth that can be taken with them to ensure any placement the youth is at, whether permanent or respite, will know pertinent information about the youth,
- 9. The right to be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings concerning the foster child in order to actively participate in the case planning and decision making process regarding the youth in their care, including individual service planning meetings, administrative case reviews, interdisciplinary staffings, and individual education planning meetings; the right to be informed of decisions made by the courts or the agency concerning the youth; the right to have their input on the plan of services for a youth 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 within the context of the team, including therapists, physicians and teachers.

- Family Service Center caseworker will notify the foster parent about the time, date and location of all Child and Family Team Meetings, court hearings, administrative case reviews (ACR's), Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings or any other relevant staffings as soon as they are scheduled. All foster parents are encouraged to attend these meetings whenever possible either in person or by phone.
 - The caseworker will provide the foster parent with the names of therapists, teachers, physicians, and other service providers upon assignment. The foster parent will be provided the opportunity to meet with these service providers in order to voice concerns about or suggestions for services.
 - If foster parents are unable to attend the meetings listed above, they are invited to participate by phone when possible or to share any concerns, suggestions or other input with their caseworker.
 - The caseworker will share this information at the meeting on the foster parents' behalf. Foster parents are immediately notified by their caseworker of any decisions made by the agency or courts during any of these meetings. As a member of the Child and Family Team, foster parents have the right to be informed and involved in any case planning for the youth in their care.
 - Of special significance the current foster parents as well as previous foster parents, if applicable and appropriate, should be an active part of any Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) to provide information related to a youth's behaviors or special needs. This input is valuable especially when determining if a youth qualifies for an increase in their level of care or if a youth requires a more restrictive living environment.
 - If a youth is placed in a residential setting and the foster parents want the youth stepped back down into their home after residential treatment, the foster parents should be participants in all meetings and staffings related to the youth's progress as well as discharge planning.
- 10. The right to be provided, in a timely and consistent manner, with any information a caseworker has regarding the youth and the youth's family which is pertinent to the care and needs of the youth and to making a permanency plan for the youth. Disclosure of information concerning the youth's family shall be limited to information that is**

essential for understanding the needs of and providing care to the youth in order to protect the rights of the youth's family. When a positive relationship exists between the foster parent and the youth's family, the youth's family may consent to disclosure of additional information.

- When looking for placement, the caseworker provides the foster parents with information regarding the reason the youth came into foster care, visitation schedules, school information, health, behavior, mental health and extracurricular activities of the youth in care. Information regarding the visitation plan with siblings and/or biological parents, and any guidelines that are established for the visits, is reviewed with the foster parents prior to placement.
- Foster parents are notified whenever changes are made to the visitation plan. When possible, visits are scheduled around the youth's regularly scheduled appointments or extracurricular activities.
- At the time of placement, all pertinent information such as family background, medical information, educational information, emotional status, behaviors, the youth's normal routines, and likes and dislikes will be discussed with the foster parents and noted in the caseworker's case notes. The Child Information Placement form is used to ensure all necessary information is reviewed by the foster parents. As the case progresses and more information is available, the caseworker will share such pertinent information with the foster parents.
- The caseworker will document the additional information shared with the foster parents in a case note. In order to ensure caseworker accountability in providing this essential information, caseworkers have regularly scheduled supervision with the foster care supervisor where each case is discussed. When needed, the foster care supervisor will accompany caseworkers to home visits at foster homes.
- Caseworkers are to complete a Sharing Information with Caregiver form (CFS 600-4) to ensure that all proper information is shared with the caregiver when the youth is placed. Family Service Center does peer reviews for all of our foster care case files on a monthly basis. Each case file is reviewed a minimum of every six months. The CFS 600-4 forms are to be in the case file at the time of the monthly reviews. If the form is not in the case file, the caseworker is given 30 days to get the form completed. At the end of the 30 days, the file is checked to ensure that this has been done. Case notes are reviewed to ensure that any information shared with foster parents is documented, i.e. texts, e-mails, phone calls and in-person contacts with foster parents.

- Foster parents receive formalized training regarding information disclosure through PRIDE training and this is reviewed at semi-annual monitoring visits by the Licensing Specialist. Due to the nature of the relationship, relative and fictive kin foster parents may have considerably more information about the family background of the youth than traditional foster parents would have.
- If appropriate, foster parents are encouraged to communicate with biological parents. DCFS Procedure 315, specifically Shared Parenting, encourages foster parents to supervise parent/child visits and/or provide some informal parent coaching or mentoring. Foster parents are informed about the reunification reimbursement that is available if a foster parent supervises visits and spends extra time with the biological parents and the youth.
- In Family Service Center's foster care program, over 60% of children are placed in the home of a relative or a fictive kin. We utilize the knowledge and familiarity that these foster parents have about the youth placed with them to develop a service plan that meets the individual youth's needs. We obtain information from the biological parents as well as the foster parents related to the youth's medical, social, developmental and educational needs. Family Service Center reaches out to foster parents to not just care for the youth but to maintain family connection by allowing visitation in the foster home, by having foster parents supervise visits when possible, by having foster parents supervise holiday visits between the parents and youth and by having foster parents attend all Child Family Team Meetings, ACR's, Court Hearings and any other pertinent staffings when possible.
- Foster parents' input regarding the youth's overall behavioral, medical and mental health well-being is discussed during home visits with the caseworkers. Because relative foster parents are not licensed initially, the caseworkers are in the homes twice per month or more as needed
- Trainings for our staff are held regularly to discuss confidentiality and how to not breach it, specifically with relatives and fictive kin.

