

THE BABY FOLD
FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

THE FOSTER PARENT BILL OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR 2004

A foster parent's rights include, but are not limited to, the following:

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

The Baby Fold's Statement of Beliefs expresses a belief in teamwork and open communication, and valuing and respecting each individual. "Each individual is a unique child of God and as such we value and respect each individual. Teamwork and open communication among employees, clients, board members and volunteers is essential to our purpose."

Child welfare specialists, family development specialists, and supervisors receive training and supervision that emphasizes the importance of teamwork with foster parents and the treatment of all team members with dignity and respect. Foster parents are encouraged to be part of the professional team through participation in staffings and joint training with child welfare specialists, family development specialists, and supervisors. Foster parents are involved in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of service plan goals and treatment plan goals. Foster parents are informed of court hearings and administrative case reviews and are encouraged to be present and participate. ***Foster parents receive training so they are prepared to function as the educational advocate for their foster children.***

Foster parents are informed of opportunities to participate as team members and to develop their professional skills through monthly newsletters ***and support groups. The newsletter serves as an additional means of communication, provides pertinent information, and enhances knowledge for the purpose of further engaging foster parents as a member of the professional child welfare team.***

The Baby Fold involved a group of foster parents in creating an agency foster parent manual. ***This manual is reviewed at the agency orientation for new foster parents and serves as a tool for educating foster parents in their role as a professional member of the child welfare team.*** Family development specialists, child welfare specialists, and supervisors meet with the foster parent group on a regular basis, but no less than quarterly, to review The Baby Fold's Implementation Plan.

The Baby Fold conducts CORE training and in-service training for foster care staff that familiarizes them with The Baby Fold's Implementation Plan, and focuses on working with foster parents and including them as a part of the professional child welfare team. Experienced foster parents ~~will be asked to~~ serve as co-trainers of this CORE session. In-service training will also inform foster care staff of the content of Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training that foster parents are required to attend and complete prior to becoming licensed.

Foster parents providing specialized foster care meet throughout the year with the entire specialized foster care program team, including supervisors, case workers, and therapists, for training and support. Foster parents in the professional foster care program meet with the treatment team, including the supervisor, caseworkers, therapists, and residential counselors, twice a month. One time per month the entire program team meets to review the program and establish goals.

Information is sought from the agency foster parents to ensure they are treated with dignity and respect. Foster parents are surveyed by the Quality Enhancement staff when children are placed into or are discharged from the program.

The Quality Enhancement staff also completes a yearly foster parent survey. These surveys offer foster parents the opportunity to express their level of satisfaction with the treatment they received from the agency foster care staff. The information received from foster parents is provided to staff through quarterly Quality Enhancement meetings and individual supervision.

Family development specialists, child welfare specialists, supervisors, **therapists, and interns** meet with the foster parent group on a regular basis, **usually monthly**, but no less than quarterly, to review The Baby Fold's Implementation Plan. **Through participation on the committee, foster parents are able to give input regarding program enhancement, provide suggestions for training and activities, and participate in planning events.** Foster parents may use the agency Foster Parent Committee as a means of expressing concerns. Information received through the committee members is provided to staff during staff meetings **and additional training is provided, as needed, to address the necessary responsiveness to foster parents' expressed concerns.**

Minutes from the foster parent committee meetings are published in the monthly foster parent newsletter. This allows all of the agency's foster parents to be apprised of the work of the committee and the progress that is being made in the monitoring of the agency's implementation plan.

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

Prospective foster parents are informed about PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training during their first contact with the agency. Family Development Specialists register prospective foster parents for PRIDE and educational advocacy training promptly. The Baby Fold has made its office available for PRIDE training sessions and is frequently used as a site for PRIDE training sessions. Five staff members of The Baby Fold are certified PRIDE trainers.

During the PRIDE training and licensure process, foster parents are invited to attend an orientation session at The Baby Fold. At that time they have the opportunity to meet members of the staff and other foster parents from the agency. They are provided with a copy of The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual and review the information with the family development specialist. Other helpful information is provided regarding parenting resources in the community. They have an opportunity to ask questions and gain familiarity with The Baby Fold's foster care programs.

Family development specialists address the training needs of foster parents at every license monitoring visit. Information about PRIDE module training, educational advocacy training, adoption training, training available in the community, and agency-sponsored training is shared with foster parents, along with the list of resources in the lending library available through the local PRIDE training coordinator. The Baby Fold offers written, audio, and visual resources through its own library.

During each biannual license monitoring visit, discussion occurs with the foster parent that helps them identify their training needs and interests, which will then in turn assist them in developing the knowledge and skills needed to successfully parent the child or children in their home. The foster parents' identified training needs are listed on the Licensing Monitoring Record. Training logs are kept in order to ensure that

foster parents obtain the required hours of training and receive training that is in keeping with their needs and interests. Family development specialists will assist foster parents, as requested, in seeking resources for training that meets their needs and interests.

Using information obtained through licensing monitoring visits, feedback from the foster parent committee, and foster parent survey results, agency training will be provided to foster parents that will assist them in meeting their required hours of training and focus on meeting their expressed needs and interests. The training schedule is developed quarterly and is advertised in The Baby Fold's foster parent newsletter.

Foster families providing care for children in specialized and treatment foster care are required to have more advanced training, at least 24 hours per year. Additional training for specialized and treatment foster care parents is provided through their training and support meetings. Therapeutic Crisis Intervention, first aid, and CPR training are made available to all foster parents and are required training for specialized and professional foster parents.

