



**Lutheran Social Services of Illinois**

**Foster Parent Law  
Implementation Plan**

**2020**

# Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan for 2020

## Introduction

Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) is a nonprofit social service organization of the three Illinois synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). LSSI is the largest statewide social service provider. LSSI foster care services are provided statewide, with services in four geographical regions. The regions are: Metropolitan Chicago area; Northern, located in Rockford, IL, Aurora IL, and Nachusa; Central, located in Champaign/Savoy, IL, Rock Island, IL, Danville, IL, Peoria, IL, Canton, IL, Galesburg, IL; and Southern, which provides foster care services in Vienna, IL and Marion, IL. LSSI strives to provide quality services to children and families.

LSSI program's focus is on the safety, well-being and permanency of children in care. Foster parents are a critical component in achieving successful outcomes for children. LSSI strives to implement the foster parent's rights and responsibilities on an ongoing basis, efforts were made to engage foster parents and staff statewide during 2019.

## Foster Parents' Rights

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

Foster parents are treated with dignity, respect, and consideration as members of the professional team. The team has the responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of the child. The team listens to the needs of the foster parent, respects any confidential information of the foster parent and ensures the foster parent has all the critical information of a child that is in their home. The team collaborates on issues and concerns and communicates openly and effectively. The child welfare specialist schedules quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) to discuss child related activities, and developmental needs of the child. The CFTM is used as an opportunity to listen to the needs of foster parents and share their concerns. By exchanging ideas in the CFTM, child welfare specialist can build a positive relationship with foster parents.

At bi-annual monitoring visits, resource staff solicits feedback from foster parents concerning their experience as a member of the team. In addition, any concerns or issues are addressed monthly in the foster home with the child welfare specialist and some sites have quarterly foster parent meetings where concerns can be addressed. Resource staff, child welfare specialists, supervisors, and program directors are available by phone, e-mail, or in-person to schedule a meeting to discuss any concerns foster parents might have. If the foster parent's concerns are not being addressed, they can request a meeting with the Associate Executive Director in their region to further address their concerns.

LSSI appreciates foster parents commitment to the children in their care. LSSI holds various foster parent appreciation events around the state. Sites hold foster parent appreciation dinners and awards banquets, parent cafes and holiday parties. These events have been very successful with large participation of foster parents. Quality Improvement Surveys are sent out Spring and Fall each year to inquire about the quality of the foster care program. Foster parents are professional members of the child welfare team and we welcome feedback and suggestions to improve upon our service to children and families.

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

LSSI requires that all new non-related foster families complete the nine foster PRIDE pre-service training sessions and utilize the Foster PRIDE training modules for foster families' in-service training as appropriate. Referrals to PRIDE are made by the LSSI resource team. Training locations, dates and times are provided to the prospective foster parent by the LSSI resource team in order to provide the prospective foster parent with option to meet their scheduling needs. Once the prospective foster parent becomes licensed the resource team provides information on training resources through letters, emails, phone and direct contact.

PRIDE Pre-Service Training is required for all persons seeking to become licensed foster parents. PRIDE Pre-Service training was revised to incorporate expanded training on shared parenting and trauma informed practices.

LSSI encourages relatives to attend foster PRIDE classes in-person because the training experience is much richer and participants meet other relative caregivers; which may lead to an enhanced support system. Relative caregivers are required to complete 6 hours of training. Relatives may complete the 6-hour training via DVD or in the classroom. Traditional non-relative caregivers are required to receive 39 hours of training. The first 27 hours of training is offered in the classroom or online, and remaining 12 hours of supplemental training can be completed in the classroom or online.

All programs are expected to host trainings for foster parents and staff as an ongoing professional development, and foster parents are encouraged to co-train with staff. LSSI foster parents are paired with experience staff or foster parent and staff development specialist (trainer) who has expertise in training. Moreover, foster parents are encouraged to communicate with their child welfare specialist if they would like to be trained on a specific topic. LSSI believes that developing foster parents is one of the keys to improve foster parents' skills. It is the foster parent right to be given training that will enhance their parenting skills; while supporting children in care.

Foster parent training needs are assessed mutually by LSSI resource supervisors, child welfare specialists, program directors, foster parents, and foster parent and staff development specialists. This is accomplished through monitoring visits and visits in the foster home by the

child welfare specialists. All information regarding training needs is kept confidential and it only discussed with the foster parent and the child welfare team.

LSSI hosted various trainings statewide in 2019, and made it convenient for foster parents to attend. Some training was scheduled to begin at 6:00 pm to accommodate the majority of foster parents' work schedule. Also, some trainings were hosted at 10:00 am to accommodate foster parents who schedule to allow for them to be out of the home after 6:00 pm. For those unable to attend, some of the trainings are made available via our LSSI teleconference trainings that was introduced in 2016. The training topics include: Child and Family Team Meetings, Lifebook, Foster Parent Implementation Plan, Communicating with Children, and Parent/Child/Sibling visits. LSSI assists foster parents with locating training offered by the Department and outside community agencies.

LSSI offers specialized foster care. A foster parent who accepts specialized foster children is required to complete an additional 12 hours of training yearly. Foster parents may utilize the foster parent meetings, and trainings held by resource staff, or foster parent and staff development specialists, and community based trainings that are approved by DCFS for additional training hours.

Additionally, LSSI offers an innovative program Therapeutic Foster Care of Oregon (TFCO) that offers services for the behavioral challenged youth. This program places the youth in a trained professional foster care home. The foster parents meet with the Team Lead of the program on a weekly basis. During this meeting they are able to discuss each of the children in detail and receive feedback to assist with behaviors presented in the home. During these weekly meeting training occurs, frequently foster parents will assist the Team Lead with the training. This provides insight on some situations that may occur in the foster home. Overall, the foster parents are supported by the team of professionals who care about their well-being, and the well-being of the youth.

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

Foster parents are informed during the licensing process regarding how they can contact staff to receive information and assistance. Each program site has an answering service or voice mail system that gives foster parents specific instructions on how to reach an LSSI on-call staff person during non-business hours. The on-call staff person is expected to call the foster parent back within the hour.

At the time of placement, the foster parent is given the child welfare specialist's and supervisor's contact information. Also, in the event of an emergency, the foster parent is informed to contact the on-call person. The on-call caseworker may direct the foster parent to call the Crisis and Referral Entry Service (CARES) hotline if the child is in need of Screening, Assessment, and

Support Services (SASS) screening. SASS will come to the home and screen the child to determine if there is a need for psychiatric hospitalization. A child who is in specialized foster care may have a medical or behavior plan which should be available. The CARES phone number is 800- 345-9049.