11. The right to reasonable written notice of (I) any change in a child's case plan (II) the reasons for the change or termination in placement. The notice shall be waived only in case of a court order or when the youth is determined to be at imminent risk of harm.

- Prior to termination of a foster care placement, all efforts are made to stabilize the family. Utilizing supportive services will be used as necessary and appropriate. When a change in placement is determined to be

necessary, foster parents will be provided a 14-day notification by the Notice of Decision (CFS 151). This document will include the reason for the change in placement, attempts at remediation, and a final determination of placement status, including the anticipated movement date.

- The caseworker will also provide the foster parent, biological parent and the Guardian Ad Litem with the Notice of Change of Placement form (CFS 151B), which explains how to request a Clinical Placement Review if they want to do so and the Notice of Change of Placement can be appealed. An appeal will not be allowed if the move is to place siblings together or if it is determined to be in the best interest of the child to move. The Notice of Change of Placement form will not be given in cases of a court order or when the child is determined to be at imminent risk of harm.
- Foster parents have the right to appeal decisions regarding change of placement. In order to appeal, the foster parent must call in or fax their request for an appeal within three days of receipt of the Notice of Change of Placement. A review will be scheduled with the DCFS Placement Review Coordinator. This meeting will take place within 10 days of the appeal being requested.
- If they are unable to maintain a child in their home, foster parents are encouraged to give Family Service Center a written 14-day notice. The agency will then work quickly to seek an alternate placement for the child. The child's belongings and all property of the child should move with the child to each placement.
- Respite is also provided to foster parents for emergency care or placement stabilization. It is not the intent that respite is available for babysitting arrangements for foster parents. It is expected that if a foster family is going on vacation or celebrating holidays, the child(ren) in the foster home would be included as part of the family.
- The following guidelines apply to respite:
 1. Children in specialized foster care receive 12 days of respite per year that are paid for by Family Service Center. Additional days need to be approved by the Foster Care Program Director.
 2. Children in traditional, relative or fictive kin foster care receive 6 days of respite per year that are paid for by Family Service Center. Additional days need to be approved by the Foster Care Director.
 3. There must be at least two weeks notice given when respite is requested unless there is an emergency.
 4. Respite requests must go through the caseworker and supervisor for approval prior to respite or the respite will not be reimbursed.

5. Day respite costs are not covered by Family Service Center unless specified by the Foster Care Program Director.
 6. Every attempt will be made to find respite; however, respite is not guaranteed.
 7. Factors impacting respite include: how many children the home is licensed to have, a child having a Supervision Plan, age range of the home, gender of the child, bedroom space/set up, foster parents' preference for age and gender of a child, school or day care situation, and therapy/visits/appointments the child may have.
 - Children cannot be left at Family Service Center for day respite. Special circumstances must be discussed with the caseworker and supervisor.
 - If a child has been sick within the previous 24 hours or they have a communicable condition such as head lice, they cannot go to respite.
 - When a child goes to respite, the foster parent must give the child's medical card to the respite provider.
 - If the child takes medication, an adequate supply of medication (along with the child's medication log) must accompany the child to respite.
 - The Foster Care Respite Information Sheet must accompany a child to respite. This needs to be signed by the caseworker and their supervisor.
 - Transportation arrangements for the child going to and returning from respite are to be covered by the foster parents. Assistance is available if needed.
- 12. 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 proceedings, and the court docket number of the case and the right to intervene in court proceedings or to seem mandamus under the Juvenile Court Act of 1987.**
- The youth's caseworker will verbally notify the foster parents of upcoming court hearings two weeks prior to the scheduled date. The information provided should include the date, time, judge's name and court docket number. This is to be documented in a case note and retained in the case record. During monthly supervision the supervisor will check case notes and ensure caseworkers are informing foster parents of court dates in a timely manner.
 - The caseworker will remind the foster parents of their right to attend court hearings and of their right to be heard. They are also apprised of their right to appeal decisions and to request a writ of mandamus. If granted, the writ of mandamus will allow the foster parent to be in court. The time

and date of subsequent court dates are to be announced at each hearing. If the foster parents are present, this announcement provides their first notification. Foster parents will receive a reminder about an upcoming court date whether or not they were present at the previous hearing.

- Family Service Center provides foster parents with court training, including but not limited to: understanding your role and responsibility in the court room, the court process, court report writing and education on court terminology.

13. The right to be considered as a placement option when a foster child who was formerly placed with the foster parents is to be re-entered into foster care when such placement would be consistent with the best interest of the youth and other children in the home.