The Nurturing Parenting classes are available to foster parents. When possible, these classes are team taught by a staff member and an agency foster parent.

Two staff members from The Baby Fold are certified STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting) trainers. This training is offered to foster parents. Two staff members are certified Effective Black Parenting instructors. This training will be offered to foster parents.

Foster parents are informed of all agency training that is available to child welfare staff, through the monthly newsletter, as well as the PRIDE modules and training that is available in the community. Foster parents are invited to participate in the agency training, including The Baby Fold's Child Welfare Services Core Training sessions that are offered three times per year. CORE topics include documentation, assessment, helping interventions, human development, attachment, ethics and mandated reporting, domestic violence, visitation and loss, policy and history, introduction to juvenile court, service planning and permanency, and crisis intervention, cultural diversity, addiction, sexual abuse, and mental illness. Foster parents may also attend agency wide training sessions on and blood-borne pathogens.

Foster parents, as training participants, are asked to complete evaluation forms for the agency training they attend. The foster parent committee offers suggestions for desired and needed training. Along with the annual foster parent survey, this information is used to improve existing training and prepare future training.

Foster parents are encouraged to attend the Illinois Foster Parent Association annual conference. This conference is advertised in The Baby Fold's foster parent newsletter.

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.

For each child in their care foster parents are provided with names of the assigned child welfare specialist and supervisor. Foster parents are also informed that they may contact the Director of Child Welfare Services if the child's worker and supervisor are not available. Foster parents may also contact a family development specialist with questions or requests for services. The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual includes The Baby Fold's organizational chart to inform foster parents of the appropriate chain of command.

Foster parents receive the emergency on-call phone number that is answered 365 days a year, before and after business hours during the week, and throughout weekends and holidays. The emergency on-call phone number is 309-530-1739 for home of relative, traditional, and specialized foster care. The emergency on-call phone number for professional foster care is 309-530-1737.

Foster parents receive a child record folder for each foster child, which lists the DCFS emergency numbers needed for to obtain authorization for emergency medical treatment for DCFS wards. Foster parents receive the DCFS Foster Family Handbook that lists offices and phone numbers that are available for assistance. The family development specialist provides training to foster parents on resources available as noted in the handbook and The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual.

The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual includes information on available supportive services, including Screening, Assessment and Support Services (SASS), System of Care wrap services, and consultation services. Phone numbers for the Crisis Team and the DCFS hotline are included.

With The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual, foster parents receive a large magnetic sheet with important phone numbers printed, including the phone numbers for the agency, Medical Card Hotline, Healthworks Hotline, Poison Control, System of Care, and the DCFS Abuse/Neglect Hotline. Blank lines are available for the foster parent to add the caseworker's name, and phone numbers for the agency on-call, doctor, dentist, health department, and school.

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

At the beginning of each fiscal year foster parents receive a schedule of dates when monthly checks for foster parents will be sent. This schedule will be published in The Baby Fold's foster parent newsletter. Checks are sent no later than the fifteenth of the month following the month when service was provided. Each foster parent is paid according to the level of care approved for the child.

Placement/Payment Authorization forms will be completed within 24 hours of the child's placement. When relative care providers become licensed, the Placement/Payment form will be completed within 24 hours of The Baby Fold receiving confirmation of the issuance of the license.

Foster parents receive a list of approved reimbursable travel expenses in The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual. Foster parents submit travel expenses at the end of each month and receive payment by the fifteenth of the following month. Foster parents are encouraged to complete Illinois Department of Public Aid forms in order to receive reimbursement for transporting their foster children to medical and counseling appointments.

At the time of placement, foster parents are informed of items that are considered non-recurring expenses. Foster parents may request non-recurring expense payment for children in their care. Foster parents must obtain approval from the Director of Child Welfare Services prior to incurring the expense. Most often the payment for these expenses is usually made directly from The Baby Fold to the provider. When prior approval has been obtained, reimbursement will be made to the foster parent within fourteen days of submission of receipts.

Foster parents may request up to seven days of paid respite per year for each child in traditional foster care. Foster parents may request up to fourteen days of paid respite per year for each child in specialized

foster care. The Baby Fold pays approved respite providers directly within fourteen days of confirmation that respite has been provided.

Foster parents may contact The Baby Fold's business office to resolve any payment problems.

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

The foster home placement agreement expresses the role and responsibilities of the agency and the foster parent related to the child being placed in the foster home. The foster home placement agreement specifically states that the foster parent needs to treat the parents courteously and refrain from criticizing them in the child's presence. The placement agreement also states that the foster parent will plan with the direct service staff before making religious commitments for the child such as baptism, confirmation, church attendance, church membership, and religious holiday celebrations. By signing the foster home placement agreement, the foster parent agrees to support the permanency goals for the child and to attend all court hearings and other staffings related to planning for the child.

Foster parents receive written notification of and are encouraged to attend all administrative case reviews. A copy of the child's portion of the service plan is given to the foster parent, including the foster parent objective, outlining tasks to be completed by the foster parent in regard to that particular child. As needed, tasks are added to the foster parent objective as they relate specifically to the child in their care.

Foster parents are involved in the development, implementation, and evaluation of service plan goals, for the child in their care, regarding the child's needs in the areas of education, medical care, development of social skills, emotional development, and the development of independent living skills. Foster parents are included in discussions regarding the child's adjustment to their placement, and participate in the completion of the child's summary portion of the client service plan.

