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Shelter Youth & Family Services

FOSTER PARENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2026



**Healthy Families
Illinois™**

Shelter Youth & Family Services is committed to providing safe, inclusive, and supportive resources for youth and families from all backgrounds and identities.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, or SUGGESTIONS?

- **Contact: shelter@shelter-inc.org**

(847)255.8060

- **Licensing Specialist**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOSTER PARENT RIGHTS

1. Dignity and Respect	pg5
2. Training	pg6
3. Contact with Agency for Support	pg8
4. Timely Financial Reimbursement	pg9
5. Placement Plan	pg10
6. Investigation of Alleged Licensing Violations	pg11
7. Additional Information About Children in Their Care	pg13
8. Information Given About Children During or Prior to Placement	pg14
9. Notifications – Methodology	pg15
10. All Necessary Information on Child/Family	pg16
11. Child Movement-Replacement	pg17
12. Court Hearing Notification	pg18
13. Placement Option for Children Re-entering Care	pg19
14. Timely Access to Service Appeal System	pg19
15. Foster Parent Hotline	pg20

FOSTER PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Open Communication	pg22
2. Respecting Confidentiality	pg23
3. Advocating for Children in Care	pg23
4. Treating Children and Families with Dignity and Respect	pg25
5. Foster Parent Strengths & Weaknesses	pg26
6. Affiliations with Foster Parent Associations	pg27
7. Assess Foster Parent Ongoing Training Needs	pg27
8. Strategies to Prevent Placement Disruptions	pg28
9. Acknowledge/Minimize Stress	pg30
10. Promote Foster Parenting Positively	pg31
11. Roles, Rights, Responsibilities of Child Welfare Team	pg31
12. Mandated Reporter Responsibility	pg32
13. Understand ACRs and Court Hearings	pg33

14. Understand Agency Appeals System	pg34
15 Maintain Accurate and Complete Records	pg35
16. Communication with Child Welfare Team	pg35
17. Cultural Sensitivity	pg36

FOSTER PARENT RIGHTS:

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

The staff at Shelter Youth & Family Services consider foster parents to be of paramount importance to the welfare of foster children. The foster parents will be treated with the dignity, respect and consideration given to each member of the child welfare system. Shelter Youth & Family Services staff demonstrates our respect for foster parents in the following ways:

- Foster parents are kept informed of program and staff changes (for example, when the assigned Child Welfare Specialist changes)
- Office telephone systems are easy to navigate, and Child Welfare Specialists can be reached directly or through the office manager. The phone system has been upgraded to new phones, making it more user friendly with direct extensions. When necessary, foster parents are given the staff's cell phone numbers.
- Home and family visits are scheduled with foster parents as far in advance as possible and with consideration for the foster parent's schedule. Foster parents are made aware that unannounced home visits may be conducted in accordance with DCFS Rules and Procedure when needed to assess licensing compliance and/or safety issues.
- Foster parents are contacted as soon as possible when the Child Welfare Specialist needs to cancel or change appointments or when they are late for an appointment.
- Child Welfare Specialist address foster parents by "Mr., Mrs., Ms." when appreciated by the foster parents.
- Foster parents' accomplishments with their birth children, their lives and work experience are recognized, valued, and utilized.
- All agency staff are expected to respond to foster parent requests, questions, and needs as they arise.
- The Child Welfare Specialist is expected to routinely ask the foster parents questions to elicit how they are adjusting to the presence of the child in their home, how it is affecting the family, and other questions that are designed to elicit their needs.

- As indicated, the Foster Care Director develops performance goals for annual evaluations for the Child Welfare Specialist.
- The Licensing Specialist maintains an up-to-date mailing list, so agency communications go to all foster parents. Foster parents who prefer email are contacted electronically.
- Shelter Youth & Family Services considers all foster home applicants regardless of race, culture, marital status, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation.

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

- Shelter Youth & Family Services requires all appropriate applicants requesting to be traditional foster parents to participate in and complete the Foster Pride/Adopt Pride training. This training uses the co-training model. The trainers are one professional and one professional foster parent that present the training to new foster parents. The Licensing Specialist notifies foster parents of the DCFS requirements for training. The Licensing Specialist refers foster parent applicants to the fifteen-session PRIDE training and the LGBTQIA+: Building Safety & Trust training. PRIDE training is offered as virtual redesign or Redesign on-site. ***Foster parents are given the DCFS Training Team phone number in case there is foster parent training assistance or questions. The DCFS Training Unit phone number is 877-800-3393.***
- Relative caregivers, who are seeking to be licensed, are required to complete the 12-hour Pre-Service Foster Parent training for Relative & Kinship Care including LGBTQIA+: Building Safety & Trust training. The training may be taken on-site, virtual, self-guided or the relative caregivers can view the DVD. Virtual training is the preferred training for related caregivers.
- ***Relative Foster Parents who are seeking to be traditional foster parents will be encouraged and supported to complete the 31-hour PRIDE training.***
- Emergency Foster Parents are required to complete the 31-hour PRIDE training. Once a foster parent is licensed, they are required to complete 18-hour Emergency Foster Care (EFC) training. Shelter Youth & Family Services will also provide training that focuses on the children that the Emergency Foster Care program serves.
- Child Welfare Specialist and foster parents mutually assess their training needs and parenting skills. These are discussed during home visits and in the Child and Family Team Meetings with regard to meeting the developmental level and emotional needs of children in care. Shelter Youth & Family Services Foster Care Director will

discuss parenting skills issues with foster parents as needed. Foster parents will be allowed the opportunity to discuss any training they feel they may not need if requested by the agency.

- A regular use of a mutual assessment will be implemented to help determine foster parent training needs. Foster parents and staff will develop an assessment tool that will help assist in determining any training foster parents may benefit from.
- Foster parents will have access to additional on-line training that can assist them in parenting skills and meeting the needs of the child(ren) in their home. Foster parents will be provided assistance by the licensing representative with scheduling on-line training. Foster parents will also be provided with scheduled DCFS in class training that the licensing representative can assist them in registering for.
- Historically the following trainings have been provided and will continue to be provided in FY26:
 - Trauma-Informed Parenting: Using Lifebooks
 - Online Foster Parent Café: Going Through Ch-ch-ch Changes
 - Online Foster Parent Café: Fill Your Cup
 - Online Foster Parent Café: Birds of a Feature – Finding Your Flock
 - Online Foster Parent Vitality Café: Invest in Yourself
 - Online Foster Parent Café: Rooted in Connections – Nurturing Families Together
- Foster Parents are always paired with the Child Welfare Specialist on their child(ren)'s case and can seek information from them. Some foster parents can be paired with a staff member for a “co-training” approach, the model used in PRIDE training, in learning about fostering and the needs of their foster child. Shelter Youth & Family Services will continue to identify foster parents who want to assist in co-training by meeting with them to schedule the agenda and contents of the training. The training will then be facilitated by the trainer and the foster parent. The training schedule will then be reflected to show that training dates will be available to foster parents and staff to attend.
- “Co-training” approach would give the foster parent the ability to learn about the challenges that they are facing with the child that is placed in their home. This approach would be able to train and focus on the difficulties that the foster parent is experiencing personally with the child to learn how to better approach the situation.
- The agency uses the Shelter Family Holiday Party and annual 5K Run to introduce Foster Parents and initiate relationships. When possible, we pair an experienced Foster Parent with a new Foster Parent to assist with training, orientations, and supportive communication.