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

LSSI ensures board payments are processed timely, because child welfare specialist have been trained to adhere to a schedule that ensures all financial reimbursements are received in time for on board payments to be distributed on the fourth Friday following the end of the service month. Board payments are made to foster parents in accordance with DCFS Rule 359 and LSSI's contracts.

For October 2019 services-- November 22, 2019  
For November 2019 services-- December 27, 2019  
For December 2019 services-- January 24, 2020  
For January 2020 services-- February 28, 2020  
For February 2020 services-- March 27, 2020  
For March 2020 services-- April 24, 2020  
For April 2020 services-- May 22, 2020  
For May 2020 services-- June 26, 2020  
For June 2020 services-- July 24, 2020  
For July 2020 services-- August 28, 2020  
For August 2020 services-- September 25, 2020  
For September 2020 services-- October 23, 2020  
For October 2020 services-- November 27, 2020

Child Welfare Specialists are trained on how to handle specific issues when there is a payment concern. If the foster parent is having a payment concern they should contact the accounts payable person at their local office, child welfare supervisor or the program director to resolve the concern. If the concern is not resolved, executive level staff will provide resolution. Payment concerns rarely reach this level, because payment issues are addressed at the local level. The agency grievance procedure is also available to foster parents who have payment problems. As noted, problems rarely reach this level.

For those foster parents who are not licensed by LSSI, the agency will assist them to receive appropriate reimbursement from DCFS in a timely manner. If the foster parent is experiencing payment problems, the foster care staff will work with the foster parent to resolve the concern. The DCFS payment hotline phone number is 1-800-525-0499.

LSSI has a history of paying foster parents on time and timely resolution of payment problems. Child Welfare Specialists are expected to complete and submit the 906 Placement Payment form on a timely basis. This is crucial to ensuring timely payments to foster parents. The 906 form is processed by the billing staff within 24 hours of a placement change or new placement.

In addition, supervisors and program directors are required to review all billing for accuracy before it is submitted to DCFS.

Foster parents are provided information regarding payment schedules and rates of reimbursement based on licensure status and the level of care they provide. Programs are familiar with the specialized foster care rate, which is determined by levels of care for children who have special needs. In addition, staff is responsible for being knowledgeable about special service fee protocols to ensure foster parents are receiving appropriate reimbursement for the level of care provided and any special services provided.

Foster parents and staff are trained regarding policies and procedures for reimbursement for bed holds and non-recurring expenses; e.g., camp, music lessons, etc. The latter are paid out of the agency's allotted specific assistance funds. There are specific criteria that must be met for the foster parent to be eligible for payments due to a bed hold. (For example, the child must be in a medical hospitalization, detention for less than 14 calendar days or a substance abuse program. The foster parent must remain involved with the child and the child must return to the foster parent upon discharge). Respite services are reimbursed in the specialized contracts and there is a small amount of funding for respite in the downstate and Cook performance-based contracts, as described in the program plans. A statewide policy is in place with clear expectations regarding these services and the rates of reimbursement for respite provided under each level of care/contract. For programs with a large number of specialized cases, respite training is provided for respite providers. Foster parents may identify their own respite provider for the agency to screen and train, or the agency will help them identify a respite provider who has already completed these steps. Respite providers must provide care that is consistent with the child's service and treatment plans. For situations not addressed in the contracts/program plans, programs seek out community resources and facilitate collaboration among foster parents to address respite needs.

All children who come into care receive a clothing voucher and children under three years of age are eligible for equipment vouchers when the lack of appropriate equipment is a barrier to the placement of an infant in a foster or relative home. Programs may use donations to provide supplemental assistance to foster parents before the first board payment arrives. These may include food, equipment, or clothing. Gift certificates to major stores are available to assist in emergency situations. Children already placed in foster care whose cases transfer to LSSI from another private agency or DCFS foster home are not eligible for clothing or equipment vouchers. Staff members are knowledgeable on the procedures to access these options.

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

Foster parents participate in the assessment of the child's needs, the development of the child's

goals, service plan, and in the evaluation of progress toward those goals. The foster parent often have a unique perspective concerning the child's strengths and needs that is valuable in the plan's content. The service plan is comprehensive, addressing the child's functioning and development needs, as well as those needs which relate to the child's right to have a relationship with his own family and cultural heritage. Also, the foster parent has the opportunity to provide input into the visitation and communication plan for their foster child with their biological family.

The foster parents and children 12 years and older receive a clearly written summary of the foster parent goals, the child's goals, and the child's summary of the service plan. This written plan, or summary of the plan, is provided to the foster parents within forty-five days of a child's initial placement in the foster home, and within five days of the subsequent re-placement of a child in the foster home.

Any information that is available after placement about the child in their home, regarding the health, safety and emotional well-being must be shared with the foster parent. Foster parents have the right to request additional information, this information will be provided to the foster parent whenever it is essential to meet the child's needs. It is the foster care supervisors' responsibility to ensure that child welfare specialists are aware of the information is appropriate to share with foster parents. Foster parents have received training on confidentiality and sharing information. No information is to be shared without signed consent to release information. The child and family team meetings (CFTM) which are held quarterly are important in order to address any current issues and ensure the child's well-being. The foster parent, biological parent, and the child welfare team should be present for the meeting and invited by the caseworker. The child welfare specialists is also required to notify the foster parent of upcoming court hearing, ACR, school meetings, and counseling appointments and foster parents are encouraged to attend these meetings whenever possible.

Child welfare specialists are required to complete a case note that documents any information or discussion shared with the foster parents. These case notes become part of the child's case file. Also, child welfare specialists are required to provide any documents that are specific to the safety, health and well-being of the child in the foster home. Additionally, child welfare specialists and supervisors are to have monthly supervision to discuss any relevant issues in the foster home. Supervisors will keep in contact with the foster parent to ensure they are treated fairly and will document their discussion in the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).

**6)The right to be provided a fair, timely, and impartial investigation of complaints concerning the foster parent's licensure, to be provided the opportunity to have a person of the foster parent's 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 or an administrative review of decisions that affect licensing parameters, or both mediation and an administrative review; and the right to have**

**decisions concerning a licensing corrective action plan specifically explained and tied to the licensing standards violated.**

The agency's resource team is trained regarding foster parent and child rights, and how to conduct an investigation for a licensing complaint. Also, the resource team assumes the responsibility of explaining the investigations of complaints concerning the foster parent according to the timeframes as required by 89 Ill. Adm. Code 383.