- If re-entry into placement occurs, Family Service Center will explore the available case history to identify the appropriateness of any previous placements. Family Service Center will access SACWIS (Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System) to obtain information about the youth's prior placements. In cases when a youth's previous placement history is unclear, DCFS licensing will be contacted and a search of the DCFS database will be requested.
- Family Service Center will review the youth's current needs and review the former foster parents' skill set. The Caregiver Matching Tool (CFS 2017) will also be utilized to help support whether the placement is consistent with the best interest of the youth.
- Caseworkers will consult with youth aged 12+ concerning their placement. In the event that they are re-entering the foster care system, Family Service Center will make every effort to reunite youth with foster families with whom they were previously placed. In such an occurrence, the caseworker will contact former caregivers to locate placement.
- Procedure 315, specifically Family Finding, requires that caseworkers look at individuals identified by the biological parents as possible relative placements or as individuals who could support the parents/youth while they are involved in the foster care system.

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

- All foster parents are provided with a copy of the Agency's written Foster Parent Grievance Procedure. This grievance process is to be used by foster parents only for grieving alleged violations of the Foster Parent Law

that are not covered by an already existing grievance or appeals process. Because there is a written procedure for such an occurrence, the appeals process for indicated cases of child abuse/neglect, licensing investigation findings and license revocations takes precedence over the Foster Parent Grievance procedure.

- When a foster parent indicates a desire to grieve a service decision, the caseworker refers them to the written Foster Parent Grievance Procedure, the immediate foster care supervisor and the DCFS Service Appeals Process. If the issue cannot be resolved internally, the foster care staff will provide information to allow the foster parent to access the DCFS appeals system. The foster parent will be provided this information and a copy of the service appeals pamphlet at a formal meeting.
- No foster parent should be treated with a lack of respect, harassed or retaliated against by any other party when exercising their right to appeal. Any such action by Family Service Center staff will result in severe disciplinary action, including possible termination. Any perceived retaliation or harassment should be reported immediately to Family Service Center's Executive Director at (217) 528-8406 and the DCFS Advocacy Office at (800) 232-3798.

15. 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 informed of the Foster Parent Hotline, which can be reached at (800) 572-2390, by the Inspector General's office during the PRIDE foster parent training. After a foster parent becomes licensed, the hotline will be discussed with foster parents at semi-annual monitoring visits and at yearly trainings provided by Family Service Center licensing staff. The brochure for the Office of the Inspector General will be provided to foster parents in the expandable file given to them at the time of initial placement.
- The DCFS Office of the Inspector General (OIG) was created to strengthen and reform the child welfare system. The mandate of the OIG is to investigate misconduct, transgression, wrongdoing and violations of rules, procedures or laws by DCFS employees, foster parents, service providers, and contractors with the Department (see 20 ILCS 505/35.5 and 35.6). The DCFS Office of the Inspector General can be reached at (800) 722-9124.

Foster Parent Responsibilities:

- 1. The responsibility to openly communicate and share information about the youth with other members of the Child Welfare Team.**
 - The foster parent and caseworker are responsible for openly communicating issues or information concerning the service needs and pertinent issues concerning the youth in placement. Foster parents serve as integral members of the Child Welfare Team and should be treated as such. Caseworkers are to include the foster parents in the Child Welfare Team by encouraging participation in Child and Family Team meetings, Administrative Case Reviews (ACR's), Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings, court hearings, and other staffings that may occur. To ensure that the youth's needs are met, it is also important for foster parents to provide ongoing communication with the caseworker during regularly scheduled visits to the foster home. This open communication will help to shape the youth's service planning.
 - The importance of openly communicating information with the Child Welfare Team is covered at pre-licensure PRIDE training as well as at semi-annual monitoring visits by the licensing staff. Active participation is also covered in the foster parent training titled "Foster Care 101."
 - Family Service Center conducts annual trainings that discuss confidentiality and what foster parents have the right to know.

- 2. The responsibility to respect the confidentiality of information concerning foster children and their families and act appropriately within applicable confidentiality laws and regulations.**
 - At the time of placement, the importance of confidentiality is discussed with the foster parent and is reinforced on an ongoing basis during visits to the foster home. Specific areas that may or may not be discussed about each case will be emphasized and will be documented by the caseworker in a case note which will become a permanent record in the youth's case file.
 - Additionally, foster parents are asked to sign an agreement of confidentiality to adhere to laws and regulations concerning confidential information regarding the foster child in placement. Confidentiality of information is defined and discussed with foster parents during pre-licensure PRIDE training, and its importance is continually discussed with the foster parents during semi-annual monitoring visits and at least one foster parent training held yearly at Family Service Center.

- Information on confidentiality laws and regulations is made available to foster parents in the initial licensure packet and again at time of placement.

