

Youth Service Bureau



of Illinois Valley

Main Office

Ottawa, IL 61350
424 W. Madison Street
815.433.3953
Fax 815.433.3980
TDD 815.431.3001
www.ysbiv.org

Aurora, IL 60505
1700 N. Farnsworth
Suite 18
630.820.6303
Fax 630-820-6306

Glen Ellyn, IL 60137
800 Roosevelt Rd.
Suite 102, Building E
630.474.9600
Fax 630.474.0019

La Salle, IL 61301
12 Gunia Drive
815.223.4151

Princeton, IL 61356
1702 ½ W. Peru St.
P.O. Box 516
815.872.2119

Rockford, IL 61101
308 W. State St.
Suite 475
815.316.1977
Fax 779.221.3098

Woodstock, IL 60098
109 S. Jefferson St.
815.313.7632

YSB Child
Development Center
901 Grant Street
La Salle, IL 61301
815.224.4244
Fax 630.474.0615

**YOUTH SERVICE BUREAU
OF
ILLINOIS VALLEY**

**FOSTER PARENT LAW 2017
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**



*"Helping young people and families succeed by serving
them in their home, school and community"*



Acknowledgment

We want to thank the 2017 Foster Parent Implementation Plan Committee members for the many hours they have dedicated to this project. We acknowledge their sacrifice of time, as well as the vision they shared with the agency through their questions, comments, suggestions, and reviews of the final plan.

Committee

Kelley Lumpkin, Licensing Supervisor
Tina McCullough, Licensing Representative
Jami Foster- Valenzuela, Licensing Representative
Kim Wirth, Foster Care Case Worker
Gretchen Rowenhorst, Foster Care Case Worker
Leslie Brown, Foster Care Case Worker
Kala Davis, Specialized Foster Care Case Worker
Cathy Zeier, Program Director
Dave Conrad, Chief Financial Officer

YOUTH SERVICE BUREAU OF ILLINOIS VALLEY

FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2017

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**YOUTH SERVICE BUREAU OF ILLINOIS VALLEY
2017 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
FOSTER PARENT BILL OF RIGHTS**

Youth Service Bureau of Illinois Valley (YSB) recognizes the importance of foster parents' rights and responsibilities, which have been defined in House Bill 2227. This plan has been developed to show conformity with the Foster Parent Law. YSB continually updates its policies and procedures in regards to the foster care program to conform to the law and ensure that all members of the foster care team are treated as equal parties.

Section 1-15 Foster Parent Rights:

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

The leadership and employees of Youth Service Bureau recognize that foster parents are not only valuable resources but a fundamental part of the child welfare team. To ensure that our foster parents are knowledgeable about their rights, YSB licensing workers provide foster parents with a copy of the DCFS Service Appeal Brochure (DCFS #1231), as well as review their rights as DCFS clients (CFS 496) during the licensing process. Additionally, we also provide foster parents with a copy of the YSB Client Rights during the licensing process.

The agency utilizes several methods of eliciting feedback regarding the foster parent's interactions with staff. These include phone surveys conducted by clerical staff, inquiries by licensing workers at each monitoring appointment, and a written survey provided to foster parents once a year while drafting the upcoming Implementation Plan. Each YSB office has an anonymous suggestion box that foster parents may utilize to provide feedback. If any contact results in negative feedback or complaints, they are immediately forwarded to the supervisor assigned to the case and/or Program Director. After investigating the concerns, the supervisor and/or Program Director will determine appropriate corrective actions if necessary for the employee.

In addition to these formal processes workers are instructed and encouraged to utilize basic respect and appropriate consideration in all of their professional contacts. For example, workers are to contact foster parents if a child/parent visit ends early. This allows for the foster parent and case worker to determine together where to transport the child, and prepares the foster parent for possible negative behavior/emotions. Workers are to call the foster parent as soon as possible if they know that they will be late for a meeting or must cancel and reschedule. It is the agency policy that whenever possible, case workers are to return phone calls within 24 hours.

Moreover, workers attempt to schedule home visits and family meetings at times when it is convenient for the foster parent to attend. We understand that many of our foster parents are employed outside of the home and their jobs are important to the care of their family. Finally, foster parents generally have a better understanding of their placements than do the case workers. Staff value information given to them from foster parents therefore, they take the time to listen when foster parents have concerns, and encourage foster parents to attend ACRs, court hearings, and CFTM (Child and Family Team Meetings).

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.

All traditional and specialized foster parents licensed through YSB are required to complete the PRIDE (Parent Resource for Information, Development and Education) training provided by DCFS, as well as the Educational Advocacy Training. YSB Staff recognize the importance of fully informed, educated foster parents. To reach this goal, we discuss with foster parents any concerns or problems they may be having with their placements or foster parenting in general. These discussions can be held at any time including but not limited to monitoring appointments, monthly case work visits, and/or counseling sessions. This allows us to mutually identify training needs for individual families and also trends across the agency.