Foster parents are consulted in establishing the visitation plan, as to the days of the week and times that are most convenient for the foster parents and child's schedules. Other means of parent/child and sibling contact, such as phone calls and letters are discussed and included in the visitation plan. Foster parents are provided with a copy of the Sibling Contact Information Form CFS 318.

When unplanned changes occur in the case plan or the permanency goal, verbal notification will be provided to the foster parent within one business day.

Foster parents are notified in writing fourteen days prior to a child being moved from their home. Foster parents are required to provide the agency with a fourteen days written notice when they wish to have a child moved from their home.

- 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.

Complaints concerning a foster parent's licensure come from a variety of sources, including routine contacts with the foster family by agency staff, reports of others outside the agency, and as a result of a report to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.

Per 89 Ill. Adm. Code 383, upon receipt of a licensing complaint the assigned family development specialist initiates a licensing complaint investigation within two days of the complaint. The family development specialist explains that he/she is conducting a licensing investigation, and informs the foster parent of the alleged violations. Foster parents are informed, both verbally and through the receipt of the Foster Parent Rights Related to Licensing Complaint Investigations Form, that they may have a person of their own choosing present, and the foster parent is given four hours to have that person present. Persons chosen to be present must sign the Confidentiality Statement for Authorized Representatives During Licensing Complaint Investigation Form.

The foster parent is informed that there will be a hold placed on their home regarding future placements, until the licensing investigation is completed. Every attempt is made to complete a licensing complaint investigation within thirty calendar days of the complaint. Foster parents are notified in writing if thirty additional calendar days are needed to complete the investigation.

Within fifteen days of completing the investigation the agency makes a formal determination of whether or not a licensing violation has occurred. Foster parents are sent a certified letter with the findings of the investigation within five days of a determination being made. Each finding is linked to a specific licensing standard. A corrective action plan also connects the elements of the plan to the specific licensing standards.

Foster parents are informed that they may request an informal supervisory review within ten days of the postmark of the certified letter. They are also informed of The Baby Fold's formal appeal process and the DCFS Appeal Process.

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

Through annual training on disclosure of information, child welfare specialists are trained regarding all information that is to be shared with foster parents concerning the children in their care. For initial placements, within sixty days of placement the worker will complete the entire Child/Caregiver Matching Tool, adding information that has become available through the comprehensive assessment. Any relevant information obtained during the comprehensive assessment, including school reports, medical records, and psychological or psychiatric evaluations will be attached. The completed Child/Caregiver Matching Tool is signed by the child welfare specialist and the supervisor and then filed in the child's case record.

In signing the Foster Home Placement Agreement, the child welfare specialist agrees to discuss with the foster parent information regarding the child's family and background in order to assist the foster parent in understanding and helping the child. Child welfare specialists continue to evaluate and assess the need for foster parents to receive other pertinent information regarding a child in their care on a case by case basis. Such case issues are discussed between the child welfare specialist and the supervisor during weekly supervision. Pertinent information is then shared with the foster parent as it relates to the children in their home.

Supervisors are responsible for holding child welfare specialists accountable for sharing pertinent information with the foster parents. Through weekly individual supervision, and team meetings that include the family development specialist, supervisors ensure that pertinent information has been shared with the foster parent.

Child welfare specialists and family development specialists routinely check the child's record folder that the foster parent maintains, to ensure that the foster parent has all the necessary information. Foster parents receive updated information through the school staffings, medical appointments, and agency staffings that they attend.

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 meetings, administrative case reviews, interdisciplinary staffings, and individual educational planning meetings; the right to be informed of decisions made by the court or the child welfare agency concerning the child; the right to provide input concerning the plan of services for a child and to have that input 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.**

All child welfare specialists receive training on the inclusion of foster parents in all staffings related to planning for the child. Foster parents are encouraged to attend and participate in all staffings related to case planning for the child in their care. During the monthly foster home visit, the worker will receive input from the foster parent, regarding service planning for the child.

All foster parents are notified in writing, and encouraged to attend DCFS administrative case reviews. Foster parents are invited to attend interdisciplinary staffings. Specialized and treatment foster parents participate in the review of treatment plans for the children in their care.

When children receive therapy services at The Baby Fold, the foster parent participates in the assessment and treatment planning process. Foster parents whose children receive therapy may consult with the child's therapist.

Individual educational planning meetings are attended by the foster parents. All licensed foster homes complete Educational Advocacy training in order to participate as a parent in the child's educational services.

Caseworkers notify the foster parents of all upcoming court hearings and the purpose for each hearing. If the foster parent chooses not to attend a court hearing, the caseworker informs the foster parent of any decisions made by the court at that particular hearing. Information regarding unplanned changes in the case plan or the permanency goal will be provided to the foster parent through verbal notification within one business day. Foster parents are provided with the name and business phone number of the child's Guardian Ad Litem.

Foster parents are encouraged to attend all medical appointments concerning the foster child. They are requested to have ongoing contact with the child's school, attending parent/teacher conferences and all other school staffings. Foster parents are encouraged to have contact with other professionals who work with their foster children.

Specialized and treatment foster parents participate in the referral and assessment process with the child psychiatrist when the foster children are being referred for psychiatric evaluations. They are responsible for attending ongoing appointments with the child psychiatrist for the purpose of monitoring medications prescribed for the foster children.