- For those children who are in therapy, their counselors are a source of guidance and training of parenting skills with foster parents.
- Shelter Youth & Family Services offers in-service training seminars. These seminars are offered free of charge for our foster parents.
- Shelter Youth & Family Services licensing specialist informs foster parents of the DCFS In-Service module classes and on-line trainings during semi-annual home visits and as needed. Referrals are also made for foster parents who are adopting to take the adoption conversion 10-hour training.
- Shelter Youth & Family Services licensing specialist informs foster parents of professional seminars/trainings offered through community agencies. Foster parents and Child Welfare Specialists are surveyed annually to determine the areas in which additional training is necessary. The surveys were modified to also ask what each group perceives to be their mutual and co-training needs. The results were reviewed by the quality assurance team in conjunction with the Foster Care Director and Executive Director.
- Shelter Youth & Family Services provides Traditional Foster Care, Home of Relative Foster Care, and Emergency Foster Care. Training is commensurate with those levels of foster care. Shelter Youth & Family Services does not provide Specialized Foster Care. In certain instances, Shelter Youth & Family Services approves and refers foster parents to parent skill training when a child presents special challenges that are beyond the immediate knowledge level of the foster parent.
- Shelter Youth & Family Services utilizes social media, the agency website, and emails, to alert foster parents of training opportunities. Foster parents have an interest in obtaining relevant information and at their suggestion, relevant educational material and links are included in the Shelter's website.
- Shelter Youth & Family Services set up a Facebook Group for Foster Parents to reach out and create a community together as well as ask each other questions or advice.
- In addition, foster parents will be provided with the monthly DCFS Training Schedule, which lists statewide and virtual training opportunities. The Licensing Specialist reviews this schedule with each foster parent during monthly or biannual visits to encourage participation in relevant courses.

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

- At the time of licensing, the foster parents are given the Advocacy Office brochure, The Office of the Inspector General and Foster Parent Hotline brochure, and a Support Reference list with important contact telephone numbers.
 - Shelter Youth & Family Services 24 hours emergency number - 847/255-8060,
 - Adoption Information Center of Illinois - 773/334-2300,
 - DCFS Advocacy Office - 217/524-2029,
 - DCFS Appeals Unit - 217/782-6655,
 - Abuse/Neglect Hotline - 800/252-2873,
 - Crisis/Behavioral/Mental Health - 800/345-9049,
 - Foster Parent Hotline - 800/722-9124,
 - Dental/Medical Care - 844/289-2264
- At the time of child's placement, the foster parents are informed of the Child Welfare Specialist name, Foster Care Supervisor name, and the Foster Care Director name and telephone number. The foster parent is given information regarding the services the child is currently receiving, including the service provider's name, phone number and address.
- The procedure for reaching the Child Welfare Specialist will be reviewed at the time of placement and during monthly home visits. Shelter, Inc.'s 24-hour telephone number 847/255-8060 is reviewed with foster parents, including how to reach the on-call worker or administrator for emergencies.

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

- Shelter Youth & Family Services mails or uses direct deposit methods to send the licensed traditional and fictive kin board payments to foster parents around the third Wednesday of the following month of care. The current board rate is made known to foster parents at the time of training and placement. Licensed foster parents that are caring for a child between:
 - ages of 0-4 years old will receive \$672 a month.
 - Ages 5-8 years old a foster parent will receive \$746 a month.
 - Ages 9-11 years old a foster parent will receive \$796 a month.
 - Ages 12 and over will receive \$827 a month.
- Unlicensed relative foster parents that are caring for a child between:
 - Ages of 0-4 years old will receive \$605 a month.
 - Ages 5-8 years old a foster parent will receive \$672 a month.
 - Ages 9-11 years old a foster parent will receive \$717 a month.

- Ages 12 and over will receive \$745 a month.
- Foster parents will be immediately informed of any changes in the board rates once Shelter Youth & Family Services is made aware. Children in specialized foster care receive higher board payment. Shelter Youth & Family Services is not a specialized agency, nor does Shelter Youth & Family Services carry any specialized foster youth in care.
- Tier 1 emergency foster parents will receive \$2,101 a month, with a daily rate of \$126 per day per child.
- Tier 2 emergency foster parents will receive \$1,850 a month, with a daily rate of \$107 per day per child.
- Other payments, such as non-recurring expenses (i.e., educational expenses, recreation, socialization, summer camps, etc.) are reimbursed to the foster parents, no more than \$200. Reimbursements will be made upon presentation of receipts, or an invoice attached to a reimbursement request form signed by the service provider, foster parent, and Child Welfare Specialist.
- Reimbursements for non-recurring expenses are typically issued two weeks from the time the receipt is presented. Foster parents are to contact the Child Welfare Specialist or Foster Care Supervisor if they have not received a reimbursement check within that time. If they are not available, the foster parent can contact the business office at [847-255-8060](tel:847-255-8060) to determine the status of their reimbursement. The Child Welfare Specialist, Foster Care Supervisor and Shelter Youth & Family Services Administration will assist to remedy any problems and issue reimbursement within two business days unless additional documentation is needed.
- Reunification funding is provided to foster parents who assist with visitation activities between biological parents and youth in care, but each request requires pre-approval from DCFS. The case management team is to utilize CFS 1042-L Family Reunification Support Special Service Fee Log for each request made.
- Day care payments are made directly through DCFS once the day care facility is approved by Shelter Youth & Family Services and DCFS.
- If a foster child is determined to have a Specialized level of care, the child's case must be transferred to an agency with a Specialized contract. If the foster parents opt to keep the child in their home, they must take any additional training required by the Specialized agency. The foster parents may maintain their license through Shelter, Inc. if they choose but the case will be managed by the Specialized agency. The Specialized agency will make the board payment to the foster parent. In regard to assessment for the level of need for the child, the Child Welfare Specialist, Foster

Care Supervisor, Foster Care Director and Clinical Director are always seeking information as to the functioning level and need of the child in care. Foster parents may contact any worker with concerns by phone or email. Each case is treated individually; however, concerns may be addressed through the use of IPS (Intensive Placement Stabilization); arranging respite care; securing additional therapies or training.

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

- As members of the child welfare team, the foster parents are advised of Shelter, Inc.'s plan for the child(ren) placed in their home as it affects the child(ren).
- The Child Welfare Specialist works in collaboration with foster parents to develop the service plan for the foster child. Information from the Foster Parents is gathered at monthly home visits, at quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings, ACRs and through the course of regular ongoing communication. Child Welfare Specialist keep foster parents informed via telephone, text, letter, regularly scheduled home visits to any changes in the case plan and the permanency goal. Foster parents are encouraged to participate in Child and Family Team Meetings and the ACR's to be a support and advocate for the child in their care.
- The importance of maintaining familial relationships and supporting cultural heritage is stressed during licensing orientation, home study, pre-service trainings, in-service trainings, and through the Child Welfare Specialists contacts.
- The issue of relationships with the biological families is addressed during the Child and Family Team meetings. Foster parents are encouraged to develop a supportive and effective working relationship with biological parents, while respecting their right to privacy and the level of involvement that they prefer to have.
- Foster parents are included in or consulted about the scheduling of the visits with biological parents and are made aware of how the visit with biological parents and siblings went. Foster parents are encouraged to give Child Welfare Specialist feedback about the visits based on the child's subsequent behavior and verbalizations.
- Foster parents are required to complete the visitation records for parent visits and sibling visits supervised by the foster parents, including the date, time, and length of each visit.

- The Child Welfare Specialist has ongoing discussions with foster parents which include reunification planning and reunification funding available through DCFS.