We routinely assist with PRIDE trainings by providing meeting space and participating in a discussion panel held during session 9. YSB encourages foster parents to continue their education and improve their skills by attending training sessions on a regular basis. Each office notifies regional foster parents via mail and electronic communication when DCFS or YSB trainings are scheduled in their area. Additionally, YSB hosts several trainings between our Aurora, Ottawa, & Rockford offices each year. In 2016, the following trainings were offered to all foster parents, regardless of agency affiliation:

- 1) Educational Advocacy: January 19th and 26th
- 2) Caring For Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: March 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th, & 31st (Cancelled Due to Low Enrollment)
- 3) YSB Training: Behavioral Management & Age-Appropriate Discipline Techniques: March 16th
- 4) YSB Training: Licensing 402 Standards-- June 2nd
- 5) Life In Limbo—June 15th
- 6) Module 5 Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families: June 8th, 15th, & 22nd (Cancelled Due to Low Enrollment)
- 7) Caring For Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: July 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th, & August 3rd
- 8) YSB Training: Licensing 402 Standards—September 17th

- 9) Foundation For Meeting The Developmental Needs of Children at Risk:
October 6th, 13th, 20th, & 27th (Cancelled Due to Low Enrollment)
- 10) YSB Training: African American Hair and Skin Care – November 5th

In 2015, YSB expanded their Specialized Foster Care Program with the absorption of 45 specialized children and 22 specialized foster homes from Illinois Mentor, YSB developed standardized training requirements for specialized foster parents. YSB increased the trainings offered throughout the agency, to ensure specialized foster parents had many opportunities for training. YSB highly recommends that specialized foster parents complete Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma training within the first year of becoming licensed in order successfully parent foster children.

Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) training will resume in 2017 as we have a newly certified TCI trainer. This training is designed to help all foster parents de-escalate children's behaviors without using restraints. In order to meet the needs of our foster parents, TCI training will occur on a bi-annual or quarterly basis as needed. TCI is a mandatory training for all specialized foster parents. Although TCI is not a mandatory training for traditional home, we highly recommend traditional foster parents to participate in TCI training.

Because foster parents are professional members of the child welfare team, we are increasing our focus on the skills and education they can contribute to the agency as a whole. YSB continues with co-training that was implemented in 2016 after a number of foster parents requested assistance with addressing hair and skin care of children with different ethnic background. We expanded our training program over the last year based on feedback from survey's and home monitoring visits. YSB recognizes that the court system is complex and difficult to understand, therefore we continue to assess ways to offer a basic child welfare court system training in 2017. In addition to in-class training, YSB purchased the book Connected Child by Dr. Karyn Purvis to lend out to foster parents in order understand and help child that have experienced trauma.

We continually utilize other professional resources within our agency, beyond case workers and licensing staff. Our Parenting Educator, Elaine Gaither, conducted semiannual trainings on Behavior Management/Discipline. A former YSB therapist, Jenn Ranter, runs a foster parent education and support group at a local church that is open to all foster parents, regardless of religion or agency affiliate. Topics of discussion have included "Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma" and "Parenting with Grace and Love".

YSB urges all Foster Parents to use the Virtual Training Center (VTC) resource that is provided by the IL Department of Children and Family Services. The VTC is available online and includes training announcements, up-to-date course schedules, course registration information, and training transcripts.

During the licensing process, a Licensing Representative will assist foster parents with how to access the VTC. Any foster parent who does not have access to a computer or internet can contact their Licensing Representative to request a copy of their training transcript and up-to-date course schedules.

- 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 the foster parent's care:

Communication between foster parents and case workers is key to supporting a child's placement, and providing children with the care they need. To that end, all licensing, counseling, and casework staff have assigned email addresses and office numbers where they can be contacted by their clients and providers. It is YSB's belief that foster parents are able to provide the greatest care for children when they know YSB staff is available during crisis situations. If a crisis does arise, foster parents have assurance of knowing that YSB staff is available to help them through all the emergency situations.

YSB recognizes that most emergencies occur at night or on the weekends therefore, each office has an on-call phone number, which is provided to foster parents upon placement. This emergency on-call number is to be utilized in instances of medical emergency, psychiatric emergency, police involvement, and missing or runaway foster children. The on-call phone is staffed by a rotation of case workers, and is monitored after 5 pm on weeknights, and throughout the weekend. Case workers are expected to answer immediately. If at any time workers are unable to immediately answer the phone they must return all calls within 10-15 minutes. The case workers themselves are supported by the on-call supervisor, providing layers of support to the foster parent. The Quality Assurance Department will conduct random calls quarterly to both the on-call phone and the on-call supervisor to ensure they are following agency protocol.

YSB continues to have a separate on-call number that is specifically for specialized foster parents. This on-call is operated entirely by specialized caseworkers, who know what resources and emergency services are available in that area in times of a crisis. Case workers also educate foster parents on how to utilize the Screening Assessment and Support Services (SASS) program when children are experiencing a mental health crisis and may be a danger to themselves or others. All of this information is kept in the Child Folder, a resource folder specific to each child, which follows them if/when they change placements. The Child Folder includes information on the child's medical history, behavioral or mental health concerns, clothing and allowance, visitation, and emergency contact information.

