

THE BABY FOLD
FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

THE FOSTER PARENT BILL OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR 2018

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 (including foster parents) is essential to our purpose." We value, listen to, are kind to, and encourage others. We seek to find common ground, are considerate, seek partnerships, and listen in order to understand each other. By adhering to each foster parent right we treat them with dignity and respect.

As professional members of the child welfare team, foster parents have the right to be provided necessary information as quickly as possible. Caseworkers ensure the timely transfer of child records so that information can be disseminated to the foster parent. When appropriate foster parents will have contact with the child's former foster parent so that information can be shared.

Communication between child welfare specialists (caseworkers) and foster parents has been enhanced by each child welfare specialist and child welfare supervisor having a work cell phone which includes texting service. This provides foster parents with easy access to the child welfare specialists and allows a quick response to their calls and text messages. Foster parents may contact the child welfare supervisor if their caseworker is unavailable and the foster parent has a pertinent need or question. Whenever possible, phone calls will be returned within one business day.

When foster parents are waiting for a decision to be made by the agency or waiting for a process to be completed, child welfare specialists will keep the foster parent informed about the progress being made toward the completion of the process or resolution of the issue at hand.

Child welfare specialists, licensing workers, 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, licensing workers, and supervisors. Foster parents are also encouraged to contribute their input in developing plans for the care of the children in their home. Phone conferencing is used for including foster parents when they are unable to participate in person. As professional members of the team, foster parents have the right to receive answers to their questions and obtain assistance in problem solving.

Child welfare specialists respect foster parents as valued team members by seeking their input when scheduling parent/child visitation and child and family team meetings and when planning and decision making is occurring regarding the child, including recommendations for permanency goals. Therapists contact foster parents for consultation, prior to a child's therapy appointment, in order to address the foster parents' concerns.

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 are provided with a form to complete prior to scheduled court hearings so their input can be considered by the judge. 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. 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.

Each newsletter highlights foster parents who have been selected by staff to be recognized for their extraordinary efforts in meeting the needs of children and working as a professional member of the child welfare team.

The Baby Fold involved a group of foster parents in creating an agency foster parent manual. This manual is provided to foster parents and 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. The manual is reviewed on an annual basis to make sure that information is accurate and up-to-date. Foster parents and staff members may request an electronic copy of the manual.

The Baby Fold has CORE DVD 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. 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.

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 they are initially licensed, at the time of initial placement, and when their license is closed.

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.

The Baby Fold's licensing team utilizes a logic model to track retention of foster homes. The logic model is reviewed and updated annually. Using the logic model, reports are generated regarding the number of foster parent that are satisfied, per quarterly and annual surveys.

The logic model also tracks the integrity of services based on file reviews using the Council on Accreditation record compliance standards.

Licensing workers, child welfare specialists, supervisors, therapists, and interns meet with the foster parent group on a regular basis, no less than quarterly, to review The Baby Fold's Implementation Plan. Through participation in the group, 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 group as a means of expressing concerns. Information received through the group

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.

Each newsletter contains a section that highlights one of the foster parent rights and one of the foster parent responsibilities, along with the corresponding information from The Baby Fold's Implementation Plan. Foster parents are encouraged to provide feedback to the Implementation Plan information, and the names of the licensing workers and their contact information is provided for that purpose.

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. Licensing workers register prospective foster parents for PRIDE and educational advocacy training promptly.

Assessing training needs is part of the placement process. By using the Caregiver Matching Tool, the caseworker and the foster parent determine areas in which the foster parent may need additional training in order to care for that particular child. Foster parents are encouraged to continue to communicate with their caseworker and licensing worker regarding any training requests they have in order to meet the needs of their foster child.

During monthly home visits, the caseworker is available to answer questions regarding The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual. This helps foster parent familiarize themselves with operational procedures at The Baby Fold. Caseworkers will also refer questions to the assigned licensing worker as needed.

Licensing workers 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 that have been approved through the DCFS Office of Training. The Baby Fold offers written, audio, and visual resources through its own library. In offering information about the variety of choices that are available for training, foster parents can then select the content and training method that best meets their needs.

During each semi-annual 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 by The Baby Fold 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. Licensing workers will assist foster parents, as requested, in seeking resources for training that meets their needs and interests.

Through their licensing worker, case worker, or the foster child's therapist, foster parents may access written, audio, and visual teaching materials to help assist them to understand and more effectively parent children who have been impacted by trauma. Consultations may occur with The Baby Fold's Clinical Director, a licensed clinical psychologist, in order to discuss specific concerns regarding children in placement. On-going Trust Based Relational Interventions (TBRI) training is available to our foster parents. They may also access DVD training pertaining to the impact of trauma and trust based relational

interventions (TBRI) through the child's therapist, caseworker, the family's licensing worker or the program manager.