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

- A licensing complaint may come from DCFS, private agency staff, a service provider, a school, or may result from a hotline call. It is a report of a violation of licensing standard or a law and may include allegations of abuse or neglect. Licensing complaint information is confidential and the identity of the individual making the complaint is not disclosed. During investigations, the foster home must be placed on “hold” status with the DCFS Placement Clearance Desk.
- Within two days of receiving the complaint, Shelter Youth & Family Services Licensing Specialist will begin the investigation. All persons relevant to the investigation will be interviewed: e.g., foster parent, child reported, witness, etc. The Child Welfare Specialist and the Guardian Ad Litem are informed of the licensing complaint.
- Foster parents have the right to have a person of their choice present during the investigation and due process as a witness or advocate.
- If a licensing complaint indicates a potential risk or safety concerns for the children in care, the Child Welfare Specialist, in consultation with their Director and the Licensing Specialist, will determine risk or safety concerns. In the case or risk, a child protective plan will be put into place in order to prevent harm to the child (ren). In the case of safety concerns, a clinical staffing will be held including the Child Welfare Specialist, Director, and the Clinical Director of Shelter Youth & Family Services before a decision to remove the child from the placement. The child(ren) may be removed from the home until the safety and viability of the home is assured. The GAL is notified.
- The license investigation should be completed within 30 days of the complaint but may be extended another 30 days if needed. A final determination as to whether or not a violation occurred must be made within 15 days of the completed investigation. Within 5 days of the finding the foster parent will be mailed a certified letter outlining the findings. The letter also contains information about the foster

parent's right to appeal negative results by requesting a review within 10 days of the letter's postmark. The Review is attended by the Licensing Specialist, Director, and the foster parent. The foster parent may bring a person of their choosing or an attorney to the review.

- If the determination is overturned the complaint is closed. If it is not overturned or the foster parent does not request a review, a corrective action plan will be developed with the foster parents for the substantiated violations. Specific violations will be listed with what actions will occur to correct them. Each action will have a deadline for completion. After the date, the Licensing Specialist may make an unannounced visit to determine whether the violations have been corrected.
- Failure to correct violations may result in Shelter Youth & Family Services seeking to revoke or to refuse to renew the foster home license and/or the removal of the child(ren) from the home. Shelter Youth & Family Services will send a letter to the foster parents explaining the planned enforcement action. This letter details the nature of the licensing violations and the possibility of requesting a hearing through DCFS, Division of Licensing and Certification. Specific instructions on the timeline for the appeal, whom to contact and how to contact the appropriate authority are contained in the letter.
- Shelter Youth & Family Services Child Welfare Specialist and/or Licensing Specialist will provide direct assistance to the foster parent, upon request, when they intend to seek either Mediation or an Administrative Case Review. If this course of action is chosen, the DCFS official will set a date for the hearing. Shelter Youth & Family Services will be represented by the Licensing Specialist and the Licensing Director.
- Foster parents have the right to be provided with the opportunity to request and receive mediation and/or administrative review of decisions that affect licensing parameters and they have the right to have decisions concerning a licensing corrective action plan specifically explained and related to the violation.

To ensure that every foster parent understands their rights and the investigative process, Shelter Youth & Family Services disseminates this information through multiple methods:

- The Licensing Orientation Packet provided to all new foster parents includes a copy of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan and the Licensing Investigation and Grievance Procedure, which outlines the steps above.
- Foster parents receive a refresher overview of this process during annual license renewals and at quarterly Foster Parent Support Group meetings.

- The Licensing Specialist and Child Welfare Specialist review these rights verbally with foster parents during home visits when a licensing complaint is initiated, ensuring understanding and support.
- All foster parents are reminded annually, in writing, that the Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure is available for their use.

The right, at any time during which a child is placed with foster parents, to receive additional or necessary information that is relevant to the care of the child.

- Shelter Youth & Family Services will inform the foster parents of all information known about the child that is relevant to the care of the child, including information regarding the services in place for the child. Throughout placement, the Child Welfare Specialist will give the foster parent all additional and necessary information affecting the care of the child. The Foster Care Supervisor ensures the Child Welfare Specialist shares all needed information on a timely basis.
- If the child in the foster parent home requires specific trainings related to any special needs, then, in consultation with the foster parent, the Child Welfare Specialist, Licensing Specialist or Clinical Director will assist in identifying and arranging meetings to better support the specific needs of the child.
- Foster parents are encouraged by the Child Welfare Specialist to attend Child and Family Team meetings, ACR's, and court regarding the child placed in their home in order to keep the foster parents informed of the child's needs and the progress towards permanency. While providing information to the foster parents, the Child Welfare Specialist will disclose all necessary information to the foster parents without violating the confidentiality rights of the biological parents.
- Child Welfare Specialist are trained in their Foundations class and through supervision with the Foster Care Supervisor on information to disclose to foster parents and confidentiality, so they will understand the limits of information that can be disclosed. The Child Welfare Specialist is accountable to keep foster parents informed of events impacting the case. This is accomplished through monthly supervision with the Foster Care Supervisor and contact with the Clinical Director.
- The Child Welfare Specialist is required to obtain consent to release information to receive such documents as psychological or medical documents.

7) The right to be given information concerning the child during or prior to placement.

- Foster parents are provided with all known information pertinent to the care of the child and needs of their families. Staff is trained to share the necessary information

in accordance with confidentiality. The Child Welfare Specialist will provide the following information:

- The medical history of the child, including known medical problems or communicable diseases, information concerning the immunization status of the child and insurance and medical card information.
- The mental health history of the child(ren) and ongoing mental health issues/concerns
- A copy of the Asthma Action Plan, if applicable
- The educational history of the child, including the special educational needs and a copy of the child's individual educational plan (IEP) or 504 Educational Special Needs Plan, if applicable.
- A copy of the child's portion of the client service plan including any visitation arrangements and all amendments or revisions: verbal case summary of the child's history, including how the child came into care; the child's legal status; the permanency goal for the child, a history of the child's previous placements; and reasons for placement changes, excluding information that identifies or reveals the location of any previous foster or relative caretaker home.
- Other relevant background information of the child, including any prior criminal history; information about any behavior problems including fire setting, perpetuation of sexual abuse, destructive behavior, and substance abuse habits, and likes and dislikes, etc.
- The preferred/familiar routines of the child(ren) for bedtimes, stories, favorite toys, and stuffed animals, etc.
- When this information is not immediately available, the Child Welfare Specialist will report it verbally as soon as it is known and provide written follow-up as indicated. If foster parents request further information, Shelter, Inc. makes every effort to seek out and provide the information. The disclosure is documented in the case record and shared with the child's Guardian Ad Litem.
- Trainings to reinforce compliance and discuss changes in policies or procedures are scheduled for both staff and foster parents as needed. The importance of sharing new information as soon as possible is stressed.
- Information sharing is reviewed by the Foster Care Director through a review of the contact notes written by the Child Welfare Specialist. Contacts include home visits, telephone calls, court hearings, Child and Family Team Meetings, etc. Child and Family Team meetings are documented by the Clinical Director, when needed.
- Foster parents are given clear explanation of the limits of disclosure to essential information for the purpose of understanding the children's needs. The

responsibility to protect the confidential rights of the children's families in the course of such disclosure is explained. The responsibility extends to the foster families in maintaining confidentiality of information. Shelter, Inc. encourages foster parents and birth parents to communicate openly and regularly, foster parents to learn more information about the child's needs directly from the birth parents. This foster parent's alliance enhances the foster parent's knowledge regarding the child's needs.