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

YSB licensed foster parents are reimbursed according to the rates set by DCFS for both traditional and specialized care (non-licensed homes are reimbursed directly by DCFS). Foster parents are provided a copy of the rate chart at the time of licensure. Licensing staff also explain pro-rated checks for partial months, and the payment schedules. Explanations or additional copies of the financial policy are available upon request.

Foster parents are reimbursed on the 16th of each month (or closest banking day if this day falls on a weekend or holiday) for foster care provided in the previous month. Reimbursements will be paid by check or direct deposit as requested by the foster parent. The board rate received reflects the amount of days the child is in care and is based on the child's age.

Payment for additional services may be disbursed based on the needs of the case and the availability of other resources. These payments are subject to DCFS rules and procedures. All case workers are trained on the YSB agency reimbursement policy which defines the costs that may be reimbursed to the foster parent, such as camp or sports fees. Respite care costs for traditional homes are subtracted on a daily basis from board payment for that month. Reimbursement payments are also processed each month and paid on the closest banking day to the 16th.

When the proper paperwork is submitted to the fiscal department, all payments are made in a timely manner, according to the above mentioned schedule. If incomplete paperwork is submitted, it will be returned to the foster parent and/or case worker for revision and resubmission. If foster parents have concerns or questions about their payments, they are encouraged to speak with their licensing worker or the fiscal department directly. YSB Fiscal can be contacted via email or phone. A review of the reimbursement will be done immediately. If an error has occurred, it will be corrected as soon as possible. If the problem appears to be connected to a DCFS payment error, the licensing worker will assist the foster parent in contacting the DCFS fiscal department. Finally, if a payment problem cannot be resolved through these steps; foster parents may request a review by the Executive Director.

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

During licensure, foster parents are given a copy of both the Foster Parent/Agency Agreement and the YSB Client Rights form. Foster parents sign these documents, signifying their understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Included in these is the right and responsibility to advocate for the child in their home and participate in the development of the service plan.

At the time of placement, YSB makes every effort to ensure foster parents are informed about a child's special needs, frequency of involvement with his or her birth family, previous placement history, and historical involvement with DCFS. Our agency case workers utilize the child portion of the DCFS service plan to develop and document services that are or will be provided to the child and/or his foster family. This also includes visitation with his parents and/or siblings. Although the plan is only required to be updated every 6 months, case workers meet at least monthly with foster parents to receive feedback and concerns about the child and the service plan. Additionally, foster parents are encouraged to attend Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) which are held every quarter. This is another opportunity for foster parents to give their feedback regarding the child's services and visitation, and to work with the professional team in developing resources and recognizing areas of weakness. Foster parents are provided a written copy of the child's service plan at each CFTM, as well as an updated copy when any changes are made. The updated copy is provided at the CFTM meetings and ACR's. If a foster parent is unable to be present at the meetings, the caseworker is responsible for ensuring the foster parent is given a copy of the service plan within 5 business days.

To assist foster parents in promoting reunification, as well as continuing the child's relationship with his or her own family and cultural heritage, YSB utilizes the DCFS Reunification Support Special Service Fee. This is a designated fund in which foster parents can receive reimbursement for facilitating parent/child visits only if the foster parent is actively engaged in mentoring the biological parent. Foster parents wishing to utilize this fee must contact their case worker.

- 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:

Youth Service Bureau strictly follows the DCFS guidelines found in Rules 383 governing licensing investigations and enforcement of the 402 standards. The agency has developed a policy summarizing the DCFS guidelines and the agency's actions if/when an investigation is to occur. That policy is provided to the foster parent at the time of licensure.

In summary, it is the policy of the Youth Service Bureau of Illinois Valley's Foster Care Program to investigate every licensing complaint in a fair and consistent manner. At the same time, YSB has a dual responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of children in our care. YSB completes a licensing investigation on all foster homes in which a licensing violation complaint or report of child abuse and neglect is made. During the

initial contact, the licensing representative will advise the foster parent of their right to have an advocate present. YSB staff utilizes DCFS form CFS 596-29 to ensure that foster parents fully understand this right. If a licensing investigation cannot be completed within 30 days, the foster parent is notified in writing of the extension. An extension letter is written each time an extension is made. Foster parents are also notified in writing the results of the licensing complaint investigation.

If a foster parent is found to have violated a licensing standard, they are provided with a written copy of this finding. They are also informed of their right to a supervisory review, along with any necessary corrective plan. If the violation is egregious, or if the foster parent fails to complete the corrective plan, they are informed of their right to an administrative review. YSB licensing staff utilizes CFS 596 forms for this communication. Foster parents are provided with the phone number and other contact information for the licensing supervisor if they wish to appeal or have questions about the findings. They are given 10 days from the date of the letter to initiate an appeal or supervisory review.