Foster parents have the availability to consult with The Baby Fold's clinical director, a licensed clinical psychologist, regarding a child's behavior and psychological needs. The Baby Fold has also made available the services of a child psychiatrist for all children in specialized and professional foster care and on a case by case basis for children in the traditional and home of relative foster care programs. The foster parents are included in the consultation process regarding the children in their care.

Foster parents are most often notified in person or on the phone of opportunities to participate in decision-making regarding the children in their care. Phone and in-person notification is documented in case records. Some notifications are in writing.

- 9. The right to be provided, in a timely and consistent manner, with any information a caseworker has regarding the child and the child's family which is pertinent to the care and needs of the child and to the making of a permanency plan for the child. Disclosure of information concerning a child's family shall be limited to that information which is essential for understanding the needs of and providing care to the child in order to protect the 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.**

Whenever possible, an attempt is made to obtain and provide all relevant information on a child prior to or at the time of the child's placement. For new intakes received from the DCFS Centralized Intake, the information received from DCFS will be shared with the prospective foster parent. The intake worker will seek additional information from the DCFS investigator, and the current DCFS caseworker if the case has been served as an intact family case. For new cases, at the shelter care hearing the caseworker will obtain further information in order to complete The Baby Fold's referral form. This includes information regarding the child's behavior, medical needs, and educational placement. This information will be provided to the foster parent.

The Child/Caregiver Matching Tool is completed to describe the child's characteristics and identify their individual needs. The Child/Caregiver Matching Tool is signed by the child welfare specialist and the supervisor and is placed in the case record.

Children requiring specialized and treatment care are usually referred with a referral packet and all relevant information is shared with the foster parents prior to them accepting the child for placement. When children are placed in emergency circumstances there may be little information available. In those instances the assigned child welfare specialist begins the process of gathering information about the child and sharing all relevant information with the foster parents as soon as possible. Information shared includes medical history and current medical status; developmental and educational history and status; information regarding prior abuse, neglect, previous placements, and relationship with family members and significant others; information regarding child's behaviors, habits, interests, and routines. Information obtained through the comprehensive assessment, regarding the child, will be provided to the foster parent.

The confidentiality of the child's family is protected unless the family member has signed a consent for the release of information.

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

Foster parents receive written notice of any change in a child's case plan. When the agency decides to terminate a child's placement, the agency provides a fourteen day written notice, per the CFS 151 Notice of Decision form, to the foster parents outlining the reasons for making the change. Foster parents also receive written notice of their right to appeal this decision. The caseworker informs the foster parent of the appeal process and explains how an appeal can be filed. Fourteen day written notice is not required when a court orders removal of the child from the foster home or when the child is determined to be at imminent risk of harm.

- 11. 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 court proceeding and the court docket number of the case; and the right to intervene in court proceedings or to seek mandamus under the Juvenile Court Act of 1987.**

The child welfare specialist assigned to the child informs the child's foster parents, by phone or in writing, of the next scheduled court hearing related to the child, including the date, time, place, judge, GAL (guardian ad litem), and docket number. The child welfare specialist is held accountable for notifying foster parents of court hearings, through weekly supervision with the supervisor, and documentation of the phone notification in a case note, or retaining a copy of the written notification in the case file.

Foster parents learn of their right to intervene in court proceedings or to seek mandamus under the Juvenile Court Act of 1987 through PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training and in reviewing the DCFS Foster Family Handbook. Agency staff also relay this information to foster parents.

- 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 re-entered into foster care when such placement would be consistent with the best interest of the child and other children in the home.**

When a child is referred for a foster home placement the child's placement history is reviewed to see if it would be in the child's best interest to be placed with a former foster family. The Child/Caregiver Matching Tool is completed to determine the child's current needs and whether the former foster family is willing to care for the child. The Child/Caregiver Matching Tool must be signed by the child welfare specialist and the supervisor. Placement decisions are approved by The Baby Fold's Child Welfare Services administrative staff, ensuring that previous foster families have been considered prior to implementing a placement decision.

- 13. 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.**

Information is included in The Baby Fold's foster parent manual on The Baby Fold's foster parent grievance process. A copy of the agency policy and procedure for foster parent grievances is provided to the foster parent at the time of placement of a child in the foster home. Foster parents are informed that this grievance process may be used to address alleged violations of the Foster Parent Law. Agency staff refer to the grievance process and provide additional copies of the process when foster parents question or disagree with an agency decision. Inclusion of the Department Head and the Chief Executive Officer in the grievance process ensures that acts of harassment or retaliation are prevented.

DCFS service appeals brochures are provided to foster parents and they are informed that they may file a service appeal with DCFS. If requested, the caseworker will assist the foster parent in writing the appeal.

14. The right to be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline established under Section 35.6 of the Children and Family Services Act and all of the rights accorded to foster parents concerning reports of misconduct by Department employees, service providers or contractors, confidential handling of those reports, and investigation by the Inspector General appointed under Section 35.5 of the Children and Family Services Act.

Foster parents learn about the DCFS Advocacy Office (phone number 1-800-232-3797) and the Inspector General's Office during PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training and through review of the DCFS Foster Family Handbook. The Baby Fold's foster parent manual lists the toll-free number for the Office of the Inspector General (1-800-722-91240). The number is also published in The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Newsletter. Agency staff remind foster parents of these resources when foster parents question or disagree with DCFS or agency policies, practices, or decisions.