When a licensing complaint is received, the resource specialist has two business days to immediately begin the licensing investigation. At this time, the foster parent will be informed of their rights and the right to have someone of their choosing during the investigation. That person will be allowed four hours to arrive to the foster home. The resource specialist will have thirty days to complete the investigation. The resource specialist must also interview other persons relevant to the investigation and document these interviews. If extenuating circumstances prevent the resource worker to complete timely, the foster parent will be informed. Once the final recommendation regarding the investigation is submitted to the Resource Supervisor, he/she has 7 business days to approve it or request corrections. The DCFS Agencies and Institutions licensing staff person assigned to monitor LSSI must also approve the licensing investigation. Within 5 calendar days of the investigation's approval, the foster parent must be informed in writing of the outcome of the investigation and the corrective action plan, if applicable. If violations are substantiated, the written notice includes information on how to request a supervisory review. The foster parent must request the supervisory review within 10 calendar days. The review must be held within 14 calendar days of the request. The results of the supervisory review must be given to the foster parent in writing and include information on how to request an informal review. The informal review is held with the DCFS Regional Licensing Administrator and can determine that: 1) the corrective action has or has not been completed; 2) initial or further corrective action should be offered; or 3) enforcement action is needed. If enforcement action is taken, such as revocation or refusal to renew the license, the foster parent has a right to request an administrative hearing.

Licensing training for child welfare staff is ongoing. The foster parent and staff development specialists include licensing standards and procedures at new employee training. Also, seasoned staff has been trained on the rights and responsibilities of foster parents at team meetings. It is the responsibility of the resource supervisors to make sure that the licensing policies and procedures are followed. In addition, LSSI's DCFS licensing representative reads all investigations and provides detailed feedback which helps ensure consistency with this process across the state.

**7)The right, at any time during which a child is placed with the foster parent, to receive additional or necessary information that is relative to the care of the child.**

At the time of placement, foster parents should receive information concerning the child's behavior, health, education, concrete supports, visitation schedule, and any other pertinent information pertaining to the child. Child Welfare Specialists are to complete a Sharing

Information with Caregiver form (CFS 600-4) to ensure that all proper information is shared with the caregiver. The foster parent and the child welfare specialist should sign the form to ensure that the information was given appropriately. Also, this form should be included in the case file and the discussion should be documented in SACWIS. At any time, foster parents have the right to request additional information about the child. In order to protect the birth parents rights and confidentiality the requested information will be shared only if it is essential to the safety, permanency and well-being of the child. It is the foster care supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the child welfare specialists are aware of appropriate information to share with foster parents. Foster parents and staff have received training on confidentiality and what is appropriate to share. Moreover, confidentiality and sharing information is included in the new employee training offered by the foster parent and staff development specialists.

Foster parents, biological parents, and members of the child welfare team meet quarterly to discuss the child's progress and permanency concerning the child. The quarterly meetings are Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) which ensure the child's well-being. The child welfare specialists is required to inform the foster parents about upcoming court hearings, ACRs, school meetings, and any other meetings that concern the child in their care. Foster parents are encouraged to attend these meetings. If the foster parent is unable to attend, the Child Welfare Specialist will discuss any pertinent information concerning the child.

Child welfare specialists are required to document any discussions with the foster parent in SACWIS. These case notes will be part of the child's case file. Also, child welfare specialists and supervisors are required to discuss monthly any issues in the foster home and document in SACWIS. Supervisors are required to keep in contact with foster parents to ensure they are being treated with dignity and respect and as a member of the child welfare team.

**8) The right to be given information concerning a child from the Department as required under Section 5 of the Children and Family Services Act and from a child welfare agency as required under Section 7.4 (c-5) of the Child Care Act of 1969.**

LSSI has established rules and procedures for sharing information with foster parents. At the time of placement the Child Welfare Specialist 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. This will ensure compliance with HIPPA regulations and Section 340.40. The foster parent should receive a packet of information that includes medical, educational history, and any other pertinent information. When the service plan is complete, the foster parent will receive the child's portion of the plan. In addition, the IA process and social history includes foster parents in initial interviews regarding the child needs so appropriate interventions are designed from the outset of the case. The results of this assessment, or social history, are shared with foster parents to the fullest extent possible.

In the case of an emergency placement, all pertinent information must be shared with the foster parent and the CFS 600-4 must be signed by the foster parent and child welfare specialist. The

CFS 600-4 must be reviewed by the supervisor at the time of placement to ensure all important information is relayed to the foster parent.

Sharing Information with Caregivers is part of the new employee training and is an on-going training topic for foster parents and staff. The child welfare specialist is accountable to provide information about the child known at the time of placement and to update the information as part of regular contacts with the foster family. Child welfare specialist should use their supervisor for consultation if unsure about what information should be disclosed. Failure to disclose appropriate information would be dealt with in supervision, as would disclosure of information to which the foster parent is not entitled. If the disclosure error was due to lack of knowledge, the staff person would be asked to complete additional training (one-on-one or group) on this topic. If the failure to disclose (or over-disclosure) was blatant or purposeful, the matter would be dealt with through the staff evaluation process and/or the disciplinary procedures of the agency.

**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 the decision-making process regarding the child, including individual service planning meetings, administrative case reviews, interdisciplinary staffings, and individual educational planning meetings; the right to be informed of decisions made by the courts or the child welfare agency concerning the children; the right to provide input concerning the plan of services for the child and to have that input be 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.**

LSSI Child Welfare Specialist are accountable for giving notification in a timely manner to foster parents regarding scheduled meetings and staffings concerning foster children in their care. These are done in writing and followed up with an in-person reminder or phone call. Foster parents are encouraged to attend to receive all pertinent information regarding the needs of the child.

The child welfare specialist will notify the foster parents about the time, date, and location of all CFTMs, court hearings, ACRs, individualized education plan (IEP) meetings or any other relevant staffings as soon as they are scheduled. Foster parents are encouraged to attend these meetings and encouraged to give input about the child's needs. LSSI understands that foster parents have direct involvement in their foster child's education and can provide relevant feedback at IEP meetings. If the foster parent cannot attend an IEP meeting, it can also be facilitated for foster parents to attend by phone, or the child welfare specialist will follow up with them within 24 hours to insure they are informed of the outcome. The child welfare specialist will provide foster parents the names, address and phone number of therapists, physicians, and teachers. LSSI trains foster parents to be advocates for children in their care and are provided Educational Advocacy training.