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

- Foster parents have a responsibility to advocate for the youth in their care by being an active member of the Child Welfare Team, participating in important meetings concerning the youth, and openly communicating any information about the youth in care. Foster parents are encouraged to attend all Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM's), Administrative Case Reviews (ACR's), Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation Meetings (CIPP's), court hearings and other case staffings regarding the youth as they have important and valuable input into the youth's service needs and goals.
- Foster parents receive training on educational advocacy within a year of licensure and are reminded of this responsibility while in pre-licensure PRIDE training. Caseworkers continue to inform foster parents of the benefits of advocating for the educational rights of the youth in their care through discussions at home visits. DCFS has an experienced Educational Liaison who assists foster parents and private agencies concerning educational rights issues.
- It is the caseworker's responsibility to follow up with foster parents regarding their concerns or requests. If a foster parent does not feel the youth's caseworker has listened to or taken proper action regarding foster parent requests or concerns, the foster parent is encouraged to contact the Foster Care Program Director.
- The Service Appeal Process (CFS 1050-32) brochure is given to foster parents at the time of placement and upon request. If a foster parent decides an appeal is necessary, foster parents can refer to the brochure on how to begin the procedure.
- Foster parents should notify the caseworker immediately if a youth in their home requires medical attention, has a need for counseling services, is being bullied at school, etc. so that the caseworker can assist the foster parent with obtaining appropriate services.
- Foster parents should notify the caseworker if there are concerns related to visits such as behaviors prior to or after visits so that the caseworker or counselor can address these issues with the youth and help them transition to and from visits.

- Foster parents should notify the caseworker if there are concerns related to unwanted or inappropriate contact from the youth's biological parent/family.

4. The responsibility to treat youth in the foster parent's care and the youth's families with dignity, respect and consideration.

- Foster parents are expected to treat the youth in their care and the youth's family in a respectful manner. At the time of licensure, Family Service Center licensing staff will discuss the level of involvement that the foster parents are comfortable having with biological parents as well as the foster parents' responsibility to support the youth's permanency goal. The foster parents are asked to sign an agreement stating that they understand these responsibilities, and this will be kept as part of their foster parent licensure file. In addition, foster parents sign an agreement stating that they will not discuss the youth or the youth's family in a derogatory manner.
- During regular visits with the caseworker, foster parents will be asked for observations about any problems or other impressions resulting from the youth's visits with birth parents and/or siblings. Concerns will be recorded in the caseworker's case notes and will be monitored and discussed as visits take place.
- Quarterly or any other scheduled Child and Family Team Meetings provide a chance for the foster parents and birth parents to work together as a team to ensure that the youth's needs are met. The caseworker, foster care supervisor and other appropriate professionals attend the Child and Family Team Meetings and ensure that both parties participate fully and treat each other with dignity and respect. Feedback and impressions of the foster parents are considered to be a unique and valuable source of information. Foster parents are instructed on the importance of their observations during pre-licensure PRIDE training and its importance is reinforced through regular contact with the child's caseworker.
- Family Service Center also provides ongoing training to foster parents regarding cultural competency and setting boundaries with youth and families. We understand that at times it is difficult to handle certain situations that may arise when a youth is from a different culture than the foster parents' own or that it may be difficult to develop a healthy relationship with the youth's biological family. For this reason Family Service Center provides foster parents with tools that can help them develop healthy relationships with biological families. Family Service

Center also provides foster parents with information on how to embrace and celebrate a youth's culture.

- DCFS Procedure 315, specifically Shared Parenting, encourages foster parents to assist biological parents through supervising visits, informal parent coaching, mentoring, etc. to aide with reunification. This allows the youth to see that the foster parents and their biological parents are working together to return the youth home.

5. The responsibility to recognize the foster parents' own individual and familial strengths and limitations when deciding whether to accept a youth into care; and the responsibility to recognize the foster parent's own support needs and utilize supports in providing care for foster children.

- In cases when Family Service Center is responsible for placing a youth in foster care, every effort will be made to assure a good fit for both the family and the youth. This process will include completion of the Sharing Information with the Caregiver form (CFS 600-4) and the Matching Tool (CFS 2017). The mutual assessment process is used during continued interaction with the caseworker during regular home visits and with licensing staff at semi-annual monitoring visits and provides an opportunity for foster parents and foster care staff members to discuss problems or concerns, which may include the need for additional supportive services for the family or the youth.
- Referrals for added services are a part of the ongoing work with foster families and are important in maintaining stable placements for youth in the foster family home. When additional support or training is needed, foster parents will be referred to appropriate workshops, trainings, materials, counseling and extra support by Family Service Center staff.
- During the licensing process, licensing staff and PRIDE trainers will discuss and address the strengths and weaknesses of potential foster parents. The licensing worker will discuss the gender, age, race, behaviors and health issues the foster parents feel comfortable caring for and will take these preferences, along with the foster parents' strengths and weaknesses, into consideration during the placement process.
- Foster parents will be forthcoming with licensing staff about the youth's preferences in their home. If something does not work, it should be expressed to the licensing staff as soon as possible.
- Whenever possible Family Service Center will arrange for an in-person meeting between the foster parents and the youth as well as

pre-placement visits before a youth is permanently placed in the foster home.

6. The responsibility to be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations in improving the quality of care and service to youth and families.