If a foster parent appeals the negative results or corrective plan, the licensing supervisor will attempt to meet with the foster parent within 14 days to discuss their concerns. This meeting will also involve the licensing representative. The Program Manager will attend if deemed necessary by the licensing supervisor. Foster parents are entitled to invite any advocates that were present during the investigation. Requests for additional attendees will be considered. The licensing supervisor will decide to uphold the original finding, modify the corrective plan, or overturn the violations. The supervisor will also provide information to the foster parent on how to contact DCFS to appeal this decision and request an administrative review.

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

Foster parents are first introduced to the right to receive additional or necessary information relevant to the care of the child during their initial PRIDE training. Additionally they are trained on rule 301.120, which governs sharing appropriate information. Case workers are also trained in confidentiality and necessary or “need to know” information during the DCFS certification training. Case workers receive refresher courses during individual monthly supervision, and during team meetings. Case workers are encouraged to consult their supervisors at any time if they are uncertain about what information they can share with a foster family about a child.

YSB acknowledges the importance of foster parents receiving all available information about a child that can be legally shared with them. Prior to placement of a child, case workers communicate information about a child through the use of the Child Profile. This information may include behavioral, emotional, developmental or medical needs the child has, placement history, current and previous services, goal of the case, and

visitation plan. Once a child is placed in the foster home, case workers continue to share information verbally to foster families during home visits and phone calls. In-home visits by the case worker are conducted weekly the first month following an initial placement of a child. The additional visits are put in place to facilitate communication and ensure support is available to both foster child and foster family. At the time of placement, Foster parents also receive the Child Folder. If the child's portion of the service plan is completed at the time of placement then the foster parents are given a copy of the service plan. In cases that the plan is not available upon placement, it is given to the foster parents within 5 business days of the plan being completed. Foster parents are encouraged to attend ACRs, CFTMs, and court proceedings to gain a better understanding of the child's needs and family situation.

During ACRs, reviewers interview foster parents and the case worker about informational exchanges, and disclose any concerns in the ACR report, which is submitted to the worker and the supervisor. Supervisors hold case workers accountable for appropriate communication by reviewing case notes and through random phone surveys conducted each month, as well as monthly supervision.

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

YSB recognizes the need to both protect a family's confidentiality as well as provide information to a foster parent that is relevant to a child's care. Additionally, foster parents need to know the background of a child in order to fully participate in family team meetings, therapy sessions, etc. As previously discussed, case workers are trained by DCFS and YSB to provide necessary information to the foster parent, without violating the parent's right to confidentiality. YSB staff follows all Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines regarding knowledge of medical and mental health diagnoses.

When requesting a new placement for a foster child, case workers are required to fill out the YSB Child Profile form. The supervisor reviews and approves the form, and it is provided to licensing staff. This is a summary of the requirements of Section 7.4 (c-5) of the Child Care Act of 1969. It includes the child's medical, behavioral and educational needs and development. It also contains information on sibling placements, visitation, and any special precautions (sexual acting out or animal abuse, for example). Finally, case workers provide information on why the child needs a new placement. Licensing workers share this information with prospective foster parents, who are also bound by confidentiality not to share the information with any other entity. Once a foster parent expresses interest in accepting placement, the case worker is required to contact the foster parent within 24 hours to further discuss the information provided in the Child Profile, and arrange for placement. After placement of the child, case workers continue

to share information with the foster parents as it becomes known to the agency and documented in the case.

All children are assigned a Child Folder which follows them each time they move to a new placement. Inside this folder is a face sheet containing emergency numbers and agency information, a copy of the child's most recent physical, disbursement forms for allowance and clothing funds, a section for foster parents to document significant events (achievements as well as concerns), sibling contact information, medication logs, and educational records such as an IEP if applicable.

Staff are instructed on how to utilize the Child Profile form and Child Folder during orientation, and periodic refresher trainings are provided during monthly team meetings. Casework supervisors assist workers during monthly supervision (or as needed) if the case worker is uncertain whether information can be shared with a foster parent.

In the case of an initial or emergency placement, foster parents are provided with all known information about the child, typically age, gender, and the circumstances of the emergency removal/placement. As more information is learned about the child, the case worker will notify the foster parent. The case worker and licensing staff also ask the foster parent to provide them with any information they learn from the direct care of the child. As previously discussed, case workers are held accountable through monthly supervision, case notes, random surveys and via DCFS meetings including the ACRs and CFTMs.

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

Our agency understands that foster parents have a wealth of information and experience to share with the professional team, especially regarding the specific child in their care, YSB upholds the right for foster parents to be notified of, and participate in team meetings and staffings. YSB encourages foster parents to attend court hearings, ACRs, CFTM, and other staffings as foster parents are an important member of the team. Foster parents must be notified in a timely manner of all upcoming meetings. Even in the rare instance that due to safety reasons, a foster parent and biological parent cannot attend the same meeting in person, YSB staff will develop methods for

foster parents to contribute to the decision making process. Those methods can include participation by phone or holding multiple CFTMs, for example. Any feedback provided by the foster parent is shared with the other participants. YSB realizes that foster parents may not be unavailable to attend all meeting/staffings therefore; the case worker will inform the foster parent of any outcomes or decisions as a result of the meeting. YSB wants to ensure foster parents are well-informed aware of any decisions made that affects the child in their care as these decisions can also affect the foster parent.