During the child's initial placement, the foster parents are included in the Integrated Assessment process and are able to give their assessment of the child and what their needs may be in order to develop the service plan that lists the specific treatment outcomes and objectives for the child. The service plan is continuously reviewed, and continually assessed and adjusted if there are things that need to be added or discontinued.

If foster parents are not able to attend meetings or staffings, the child welfare specialist will notify the foster parents of any decisions that are made by the agency or court. As a member of the child welfare team, foster parents have the right to be informed and involved in any case planning for the child in care.

LSSI has prided itself on working collaboratively with foster parents. Foster parents are active participants in case planning regarding the needs of their child(ren). When issues or changes occur the agency will consult the foster parent. LSSI understands the foster parents have first-hand knowledge about the social and emotional well-being of the child, and LSSI understands working collaboratively is best for the child(ren).

**10) The right to be given, in a timely and consistent manner, any information a caseworker has regarding the child and the child's family which is pertinent to the care and needs of the child and to the making of a permanency plan for the child. Disclosure of information concerning the child's family shall be limited to that information 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 parent and the child's family, the child's family may consent to disclosure of additional information.**

LSSI believes that foster parents are important members of the team. They have significant information on the health and well-being of the child in their care. Foster parents have the most up to date information about the needs of the child, and information on the child's development, education, emotional, mental health and medical needs. When considering initial placement of a child, the child welfare specialist and resource specialist staff will advise the foster parent of all relevant information regarding the child that is consistent with the rules of confidentiality, and foster parents must be given non-identifying information pertaining to the child's family medical and mental health background. When a foster parent receives a call about placement, they are encouraged to ask specific questions so they can make an informed decision regarding the child that may be placed in their home.

At the time a child is placed in a foster home, the child welfare specialist will provide the foster parent any information that may be used to support and properly care for the child. Moreover, the child welfare specialist should provide the foster parent, medical information, educational history, any visitation arrangements that supports the child and the biological parents, and any special needs information.

The child welfare specialist shares any information that becomes available that is pertinent to the health, safety and well-being of the child on the phone or at home visits. Child welfare specialists are provided guidance during supervision on information that should be disseminated. Foster parents are encouraged to attend Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) and Administrative Case Reviews (ACR) to share information to the child welfare team and biological parents. Additionally, foster parents are encouraged to build a relationship with the biological parents.

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

When a change of placement is determined to be necessary, foster parents shall be provided a fourteen day notification by the Notice of Decision form (CFS-151B). This document shall include the reason for change in placement, attempts at remediation, and a final determination of placement status, including the anticipated movement date.

The child welfare specialist 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 wish to do so. Prior notice is waived if the child is determined to be at imminent risk of harm or court order. Foster parents have the right to appeal decisions regarding change of placement. In order to appeal, foster parent must call in or fax their request for appeal within three business days of receipt of the notice to change placement.

Additionally, foster parents are provided a copy of the Service Appeal Brochure (CFS 1050-32), which is consistent with the appeal information in the (CFS 151-B) Notice of Decision and (CFS 151-B) Notice of Change in Placement. The child welfare specialist or the supervisor will review the brochure and explain their different options.

When a foster parent gives notice to have a child removed from their home, the child welfare specialist immediately starts the process of finding another placement. If the removal of the child is going to be a difficult transition for the foster parent, our clinical team is available to provide therapeutic service for the foster parents and their immediate family.

**12) The right to be notified in a timely and complete manner of all court hearings, including notice of the date and time of the court hearing, the name of the judge or hearing officer hearing the case, the location of the hearings, 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.**

The Child Welfare Specialist should write and/or verbally notify the foster parents of upcoming court hearings two weeks prior to the scheduled court date. The information should include

date, time, judge's name, court docket number, and caseworker information. This is to be documented in a case note and retained in the case record. The child welfare specialist will remind the foster parent of their right to attend court proceedings and of their right to be heard. If the foster parents are unable to attend the child welfare specialist should provide the foster parent all information pertinent to the child.

Foster parents are informed of their right to intervene in court proceedings or to seek action from the court for their foster child, under the Juvenile Court Act of 1987 as part of their on-going in-service training. During the child's placement, the child welfare specialist provides education to the foster parents as to the purpose of shelter Care, Adjudication, Dispositional and Permanency Hearing. Additionally, LSSI encourages and supports foster parents in their seeking additional training regarding court procedures.

**13) The right to be considered as a placement option when a foster child who was formerly placed with the foster parent is to be re-entered into foster care, if that placement is consistent with the best interest of the child and other children in the foster parent's home.**

Foster parents who previously had a foster child in their home are given priority consideration as a placement option in the event that a child who was formerly placed with them re-enters foster care. This priority consideration is given unless such replacement is not considered consistent with the best interest of the child in question or that of other children in the foster home. Additionally, the foster home must have available capacity for the child to re-enter into the foster home.

LSSI will make every effort to reunite children with foster families with whom they were previously placed. Also, the child welfare specialist will consult with children twelve and older concerning their placement. In the event the former placement is no longer an option, the Child Welfare Specialist will make attempts to locate relatives with whom the child is acquainted with.

**14) The right to have timely access to the child placement agency's existing appeals process and the right to be free from acts of harassment and retaliation by any other party when exercising the right to appeal.**

Foster parents are provided with a copy of the agency's written Foster Parent Grievance Procedure, and a copy of the written appeals procedures. An acknowledgement of receipt of this information is included in the foster home file. Foster parents also receive training on the Foster Parent Law, and include instructions on both the DCFS and LSSI appeals processes.

When a foster parent indicates a desire to grieve a service decision, the child welfare specialist 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 resolve internally, the child welfare specialist will provide information to allow the foster parent to access the DCFS

appeal system. The foster parent will be provided this information and a copy of the service appeals pamphlet at a formal meeting.

Foster parents shall not be treated disrespectfully, harassed, or retaliated against by any party when exercising their right to appeal. Any such action by a LSSI staff will result in disciplinary action, including possible termination. Any perceived retaliation or harassment should be reported immediately to LSSI management and the DCFS Advocacy office at 1- 800-232-3798.