- Family Service Center will offer a minimum of nine foster parent meetings and one recognition event every year to give foster parents an opportunity to meet as a group and develop connections with one another. As well as the training provided at the foster parent meetings, caregivers will have the opportunity to share ideas with each other and discuss other services or practices they feel should be implemented.
- Foster parents are encouraged to explore other foster parent support services such as: 1) National Foster Parent Association (nfpaonline.org), 2) Foster Parent/Adoptive Parent Association (ilfapa.org), and 3) Foster Care Central (fostercarecentral.org).
- In addition to the Family Service Center foster parent group, relative foster parents are encouraged to participate in the Relatives as Parents Network (RAPN). The Springfield area group is hosted by The Parent Place. The Parent Place can be reached at (217) 753-8730 with any questions or to RSVP to a meeting.
- A foster parent support group is available where foster parents can participate in “brown bag” trainings to read books as a group, view videos or discuss specific topics relevant to foster parents.

7. The responsibility to assess the foster parent’s ongoing individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.

- Foster parents have many opportunities to receive training related to their identified needs, including Family Service Center’s monthly foster parent meetings, DCFS online in-service digital training, the Family Service Center library, community training events, etc. Foster parent meetings are held at Family Service Center on a monthly basis. Input as to topics covered comes from foster parents, caseworkers, parents or clinical staff. Foster parents are encouraged to communicate openly with the casework and licensing staff about any training needs or concerns they may have. Family Service Center staff will assist foster parents in locating training resources to address this need, and provide one-on-one training with Family Service Center staff or an experienced foster parent.
- Foster parents have the ability to make requests for training that would be beneficial at all foster parent meetings and on a semi-annual licensing

survey. Family Service Center's Licensing Department works diligently in searching for training materials that would benefit the foster parents. Notification of trainings is sent through e-mail and/or mailings. Foster parents may register for DCFS trainings directly through the Office of Training at (877) 800-3393, at www.dcfstraining.org or with the assistance of licensing staff.

- Through training offered yearly on topics such as Trauma Informed Parenting, Stress Management, Foster Care 101 and De-escalation, foster parents are equipped with tools to help them care for youth placed in their home.
- Child Care is provided for all foster parents attending trainings held at the Family Service Center agency office.

8. The responsibility to develop and assist in implementing strategies to prevent placement disruptions, recognizing the traumatic impact of placement disruptions on a foster child and all members of the foster family; and the responsibility to provide emotional support for the foster family if preventable strategies fail and placement disruptions occur.

- At the time of placement and throughout the time a youth is placed with foster parents, foster parents receive information concerning the youth's emotional, medical, developmental and/or behavioral needs. Foster parents have the right to request additional information concerning a youth at any time the youth is placed in their home. Foster parents receive training and all available resources to stabilize a placement including but not limited to: respite, behavioral specialist services, counseling and in-home assistance.
- The foster parents, caseworkers and other Child Welfare Staff have the responsibility to identify and report any previously unidentified issues that may disrupt the youth's placement. Family Service Center provides foster parents with a 24-hour on-call crisis line (217-685-8119) that is staffed by foster care caseworkers on a rotating basis. Foster parents are also provided with the CARES (Crisis and Referral Entry Service) hotline at (800) 345-9049, which provides access to emergency services for youth in care on a 24-hour basis.
- Supportive services are offered such as individual and/or family counseling to prevent placement disruption or to assist with a smooth transition for the youth and foster parents if a placement disruption does occur.
- If a placement is identified as being at risk of disruption, a family meeting will be convened to develop a plan to enhance support to the foster family

in order to stabilize the youth's placement. If the stabilization efforts put into place at this meeting prove to be unsuccessful, Family Service Center staff will work with foster parents to maintain the placement while an alternative placement is identified for the youth. Whenever it is possible, foster parents are asked to give a 14-day notice when a placement cannot be maintained.

- Family Service Center employs Behavioral Specialists for those youth who receive specialized foster care services. Behavioral Specialists assist and train foster parents in the foster home with behavior management techniques. They also provide mentoring for the youth as well as respite time for the foster parents.
- For traditional, fictive kin and home-of-relative youth at risk of placement disruption, the caseworker will make a referral to IPS (Intensive Placement Services), which is operated by Rutledge Youth Foundation. The program is designed to assist families with placement stabilization and/or counseling to maintain a foster placement.
- In accordance with DCFS Procedure 315 Family Service Center staff will try to identify someone on the Family Finding list as a possible placement for a youth initially and when a youth's placement disrupts.
- Foster parents will be forthcoming with any issues they may have with staff or youth to help preserve the placement.

9. The responsibility to know the impact foster parenting has on individuals and family relationships; and the responsibility to endeavor to minimize, as much as possible, any stress that results from foster parenting.

- During pre-service PRIDE training, foster parents are trained to recognize signs of stress in themselves and their families. Caseworkers will regularly discuss stress and burnout with foster families at home visits, and will continually assess the foster family's stress level during the ongoing relationship. In an effort to ensure that stress is being effectively managed, caseworker may refer foster parents and/or youth for additional services and provide assistance in developing individual stress reduction techniques with the foster parents. Family Service Center provides in-home counseling to foster parents when the stressor is deemed to be related to a foster care placement.
- Family Service Center offers an annual foster parent training on Stress Management to help the foster parents identify stressors in their environment and positive coping skills to utilize.