- In addition, the Child Section of the Integrated Assessment process includes the foster parents in many of the initial interviews regarding the child and is intended to get more initial information about the child's needs so that appropriate interventions are designed from the outset of the case. The results of this assessment, or social history, are shared with the foster parents to the fullest extent possible.
- The Child Welfare Specialist is accountable to provide the information known at the time of the placement and to update the information as part of regular contact with the foster parents. Staff should use their director for consultation if unsure about what information should be disclosed. Failure to disclose appropriate information would be dealt with in supervision. If failure was due to lack of knowledge, the staff person would be asked to complete additional training on this topic. If the failure to disclose was blatant or purposeful, the matter would be dealt with through the supervision and staff performance evaluation process and/or disciplinary procedures of the agency.

8) *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 child in their care, including individual service planning staffings, administrative case reviews, interdisciplinary staffings, and individual education planning meetings; the right to be informed of decisions made by the court or the agency concerning the child; the right to have their input on the plan of services for a child given full consideration in the same manner as information presented by any other professional on the team; and the right to communicate with other professionals who work with the foster child within the context of the team, including therapists, physicians, and teachers.*

- Shelter Youth & Family Services encourages foster parents to play an active and comprehensive role in the child's life. Foster parents are important advocates for the child and should participate in the decision-making process. Foster parents are

integral parts of the child welfare team, and they are notified and encouraged to attend all scheduled events pertaining to the child in placement.

- Foster parents will be informed by phone and/or in writing of all court hearings, administrative case reviews, staffings, school or other meetings regarding a child in their care and will be invited to attend and asked for their input into case planning.
- Foster Parent input is given full consideration. The scheduling of staffings with the agency's control will take the foster parents' schedules into consideration.
- If foster parents are unable to attend a meeting, the Child Welfare Specialist informs them within three working days of any relevant findings or decision. Foster parents are encouraged to keep in close contact with all Child and Family Team members including any professionals providing services to a child in their care including physicians, counselors, teachers, and recreational staff advocating for children.

9) *The right to be provided, in a timely and consistent manners, with any information a Child Welfare Specialist has regarding the child and the child's family which is pertinent to the case of the child and the needs of the child and the making of a permanency plan for the child. Disclosure of information concerning a child's family shall be limited to that information which is essential for understanding the needs of and providing care to the child in order to protect the rights of the child's family. When a positive relationship exists between the foster parents and the child's family, the child's family may consent to disclosure of additional information.*

- Shelter Youth & Family Services verbally and in writing, shares information with the foster parents during intake, if possible, if not as soon as possible after the placement. Ongoing to share information is critical to ensure the child's needs are being met in the foster home.

This includes:

- Basic personal information about the child(ren)
- What was the cause of the case coming into the child welfare system
- Placement history
- Permanency goal
- Area of biological parents, siblings, and/or paramour
- Visitation plan
- Educational status, history and needs: IEP, 504 Special Needs Plan
- Special medical, mental health, and/or behavioral needs, potential risks
- Services required

- Religious information
- 906 Placement form and medical card information
- Behavioral/Social information
- Other information deemed necessary to provide the best possible care for the child(ren)
- The Child Welfare Specialist and the foster parents share ongoing information as it becomes known.
- Foster parents are told if information they are requesting cannot be disclosed because it is unknown or because it is confidential or otherwise protected. Disclosure of information concerning a child's family shall be limited to information that is essential for meeting the needs of the child in order to protect the rights of the biological family.
- Foster parents are encouraged to develop a positive working relationship with the biological parents and the child's family. This may result in the biological parents consenting to disclose additional information.

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

- In accordance with DCFS' policies and procedures, Shelter Youth & Family Services will notify foster parents of any changes in the child's plan in general and regarding termination of a placement, in particular, in writing and 14 days before the effective date of change. A Notice of Change of Placement includes the nature of the decision, the reason for the decision, the effective date, and information about the foster parent's right to appeal the decision.
- Such 14-day notice is waived only in cases of a court order or when the child is determined to be at imminent risk of harm. If the agency judges the child to be in imminent risk of harm, the child can be removed from the foster home immediately. A Notice of Change of Placement is given to the foster parents upon removal.
- Foster parents have the right to appeal for a change in the child's placement except for placements with the biological parent or sibling, placements for purposes of adoption as ordered by the Court or return to the person with whom the child lived prior to entering into substitute care (reunification). Foster parents may be able to delay a change of placement by requesting an emergency review or filing an appeal within 10 days of receiving written notice of intent to change the child's placement.

- The Child Welfare Specialist and/or the Licensing Specialist will provide assistance to file an appeal upon request.
- If the Foster parents disagree with the change of placement, they may request a Clinical Placement Review by calling immediately 866-225-1431 or faxing a request for a review to the DCFS Clinical Placement Review Team within 3 days of this notice. Fax number 800-733-3308.
- Clinical Placement Review Team will review all documentation provided from all parties and will decide if the change of placement is appropriate and in the best interest of the child.
- A foster parent may request a service appeal. Written requests for a service appeal are sent to:

Administrative Hearing Unit
 Department of Children and Family Services
 406 E. Monroe St.
 Springfield, IL 62701
 217-782-6625

11) 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 seek mandamus under the Juvenile Court Act of 1987.

- During the pre-service training, perspective Foster Parents will learn about the Juvenile Court process and its participants. Foster Parents will receive additional information about the child welfare system from their Child Welfare Specialist and through Shelter’s on-going in-service trainings.
- Shelter Youth & Family Services Child Welfare Specialists will notify Foster Parents of any court hearings regarding a child in their care by phone or in writing and further inform Foster Parents of their right to be heard. The notice will include the date and time of the proceeding, the location of court, the court calendar, judge’s name, and nature of the hearing. Shelter Youth & Family Services encourages Foster Parents to attend hearings whenever possible to serve as advocates for the child.
- This notification is documented in the case record, and the Foster Care Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that caseworkers notify Foster Parents in a timely manner.

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

- Providing continuity of care and minimizing disruption to the child are of primary concern as a child re-enters the system.
- Shelter Youth & Family Services facilitates the placement or is notified of re-entry; the previous foster parents are the first option when the foster parents have space and when such placement would be consistent with the best interest of the child and other children in the home.
- Information regarding previous placements and foster parents is maintained in the child's file through transfer and closing summaries such as 906 documents and is accessible to the Child Welfare Specialist.
- The Child Welfare Specialist considers the situations of both the child and the child's previous foster parents to determine whether or not the child re-entering the placement would be appropriate.
- When possible, placement options are staffed with Foster Care Director, Clinical Director, and Licensing Specialist to confer on best interest regarding placement decisions.
- Possible exceptions are significant changes in the home that affect the family's ability to care for the child. These might include the foster home being filled to capacity, one of the children involved has behaviors or mental health needs that preclude other children being placed in the home, etc.
- This consideration is complicated by the current DCFS Rule requiring the agency to respond within one hour of receiving the potential referral from DCFS, informing DCFS if we have a foster family who are willing to accept the child(ren).

13) *Foster parents have the right to timely access the existing appeals process with the child placement agency. The exercise of this right is protected from any act of harassment or retaliation. Shelter Youth and Family Services ensures that all appeals and grievance reviews are handled fairly, transparently, and with consideration of the child's best interest.*

Appeals and Grievance Process

- Foster parents are encouraged to address concerns by first contacting their Child Welfare Specialist to discuss and attempt resolution.