**15) The right to be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline established under Section 35.6 of the Children and Family Services Act and of 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 appointed under Section 35.5 of the Children and Family Services Act.**

Foster parents are well informed of their rights. Foster parents receive information regarding the foster parent hotline, and all sites make available the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) brochure. The brochure for the OIG will be displayed at their site location in a public area. LSSI wants foster parents to be aware of all available resources to them. LSSI cooperates fully when it receives a call from the OIG and/or the Advocacy office to provide additional information and addresses any concerns immediately. The Foster Parent Hotline number is 1-800-722-9124.

The OIG office was created to reform and strengthen the child welfare system. The mandate of the OIG is to investigate misconduct, misfeasance, malfeasance and violations of rules, procedures or laws by Department of Children and Family Services employees, foster parents, service providers and contractors with the department (See 20 ILCS 505/35.5, 35.6, and 35.7). The DCFS office of the Inspector General can be reached at 312-433-3000.

DCFS has established a Foster Parent Helpline Number that is a statewide toll free number. The Helpline provides advice and referral services. The Helpline number is given to the foster parents at the conclusion of PRIDE training and upon licensure with LSSI, the Helpline number is 866-368-5204.

LSSI does not tolerate any misconduct by employees, service providers, or contractors. LSSI provides ongoing training about the Foster Parent Helpline and Inspector General Investigations. When appropriate, child welfare specialist and supervisors will provide support and information to foster parents in the event of reports of misconduct.

## **Foster Parents' Responsibilities**

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

Foster parents are required to participate in pre-service and ongoing training. The importance of open communication is discussed in PRIDE training and continues throughout their involvement with LSSI.

Foster parents are encouraged to keep records of the child's physical, dental, vision, hearing, and school records. During home visits the Child Welfare Specialist will initiate conversation about the child's records, safety, well-being and permanency. Foster parents are encouraged to openly discuss any concerns they may have. This provides the foster parent and Child Welfare Specialist the opportunity to openly communicate.

During home visits, CFTM, ACR's, or any other pertinent meetings, the foster parent is encouraged to communicate regarding the child. LSSI understands that open communication is one of the keys to placement stabilization. Also, foster parents can speak to the child welfare specialist, supervisor, program director, or Associate Executive Director.

### **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 are informed about the importance of confidentiality, and reinforced on an ongoing basis during visits to the foster home. When foster parents understand the importance of confidentiality for children and their families, they are more likely to understand and abide by the expectations. Confidentiality is also covered in the placement agreement. The rules, limits and necessity of confidentiality are also covered by the Resource Specialist at monitoring visits and documented on the appropriate form.

Foster parents are encouraged to participate in training on confidentiality and how information is shared. Specific information that can and cannot be shared will be documented by a child welfare specialist in a case note which will become a permanent record in the child's case file. In addition, staff and foster parents need ongoing training regarding the handling of foster parents' confidential information and the laws and regulations available to protect foster parents' privacy. This remains an important training area that must be addressed on an ongoing basis. This training is part of the new employee training conducted by the Foster Parent and Staff Development Specialist, and refresher training will be given in team meetings.

When a foster parent has concerns regarding confidentiality issues they are encouraged to seek out the appropriate answer to assure compliance with the confidentiality standards. LSSI staff is

available at any time to assist with any questions a foster parent may have regarding the confidentiality standards.

### **3)The responsibility to advocate for children in the foster parent's care.**

LSSI has a responsibility to strengthen the relationship between the foster parent and the child. This includes the foster parent and the child building a trusting relationship that is open and honest. Foster parents learn at PRIDE to advocate for the child in their care, and their responsibility to the child. Foster parents are trusted advocates who help shape the lives of the child in their care. They spend the majority of their time with the child, and help provide planning and management of their case.

Foster parents are encouraged to attend all meetings, staffings, ACRs, placement reviews, CFTM, and court hearings to discuss the care of the child in their home and give open and honest feedback. Foster parents have valuable input on the child's service needs and goals.

Foster parents are encouraged to work closely with all other professionals involved in the care of their child/children. These professionals may include the Guardian Ad Litem, CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), other court personnel, doctors, nurses, school teachers, therapists, mentors, etc. Not all Illinois counties have CASA programs, but foster parents are encouraged to find out if their community has an active CASA program by visiting the Illinois CASA website, and child welfare specialists assist with locating an active CASA program in the area. Moreover, child welfare specialists encourage foster parent active participation with other professionals recognizing the foster parent's input as being valuable to the overall success of the child/children's care.

Foster parents are to receive training on education advocacy within a year of licensure, and are informed of this responsibility while in pre-licensure PRIDE training, as well as reminded in monthly home visits. Child Welfare Specialists will continue to inform foster parents of the benefits of advocating for the educational rights of the children in their care through discussion at home visits, and the Resource Specialist will discuss the benefits of advocating at their bi-annual monitoring visits.

During pre-service training, foster parents will receive training on working with the court system and the appeal process. These topics are also covered as in-service training topics. Programs serving special needs populations have additional training for foster parents caring for the specialized children. Since these children tend to receive services from many providers and have complex needs, the training for these foster parents include emphasis on advocacy skills.

It is the child welfare specialists responsibility to follow-up with foster parents regarding their concerns or requests. If a foster parent feels the child's child welfare specialist has not taken proper action regarding their request, the foster parent is encouraged to contact the Child Welfare Specialist, Supervisor, Program Director or Associate Executive Director. If a resolution cannot be reached, the foster parent is encouraged to follow the Service Appeal Process (CFS

1050-32), which is outlined in a brochure given to the foster parent at the time a child is placed in the home.

**4) The responsibility to treat children in the foster parent's care and the children's family with dignity, respect, and consideration.**

Foster parents are informed about their responsibility to treat children that are in their care as well as their families with dignity, respect, and consideration during PRIDE training, foster parent teleconference training provided by LSSI, and ongoing DCFS and LSSI training. Child welfare specialists and resource specialists monitor the treatment of children and their families through home visits, CFTM, and clinical staffing's. Resource staff will provide support when an issue arises or when foster parents feel their issues or concerns are not being addressed. Child Welfare Specialists encourage foster parents to use positive reinforcement that build on the child strengths and abilities. All foster parents sign an Acknowledgment of Understanding Concerning Prohibition of Corporal Punishment (CFS 452-3) at the time of licensure acknowledging that corporal punishment is never allowed, and negative comments cannot be used when disciplining. Foster Parents are encouraged to not to talk about negative case dynamics with the child, and are encouraged to discuss educational, medical and mental health information with their biological family during CFTM. As foster parents provide support to the child in their care, they are encouraged to support the biological family. This fosters the child's social and emotional well-being.