A foster parent's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

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

PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training prepares prospective foster parents for their roles as team members and emphasizes the value of open communication. The Baby Fold's policy on Principles of Communication is shared with foster parents and agency staff encourage open communication and sharing of information among all members of the child welfare team. Foster parent involvement, in staffings, court hearings, administrative case reviews, and home visits provides a forum for open exchange of information.

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

Issues of confidentiality are covered in the PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training, the DCFS Foster Family Handbook, The Baby Fold's foster parent manual, licensing standards, and The Baby Fold foster home placement agreement. Agency staff work with foster parents to help them identify information that is confidential and the reasons for adherence to confidentiality.

The topic of confidentiality will also be addressed in the monthly newsletter and in a joint training session for staff and foster parents.

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

Agency staff are trained to recognize the role of foster parents as advocates for children in their care. PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training, Educational Advocacy training, and the DCFS Foster Family Handbook help inform foster parents regarding their roles as advocates. Foster parents are encouraged to advocate for their foster children in all arenas, including staffings, Administrative Case Reviews, multi-disciplinary staffings, court, meetings with the guardian ad litem, and Child and Family Team meetings.

According to the foster home placement agreement foster parents are to be active participants in the child's education by facilitating his/her educational program, maintaining regular contact with school staff, and attending all staffings. Family Development Specialists register foster parents for Educational Advocacy Training and ensure completion per licensing standards.

Information is available through the monthly newsletter on how foster parents can work with the courts to help advocate for the children in their care. Foster parents are encouraged to attend The Baby Fold's CORE Training, which includes two sessions on the juvenile court system. CORE training is offered three times a year.

Foster parents are informed of the DCFS and agency appeal processes, the Inspector General's office and the DCFS Advocacy Office as resources to consider utilizing in their role as advocates. The service appeal process is discussed during the CORE Training session on client service planning. Copies of the DCFS service appeal brochures and The Baby Fold's foster parent grievance process are provided to foster parents along with the child's record folder.

4. The responsibility to treat children in their care and their families with dignity, respect and consideration.

PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training, licensing standards, and the foster home placement agreement all emphasize the responsibility of foster parents to treat children in their care and their families with dignity, respect and consideration. ***These values are also promoted through the annual agency training on diversity and cultural competence.*** Sensitivity to children and birth families is an integral part of the orientation training provided to new foster parents at The Baby Fold.

The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual includes the agency's statement of beliefs which emphasizes valuing and respecting each individual. The manual includes a copy of the Client Rights form, outlining the rights to which children and clients are entitled. Information is included regarding relationships between foster parents and biological parents. Through the Foster Parent Manual and orientation training, foster parents are informed of the role of the caseworker in assessing the safety and well being of each foster child, and are made aware that private face to face contact will be made with the foster child at least one time per month.

The Baby Fold's CORE training on working with foster parents is co-led with an experienced foster parent. Foster parents are encouraged to attend this CORE session which reviews the licensing standards. It emphasizes the appropriate care of children, respectful treatment of the biological families, and cultural sensitivity.

Other CORE sessions, including Ethics and Helping Interventions and Assessments, also discuss the need to treat clients with dignity and respect. Training is also available on trans-cultural parenting and Effective Black Parenting for foster parents to further enhance their abilities to understand and work with children and families of other races and cultures.

Agency staff reinforce this responsibility with foster parents in their regular contacts with foster families. This includes weekly or monthly case management contacts by the caseworker and biannual monitoring visits by the family development specialist. During these contacts staff will model dignity, respect and consideration through their discussion of the family and the foster child with the foster parent. As needed, staff will reiterate licensing standards emphasizing appropriate treatment of the foster children and their families.

Violations of licensing standards will be reported via The Baby Fold's Licensing Complaint Report and will be signed by the staff member making the report and their supervisor.

- 5. The responsibility to recognize their own individual and familial 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.**

The agency and foster family engage in a mutual assessment process at the time of licensing and through continued monitoring visits which includes an assessment of family strengths and limitations and the types of children whose needs can be met by the foster family. Foster Parents complete a Foster Parent Preference Checklist that allows them to state demographic preferences and give placement preference information based on their personal strengths, limitations, and desires. At the time of the six months monitoring visit with the family development specialist, the foster parent may make changes to their Preference Checklist. Through completion of successful placements, the strengths, capabilities, and talents of the foster family are noted. These factors are taken into consideration when the agency considers foster families for possible placements. The agency utilizes the Child/Caregiver Matching Tool to ensure that the needs of each child will be met in the proposed foster placement. Agency staff urge foster parents to consider their strengths and limitations when the agency presents them with the referral of a child.

Through the use of the Child/Caregiver Matching Tool, the areas in which the foster parent may need additional assistance are identified. Once a child is placed the agency works with the foster family and includes them as a member of the professional child welfare team to help identify the supports and resources needed to meet the needs of the child. Child welfare specialists make referrals for needed services for foster children on their caseloads.

Training needs are examined throughout the time that a family is licensed with the agency, both relating to the needs of an individual child as well as training that applies to foster parenting in general. The foster parent's training logs are reviewed with them at each monitoring visit. Training that is pertinent to the foster parent's needs is discussed and training options are noted.

- 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.**

Foster parents learn of foster parent associations and support groups through PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training, the DCFS Foster Family Handbook, Fostering Illinois, and The Baby Fold's foster parent monthly newsletter.