- If the issue remains unresolved, the foster parent may contact the Foster Care Supervisor, and if still unresolved, the concern is elevated to the Foster Care Director.
- At each step, documentation of the concern and the actions taken are recorded in the foster parent’s licensing record for accountability and follow-up.
- Foster parents may also utilize Shelter Youth and Family Services’ Grievance Procedure or the DCFS Service Appeal Process, which are explained during PRIDE training and distributed annually in the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. Both processes are reviewed and approved by the DCFS Licensing Representative.

Determining Best Interest During Appeals

When a foster parent appeals a decision or raises concern, Shelter Youth and Family Services follows a structured process to ensure that all decisions reflect the best interest of the child. This process includes:

- The Foster Care Director and Supervisor review all case documentation, incident reports, and input from the Child Welfare Specialist and Licensing Specialist.
- A multidisciplinary meeting is held that may include the Clinical Director, the foster parent, caseworker, and when appropriate, the youth’s Guardian ad Litem (GAL) or therapist. Each participant provides input on the child’s needs and placement stability.
- The team evaluates the child’s emotional, behavioral, educational, and physical needs, and how the current or proposed decision will impact those areas.
- Consideration is given to the length of time the child has been in the home, the attachment to the foster family, the child’s school and community connections, and the foster parent’s ability to continue meeting the child’s needs.
- The Foster Care Director, in collaboration with the case team and Licensing Specialist, makes a written recommendation prioritizing the child’s safety, stability, and well-being. The foster parent is informed of the decision in writing and reminded of their right to appeal further through the DCFS Service Appeal Process if dissatisfied.

The Foster Parent may also contact the DCFS Advocacy Office:

DCFS Advocacy Office Hours

Monday-Friday
8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Phone

217-524-2029 or 800-232-3798

Fax

217-557-7278

E-mail address

Dcfs.advocacy@illinois.gov

The Foster Care Director follows up with the foster parent after resolution to ensure no harassment, retaliation, or conflict of interest has occurred. All concerns are tracked for compliance and quality assurance. Shelter Youth and Family Services enforces a zero-tolerance policy for retaliation and is committed to maintaining respectful, transparent communication throughout the process.

14) 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 the misconduct by Department employees, service providers, or contractors, confidential handling of those reports, and investigation by the Inspector General.

- At the pre-service training, a listing of phone numbers will be presented to each prospective foster parent, including the Advocacy Office for Children and Family Services, the Inspector General's office, and the Bureau of Quality Assurance. The Foster Parent Hotline is 1-800-722-9124.

FOSTER PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

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

- Foster Parents are trained on the type of information that must be shared with Shelter Youth & Family Services as well as the importance of sharing information during monthly home visits and regular telephone contact with Child Welfare Specialist.
- Foster Parents are responsible for sharing general information with the Child Welfare Specialist including medical updates, results from exams, grades from school, any school meetings, and any behavioral/emotional issues.
- Foster Parents are expected to communicate fully with the Licensing Specialist at the bi-annual home visits.
- Foster parents must ensure that all licensing and child-related documentation remains current. Any documentation that is outdated (such as physicals, background checks, training certificates, or emergency contact forms) must be provided to the Child Welfare Specialist within five business days of renewal or at the next monthly home visit, whichever comes first. The Child Welfare Specialist reviews and forwards the updated documentation to the Licensing Specialist for filing.
- The Licensing Specialist conducts quarterly reviews of each foster home file to verify that all records are current. Foster parents receive written reminders 30 days prior to the expiration of any required documentation.
- Foster Parents will provide any documentation that is outdated to the Child Welfare Specialist, on an on-going basis.
- Foster Parents are also responsible for communication of unusual incidents within 24 hours. Foster Parents are to contact their Child Welfare Specialist or to call the agency at 847-255-8060. After business hours this line (847-255-8060) is linked to an answering service. Shelter Youth & Family Services staff should respond within one hour. Critical incidents include, but are not limited to:
 - Any abuse or neglect of a child
 - Any injury requiring medical attention
 - Runaway or missing child (call 911 before contacting Shelter, Inc.)
 - Possession of a weapon
 - Alcohol or drug use

- Physically or sexually aggressive behavior
- Pregnant or parenting youth
- Suicide threat or attempt (call 911 before contacting Shelter, Inc.)
- Destruction of property
- Trips to a hospital emergency room or hospitalization
- Missed medication nor medication refusal
- School suspension or expulsion
- Criminal arrest or conviction of a child or foster parent
- Curfew violation

In addition, Foster Parents are expected to keep the Child Welfare Specialist informed about:

- Medication Logs
- Dental, vision and hearing exams
- Visits by biological parents and contacts with them
- Visits with siblings
- Medical action plans
- Educational report cards and progress reports
- IEP and 504 Plan meetings

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

- Foster Parents receive confidentiality training during pre-service education. They sign confidentiality agreements during the licensing orientation.
- Foster Parents are educated that information about child(ren) and their birth parents cannot be shared with relatives, neighbors, friends, or other parents - including other foster parents. This information is shared with Foster Parents for the purpose of enabling them to provide proper care and understanding.
- At the time of licensing and at licensing renewal, Shelter Youth & Family Services' Licensing Specialist and the assigned Child Welfare Specialist provide additional information to foster parents regarding the “dos and don'ts” of confidentiality. This is done to facilitate sensitization to the importance of the child in their care and their biological parents

- Periodic training of Foster Care staff is conducted in team meetings, individual supervision and, as applicable, with Foster Parents.
- Changes in the law pertaining to confidentiality are made available to foster parents via mail or in-person contact.

18(3). The responsibility to advocate for children in your care.

Shelter Youth & Family Services Foster Parents are the primary caretakers of the child(ren). Child Welfare Specialists continually encourage Foster Parents to advocate for their child and help to identify areas of need. As the primary caretakers, Foster Parents often have the most intimate and useful information about the child(ren)'s personal needs (such as physical, emotional, educational etc.)

SHARING INFORMATION /PARTICIPATING IN STAFFINGS:

- It is the Foster Parent's responsibility to share relevant information with the agency so that the ongoing needs of a child can be met. The agency will also be checking with schools, therapists, etc. to obtain information on the children's needs and progress.
- Foster Parents are routinely encouraged by Child Welfare Specialists to attend court and participate in staffing's (i.e., ACR, Child and Family Team Meetings) in order to share and learn information relative to caring for the child(ren) in their care. Routine communication also helps in maintaining a stable placement.
- Participation by foster parents is highly encouraged to provide support and to advocate for the child in their home.

REQUESTING ADDITIONAL SERVICES:

- If a Foster Parent believes that a child in their care needs more services than is being provided, they are expected to contact the Child Welfare Specialist. If more services are needed, the Child Welfare Specialist will staff the case with the Foster Care Supervisor and Foster Care Director. If indicated, the local Intensive Placement Stabilization (I.P.S.) agency will be contacted to help provide in-home services. If other services are indicated, (i.e., therapies, recreational activities) these will also be arranged.

SERVICE APPEAL:

- If the Foster Parents are not satisfied with the services, they and/or a child in their care are receiving, they are reminded by the Child Welfare Specialist and/or the Foster Care Supervisor of their right to file a service appeal. A service appeal

brochure is provided to foster parents initially and upon renewal of license. Training in appeal procedures is also provided through the Child Welfare Specialist and Licensing Specialist.

COURT TRAINING:

- Court training is provided through DCFS Learning and Development Center (LDC) and an overview of the court process is included in the Foster Parent Handbook. Additionally, court training is provided through the Child Welfare Specialist on an on-going case by case basis as each case differs in its court involvement.

EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY TRAINING:

- Education Advocacy Training is offered after the Foster PRIDE/Adopt training. This is coordinated through the Licensing Specialist. All licensed foster parents are expected to complete this training. Unlicensed HMR Foster Parents are encouraged to complete Educational Advocacy Training.