Using information obtained through licensing monitoring visits, feedback from the foster parent group, 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.

The Baby Fold also provides training, nine times a year, using the "Foster Parent College" DVD series. Each training session will include viewing the DVD, answering review questions on the information that was presented, and receiving the corresponding written handouts. Topics from this series include home safety, supervision of children, fostering children from different cultures, and understanding the impact of fostering on the foster family household members. Caseworkers will be informed by e-mail of each training session so they are aware of the upcoming topic and can encourage foster parents to attend those sessions which may be of particular interest or help to them. The DVDs may be used by staff to work individually with foster parents to address identified training needs.

Foster families providing care for children in specialized foster care are required to have more advanced training, at least 16 hours per year. Specialized foster parents develop their training plans with their licensing worker and the specialized foster care treatment team in order to address the specific needs of the children in their care. All specialized foster parents are encouraged to complete Trust Based Relational Interventions (TBRI) training to improve their ability to effectively nurture and parent children receiving specialized foster care services.

Information is provided to foster parents regarding availability of First Aid and CPR training in the community. They are also provided with the information regarding the support group meetings and training provided by the local DCFS Foster Parent Support Specialist.

The Nurturing Parenting classes are available to foster parents. These classes are taught by therapists and therapy interns at The Baby Fold.

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. Information regarding agency sponsored training is also e-mailed to foster parents.

Foster parents are encouraged to participate in the agency training, and view The Baby Fold's Child Welfare Services Core Training sessions that are available on DVD. CORE topics include helping interventions, attachment, visitation and loss, car seat safety, community and state resources, court report writing and testifying, domestic violence, nurturing parenting, sexual abuse, confidentiality, mandated reporting, addictions, treatment and service planning, personal safety and crisis intervention.

Foster parents, as training participants, are asked to complete evaluation forms for the agency training they attend. The foster parent group 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 DCFS sponsored regional caregivers' conferences/institutes. Information about the conferences is included in The Baby Fold's foster parent newsletter.

Foster parents are encouraged to attend the local Foster Care Advisory Council quarterly meetings which include training sessions on pertinent information such as safe sleep for infants. Letters and e-mails are sent to foster parents informing them of the dates, times, and location of these meetings.

Foster parents are encouraged to access the Path Crisis Center's Path-o-gram, a monthly on line newsletter which contains a wealth of information regarding local social service agencies' programs, including opportunities for training. The Baby Fold will include information from the Path-o-gram in its foster parent newsletter.

The Baby Fold is participating in the McLean County Foster Care Coalition, working with DCFS and private agencies to jointly provide training to foster parents. All foster parents are being encouraged to become more knowledgeable about childhood trauma and the impact it has for those caregivers dealing with those children who have experienced trauma. The Baby Fold's training coordinator provides trauma informed parenting training for foster parents three times a year. The training has been open to both DCFS and private agency foster parents in the Bloomington/Normal area.

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. Child welfare specialists and their supervisors may be reached on their agency desk phone, agency cell phone (by calling or texting), or agency e-mail. Foster parents are also informed that they may contact the Child Welfare Services Manager 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. When foster parents call the agency after hours, the answering machine message instructs them how to reach the on-call phone for each foster care program.

Foster parents receive a child record folder for each foster child, which lists the DCFS emergency numbers needed to obtain authorization for emergency medical treatment for DCFS youth. Foster parents can access the DCFS Foster Family Handbook on line, or receive a digital copy that lists offices and phone numbers that are available for assistance. The licensing worker 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), Intensive Placement Stabilization wrap services, and consultation services. Phone numbers for The Baby Fold's after hours emergency number, the Crisis Team and the DCFS hotline are included. One of the Welcome Dinner training sessions will provide information regarding the purpose for and availability of Intensive Placement Stabilization services.

The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual addresses respite care, including when respite can and can not be provided, who can provide respite care, respite care limits, and how to make arrangements for respite care.

With The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual, foster parents receive a large information sheet with important phone numbers printed, including the phone numbers for the agency, Medical Card Hotline, Healthworks Hotline, Poison Control, Intensive Placement Stabilization, 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.

The Baby Fold partners with The Forgotten Initiative and offers foster parents and their foster children the opportunity to participate in the services, supports, and methods of encouragement that they offer.

Gifts received by the agency, such as gift cards or tickets to sporting events and local attractions may be used to benefit our foster families.