Family development specialists discuss the ongoing training needs of the foster parents during the licensing monitoring visits and inform them of workshops and conferences that are available to them.

The agency supports the attendance of foster parents and staff at the annual Illinois Foster Parent Association conference.

The Baby Fold offers a monthly newsletter for foster and adoptive parents. New foster parents are invited to a welcome party at the agency. This offers them the opportunity to meet staff, other new foster parents, and experienced foster parents. The Baby Fold also offers a Nurturing Parent group for foster parents. Through these groups, along with PRIDE training, foster parents become acquainted with one another and develop supportive relationships.

Specialized foster care parents and professional foster care parents are involved in program meetings that give them the opportunity to meet with the other foster parents in the program and obtain support and encouragement from each other.

Agency foster parents utilize one another to provide respite.

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

Foster parents receive information regarding ongoing training requirements through receipt of the licensing standards and The Baby Fold's foster parent manual. The Baby Fold's Training Needs Assessment form is completed jointly by staff and foster parents. Family development staff and foster parents together assess training needs and complete and sign the Licensing Monitoring Record form, which contains the training plan pertaining to the child(ren) placed in the foster home.

Through regular license monitoring and case planning activities foster parents and the agency identify training needs, as they pertain to the care of the children currently placed in the home, and in preparation for accepting future placements. The Caregiver Matching Tool is used to identify areas in which the foster parent may need assistance through additional training. The Baby Fold informs foster parents through personal contacts and the monthly newsletter of ongoing module training, agency training, and outside training that can meet those training needs. If necessary, the Family Development Specialist will seek a training resource to fulfill a particular need. The Baby Fold will reimburse foster parents for travel expenses to attend agency-approved training.

Foster parents are informed of information resources, such as articles, books, audio tapes, video tapes, and community support groups. They are informed about the availability of the DCFS lending library.

The Baby Fold's child welfare program's CORE training is available to foster parents. Through the foster parent newsletter and the foster parent committee meetings, foster parents are invited to suggest training topics that can be addressed through the foster/adoptive parent training sessions.

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

The Caregiver Matching Tool **is used to make appropriate placements.** **This tool,** social history information, and placement history information are used to identify children **who may be** at risk of disrupting from or creating disruption within the foster home. These pieces of information help to identify areas for developing strategies to prevent placement disruptions. A plan is then developed for prevention of disruption. The plan may include additional support services and further training for the foster parent.

Through PRIDE, the DCFS Foster Family Handbook, The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual and orientation training, foster parents learn of available support services that can be accessed in order to maintain placements. Foster parents are informed of staff meetings that will include presentations by local service agencies providing support services, such as SASS and System of Care (phone number 1-800-345-9049).

The Baby Fold and foster families work together to access System of Care Services, SASS services, respite, counseling, and other services needed to prevent a disrupted placement. **Workers will maintain the required in-person contacts to assess problems, work with the foster parents on problem solving, and assist in seeking appropriate supportive resources as needed.**

Family development specialists and child welfare specialists encourage foster families to utilize needed services to ensure that foster children and members of the foster family receive emotional support when placement disruptions occur. Foster parents may request counseling, **training**, or support services for themselves and their family members should placement problems or a placement disruption occur.

Baby Fold staff are available 24 hours a day to assist foster parents when problematic behaviors arise. **The on-call phone number for professional foster care is 309-530-1737. The on-call phone number for home of relative, traditional, and specialized foster care is 309-530-1739.** The on-call worker can provide assistance himself or herself or can contact the child welfare specialist, supervisor, or therapist involved in the child's case. A response form is completed by the on-call worker, informing the caseworker and supervisor of the reason for the call, any response given, and anything requiring further follow-up by the worker is noted. This form is provided to the worker the following business day.

When critical incidents and/or unusual incidents occur, the required forms are completed that include a plan for resolution of the problem.

Foster parents have the availability to consult with The Baby Fold's therapists and clinical director regarding the child's problematic behavior in order to reduce the potential of placement disruption. Information is collected from the child welfare team, including the foster parents, and clinical tools are used to assess the child's functioning. Behavior plans are developed for use in the foster home.

Foster parents are encouraged to avail themselves of support services in order to prevent placement disruption, including the use of respite services. The Foster Parent Support Group provides opportunities for additional support through teaching, encouragement, problem solving, sharing assistance, and mentoring.

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.

The Baby Fold offers many forums for foster parents to address the stress they experience as foster parents. Training sessions assist foster parents in identifying and minimizing the stress. Agency staff are available by phone at all times to assist foster parents in recognizing stress and formulating strategies for preventing, reducing, or eliminating stress. Stress management and self care training is available and can be accessed. Foster parents may participate in the agency's annual health fair.

The Baby Fold has sponsored a support group for pre-adoptive and post-adoptive parents. Assistance and training has been provided in helping these families develop their own group. The group meets every third Tuesday of the month, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The Baby Fold will continue to provide consultation and training as needed.

The monthly newsletter gives tips and suggestions to foster parents for reducing stress related to foster parenting. Foster parents can consult with The Baby Fold's therapists and clinical director and they can request counseling as it relates to the fostering experience. Family development specialists can refer foster parents to PRIDE module training that addresses the impact of foster parenting. Family development staff help reinforce the services that are available to foster parents to effectively manage the stress associated with foster parenting.