19(4). The responsibility to treat children in the Foster Parents' care and the children's families with dignity, respect, and consideration.

Foster Parents learn during pre-service and on-going training about the effects of their own behavior on children in their care. The need for dignity, respect and consideration among all parties is stressed at all times.

- The Child Welfare Specialist is expected to observe Foster Parent interactions with their children on an on-going basis. As part of the monitoring process, the Child Welfare Specialist will encourage the Foster Parents and child(ren) to articulate their needs in order to identify and meet these needs.
- The Child Welfare Specialist will provide necessary information, within the limits of confidentiality and support, if it is observed that the foster parents are experiencing distress, confusion or anger regarding the child's or biological parents' words or deeds. Counseling referrals will be made when needed.
- Foster Parents are encouraged to maintain close contact with the child's therapist or other service providers. Foster Parents are to participate in the child's services as recommended by the provider, or as determined needed by the Foster Parent.
- Any perception of indignity, disrespect or lack of consideration will be discussed immediately with the Foster Parent and the Foster Parents' needs will be assessed to provide them with the training and/or support needed to reclaim any lost dignity, respect, or consideration.

- Foster Parents are trained that approved telephone contact, sibling visits or parent-child visits are not to be used as discipline for a child's misbehavior. If the Foster Parents have a concern about the effect these contacts are having on the child, they are encouraged to express these concerns to the Child Welfare Specialist as soon as possible. Then, the team can convene to decide what kinds of support, if any, are necessary to ensure productive interactions between the child, their foster parents, and their biological parents.
- The Child Welfare Specialist will notify Foster Parents of changes or cancellations to the visitation schedule. Foster Parents are expected to inform the child(ren) in their care of cancelled or rescheduled visits with biological parents and/or siblings.
- Shelter Youth & Family Services provides ongoing annual training opportunities that reinforce dignity, respect, and trauma-informed care practices. Topics such as empathy-based communication, cultural responsiveness, managing challenging behaviors, and conflict resolution are incorporated into required in-service training and quarterly Foster Parent Support Group meetings. These ongoing trainings give foster parents continued opportunities to strengthen their skills, share experiences, and reflect on strategies for maintaining respectful, supportive relationships with children and families.

20(5). The responsibility to recognize the Foster Parent's own individual and familial strengths and limitations when deciding whether to accept a child into care; and the responsibility to recognize the Foster Parents' own support needs and utilize appropriate supports in providing care for foster children.

EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS:

- The identification of new traditional foster placements is made by the DCFS Case Assignment Unit based on the address of the child's biological parent and/or school. Foster Parents provide specific information regarding the age range, gender, and number of children they are willing to foster, and if they agree to support the reunification of the child with their family, if that is the permanency goal.
- Although Shelter, Inc. typically receives minimal information regarding the referred child from the Case Assignment Unit, Shelter Youth & Family Services will share available information about the child(ren) with the prospective Foster Parents, who will then make the choice whether to accept the child(ren).
- Mutual assessment and decisions about a placement and how well it might work for a specific child or children are made based on all the available information and Foster Parents are given the choice to accept or deny a placement. Shelter's

Licensing Specialist is trained to help families consider their family dynamics, strengths, weaknesses, and resources. Foster Adopt PRIDE pre-service training provides exercises in self-awareness.

ONGOING MUTUAL ASSESSMENT –POST LICENSURE:

- Post licensures, Foster Parents are directed to training possibilities and/or resources for support.
- When needed, foster children are referred to counseling, mentoring, Intensive Placement Stabilization, and other services which are available to them within their community. Information is provided by the Child Welfare Specialist as well as the Licensing Specialist.
- Ongoing Mutual Assessment and training also occur at quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings. At these meetings, Foster Parent feedback is solicited, and ideas and feedback are given to support the child.
- The Licensing Specialist conducts bi-annual visits during which needs and strengths are assessed to find ways to meet needs (including support and trainings) and to recognize and commend strengths.

21(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 children and families.

- New Foster Parents may be teamed with experienced Foster Parents to form a supportive or mentoring relationship.
- The use of support groups for parents is encouraged and facilitated. Foster Parents are referred to national Foster Parent groups, Facebook foster parent support groups, and Shelter, Inc. Facebook support group.
- The Licensing Specialist encourages foster parents to speak publicly of the benefits of foster parenting during the bi-annual home visits.
- In-service trainings also provide an atmosphere of camaraderie and mutual support among Shelter Youth & Family Services' Foster Parents.
- Each licensed home receives the official Foster Parent newsletters, "Fostering Illinois" and "Foster Parent Advocate" and Foster Parents are encouraged to attend statewide meetings.
- Several times throughout the year, Shelter Youth & Family Services holds social events to bring its Foster Parents and their families together. These include a 5K run/walk and a holiday party/event. An announcement letter is sent to each Foster Parent informing them of the time and location of the event and the name and

phone number of the contact person and Child Welfare Specialists remind Foster Parents of these events during regular contacts with them. Foster Care staff use these events to help link Foster Parents for purposes of mentoring and support.

- As suggested by some parents, links to training opportunities are posted on the Shelter Youth & Family Services web site. Social media such as Facebook and email may also be used to link Foster Parents with other Foster Parents. Foster Parents' needs for training are elicited by surveys, compliance visits with the Licensing Specialist and regular visits to the foster home by the Child Welfare Specialist.

22(7). The responsibility to assess your ongoing individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.

- On a yearly basis, the Shelter Youth & Family Services CSIT- Quality Assurance Team provides Foster Parents with an assessment/questionnaire. The questionnaire is targeted towards rating on-going in-service trainings and encouraging requests for future trainings.
- On an individual basis, training needs are assessed by the Child Welfare Specialists and the Foster Care Director to address specific problems being faced by Shelter Youth & Family Services Foster Parents.
- Foster Parents are notified of Foster Parent Trainings and Conferences on a local, state, and national level.
- Additionally, Shelter Youth & Family Services conducts at least 1-3 trainings per year for the community on topics of interest in the field as they relate to children. All Foster Parents are invited to attend these trainings at no cost.
- Foster Parents are also given information about the DCFS Lending Library, the schedule of Module classes and DCFS on-line Module training courses through the DCFS Learning and Development Center (LDC)
<https://ilgov.sharepoint.com/sites/DCFSTrainingCaregiver>
- DCFS Learning and Development Center (LDC) offers trainings in English and in Spanish.

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

Placement changes and disruptions can be traumatic for the child in care as well as for foster family members. It is an agency priority to maintain stability in our foster homes. The maintenance of stability requires the sharing of information and concerns on an ongoing basis.

SHARING INFORMATION:

- As primary caregivers, Foster Parents are asked to share as much information as possible about the child(ren)'s functioning in the home (ie. behaviors, eating and sleeping habits).
- Starting early in placement, Foster Parents are encouraged to talk honestly and openly with the assigned Child Welfare Specialist about any concerns or problems related to a child in placement.
- The Child Welfare Specialist will also be seeking information from schools, therapies, etc. to gather information on the child(ren)'s overall functioning and needs.
- The Child Welfare Specialist will use monthly home visits to ask questions designed to elicit Foster Parent thoughts, perceptions and needs in order to support their care for the child.
- When need is identified, the Child Welfare Specialist will check in more frequently and offer support.