Child welfare specialists are trained to monitor the attitudes toward and treatment of foster children and their families to ensure that foster parents always remember to treat them with dignity, respect and consideration. Child welfare specialists are required to speak to children alone. This allows the child to express any concerns, fears or questions. The child welfare specialists can address any issues presented by the child directly with the foster parent or speak to the resource representative and supervisor. The resource representative also evaluates the foster family's ability to support the identified permanency goal at bi-annual home visits. Permanency goals are an ongoing discussion between the caseworker and the foster family. The resource specialist as well as child welfare staff encourages the foster family to be involved with court hearings, case reviews, parent/child visits and CFTM.

As stated elsewhere in this Plan, foster parents are encouraged to meet and become involved with the birth families of their foster children. This is not mandatory, but is strongly encouraged because in almost all cases it assists the foster family, child and birth family in meeting the child's service and permanency needs. The opportunity to work together with the birth family also gives the foster family the opportunity to demonstrate their respect and consideration for the child and his/her birth family. When a child returns home, foster parents are encouraged to be involved, thus providing a smooth transition. Sometimes foster parents are able to stay in touch with the birth family, providing ongoing support and encouragement to the family as they reunify.

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

Every effort will be made to assure a good fit for both the child and the family providing care for the child. 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 begins at PRIDE training and the process continues during interaction with the resource specialist and the child welfare specialists during regular home visits and bi-annual monitoring visits. Referrals for added services are a part of ongoing work with foster families and are important in maintaining stable placements for children. When additional support or training is needed, foster parents will be referred to appropriate workshops, training, counseling, and given educational materials and provided extra support by LSSI staff. Moreover, the foster parent and staff development specialists will assist with support, training, and consultation which include the teleconference trainings. LSSI encourages foster parents to establish a network of support in order to further utilize their strengths and receive assistance for areas of improvement.

During the licensing process, the resource specialist will discuss with the foster family the need to develop a list of questions they would like answered before a child is placed in their home. Foster families are informed that they may choose not to foster a child if they are not comfortable with the information given regarding the child at intake. Foster families will work with the resource specialist to identify a capacity and age range which best fits their daily routines and parenting skills.

If foster parents experience difficulty caring for a child, understanding their trauma, or their needs, they are encouraged to ask for assistance from LSSI staff, so that their needs as well as the child's are met. Resources to address any issues include training provided by LSSI, DCFS, books, videos, and in-home individualized trainings.

Moreover, it is LSSI's responsibility to recognize the foster parent's personal support needs and assist them in finding resources and trainings that is collaborative, effective, and innovative.

**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.**

LSSI provides ongoing trainings and support groups throughout the state where foster parents can receive the benefits of affiliating with other foster parents. Some of these avenues include regular foster parent meetings, newsletters, advisory councils, and training opportunities. LSSI staff provides information on support groups for foster parents in an effort to encourage alliances with other foster parents. LSSI encourages foster parents to meet with other foster parents and develop connections with one another where they will have the opportunity to share ideas and network.

The resource staff shares the availability and benefits of support groups during the licensing process and ongoing home monitoring. Foster parents are presented the opportunity to participate in meetings, trainings, and co-trainings. LSSI local sites will provide meetings and training opportunities to foster parents throughout the year. Moreover, LSSI will encourage foster parents to become co-trainers to connect with other foster parents. All foster parents have strengths and skills in different areas. For example, a foster parent who is caring for a child with behavior concerns can be connected to another foster parent who is experiencing the same challenges with their foster child.

LSSI distributes information on state and national foster parent groups and encourages participation. LSSI Statewide foster parent and staff development manager, and a foster parent are currently members of the Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Council. Also, LSSI has foster parents who are not members, but attend the meetings.

**7) The responsibility to assess the foster parents' ongoing individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.**

Foster parents have many opportunities to receive training related to their identified needs. Foster parents can request training through their resource specialist or child welfare specialist. Foster parents are informed about community sponsored parenting-training opportunities and training at their local site. The resource specialist and the foster parent mutually assess strengths and needs in order to continue improving their skills to meet the needs of foster children. The resource specialist will document their strengths and needs on the CFS 590 Licensing Compliance and Monitor Record and case notes. Also, the Child Welfare Specialist will assess foster parents strengths and needs at the foster parent worker visit every 30 days.

Foster parents have identified specific trainings that they would like to attend. The resource specialist or child welfare specialist will assist in registration if the foster parent needs assistance. Foster parents are kept updated about training materials such as books, internet resources, tapes, videos, and LSSI tele-conference training that might be helpful to them. Foster parents are active in support groups and will inform other foster parents about their experience and will urge them to attend training. The resource specialist has encouraged one to one training by asking seasoned foster parents with more experience to discuss their personal stories in order to help other foster parents. This has occurred at meetings and trainings.

**8)The responsibility to develop and assist in implementing strategies to prevent placement disruption, recognizing the traumatic impact of placement disruptions on a foster child and members of the foster family; and the responsibility to provide emotional support for the foster children and members of the foster family if preventive strategies fail and placement disruption occurs.**

After the child is placed, the Child Welfare Specialist will continue to assess the foster home every thirty days for any signs of placement disruption. The caseworker will talk to the foster

parent about trauma, and any adverse experiences the minor may have had before being placed. Also, the caseworker will speak to the minor alone and offer emotional support. Moreover, the Child Welfare Specialist and the foster parent will communicate if the child needs additional supports to prevent placement disruption. The Child Welfare Specialist will suggest the de-escalation/safety and trauma training to assist foster parents in strategies and techniques that can be used for children who have experienced complex trauma. It is the foster parent's responsibility to report any unidentified issues to their Child Welfare Specialist immediately. This will assist in helping the foster parent and child with any needs that may have not been met at the time of placement.

LSSI provides foster parents at each site a 24 hour on-call number, which is staffed by a Child Welfare Specialist. Additionally, foster parents are also provided with the Crisis and Referral Entry Service hotline (CARES), at 1-800-345-9049, which provides emergency services to children who are in care. LSSI understands that foster parents and foster children need services that are available to them 24 hours a day.

If a placement has been identified as needing more supportive services and appears at risk of placement disruption, a CFTM will be convened to develop a plan to enhance support to the foster family in order to stabilize the placement. LSSI employs therapists who will assist foster parents with behavior techniques. Additionally, the Child Welfare Specialist can make a referral for Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) services. This program is designed to assist families with placement stabilization and counseling to maintain a foster placement.