Approximately 1-2 months prior to an ACR, YSB case workers are responsible for verifying attendees and their mailing addresses within the DCFS system. DCFS then sends out written invitations to all members of the team approximately two weeks before the review. Case workers verbally remind foster parents of the ACR and the importance of attending during home visits.

During the licensing process and at each six month monitoring appointment, licensing workers remind foster families of the importance of attending court hearings. Case workers also verbally provide dates/times of court hearings and any scheduled CFTMs during home visits, phone calls, or occasionally email. This is documented in case notes or during monthly supervision meetings.

Foster parents are given an overview of their rights as professional team members during their initial PRIDE training. Licensing workers review their responsibilities regarding contact with school officials and the case workers while completing the CFS 590 form at licensure. Both licensing workers and case workers also educate foster parents on the difference between team meetings and internal staffings/supervision (for example, the one on one meeting each month between staff and supervisor) in which they would not directly participate, but where their concerns could be discussed.

Foster parents are encouraged to take the Educational Advocacy training within the first year of licensure. Licensing workers reinforce the knowledge that foster parents are invaluable resources in the educational process, and often are the first to learn of the potential need for an IEP. Finally, all of the YSB therapists make themselves available before, during or after counseling sessions to talk to the foster parents. They are also encouraged to call the therapists with any concerns or questions about caring for their foster child.

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

Choosing to accept a foster child into your home can be a complicated decision. Foster parents need to take into consideration not only what is in the best interests of the children living in the home, but foster parents must assess their own abilities. Foster parents need to look at their own strengths, weakness, and their own support systems. YSB believes it is important to provide as much information about the child as possible when contacting a potential foster home. To accomplish this goal, all case workers are required to complete the YSB Child Profile form when requesting placement. The Child Profile provides information on the child's medical needs, behavioral needs, mental health diagnoses, mental health treatment, and educational progress including Individualized Education Plans (IEP), and overall development as well as any safety concerns. These can include sexualized behavior, animal cruelty, food allergies, use of drugs/alcohol, self-harming behaviors, etc.

The Child Profile also provides foster parents information that impacts their responsibilities for a child – such as visitations with parents or siblings that must be maintained. When searching for an appropriate placement, licensing staff verbally share the information contained in the profile. If a foster parent expresses interest or agrees to take placement of the child, the case worker is notified and the foster parent's contact information is provided. The case worker must contact the foster family with 24 hours (less during emergency situations) to answer questions or provide any further information.

Upon placement, the foster parent is given a copy of the child's new placement agreement (CFS 906-1), the medical card, and educational information. If circumstances prevent this from occurring at time of placement, the information is then mailed to the foster parent the next business day. From that point forward, it is the case worker's responsibility to continually update the foster family on information learned about the child and his/her family (when appropriate or allowed by law). Communication is done informally through monthly home visits, quarterly CFTMs, and regular phone contact, as well as encouraging foster parents to attend court hearings where they may be permitted additional knowledge of the family case. Foster parents are provided with the child's section of the Integrated Assessment as well as the service plan. Case workers encourage the ongoing dissemination of information that is needed for the child's care by utilizing YSB Child Folders, and ensuring the child folder moves with the child to any new placements.

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

Foster parents are provided with a copy of the DCFS Service Appeal Brochure at licensure, which outlines their rights regarding an appeal of change of placement. This brochure is also provided by many ACR Reviewers at the biannual meetings.

Except under imminent risk situations, case workers are required to give foster parents a written 14-day notice if the child is to be removed from their care. Case workers utilize form CFS 151B, which requires an explanation for the move, notifies the foster parent of their right to request a clinical appeal, and requires a minimum of 14 days before the move can occur. Foster parents are again given a copy of the Service Appeal Brochure. If the child is at imminent risk of harm, the child is removed immediately. However, the foster parents are still provided with the necessary information to request a clinical appeal.

YSB also requests that our foster parents give a 14-day notice if at any time the family determines they can no longer care for the child. YSB works with children that have experienced trauma therefore; locating an appropriate placement is best for these children. The 14-day notice allows for YSB to locate a home and have at least one pre-placement visit.

When a case worker makes changes to a child's service plan, it is likely that the foster parents are already aware of the changes due to monthly home visits and participation in team staffings. However, the case worker does provide a written copy of the plan to the foster family, so they have a chance to discuss or express any concerns. This is done before the ACR or at the CFTM.

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

YSB foster parents are encouraged to attend all court hearings regarding the child in their care. During licensure, foster parents review and sign the YSB Foster Parent/Agency agreement, which has specific sections regarding the foster parent's right to participate in hearings. Both licensing staff and case workers remind them of this right, as well as the importance of their contributions, during monthly home visits. Many foster parents are already aware of upcoming court hearings due to their participation in the previous hearing. However, if a foster parent was unable to attend a hearing, the case worker will contact the family within five business days and provide them with the next scheduled date and time.