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 of when monthly foster care board payments 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 Child Welfare Services Manager 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 and relative (including unlicensed relative homes) foster care. Foster parents are eligible for a minimum of fifteen hours of paid respite per month for each child in specialized foster care. Written respite plans are developed for specialized foster care children.

Upon confirmation that respite has been provided, within 24 hours the case worker will complete the respite payment form and submit it to their supervisor. 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. As needed, tasks are added for the foster parent as they relate specifically to the child in their care.

The child's client service plan will note the permanency goal set for the child and the planned achievement date for that goal. The case worker will ensure that the foster parent understands the permanency goal that has been selected and the timeframe for the planned achievement date.

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. Foster parents are encouraged to host sibling visits and are reimbursed for hosting and supervising sibling visits.

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.

The Baby Fold uses the monthly foster parent newsletter to provide information about cultural events in the community and to encourage foster families to participate in the events.

- 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 licensing worker initiates a licensing complaint investigation within two days of the complaint. The licensing worker 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.**

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 integrated assessment including school reports, medical records, and psychological or psychiatric evaluations. 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 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 individual supervision, and team meetings, supervisors ensure that pertinent information has been shared with the foster parent.

Child welfare specialists and licensing workers 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, agency staffings, court hearings, and Child and Family Team Meetings that they attend.

When requested, the child welfare specialist will provide the foster parent with documentation that verifies the child's placement with the foster parent, in order for the foster parent to be able to provide that confirmation to the child's school or other service providers such as WIC.

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

Child welfare specialists are trained regarding all information that is to be shared with foster parents concerning the children in their care. At the time of placement of a child, child welfare specialists provide all available information in writing to the foster parents. The information that is provided includes the child's medical history, educational history, the child's portion of the service plan and any other relevant background information about the child.

Child welfare specialists provide all available information to foster parents at the time of placement. If unavailable at the time of placement, child welfare specialists provide the information as quickly as it becomes available. Child welfare specialists and foster parents sign a CFS 600-4 Sharing Information with the Caregiver form within 10 days of placement.

The CFS 600-4 is included in the case opening packets used by the caseworkers for each newly assigned case. The form is listed on the Case Opening Checklist to ensure completion of the form within the required timeframe. Supervisor oversight and file reviews hold child welfare specialists accountable for completing this process and the form.

- 9. The right to be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings concerning the foster child in order to actively participate in the case planning and decision-making process regarding the 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 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. Foster parents are provided with a form to complete to give their input which is submitted to the court and reviewed by the judge prior to the court 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 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 encouraged to attend 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 foster care. The foster parents are included in the consultation process regarding the children in their care. Cases may be referred for consultation to The Baby Fold's interdisciplinary team.

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.

- 10. 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 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 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. Without violating the confidentiality of the biological parents, foster parents will be provided with as much information as possible regarding the parent/child visits as it pertains to the care and the needs of the child. Information will be shared with the foster parent as soon as possible following the parent/child visit.

- 11. 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.

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 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, in person, 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. Completion of this task is verified through 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.

Foster parents are provided with a form to complete, prior to the court hearing, which allows them to give the juvenile judge information regarding the child from their perspective.

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

When a child who was previously served in foster care at The Baby Fold is referred for a subsequent foster home placement, the child's placement history with The Baby Fold is reviewed to see if it would be in the child's best interest to be placed with a former foster family. The child's placement history with The Baby Fold can be accessed via our SDS computer data base system. A copy of the child's closed file is also available and accessible at The Baby Fold.

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.

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.

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. A copy of the grievance process is also provided to foster parents on an annual basis when they receive a copy of the updated implementation plan. The process is also reviewed on an annual basis by the foster parents and staff who provide feedback regarding the implementation plan. 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 Director 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.

15. 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 1-800-232-3798) 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 (1-800-722-9124). The number is also published in The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Newsletter and provided on the information sheet. 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 via The Baby Fold's foster parent manual, 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. Confidentiality is reviewed with licensed foster parents at every six month license monitoring visit.

The topic of confidentiality will also be addressed in the monthly newsletter and is one of the CORE DVD Training topics.

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. Licensing workers 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 view The Baby Fold's CORE Training on DVD.

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. 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. 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.

Foster Parents are expected to participate in the initial family meetings as a way to initiate contact and communication with birth parents. These meetings provide an opportunity for foster parents to begin building bridges with the birth families for the benefit of the children. Foster parents are also expected to participate in child and family teams. Their participation provides an opportunity for all involved persons to share information and develop strategies that will assist birth families in meeting their goals. Foster parent

participation in child and family teams also assists children in care to observe all involved parties working together. Participation in child and family team meetings provides foster parents with opportunities to build relationships with birth parents and to share information about the child and to work together on common goals. Foster parents also are encouraged, when deemed appropriate, to involve birth parents in as many medical appointments and educational meetings and activities as possible. Child welfare specialists and other staff help facilitate a family's involvement by keeping birth parents informed of dates and times that appointments and activities are being held.