If stabilization efforts put into place are unsuccessful, LSSI will work with the foster parent and the biological family to locate another placement. Also, the caseworker will use the Relative Resource and Positive Supports Worksheet (CFS 458-B) to locate supports and possible placement for the child. Foster parents are asked to give at least a 14 day notice when requesting removal of a child from their home.

**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.**

Foster parents receive de-escalation/safety, trauma and Lifebook training to recognize signs of stress and other related signals that may ultimately lead to disruption of placement or undue stress on the foster parents, foster children, or foster parents' family members.

Specialized training topics may also be designed by programs or the foster parent and staff development specialist to deal with stressors. For example, constant exposure to separation in foster care (attachment issues and separation from biological parent) is very trying on a child. In addition, foster parents also experience separation and loss when a child returns home or leaves their care for another reason. LSSI staff use a special training model to address attachment issues, using the Circle of Security Model. This training has been well received by foster parents and biological parents who attended. These types of special trainings will

continue throughout the state to provide special support to foster parents and the challenges they face.

LSSI provides respite care for all levels of foster care, based on the program plan, including relative, traditional, and specialized care. The methods for obtaining respite and the rates of reimbursement vary depending on level of care of the child. Foster parents should contact their child welfare specialist in the event that respite is needed.

Licensed foster parents may access the DCFS Voluntary Placement Hold system. LSSI understands that foster parents may need a break. All child welfare specialist, supervisors, resource and intake staff members are knowledgeable about the placement clearance and “hold” processes and make that information available to foster parents. Foster parents should contact their resource specialist if they would like to request a voluntary hold on placements to the foster home.

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

Foster parents understand the rewards and benefits to children, parents and families as they provide protection and nurturance to children in their care. They help meet the developmental needs of children and support the permanency goals for children in their care. Foster parents are rewarded by seeing families strengthened and are encouraged to actively assist and mentor families to support them in improving the environment from which the children were removed. They understand that this could assist and aid in a successful reunification for families. Foster parents truly understand that families need to be together if possible. If reunification is not possible, foster families see reward in possibly providing permanency through adoption, guardianship, or Independence for youth in care. This aids in the children developing lifetime connections. Foster parents also see the reward of being a member of a professional foster care team in working together to meet the needs of a child in their care.

LSSI staff formally acknowledges the rewards and positive benefits of fostering through various outlets. The agency hosts several foster parent appreciation events during the year. In planning for these events, we ask foster parents to help us identify community contacts who might be willing to assist. LSSI places special emphasis on foster parent appreciation during May, which is National Foster Care Month. LSSI continues to use National Foster Care Month as an opportunity to raise the profile of fostering within local communities by urging local press contacts, churches and businesses to honor foster parents in their midst. Foster parents are informed of special events by child welfare specialist, e-mail notices, monthly newsletters, LSSI foster care Facebook and/or personal invitations sent directly to their homes. Foster parents are encouraged to speak positively about foster parenting in their communities, with special emphasis during the month of May.

Foster parents are encouraged to participate in recruitment activities and invite friends, family members and neighbors to LSSI's Foster Care Informational meetings. Friends or family members of current foster parents are often the most successful new applicants. Reminders to foster parents about referring others have been provided via program newsletters, churches and the LSSI Foster Care Facebook page. Foster parents who present at any recruitment activity are provided with individual or small group preparation for these responsibilities. LSSI staff and foster parents also participate in the annual advocacy day in Springfield, "Lutheran Day." This is an opportunity for foster/adoptive parents to meet with legislators and talk about the needs of their families. A morning meeting before the legislative meetings serves to prepare all participants for their sessions. These opportunities and events involve LSSI foster parents in promoting a positive image of foster care to the wider community.

**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 PRIDE training, foster parents receive a thorough overview of their role, rights, and responsibilities within the child welfare system. During the PRIDE training, caregivers hear a panel presentation by professionals who discuss their various roles and responsibilities within the child welfare system. The importance of the child's family of origin is discussed. Training on teamwork, respect and communication is part of the ongoing training for staff and foster parents.

Foster parents are encouraged to be an active and vital part of the services provided to the child and family. The foster parents are strongly encouraged to attend the court hearings, ACRs, and any other relevant meetings. If the child is receiving counseling services, the foster parent is consulted regarding any behavioral issues pertaining to the child/children and should be actively involved in the therapeutic process. The child's progress in counseling is strongly correlated to the foster parents' active participation in the counseling process with the child, including close communication with the therapist and participation in family sessions, if indicated. LSSI is committed to encouraging this participation by considering the foster parents' schedules when planning sessions. Moreover, LSSI foster parents have a voice and are encouraged to communicate any issue or concerns to the Child Welfare Specialist and/or Child Welfare Specialist supervisor for clarity and resolution. If there is no resolution to an issue or concern, foster parents are encouraged to seek the site program director for a resolution.

LSSI plans to continue its emphasis on developing trainings that are designed for foster parents. Foster parents are encouraged to participate in foster parent meetings and trainings, which are held at each site. In addition to training, attending these meetings allows foster parents to be kept informed of policy changes, staff changes, and other important agency and DCFS announcements.

Foster parents are surveyed twice a year by LSSI Quality Assurance staff and the information is compiled and presented in a report to the agency management team. If the Quality Assurance notes a comment that is concerning or that requires follow-up, the appropriate program director

and associate executive director are immediately sent the information for their attention and follow-up. The surveys are anonymous, but foster parents may include their names if they wish. Also, the report is uploaded on the agency's internal website so all staff have the information.

**12) The responsibility to know and, as necessary, fulfill the foster parent's responsibility to serve as mandated reporters 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 the foster parents have committed child abuse or neglect and applicable administrative rules and procedures governing investigations of those allegations.**

During pre-service training, foster parents are informed of their legal responsibilities as mandated reporters. The resource specialist also addresses this responsibility at pre- licensure and ongoing home visits. Foster Pride also includes information regarding both mandated reporting requirements and foster parents who are subjects of abuse/neglect reports. Also, foster parents are given copies of the Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes (Rule 402), which outlines the requirements for foster parent licensure and the investigation process. Foster parents are required to complete and sign the Acknowledgement of Mandated reporter Status form (CANTS 22) during the licensing process. This requires them to report to the child abuse hotline at 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873) whenever there is cause to believe abuse and or neglect. After licensure, foster parents will receive refresher training on their responsibilities as mandated reporters during foster parent meetings and bi-annual monitoring visits.