For all foster families, regardless of previous attendance, the case worker will provide a reminder one to two weeks before the scheduled hearing. This information will include the date, time, location, judge's name and docket number. If a hearing should change

location, time or judge, the case worker will immediately notify the foster parent. Case workers typically provide this information verbally, and document doing so in their case notes. Upon request by the foster parent or advisement by the supervisor, case workers will send the foster parent written reminders via mail or email. Each team supervisor reviews this communication during monthly staff meetings. If a foster parent has a concern or complaint about this communication, it is brought to the attention of the supervisor, who will meet with the case worker and/or the foster parent to resolve the concern.

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

When a child with an ongoing case, who has been returned home, re-enters the foster care system, the case worker will review previous placements in the SACWIS system, the YSB internal database, and the child's physical file. They will determine which home(s) the child was previously placed in and the circumstances of their removal if applicable. For licensed foster homes, the case worker will contact licensing staff to determine if that home still meets licensing standards and has capacity. They will then contact the home and discuss placement with the foster family. If the placement was with an unlicensed relative, the case worker will consult with the case supervisor, and then contact the relative for possible placement, when appropriate.

If the child's previous case has closed, DCFS workers will contact the licensing department to inquire about a specific previous placement. Licensing staff will review the foster home file to ensure that it continues to meet licensing standards and has capacity. Licensing staff will also consult with previous case workers or supervisors in an attempt to determine if that placement would be in the best interests of the child, before contacting the foster home. Even if the agency cannot accept or has not been assigned the child's case, YSB will still work with other child welfare agencies to "share" the YSB home.

For specialized placements, the Spec Intake team will consult with the case worker and the foster home to determine the possibility of placement. Finally, if no information can be determined through SACWIS or the child's file, the case worker will meet with the biological parent to gather information about previous homes, and assess their potential for placement.

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

Foster parents have multiple processes for appeals, depending on the nature of their concern. If it is regarding a change of placement, foster parents must follow the appeals

process outlined by the DCFS Appeals Brochure. They are provided a copy of this brochure at licensure, and again if a notice of removal is issued. DCFS also informs foster parents of their procedure for appeal at every Administrative Case Review.

During licensing investigations, foster parents are always informed of their rights and the ability to appeal decisions made. If a licensing investigation is substantiated, foster parents are provided information to contact supervisor and informal reviews utilizing DCFS's CFS 596 forms.

Foster parents have the right to grieve any disagreement with YSB's implementation of Foster Parent Law. Foster parents are required to first discuss their concerns with the specific staff member and their immediate supervisor. If this does not address the issue, a formal grievance may be filed in writing and submitted to the Program Director. From there, it can be escalated to first the Quality Assurance Department and finally to the Executive Director. At any time during this process, the foster parent may contact the DCFS Advocacy Office. For detailed information on the Foster Parent Law Grievance Policy and a copy of the petition, please contact a YSB staff member. Foster parents are provided this policy at licensure and when they receive the yearly Implementation Plan.

Finally, foster parents have the right to access the YSB internal appeals process. The YSB internal appeal is to address case worker decisions and interactions with staff not covered by the Foster Parent Law. Foster parents are provided a copy of this policy at the time of licensure, and upon request. The procedure mirrors the Foster Parent Law Grievance procedure, with the exception that the foster parent appeal would be heard first by the case worker, the immediate supervisor, the Program Director, and then the Executive Director. YSB case workers are trained on all appeal processes during team meetings and individual supervision. A copy of this internal appeals process is available upon request and on the YSB website.

Both the YSB Foster Parent Law Grievance Policy and the YSB internal appeals policy explicitly states that no retaliation by a case worker or any staff member will occur. Each staff member is made aware that harassment or retaliation against a foster parent is strictly prohibited. Case workers are taught that foster parents are a very valuable member of our team and that a foster parent's concerns should be validated. At any point within the appeal process, foster parents have the right to contact the Office of the Inspector General to address their complaints and concerns.

- 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 are first educated about the Foster Parent Hotline and Inspector General's office during PRIDE training and YSB licensure. Important phone numbers, including the Foster Parent Hotline, are included in the packet of policies provided to foster parents at the time of licensure. Additionally, this contact information is included each quarter in the DCFS Foster Parent Newsletter, on the YSB Facebook page, and the YSB website.

Section 1-17. Foster Parent Responsibilities. A foster parent's responsibilities include, but are not limited to the following:

1) The responsibility to openly communicate and share information

Open communication is first introduced to foster parents during the PRIDE training classes. Licensing workers further discuss and encourage open communication and sharing of information while completing the home study and reviewing CFS 590 (a form that summarizes the 402 Foster Parent Standards). Also, foster parents at YSB are required to review and sign the Foster Parent/Agency Agreement, which outlines the importance of regular communication with the case worker and licensing staff.