OPTIONS FOR INTERVENTIONS:

- Foster Parents should know that the first option when there are problems is to seek help through the Child Welfare Specialist, who can then engage the treatment/foster care team. Foster Parents' unique insight into the child(ren)'s daily behaviors and moods is vital in forming a stabilization plan.
- When there are identified problems in the placement, the team (comprised of the Foster Parent, Child Welfare Specialist, Foster Care Supervisor, Foster Care Director, Clinical Director, service providers, etc.) will convene and work out an Action Plan that will pro-actively support stability and include all applicable services and supports for the child and /or Foster Parents (such as therapies, behavioral contracts, etc.).
- When the need is identified, Intensive Placement Stabilization (I.P.S.) services will be requested to help stabilize placement. I.P.S. services are contracted through a local agency which provides in-home consultation and counseling to address the child's behaviors and needs. Services are

continued until behaviors and disruptions are stabilized. The Foster Parent is directly involved in the services, as well as in the decision-making process of how long/often the services should continue.

UNFORSEEN CRISIS:

- Should an unforeseen or unexpected event or crisis occur, when there had been no identified problem, Foster Parents are expected to activate this team through their Child Welfare Specialist. Foster parents are informed of emergency contact numbers - including the agency's 24-hour on-call line (847-255-8060) and /or the Child Welfare Specialist's cell phone.
- The Child Welfare Specialist will enact the team who will work to stabilize placement with services, trainings and/or further support before moving to terminate placement. Services may consist of individual therapy, family therapy, Intensive Placement Stabilization (I.P.S.), Parent Coaching, SASS services, or other supports that may be deemed appropriate and helpful.
- Services available to Foster Parents are discussed in PRIDE Training. Foster Parents notify the Child Welfare Specialist of their needs and Child Welfare Specialist then locates appropriate services.

Support Following a Placement Disruption

- If preventive strategies are not successful and placement disruption occurs, Shelter Youth & Family Services provides emotional and practical support to both the foster child(ren) and the foster family.
- For the foster child(ren): The Child Welfare Specialist and Clinical Director coordinate with the child's therapist and new caregivers to ensure continuity of treatment and emotional support.
- For the foster family: The Child Welfare Specialist conducts a debriefing session to process the experience, assess emotional needs, and provide resources to peer support groups. The licensing specialist will follow up with the foster family to discuss what support or training may prevent future disruptions and to ensure the family feels valued and supported.
- The agency also encourages participation in Foster Parent Support Groups, where foster families can discuss their experiences, receive guidance from other foster parents, and rebuild confidence before accepting future placements.

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

- Child Welfare Specialists work with foster parents to “help them” learn to recognize why they are experiencing stress.
- The Child Welfare Specialist asks questions to family members and Foster Parents that encourage them to talk about their experiences with having a child in their home and how it is impacting them.
- During pre-service training and the home study, foster families learn there are many adjustments and accommodations needed by all family members in order to be comfortable with a foster child/sibling living in the home. The Child Welfare Specialist reiterates these issues during visits and Child and Family Team Meetings to help the family successfully manage the processes and stresses that are associated with foster parenting and having a child in their home.
- Confidential family counseling services provided by Shelter Youth & Family Services clinical team, are available to our foster families to help minimize the adjustments and potential stress to the family.
- If other Foster Parents are available, respite care may be provided, if a short-term “vacation” will return equilibrium to an otherwise stressed situation.
- If a circumstance arises in which a Foster Parent wishes to put a “voluntary hold” on their license due to a personal situation, Shelter Youth & Family Services will respect the Foster Parents’ wishes and work with them to place foster children in their home at a future time when the Foster Parents indicate they are ready to proceed with a placement. Shelter Youth & Family Services will not place a child in the home until the family is ready to move forward.

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

- Shelter Youth & Family Services recognizes and rejoices in the work of our Foster Parents at annual events such as picnics, organized outings and a Holiday Party or event. Shelter Youth & Family Services often provides winter clothes, summer clothing, school backpacks, Easter baskets, birthday presents, and Christmas presents.

- Foster Parents understand the rewards and benefits to children, parents, and families as they are encouraged to provide the nurturing and protection to the children in their care.
- Foster Parents are significant in the process of helping the child attain well-being, which includes meeting developmental milestones, being physically and mentally healthy and supporting the children's permanency goal.
- When Foster Parents are able to see biological families become stronger, they are encouraged to actively partner with the child's parents in order to help the family be reunited.
- If reunification is no longer an option, then the Foster Parents see rewards in adoption or helping the youth to achieve independence.
- Regardless of the outcome, foster parents understand they have a positive impact on the lives of the child(ren) in their care, and they can establish the potential to be an on-going source of support for the child.
- Shelter Youth & Family Services informs foster parents of upcoming events, celebrations, and community engagement opportunities through email announcements, quarterly newsletters, mailed invitations, and postings on the agency's website and social media pages. Event information is also discussed during home visits and quarterly support group meetings to ensure all foster parents are aware of opportunities to participate.
- Public relations and advocacy are incorporated into PRIDE pre-service and ongoing in-service training. Foster parents learn how to represent foster parenting in a positive and professional manner, share their experiences while maintaining confidentiality, and promote the value of foster care within the community.
- During quarterly Foster Parent Support Group meetings, staff provide refreshers and discussion-based learning around advocacy, cultural sensitivity, and effective communication. Foster parents are encouraged to use these skills when speaking publicly about fostering or engaging with schools, community organizations, or potential new foster families.

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

- Starting with PRIDE training and continuing with ongoing trainings, Foster Parents are thoroughly informed about the roles and responsibilities of the various members of the child welfare team and the Juvenile Court process.

- The roles and responsibilities of all participants in the child welfare system are reiterated in child and Family Team Meetings, ACRs and Court hearings.
- Foster Parents are encouraged to attend Child and Family Team Meetings, ACRs and Court hearings to share their input as the primary caregivers for the child(ren).
- Shelter Youth & Family Services maintains an open-door policy for Foster Parents to raise concerns, discuss issues that arise, grieve decisions, etc. As a result, most issues raised are addressed and resolved with satisfaction without having to resort to formal procedures.
- If a child is in counseling or other services, the Foster Parents are consulted about any behavioral issues with the child(ren) and should be actively involved in the therapy process.
- At Child and Family Team Meetings and other staffings the Foster Parents are included in discussion of the issues pertaining to the child and the permanency goal for the child(ren). The meetings might include service providers, attorneys, family members and IPS staff.
- If the Foster Parent wishes to participate, but cannot attend meetings in person, they are able to participate virtually.
- All staff are trained on the child welfare system.
- Shelter Youth & Family Services provides co-training opportunities for Child Welfare Specialists and Foster Parents per request or need to assist Foster Parents in understanding the system and participating as equal members of the child welfare team as well as topics related to children with special needs.
- A flow chart with descriptions of the various court proceedings and the progression of types of hearings through the life of a child's case is included in the Foster Parent Handbook.
- Shelter Youth & Family Services believes that it is imperative that Foster Parents understand the roles, rights, and responsibilities of all the professionals in the child welfare system. Speakers from all areas of the Juvenile Court System are scheduled as needed to address our Foster Parents.
- Foster Parents are encouraged to include birth parents and the Child Welfare Specialist in medical, educational, and counseling sessions and they may choose to include birth parents in birthday parties and other family occasions. These contacts with birth parents can be very helpful in dispelling erroneous notions about both the foster family and the birth

family. Foster Parents are encouraged to mentor birth parents who are willing to receive it.

27(12). The responsibility to know and, as necessary, fulfill their responsibility to serve as mandate reporters of suspected child abuse/neglect under the Abuse and Neglected Child Reporting Act; and to know the child welfare agency's policy regarding allegations that Foster Parents have committed child abuse or neglect and applicable Administrative Rule and Procedures governing investigations.