Through the Foster Parent Manual and orientation training, foster parents are made aware of the procedure for utilizing respite care. Foster parents are encouraged to use respite care and approved child care arrangements as preventative measures to avoid placement disruptions.

Foster parents may request a "voluntary hold" on placement referrals during times that they are experiencing undue stress. Family Development Specialists inform foster parents of this process and ensure that foster parents are aware of this option.

Through participation in the foster parent committee, foster parent attendees have the means to make suggestions regarding ways the program can be improved for their benefit, assisting them in more effective foster parenting. It also provides a way for foster parents to have input as to ways the agency can acknowledge and express gratitude for their service.

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.

The Baby Fold Story, a newsletter with a circulation of 25,000 which includes the agency's foster parents, highlights accomplishments of foster parents and promotes foster parenting in a positive way. The annual Baby Fold Festival of Trees enhances community awareness of all agency programs including the agency's foster care program. The Baby Fold utilizes both print and broadcast media to promote foster parenting. Brochures for recruitment of foster parents have been developed.

Churches are used as a means of contact in order to promote foster parenting and give recognition to those who are foster parents. Church bulletins, church newsletters, and church programs are used for this purpose.

Foster parents receive encouragement through their contacts with agency staff and other foster parents, and through the receipt of the foster care newsletter. Training sessions bring foster parents together to encourage and support one another. CORE training that focuses on foster parents as a member of the professional team highlights the importance of being able to work with the schools, courts, and other agencies, representing foster parenting and the agency in a positive light.

Foster parents actively recruit additional foster parents. Items with the agency logo, such as shirts, coffee mugs, and book bags have been distributed to the foster parent committee members and are used to promote foster parenting. Buttons that bring attention to foster parenting have been made and distributed to foster parents to wear. Foster parents use opportunities to promote foster parenting and recruit interested individuals.

Foster parents are informed of and encouraged to attend state events that acknowledge and support foster parents. The Baby Fold's annual foster parent/family appreciation event acknowledges the efforts and accomplishments of our foster parents.

The Baby Fold's foster parent newsletter features a foster parent spotlight each month. A foster parent is selected, from staff nominations, to be recognized for their significant accomplishments in foster parenting.

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

Foster parents learn about the roles, rights and responsibilities of foster parents and others on the child welfare team through PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training, the DCFS Foster Family Handbook, The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual, The Baby Fold's orientation session, Fostering Illinois, The Baby Fold's monthly newsletter, The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan, **the foster parent support group**, and contacts with the agency and other professionals. Foster parents have the opportunity to attend The Baby Fold's CORE training and monthly training sessions with the child welfare staff.

Foster parents are encouraged to attend the foster parent group which oversees The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. These meetings are announced in The Baby Fold's monthly newsletter.

During The Baby Fold's orientation session and overview of The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual is given. This includes information regarding foster parents' rights and responsibilities, and the manual includes a copy of The Baby Fold's Implementation Plan. Information regarding the roles of the various members of the child welfare team is provided. A copy of the Client Rights form is included.

Each month, The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Newsletter will feature information on one foster parent right or responsibility. Foster parents may be interviewed to express their thoughts concerning the featured right or

responsibility and what importance it has to them personally. **Foster parents are encouraged to contribute articles to the newsletter.**

Foster parents assume co-training responsibilities by assisting with the Nurturing Parenting Classes, the CORE session on working with foster parents, and PRIDE modules. **The foster parent support group is co-led and organized by foster parents.**

Specialized foster care parents and professional foster care parents have regular team meetings. Training is a component of these meetings.

The responsibilities of foster parents are listed in the foster home placement agreement, which they sign each time a child is placed in their home. The responsibilities of the foster parent are also listed in the agency's foster parent manual. Discussion of the foster parent's responsibilities will be ongoing through **the monthly support group**, the monthly newsletter, meetings with foster parents, and through joint training with foster care staff and foster parents.

Foster parents are encouraged to attend and participate in court hearings, Administrative Case Reviews, school staffings, child and family teams, and treatment team staffings. Foster parents are integral participants on Child and Family Teams.

Through the agency quality enhancement program, foster parents are surveyed at the time of new case openings, when children change levels of care, and when children are discharged from the agency's foster care program. The annual foster parent satisfaction survey offers the opportunity for foster parents to voice their issues and concerns, which are then made known to management staff. Feedback received through the Foster Parent Committee is provided to the Director of Child Welfare. All staff, including the CEO and the Director of Child Welfare Services, respond to concerns expressed by foster parents.

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

Foster parents receive training on their responsibilities as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect through PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training, the DCFS Foster Family Handbook, The Baby Fold's new foster parent orientation session, and The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual. They receive a copy of the Mandated Reporter Handbook. Foster parents sign an acknowledgment of their responsibility as mandated reporters. Agency staff reinforce the need for foster parents to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

PRIDE module training and SACY training, including the SACY Module Training, provide the opportunity for foster parents to gain understanding regarding child sexual abuse and reactive and sexually aggressive behavior. The DCFS Lending Library can facilitate learning about child sexual abuse.

Information provided through The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual and the Foster Parent Newsletter, alerts foster parents regarding their responsibility for reporting unusual incidents, including suspected incidents of abuse or neglect, and sexually aggressive acts committed by DCFS wards.

The DCFS Foster Family Handbook provides information about the process related to a child abuse or neglect investigation. DCFS and agency staff also provide information about the administrative rules and procedures that apply to such investigations. DCFS administrative rules and procedures are available on the DCFS website. The DCFS website will be posted in The Baby Fold's foster parent newsletter. A copy of DCFS administrative rules and procedures will be provided to foster parents upon request.