- Family Service Center also offers community counseling that may be of assistance to foster families to address and minimize stress as a result of foster parenting.
- Family Service Center provides respite care for all levels of foster care, including relative, traditional, fictive kin and specialized foster care. Respite care is provided on a case-by-case basis and is approved by the foster care supervisor and Foster Care Program Director.
- Licensed foster parents may access the DCFS Voluntary Hold system if they decide for a period of time not to accept additional foster children for placement. Holds can be requested for any purpose, including life changes and simply needing a break from taking placements. Foster parents can contact the Family Service Center licensing department to request a hold on placements.

10. The responsibility to know the rewards and benefits to children, parents, families, and society that come from foster parenting and to promote the foster parent experience in a positive way.

- Foster parents are encouraged to speak positively about their experiences in the community and to assist in recruiting new foster parents when possible. Caregivers may be asked to share their experiences in foster care with potential foster parents at recruitment events held by Family Service Center.
- Family Service Center provides on-going recognition of the valuable service foster parents provide during the agency's regular contact with the families. The agency mails notes of congratulations and/or thanks for specific achievements and milestones achieved by the foster families. Foster parents also receive public recognition for years of service each May at Family Service Center's annual foster parent appreciation picnic. The agency also hosts Halloween and Christmas parties for the foster families.
- Family Service Center recognizes foster parents on the Family Service Center website.
- Family Service Center partners with community groups such as the VFW, the Elks and the Lions Club to provide foster parents with school supplies, Halloween costumes and Christmas gifts.

11. The responsibility to know the roles, rights and responsibilities of foster parents, other professionals in the child welfare system, the foster child, and the foster child's own family.

- During pre-licensure PRIDE training, foster parents receive a thorough overview of their rights and responsibilities, the role of foster families and other professionals, and appropriate relationships between foster families and birth families. Yearly, foster parents are given the opportunity to work with the licensing department on updating the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. The approved copy of this plan is provided to foster parents each January and appraises foster parents of the efforts made by Family Service Center to ensure their rights and responsibilities. Foster parents are continually made aware of the integral part they play on the Child Welfare Team and are encouraged to attend all Child and Family Team meetings, ACR's, court hearings, clinical staffings, IEP meetings and any other relevant meetings.
- Foster parents are encouraged to participate in foster parent meetings and trainings, which are held at least nine times every year. In addition to training, attending these meetings allows foster parents to be kept informed of policy changes, staff changes, and other important announcements made by the agency. Foster parents are also surveyed twice annually by Family Service Center's internal Satisfaction Committee and the information is compiled and presented to the agency's Board of Directors. Family Service Center management is made aware of any concerns or other feedback obtained from these surveys and takes steps to address any issues.
- Foster parents are encouraged to participate in activities and events that support and recognize the importance of foster caregivers. Family Service Center partners with foster parents to promote community awareness of the need for foster parent recruitment.

12. The responsibility to know, and as necessary, fulfill the foster parents' responsibility to serve as a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act; and the responsibility to know the child welfare agency's policy regarding allegations that foster parents have committed child abuse or neglect and applicable administrative rules and procedures governing investigations of these allegations.

- Foster parents are initially trained concerning their status as mandated reporters at pre-licensure PRIDE training. During the licensure process, foster parents are asked to review and sign a statement affirming their responsibilities as a mandated reporter. At this time, foster parents are also made aware of the procedures governing allegations and investigations of abuse or neglect, and are also given copies of the

Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes (Rule 402), which outlines the requirements for foster parent licensure and the investigation process. After licensure, foster parents will receive annual refreshers on their responsibility as mandated reporters during monthly foster parent meetings and semi-annual monitoring visits.

- Foster parents are given information about the investigation process at the time of licensure. If a violation in a foster home is being investigated, the licensing department is responsible for again explaining the licensing investigation process and informing the foster parent of the rights afforded to foster caregivers during this process. Depending on the situation, a licensing investigation can either be completed concurrently with DCFS investigators or be a stand-alone investigation by Family Service Center.
- Foster parents are informed of the importance of notifying the caseworker immediately of any concerns that they may have regarding sexualized behavior among youth placed in their home. Caseworkers, foster care supervisors and foster parents work together to determine if the youth meets the criteria for sexually problematic behavior. The caseworker meets with the foster parents to discuss available services and options for the youth and family, and to gather information from the foster parents for the completion of a supervision plan. The caseworker will help the foster family make the necessary changes in their home (i.e. bedroom composition, alarms, etc.) These criteria are outlined in the Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes (Rule 402.9).

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

- As members of a youth's Foster Care Team, foster parents are encouraged to take an active role in permanency planning by attending court hearings, Integrated Assessments (IA's), Administrative Case Reviews (ACR's) and other important meetings pertaining to the youth placed in their home. Foster parents are continually reminded of the importance of their participation during PRIDE training, at semi-annual monitoring visits, and at regular visits from the youth's caseworker.
- The youth's caseworker will notify foster parents of the time, date, and location of upcoming court hearings, ACR's and other important meetings and will assist them in understanding what is to occur at these meetings. Family Service Center holds an annual foster parent training on the

purposes of such meetings. The youth's caseworker is responsible for informing the foster parents of a scheduled meeting as soon as the date of the meeting/hearing is known to the caseworker.