- Foster Parents are trained during PRIDE training on their role as mandated reporters and the responsibilities that go along with being a mandated reporter. Foster Parents sign an Acknowledgment of Mandated Reporter Status stating that they are mandated reporters of any abuse or neglect they might observe.
- Foster Parents are informed during PRIDE Training of their responsibilities as mandated reporters. Important texts on the requirements of PRIDE book, and a Foster Family Handbook are distributed to each foster family at pre-service training. Foster Parents are informed that Shelter Youth & Family Services' ability to deal with allegations of Child Abuse or Neglect against a licensed Foster Parent internally is very limited and that, typically the DCFS Division of Child Protection must be involved as the investigative agency. DCFS procedures cover service appeals, the appeal process of indicted child abuse/neglect, the process for appealing licensing investigation findings or license revocations, etc.
- Ongoing training regarding Mandated Reporting may occur at Child and Family Team Meetings and through the Child Welfare Specialist through the course of case management.
- Foster Parents are also informed of the responsibilities of caring for foster children who have been designated as Sexually Problematic Youth, as it pertains to protecting children already in their home. A safety plan is made for children who are sexually problematic, and foster parents who accept a sexually aggressive child into their home are responsible for conducting that plan. Trainings about Sexually Problematic Youth is provided either through Shelter Youth & Family Services, other POS agencies, or DCFS. The Licensing Specialist makes foster parents aware of the trainings and encourages them to participate.
- Foster Parents receive a copy of Preparing for Success: A Guide For Parents Who Adopt Sexually Abused Children during PRIDE training. If allegations of abuse or neglect are made against Foster Parents, Shelter Youth & Family Services provides training to Foster Parents on what they should expect if they are ever accused of abuse or neglect – specifically on their rights and appeal rights.

- Additional training is now provided to explain the difference between licensing investigations and DCP investigations, what Foster Parents can expect if they become involved, and how such incidents are resolved. Foster Parents are advised of their right to have someone of their choosing at any interview, of the multiple appeal processes available and how they can get assistance in any appeal from Shelter Youth & Family Services, even if the appeal is of a Shelter Youth & Family Services decision.

28(13). The responsibility to know and receive training regarding the purpose of administrative case reviews, client service plans, and court processes, as well as any filing or time requirement associated with these proceedings and actively participate in their designated role in these proceedings.

- Foster Parents should take an active role in permanency planning through court hearings, Integrated Assessments, quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings and other case related meetings. The importance of their participation is stressed during the initial training and reiterated by the Child Welfare Specialist on an ongoing basis.
- Administrative Case Reviews are convened every six months. Prior to the review, the Child Welfare Specialist is required to review the plan with the Foster Parent, provide the date and time of the review, and if they are unable to attend in-person they are encouraged to participate virtually.
- Foster Parents are individually trained on an ongoing basis through the life of the case by the Child Welfare Specialist and Licensing Specialist. The workers will explain the current status of the case and any changes which may occur during the different court phases or based on the differing needs of the child(ren).
- The Child Welfare Specialist and/or the Licensing Specialist will always provide more training if needed or requested. If they are unable to participate in person, then virtually is highly recommended.

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

- In addition to Shelter Youth & Family Services Foster Care Complaint Policy (Grievance Procedure), Shelter Youth & Family Services maintains an open-door policy for Foster Parents to raise concerns, discuss issues that arise, grieve decisions, etc. As a result, most issues raised are addressed and resolved with satisfaction without having to resort to formal procedures.

- The open-door policy follows the agency’s chain of command and includes the child welfare Specialist, the Foster Care Supervisor, Christine Siwula, the Foster Care Director, Christina Gaytan; and the Associate Director, Gina Ciulla.
- Additionally, Foster Parents can contact the DCFS Advocacy Office and Shelter Youth & Family Services Agency Performance Monitor. The Monitor’s number will be provided upon request. Any effort by Shelter Youth & Family Services staff to withhold contact information should be reported for disciplinary action.
- In order to avoid any conflict of interest, Foster Parents may seek assistance from DCFS staff or other advocates.
- Written procedures regarding Shelter Youth & Family Services’ Grievance Procedure are provided to all Foster Parents at the time of licensing and annually thereafter. The Foster Care Complaint Policy consists of the specific steps and timelines defined in DCFS Rule 401, and any changes must be approved by DCFS Licensing.
- The rights of Foster Parents are spelled out in the Foster Care Implementation Plan, which is provided annually and for which Foster Parent feedback and participation is routinely requested.

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

- The Child Welfare Specialist provides Foster Parents with a Child Record Folder at the time a child is placed in the home. A list is inserted explaining in detail what should be included in the folder, where in the folder it should be kept and in what order. This is also explained and trained to the Foster Parent by the Child Welfare Specialist on an individual basis. Child Welfare specialists occasionally check these files and answer Foster Parents’ questions about them.
- Maintaining a “Child Record Folder” during the time a child is in placement is an important contribution to the child’s history. Integral components of the folder include medical, school, physical reports, the service plan/visit plan, and noteworthy events in the life of the child(ren).
- PRIDE training provides written information on the importance of maintaining a child’s folder, as well as written information on the regulations and expectations for maintaining information. This information is also provided in the licensing rules which are provided at time of licensure. Foster Parents may refer to their PRIDE manual for reminders about the information to be kept.

- The records are monitored by Child Welfare Specialists and the Licensing Specialist during visits and when questions arise.

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

- As the Foster Parent is the primary caregiver for the child(ren), Shelter Youth & Family Services looks to the Foster Parent to provide relevant information about a child in their care during the time of placement and after the placement has ended.
- Training on ongoing communication is offered by the Licensing Specialist and Foster Care Director.
- Whether the child returns to their family of origin or is placed in another foster home or long-term facility, the cooperation of the Foster Parents in sharing information will enhance the ongoing care of the child(ren).
- The Foster Parents are informed that they must share the information with the Child Welfare Specialist. The Child Welfare Specialists are trained on this by the Shelter Youth & Family Services Foster Care Director. Foster Parents are educated about this responsibility by the Licensing Specialist. The Child Welfare Specialists are then able to discuss this with Foster Parents on an ongoing basis.

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

- Shelter Youth & Family Services is fortunate to have a multi-ethnic group of Foster Parents. Shelter Youth & Family Services is working to find ways to better connect foster families, like through our Facebook group, to be able to develop a good understanding of various cultural and ethnic differences.
- To enhance this naturally occurring process, the staff is responsible for assisting Foster Parents in understanding the potential complications in cross-cultural placements in order to avoid difficulties that may occur.
- The Foster Parents must face issues of self-awareness in the context of the child's cultural needs, particularly when the placement occurs in a home of differing cultural background. Likewise, the child must be helped to feel comfortable and secure in a cross-cultural environment.

- When a culturally diverse placement is made, the Foster Parents and the Child Welfare Specialist work closely to obtain the necessary level of understanding and sensitivity to support and maintain the heritage of the child.
- Shelter Youth & Family Services will provide additional education to foster families regarding cultural diversity through additional trainings.
 - Hair care
 - Trainings focused on DEI
- In-service training offers a specific training to Foster Parents who provide Foster Care to children of a different culture or race from that of the foster family. The Licensing Specialist makes these trainings known to Foster Parents and encourages them to attend.
- If Foster Parents become aware of other training they want to attend on this topic, Shelter Youth & Family Services would be willing to pay the fee for them to attend.