CORE DVD sessions, including Attachment, Visitation and Loss, and Helping Interventions and Assessments, also discuss the need to treat clients with dignity and respect. Training is also available on trans-cultural 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 semi-annual monitoring visits by the licensing worker. 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 licensing worker, 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.

The Baby Fold partners with The Forgotten Initiative, and foster parents are encouraged to use the offerings of encouragement, support, and services provided by this group.

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, Families Now and Forever and The Baby Fold's foster parent monthly newsletter.

Licensing workers 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 Caregivers' Conferences.

The Baby Fold offers a monthly newsletter for foster and adoptive parents. It notes opportunities for family focused activities.

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 as needed or requested. Through these groups, along with PRIDE training, foster parents become acquainted with one another and develop supportive relationships.

The foster parent group provides the opportunity for foster parents to get to know one another, network with each other, and learn from one other. It allows their voice to be heard regarding their concerns and serves to strengthen their working relationships with staff members.

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. 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 licensing worker will seek a training resource

to fulfill a particular need. As stated in The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual, 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 encouraged to use the DCFS Virtual Training site.

The Baby Fold's child welfare program's CORE DVD 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. Using this tool, the social history information, and placement history information, the caseworker is responsible to identify the early signs of 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.

When a Clinical Screener or caseworker completes the initial or on-going Integrated Assessment, the foster parent is involved in the assessment process. Through this process risk factors are noted and the child's needs and corresponding services are identified. Recommendations made include specific training for the foster parent, increased caseworker contacts, and additional Child and Family Team meetings as needed.

Through PRIDE, the DCFS Foster Family Handbook, The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual and orientation training, foster parents learn of available support and stabilization services that can be accessed in order to maintain placements.

The Baby Fold and foster families work together to access Intensive Placement Stabilization 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. Linking the foster parent with another foster parent may be used as a source of additional support.

When respite care is utilized to prevent a placement disruption, a plan will be made for contacts and meetings that will occur during the respite in order to have the appropriate interventions in place before the child returns from the respite.

Licensing workers 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. Upon receipt of a written notice from a foster parent for the removal of a foster child, a plan will be made for supporting the foster child and the foster family through the transition.

Foster parents may request counseling, training, or support services for themselves and their family members should placement problems or a placement disruption occur. Foster parents are encouraged to seek assistance and support, as needed, from other social service agencies, their church/pastor, or local

support groups. When possible and appropriate, foster parents may maintain contact with a foster child following the disruption of the placement.

Baby Fold staff are available 24 hours a day to assist foster parents when problematic behaviors arise. 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.

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.

The Baby Fold's Keeping the Promise Program provides a family night three times a year for post-adoptive families. This provides opportunities to alleviate stress and network with other families.

Foster parents are encouraged to participate in the agency and the McLean County Foster Care Coalition recruitment events and to share their experiences as foster parents. Retention activities are advertised in the monthly newsletter and are provided as a means of support and appreciation and provide opportunities for foster parents to socialize and engage with one another.

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, including requesting emotional support for their family when a foster child returns to their biological family. Licensing workers can refer foster parents to PRIDE module training that addresses the impact of foster parenting. Licensing 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.

Respite requests for the purpose of preventing a placement disruption are made to the child welfare specialist. Respite care may also be provided for emergency situations including employment related travel, illness in the immediate family, or a death in the family.

Foster parents may request a “voluntary hold” on placement referrals during times that they are experiencing undue stress. At any time, a foster parent may request having their home removed from The Baby Fold’s placement opening list so that they will not be called for placements.

Additionally, licensing workers inform foster parents of the non-active status process at the time of licensure and at each renewal and ensure that foster parents are aware of this option.

Through participation in the foster parent group, 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.

Foster parents are encouraged to be involved with the local Foster Care Advisory Council. Dates, times, and locations of these quarterly meetings will be published in the foster parent newsletter and will also be sent out by letter and e-mail.

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 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 DVD 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.

Items with the agency logo, such as shirts, coffee mugs, and book bags are used to promote foster parenting. Shirts with the words: “Got Kids? Ask me how to become a foster parent” are available for purchase.

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 actively recruit additional foster parents. They are encouraged to participate in foster parent recruitment events within the community. Licensing workers identify foster parents who have the skills and experiences to assist in recruitment events where staff will also be present to answer questions. Foster parents are identified who are comfortable with public speaking and are willing to share in recruitment events by telling their own stories and sharing their own experiences on a voluntary basis.