- Family Service Center provides training each year titled "Foster Care 101." In this training the foster parents gain knowledge on the Integrated Assessment process, Administrative Case Reviews, Service Plans, court proceedings and other important events and terminology pertinent to youth in care.
- Family Service Center provides training on DCFS Procedure 315 which covers Family Finding and Shared Parenting.

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

- The updated Foster Parent Law Implementation plan is distributed to foster parents every January and contains a current copy of the Foster Parent Grievance Procedure. Appeal procedures related to DCFS rules and regulations are reviewed with foster parents during PRIDE training and annually at a foster parent meeting. A copy of the Foster Parent Grievance Procedure is always available to foster parents by requesting it from the licensing department or from the local DCFS field office. The foster parents' rights are explained in full whenever an appeal is filed.

15. The responsibility to know and understand the importance of maintaining accurate and relevant records regarding the youth's history and progress; and the responsibility to be aware of and follow the procedures and regulations of the child welfare agency with which the foster parent is licensed or affiliated.

- At the time of placement, the caseworker and foster parent review the documentation that is to be kept and the importance of keeping good documentation. The caseworker will provide the foster parents with an expandable file in which to organize and maintain the youth's records in an orderly fashion. These requirements are also discussed during PRIDE training and at monthly foster parent meetings. Foster parents are to maintain copies of medical records, any physical conditions experienced by the youth, telephone numbers for the youth's physician, medication logs (CFS 534) and behavior logs (CFS 534-1). The names and contact information of persons to be contacted in an emergency are also to be maintained.
- The Licensing Specialist reviews record management at every monitoring visit held with foster parents. During monitoring visits emphasis is placed

on Rule 340.50(15) Foster Parent Code and Rule 402.26 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes “Records to be Maintained” including but not limited to: medical records, educational records, receipts, out-of-state travel consents and service provider reports.

16. The responsibility to share information, through the Child Welfare Team, with subsequent caregivers (whether the youth’s parent or another substitute caregiver) regarding the youth’s adjustment in the foster home.

- Foster parents, in cooperation with the caseworker, will complete the Shared Information with the Caregiver Form (CFS 600-4). This includes information about the youth, such as allergies, behaviors, service providers, and special areas of importance to the youth. This form is then given to the subsequent caregiver if a youth is moved to a different foster home.
- In addition, the youth’s expandable file is passed along to the subsequent caregiver regarding the youth. The subsequent caregiver is encouraged to contact the caseworker for any unclear or missing information on the youth, or may contact the prior caregiver, with their permission. If the youth is returning to the home of a parent, a Child and Family Team meeting is always convened to discuss the youth’s transition home and to discuss all pertinent information that the parent might need to know when the youth returns home.

17. The responsibility to provide care and services that are respectful of and responsive to the youth’s cultural needs and are supportive of the relationship between the youth and his or her own family; the responsibility to recognize the increased importance of maintaining a youth’s cultural identity when the race or culture of the foster family differs from that of the foster child; and the responsibility to take action to address these issues.

- Foster parents have the responsibility to inform their caseworker of weaknesses or barriers that may impede their ability to provide appropriate care and consideration of a foster child’s cultural differences. These issues are covered in pre-licensure PRIDE training, and specific information such as religious affiliation, holidays, celebrations and personal care issues are addressed individually with the foster parents by the caseworker.
- Families also receive support, assistance, and information regarding cultural sensitivity through the Relative as Parents Network. Caseworkers

are also invited to attend this workshop. Family Service Center offers training on cultural diversity and sensitivity as well. Family Service Center also encourages foster parents of other cultures to train other foster parents and staff on skin care, hair care, food, and traditions that are important to each culture.

Attachment A: 2020 Foster Parent Meeting/Training Schedule

Family Service Center offers foster parent trainings on the last Wednesday of each month from 11:30 am to 1:00 p.m. held at Family Service Center.

Family Service Center Foster Parent Training Schedule	
January 22 nd	Revised Licensing Standards
February 26 th	Avoiding Power Struggles
March 25 th	Bedwetting
April 29 th	Child-proofing the Home
May – Cancelled due to COVID-19	Foster Parent Appreciation Picnic at Refuge Ranch
June 24 th	Lifebook: Preparation
July 29 th	Therapy: Benefits of Youth in Therapy
August 26 th	Confidentiality
September 30 th	Transitioning from Foster Care to Adoption
October – To Be Scheduled	Foster Care Annual Halloween Party
November 25 th	Revised Implementation Plan
December – To Be Scheduled	Foster Care Annual Christmas Party

*Training dates and topic subject to change

Family Service Center also informs foster parents of trainings offered in the community through other service providers such as The Parent Place, Lincoln Prairie Behavioral Health Center, DCFS and The James Project.

Family Service Center holds annual Halloween and Christmas parties and celebrates foster parent appreciation in May by holding a special picnic honoring the foster parents' dedicated service.

Training fliers are e-mailed and/or mailed to the foster parents monthly to remind them of available trainings.

Childcare is provided for all foster parent trainings.

In 2021 we will be implementing Zoom Meetings as an additional way to provide foster parent trainings.

Attachment B: A list of names or actual signatures of foster parents involved in reviewing and/or revising the plan.