Foster parents are invited to attend The Baby Fold's CORE training on ethics and mandated reporting. The CORE session "Working with Foster Parents" discusses the child abuse/neglect investigation process as it pertains to foster parents. A training session on abuse/neglect allegations against foster parents and the investigation process will be provided by DCFS Division of Child Protection staff.

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 these proceedings; and the responsibility to actively participate in the foster parent's designated role in these proceedings.

Foster parents learn about administrative case reviews, client service plans, and court processes through PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training, the DCFS Foster Family Handbook, The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual, and agency training. Foster parents are encouraged to attend all agency training, including training on these topics. As stated in the foster home placement agreement, foster parents are encouraged to attend and participate in these processes. Foster parents are invited to attend The Baby Fold's CORE training on the court system and service planning.

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

The PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training and the DCFS Foster Family Handbook provide information on the DCFS service appeal process. Copies of the DCFS Service Appeal brochure are provided to foster parents at the time of placement. A copy is included in The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual. This brochure outlines what appeals can be filed.

Foster parents may attend the CORE session on client service planning. The appeal process is discussed in this CORE training.

Family development specialists and child welfare specialists assist foster parents with the appeal process should they need their assistance. This includes assisting in writing and submitting the appeal, if requested.

The DCFS Advocacy Office (phone number 1-800-232-3798) is also available to assist foster parents with the appeal process. Information regarding the DCFS Advocacy Office is located in the DCFS Foster Family Handbook and The Baby Fold Foster Parent Manual.

The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual includes The Baby Fold's foster parent grievance procedure. ***It specifies that The Baby Fold makes available to all foster parents a process to express and resolve***

grievances and is to be used for grieving alleged violations of the Foster Parent Law. The procedure is reviewed with new foster parents during the agency orientation session. Foster parents are invited to attend the CORE session on working with foster parents. The agency's foster parent grievance procedure is discussed during this training session.

A copy of the grievance procedure is given to ***and reviewed with*** foster parents at the time of placement. Foster parents receive information on The Baby Fold's grievance procedure when complaints arise.

The Baby Fold's Quality Enhancement Coordinator reports the grievances, on a quarterly basis, to the Administrative Quality Enhancement team for risk management analysis, and to the specific program in which the grievance was filed. The Chief Executive Officer ensures that patterns of grievances and/or specific problematic or unresolved issues for which liability may be incurred will be reviewed by the board or appropriate board committee on a quarterly or as needed basis. The review will be conducted in such a way that the confidentiality of the person(s) served will be protected.

- 15. The responsibility to know and understand the importance of maintaining accurate and relevant records regarding the child'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 learn the importance of record keeping through PRIDE and through reviewing the licensing standards with the family development specialist. Foster parents are encouraged to attend the child welfare CORE training on documentation. During the licensing process and through continued monitoring visits The Baby Fold's family development specialist instructs the foster parents on the records that are required.

The agency provides the foster parent with an expandable, divided folder for each foster child. The folder sections are labeled and contain copies of the required forms for record keeping. Instructions are included in each child's record folder. Agency staff review these records when they are in the foster home to ensure that all necessary records are being kept.

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

Through PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training foster parents are informed of the importance of working as a member of the team, and sharing pertinent information regarding the children in their care. The Baby Fold's CORE training session on working with foster parents emphasizes the need for team work and the importance of providing information regarding the children.

Agency staff instruct foster parents to keep each child's record folder current. Child welfare specialists review the record folder each month during the in home visit. Family support specialists review the record folder two times per year during their in home monitoring visits. This ensures that all necessary information is contained in it when a child moves from the foster parent's home.

Additionally, foster parents complete a behavior summary to be given to the next caregiver when a child leaves their home. The foster parent will work with the caseworker to develop a plan for sharing information with the subsequent caregiver. Unless contraindicated the foster parent meets with the future

caregiver to present information and answer questions in person. The foster parent will work with the caseworker to determine the appropriateness of developing a plan for any on-going contact with the subsequent caregiver and the child.

Foster parents are encouraged to develop life books that the children will take with them. The life book project includes workshops for foster parents and children to attend for assistance in completing the child's life book. Foster parents, staff, and children collaborate on the development of pages for life books.

The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual includes information on the necessity for foster parents to report unusual incidents and high-risk indicators to the child's child welfare specialist. Information on the DCFS Unusual Incidents policy and procedure will be provided in the foster parent newsletter.

- 17. The responsibility to provide care and services that are respectful of and responsive to the child's cultural needs and are supportive of the relationship 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.**

PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training addresses the need for children to remain connected with their biological families and their culture. Module training, agency training, and outside training are available to foster parents to help them increase their understanding of what is required to meet a child's needs for cultural identity. Agency staff encourage foster parents to participate in activities that will enhance the cultural needs of the foster children in their home.

The Baby Fold offers CORE training on diversity for staff and foster parents. Staff help foster parents identify areas of need regarding the children in their care. Appropriate referrals for services or training are made to assist foster parents with specific areas of need. Examples include the availability of staff and other foster parents to assist with the hair care and skin care needs of children whose hair and skin require special care.

Community programs and services are accessed, such as culture festivals, in helping foster parents meet the children's cultural needs. Resource materials are provided through the DCFS lending library.