Foster parents use opportunities to promote foster parenting and recruit interested individuals. Foster parents use employer sponsored activities such as service fairs and lunch and learn sessions to share their personal foster parenting experiences and increase awareness of foster care in their communities. They participate, along with the agency, in the local foster parent coalition recruitment events in the community. Through these events which are planned with agency staff, foster parents are invited to “tell their story” to help participants learn what foster parenting is like from their perspective.

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 events acknowledge 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, Families Now and Forever, The Baby Fold’s monthly newsletter, The Baby Fold’s Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan, and contacts with the agency and other professionals. Foster parents have the opportunity to view The Baby Fold’s CORE DVD training and attend 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 and are held on a quarterly basis. Foster parents and staff are both invited to attend in order to foster communication about one another’s roles, and responsibilities. Foster parents are encouraged to ask questions and express concerns in order to clarify the roles of other members of the professional team. The foster parent group meetings also provide an opportunity for foster parents to express concerns and/or issues that need to be addressed in order to improve service provision and/or communication between agency personnel and foster parents. The Child Welfare Services Manager also attends the meetings, providing an opportunity for foster parents to express concerns directly to management staff.

During The Baby Fold’s orientation session, an 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 and 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. The Foster Parent Newsletter is also utilized to keep foster parents informed of staff changes and of services and programs in the community available to children in their care.

DCFS PRIDE modules are co-trained by PRIDE trainers, some of whom are also foster parents. In the CORE DVD session on working with foster parents, information regarding roles and responsibilities of all members of the professional team are provided to participants.

Experienced foster parents assist newly licensed foster parents in developing an understanding of the roles, rights and responsibilities of foster parents and other professionals in the foster system.

PRIDE trainers who are on staff at The Baby Fold provide an overview of PRIDE to all staff members on an annual basis. Included in this overview, staff members watch the "Making a Difference" video and participate in some of the activities. This gives staff members a better understanding of the information that is provided to foster parents so they can clarify foster parents' questions and concerns about roles and responsibilities of different team members.

The responsibilities of foster parents are listed on the foster home placement agreement, which they sign each time a child is placed in their home. This placement agreement is reviewed with the foster parent by the caseworker when placement occurs. The Baby Fold has created a foster parent manual for each foster parent to use as a resource guide. The responsibilities of the foster parent are included in this manual which is given to them and reviewed during orientation for new foster parents. The responsibilities of agency staff members are also described in the agency's foster parent manual. Discussion of the foster parent's responsibilities will be ongoing through the monthly newsletter and meetings with foster parents, and foster care staff. Child welfare specialists assist foster parents in understanding roles and responsibilities of different team members through discussions that occur during regular casework contacts in their home. Licensing workers offer support and guidance to foster parents during monitoring visits and clarify any questions pertaining to team members' roles and responsibilities.

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 they are initially licensed, upon initial placement and when they close their license. Unlicensed relative caregivers are surveyed at the time of placement and at the time the child's discharge. 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 group is provided to the Associate Director of Foster Care Services. All staff, including the CEO, Director of Family and Community Services and the Child Welfare Services Manager, 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 training on sexually problematic behaviors 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 youth.

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 in licensed and unlicensed foster homes. 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.

The McLean County Foster Care Coalition is preparing to provide training for foster parents that will review the neglect and abuse allegation process and the applicable rules and regulations which govern investigations of those allegations in a foster home.

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, and The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual. Foster parents are encouraged to attend all agency training, and view the CORE DVDs which include training on these topics. As stated in the foster home placement agreement, foster parents are encouraged to attend and participate in these processes.

Child Welfare Specialists and licensing workers encourage foster parents to participate in administrative case reviews, child and family team meetings, and court hearings in order to be fully informed of the permanency goal for the child and to be involved in permanency planning for the child.

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 file

Licensing workers 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 view the CORE DVD 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 updated and given to foster parents annually. Foster parents receive information on The Baby Fold's grievance procedure in The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual at the time of licensure and when complaints arise.

The Baby Fold's Vice President of Quality and Information Systems reports the grievances, on a quarterly basis, to the Quality Council (the Agency's Leadership 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 licensing worker. During the licensing process and through continued monitoring visits The Baby Fold's licensing worker 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.

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. Licensing workers 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 their ability to meet the cultural needs of the foster children in their home. Foster parents are encouraged to use Child and Family Team meetings to engage in conversation with the biological family about their culture and how it can be imparted to their child while in foster care.

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.