Foster parents are given information about the investigation process at the time of licensure. If there is a child abuse or neglect investigation involving the foster home, the child abuse/neglect investigator from DCFS will explain the investigation process and will inform the foster parents of their rights during the investigation. Typically, there is a concurrent licensing investigation conducted by LSSI. The LSSI resource specialist will also explain the foster parents' rights during the licensing investigation. If the foster parent has further questions regarding the policy, they are encouraged to contact their Resource Specialist or Supervisor to discuss their questions and get a clear understanding of such policy.

**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 requirements associated with those proceedings; and the responsibility to actively participate in the foster parent's designated role in these proceedings.**

Foster parents receive ongoing training in ACRs, client service plans, and court processes. Foster parents are encouraged to take an active role in permanency planning. Foster parents are continually reminded of the importance of their participation in the permanency planning of a child in their home during PRIDE training, bi-annual monitoring visits and at regular visits from the child welfare specialist. LSSI promotes and encourages active participation from foster parents, because they know the child best. Foster parent input is valuable to sound decision making and planning.

Child welfare specialists may provide one-on-one information to foster parents before, during, or after ACR meetings and court dates to help them fulfill their roles as foster parents and advocates and to inform them of what has taken place if they have not been in attendance. If the foster parent is unable to attend, they are encouraged to submit documentation as to their input and recommendations. Also, foster parents are encouraged to phone in if they are not available to be present at an ACR. LSSI wants foster parents to have a voice in the life of a child that is placed in their home.

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

It is the responsibility of LSSI to inform foster parents of the appeal procedure for foster parents. They are encouraged to contact their resource specialist or child welfare specialist with questions if they do not understand the appeal procedures and their rights. LSSI resource staff and child welfare staff offer guidance and assistance to foster parents who wish to appeal a decision. Foster parents can also contact the child welfare supervisor, program director or associate executive director with any specific information pertaining to an appeal decision.

Informational brochures are distributed to foster parents regarding the appeals process which includes both the DCFS process and the internal LSSI Interaction and Grievance process. The foster home record contains an acknowledgement demonstrating that the foster parent both received and had the LSSI process explained to them. This procedure includes a process for reporting any violations of the Foster Parent Law not covered by an already existing appeal or grievance procedure. This process delineates time frames for resolution as well as all steps necessary for discussion and a satisfactory conclusion. This brochure also lists the foster parent's right to appeal to an advocate outside of LSSI if needed.

In addition, the Office of Inspector General's brochure offers excellent information regarding the OIG's role and how they can assist foster parents and staff. All LSSI sites have been given copies of this brochure. Sites are expected to make this brochure available to their foster parents. As noted in the brochure, the Foster Parent Hotline is 1-800-722-9124.

**15) The responsibility to know and understand the importance of maintaining accurate and relevant records regarding the children'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.**

Foster parents receive training regarding the need for keeping records of significant events, medical reports, medication/behavior charts (where applicable), and other record keeping needs. Keeping accurate records ensures adequate medical, educational, and therapeutic services are provided. In addition, the child may have questions about their life as they grow older and accurate record keeping can help answer their questions. Subsequent providers and child welfare specialist may also need the information to plan for the children in the future.

During training, LSSI expectations for record keeping are discussed and written expectations are distributed.

Children served in the specialized program or children who may have behavior concerns are provided a “Staying Calm Plan” that is developed to assist foster parents and the child with interventions to reduce negative behaviors. The “Staying Calm Plan” is part of the de-escalation/safety training that is presented to foster parents yearly. Programs are expected to provide the “Staying Calm Plan” to foster parents and assist them if needed.

Records are reviewed regularly by the child welfare specialist. The resource specialist may also review foster parent’s record-keeping methods to provide support and assistance with this task. Informal one-on-one training is provided by both resource staff and child welfare specialists to assist foster parents in effective record keeping and to ensure that all procedures regarding the medication and behavior logs are being fulfilled, as well as ensuring that all significant events/issues are recorded timely and accurately.

**16) The responsibility to share information, through child welfare teams, with subsequent caregivers (whether the child’s parent or other substitute caregiver) regarding the child’s adjustment in the foster parents’ home.**

LSSI considers foster parents members of the professional team, foster parents may be asked to provide the children’s records to subsequent caregivers. Whenever possible, the foster parents meet subsequent caregivers and provide the children’s records. In addition, foster parents are encouraged to be active participants in the transition process whenever possible and appropriate. This is important given that children’s adjustment to new caregivers is significantly enhanced when the children’s routines are kept as similar as possible and the children observe their past and subsequent caregivers cooperating with one another.

LSSI offers Lifebook training for foster parents on how to assist children in creating a meaningful and completed Lifebook. Lifebooks are an essential tool to aid children in the child welfare system in understanding the narrative of their lives and the meaning of the changes they have experienced. In addition, Lifebooks are a catalyst to conversation and relationship building between the child and their foster parent who assists them in the process of creating a book. This not only promotes the child’s positive adjustment to a new home, but the foster parent learns how the child views their life story and the transitions and difficulties the child has experienced. Moreover, this helps the foster parent better understand how to support and parent the child.

**17) The responsibility to provide care and services that are respectful of and responsive to the child’s cultural needs and are supportive of relationships between the child and his or her own family; the responsibility to 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 the responsibility to take action to address these issues.**

LSSI works to ensure that the cultural needs and identity of all clients are understood, respected, and fostered. Foster parents receive ongoing training on cultural sensitivity. Foster parents are expected to respect and support a child's ties to his or her birth family and cooperate with the supervising agency and the service plan for the child and family. Foster parents are also trained on keeping families connected, and the importance of maintaining a child's cultural identity.

Foster parents are actively encouraged to support the birth family through involvement in family visits and other events. This provides a wonderful opportunity for the foster and birth families to learn from one another and support the child. Birth parents can often learn caregiving ideas from foster parents. In addition, this provides opportunities for exchange around cultural and racial differences. Foster parents whose race, ethnicity and/or culture are different from the birth family may find special benefit in these opportunities to learn about the birth family's cultural traditions and values. Workers are available to help facilitate these exchanges.

Foster parents are encouraged to meet the cultural needs of their child in their home through books, trainings, and outside resources. Resource specialist and child welfare specialist are responsible for assisting foster parents with a training plan that addresses cultural and racial sensitivity as needed.