To facilitate this communication, foster parents are provided with case workers' phone numbers, email addresses, and the agency 24 hour on call number. During home visits and semi-annual monitoring appointments, foster parents are asked if they have any concerns and about their understanding of their responsibilities in the foster care system. Foster parents are encouraged to maintain communication between visits through phone calls and emails (non-confidential information). If the agency or foster parents feel they are struggling in this area, licensing staff will recommend that they take the DCFS training "Working as a Professional Team Member". Foster parents are given random phone surveys and yearly questionnaires to elicit feedback and to share information about the agency and its staff.

Upon initial placement, foster parents will receive a Child Folder. This folder contains important information about the child and the agency. It includes, but is not limited to, recent medical exams, educational documents, important phone numbers, and medication logs. The folder is to follow the child through placement, and also allows caregivers to communicate behaviors, milestones, and routines.

2) The responsibility to respect the confidentiality of information concerning foster children and their families

Like all core responsibilities, foster parent confidentiality is covered during the PRIDE training classes. It is further explained and reinforced during licensure through review of the CFS 590 and the Foster Family/Agency Agreement, and at every monitoring

appointment. Foster parents are given a copy of the 402 Foster Parent Standards and The Child Care Act of 1969 when they are licensed, they are encouraged to learn the material in-depth. When updates concerning confidentiality, such as posting on social media, are updated by DCFS, licensing workers provide that information to all existing and new foster parents.

If a foster parent has been found to violate confidentiality, the licensing staff and case worker will consult to determine if further education would benefit the foster parent. If so, they would be required to complete an applicable training prior to accepting future foster placements. If the violation is severe, an investigation will be completed, and the status of the license reviewed.

Case workers are expected to uphold confidentiality, educate foster parents, and model appropriate information sharing. Case workers are governed by DCFS Rule 431 and HIPPA guidelines for sharing medical and mental health information. Foster parents are informed that not all information regarding biological parents can be shared by the case worker due to confidentiality. Therefore, they are encouraged to attend court hearings, but again cautioned that any information they learn during court hearings and at other meetings is to be kept confidential.

3) The responsibility to advocate for children in the foster parents' care.

All foster parents are encouraged to attend an Educational Advocacy training either in conjunction with their PRIDE classes or within the first year of licensure. While DCFS only requires one foster parent to attend, sometime within the first 4 years, YSB believes the training is more beneficial if both foster parents participate. Each YSB office will send notices to the foster parent when an Educational Advocacy training is offered in their area, and they are reminded of this requirement at each monitoring appointment. Upon request by the case worker or foster parent, a DCFS Educational Liaison may be contacted to further assist the foster parent and child. Foster parents are also encouraged to work closely with a child's therapist, as an understanding of the child's emotional and mental health needs will increase their ability to advocate for them.

YSB does not have specific court training at this time, but one is in development for 2017. In the meantime, foster parents are informed (via the Foster Parent/Agency Agreement) of the agency's commitment to providing a lawyer and/or seek out training and education if they are required to testify at court. They are encouraged to participate in all scheduled CFTMs, IEP staffings, CIPPs, and court hearings, where they can utilize their knowledge of the child to help develop appropriate services and resources. Whenever possible, these meetings are scheduled around the foster parent's schedule to further ensure their participation.

Finally, foster parents are provided with a copy of their Service Appeal brochure at licensure, and are required to sign the DCFS Client's Rights form showing that they received and understand the Service Appeal process. The DCFS Service Appeal process (Part 337) is located on the DCFS website:

<https://www.state.il.us/dcfs/index.shtml>

Both case workers and licensing staff are available to assist foster parents in reviewing the process and filing an appeal.

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

Just as foster parents have the basic right of being treated with dignity, respect and consideration by the agency, so do the foster children in their care. Foster parents again cover this topic during their PRIDE training, and it is reviewed with them by licensing staff during initial licensure and semi-annual monitoring.

Licensing workers discuss the importance and requirement of foster parents to treat all children in the home equitably, and to protect all children from neglect and abuse. Basic rights such as clean and appropriate bedding, nutritious and adequate food, etc are also reviewed. Foster parents are provided copies of the 402 Foster Parent Standards as well as the Child Care Act of 1969. If this becomes a topic of confusion or multiple foster parents are not providing our children with these basic rights, YSB will either seek out or create trainings on the topic.

To monitor foster homes, case workers meet one on one with foster children during their home visits. In addition to general questions about school and activities, case workers check with the foster children to determine that they are being treated appropriately by their placements. Any allegations by a foster child that he/she has not been given this basic right will be investigated by licensing and case worker staff.

Foster parents are expected to treat all children placed in your home as a valued household member on a daily basis. This can be accomplished by doing the following:

- Providing the foster child(ren) in your home with the same meals as your biological family has unless your child(ren) , for example, are allergic to the food or prohibited from eating for religious reasons, etc
- Including the child(ren) in your care in family outings including vacations
- Referencing or speaking about the child(ren) or child(ren)'s biological family in a respectful manner

- Allowing and encourage the child(ren) to participate in extra-curricular activities (provide transportation to and from activities or make arrangements for transportation).
 - Be courteous of a child's feelings and belongings when they are moving from your home by ensuring they have all possessions and suitable moving supplies
 - Provide an open and welcoming environment for the child on a daily basis
- 5) The responsibility to recognize the foster parents 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

During the 3-4 month licensing process, foster home applicants and the licensing worker, complete a checklist of behaviors commonly seen in foster children. The purpose of this assessment is twofold: 1) foster parents are educated in the possible needs of future placements and 2) foster parents required to assess their willingness and ability to care for children with these needs and behaviors. If a weakness is identified, either at the time of licensure, or following placement, licensing staff will seek out and recommend appropriate trainings for the foster parent. Also, during PRIDE training, foster parents are asked to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. Any concerns by the trainer are addressed both with the foster parents and the licensing worker.