The following foster parents were involved in reviewing and revising the final 2021 plan:

Lavonne White, Bill Morgan, Linda Fenski, Mattie Foster (Review Team)

Attachment C: Actual signatures of foster parents who attest that they've reviewed and approved your final 2021 plan.

See attached.

Attachment D: A copy of the agency's/region's Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure.

See Pages 41 and 42

Attachment E: Copies of any Foster Parent Law grievances filed during the past year, with all identifying information redacted.

We did not have any grievances filed during the past year.

Attachment F: Summary of foster parent comments.

- "More transitional visits would be nice"
- "Caseworker needs to assist the foster parents in understanding what aspects of case are confidential from them and what they have a right to know."
- "The agency needs to insure that change of placement paperwork is given to foster parents."
- "There have been a lot of staff changes."
- "When I was a new foster parent, I didn't always know the best questions to ask before accepting a placement. It would be nice if they could give as much info as possible when they call."
- "When we got our relative placement we had no idea we could use respite."

Attachment G: Summary of agency response to foster parent comments.

- Foster parents are given a 14-day notice and the agency has put in a plan to incorporate more transitional visits during that time span.
- Foster parents are given the child specific portion of the case, given information regarding change in visits, and can attend ACRs and court hearings. HIPAA training is provided to staff on an annual basis. This information will be provided to foster parents as well during the initial visit and when licensing staff visits the home.
- There is a training being conducted to educate caseworkers on the proper paperwork to give to foster parents when a youth is moved from their home.
- Staff retention is an ongoing issue. Family Service Center is currently "hiring up" so that we have enough workers. There has been an increase in the number of cases coming into care. As a non-profit child welfare agency, it is not unusual for caseworkers to leave the agency after they have the two years experience

needed to transfer to DCFS. Family Service Center is making staff retention and recruitment a priority and are looking at ways that we can retain staff. See Introduction.

- Family Service Center has made it a priority for caseworkers to start using the CFS 600-4 for each time a child is placed. In situations that it is possible, the licensing worker will gather as much information on this form to share with foster parents when calling about a placement.
- Foster parents will be provided the correct information about our respite contract at the first visit.

Attachment H: Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Plan

See Attached

Attachment I: Adoption Photos from 2019 (With the Permission of the Adoptive Parents)

See Attached

Family Service Center

Policy Statement

Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure

Year 2019

Policy Statement: Family Service Center will maintain a foster parent grievance procedure. Caseworkers will inform the foster parents of their right to initiate a grievance and provide foster parents with a copy of the procedure when needed.

This grievance process is to be used by foster parents only for grieving alleged violations of the Foster Parent Law that are not covered by an already existing grievance or appeals process. It cannot be used to address issues that are covered by the service appeal process, the appeal process for indicated cases of child abuse/neglect, the process for appealing licensing investigation findings or license revocations, etc.

Section 1. “Grievance” refers to a dispute or disagreement raised by a foster parent against the Family Service Center or an employee of the Family Service Center involving the interpretation of any actions or course of actions in service to the foster parent.

Section 2. The grievance shall be put in writing and should clearly state the following:

- a. The exact nature of the grievance
- b. The exact date or dates of the act of commission or omission
- c. The identity of the party or parties who claim to be aggrieved
- d. The identity of the party or parties alleged to have committed the act of commission or omission
- e. The specific action or course of actions that alleged to have taken place
- f. The remedy which is being sought

Section 3. Procedure: Before initiating a written grievance, the foster parent should raise any matter of disagreement, concern, or dispute with their caseworker or the foster care supervisor of the caseworker in order to informally resolve as many matters as possible. In the event that a satisfactory settlement is not or cannot be reached, grievances shall be processed in the following manner:

Step 1: The foster parent shall present the grievance orally to the caseworker, or the foster care supervisor, explaining the nature and circumstances within five (5) working days after its occurrence. The foster care supervisor shall then attempt to resolve the matter and shall respond to the foster parent within five (5) working days after presentation of the grievance.

Step 2: If a satisfactory settlement is not reached under step one; the grievance is presented by the foster parent to the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan Liaison in writing on the form described in Section Two within five (5) working days after the

expiration time set forth in Step 1. The Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan Liaison shall issue a written decision to the foster parent within ten (10) working days after the date of the receipt of the written grievance.

Step 3: If a satisfactory settlement is not reached under step two; the grievance shall be presented by the employee for the foster parent to the Executive Director in writing in the form described in Section 2 within five (5) working days after the expiration of the time limit set forth in Step three. The Executive Director shall issue a written opinion to the foster parent within ten (10) working days after the receipt of the written grievance.

Step 4: If a satisfactory settlement is not reached under step three, the foster parent shall resubmit the written grievance after receipt of the response from the Executive Director as outlined in step three above, to the Family Service Center's Board of Directors for review. The foster parents may request a meeting, with legal counsel if desired, to present the grievance to the Family Service Center's Board of Directors. The findings and opinions of the Family Service Center's Board of Directors, in nature is a recommendation, are then transmitted to the Executive Director, whose decision shall be final.

Section 4: The internal foster parent grievance process does not replace any other criminal or legal actions outside of the Family Service Center which may be warranted.