If a new foster parent would benefit more from a mentor than a formal training, they are matched with an experienced foster home within the agency. Foster parents and licensing staff discuss the foster parent's support system during licensure, and information regarding local support groups is provided upon request. Respite foster care and Intensive Preservation Services (IPS) will be provided as needed for foster parents. This will aid the foster parents in preventing emotional fatigue.

When a child needs a new foster placement, the strength and limitations of the family (gathered from the checklist, the home study, previous placements, and ongoing conversations at monitoring appointments) are considered. Informal matching meetings between the case worker and licensing staff are held, and information from the Child Profile and licensing file are compared. Additionally, licensing staff consider current foster children in the home, and consult with those case workers regarding any concerns they may have if a new child is placed in the home. With specialized youth, there is a more formal meeting between the Intake Coordinator, case worker, supervisor, and licensing staff. They utilize the DCFS Specialized Broadcast form to ensure all information known is discussed and shared.

- 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.

Ongoing support and advocacy is essential for foster families to maintain successful placement. Licensing staff has ongoing discussions with foster parents about the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents, or foster parent associations within the community in which they live.

Our agency also believes that informal supports, such as family and friends, can also be effective for foster parents. Foster parents are encouraged to look within their family and friends for viable sources of support and backup caregivers during licensure and throughout their involvement with YSB. However, not every family has those resources, and so licensing workers will arrange for mentoring with experienced foster parents. Staff can also provide foster parents with a list of support groups, including, but not limited to:

- Foster Parent Cafes
- Church of the Resurrection support and educational groups
- Willow Creek foster and adoptive programs
- Family Matters Information and Parent Training Center (online support)
- DCFS DeKalb Foster Parent Support Group
- DCFS DuPage County Foster Parent Support Group

In addition to the more traditional support groups, YSB maintains a closed Facebook group just for YSB foster parents. Foster parents will be encouraged to seek support and information from fellow foster parents on the site, day or night. They will be reminded of confidentiality guidelines and a staff member will monitor the posts. In 2016, YSB started a quarterly newsletter to keep foster parents informed of local and online support groups, upcoming training opportunity, and information to guide foster parents on working with children that have experienced trauma. If YSB staff learns of relevant and/or helpful websites or other resources, they will share this information with foster parents.

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

During licensure, foster parents review a tolerance checklist with licensing staff. Beyond utilizing this checklist for future placement matching, it helps foster parents identify weaknesses or areas in which they would like additional training. At each subsequent monitoring appointment licensing staff will review the training requirements and asks foster parents for feedback and concerns. Foster parents are encouraged to discuss the areas they would like to receive training on or topics they would be interested in developing into a training to benefit other foster parents. All foster parents know that

they will need a minimum of 16 hours of training to renew their licenses. However, YSB licensing staff do work with foster parents to obtain training in areas that are beneficial to the foster parent, not simply to meet the renewal minimums.

To support foster parents in this area, all YSB offices have upgraded their electronics and technology to facilitate multiple methods of learning. The closed Facebook Foster Parent group will feature polls on the types of trainings and locations where trainings should be held. Finally, if a case worker, therapist or licensing worker identifies an area of need, the team will either seek out or develop educational resources and trainings for that foster parent. As a whole, the licensing team will look for trends within licensing investigations or worker concerns, and increase trainings in those areas (such as inappropriate discipline, etc).

- 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 if preventative strategies fail and placement disruptions occur.

When accepting a new foster home for licensure YSB staff educates foster parents about the trauma to a child when placement disruptions occur. Foster parents are encouraged to discuss as a family each person's willingness and readiness to become foster parents. Further, they are asked to name support systems, sources of stress and how to deal with it, and interests/activities that can continue and those that might be disrupted when a child is placed in the home. This education and assessment is the first step in a preventative strategy. Foster parents are also educated on the importance of communication, and discussing concerns with their case worker before a situation becomes too difficult to maintain and a child is forced to leave the home.

When discussing placement of a child in the foster home, licensing and case work staff provide all known information about the child so that foster parents can made a thoughtful decision. However, foster parents are also cautioned when a child is new to the system, or has been in a home that failed to report behaviors. In those instances, the agency may not be aware of all behavioral concerns or needs of the child, and it is very important that the foster parent factor this into their decision. Whenever possible, YSB arranges pre-placement visitation to ensure a good match and to educate the foster parent on the needs of the child.

To help foster parents understand the traumatic impact of placement disruptions on the family and the child, YSB encourages foster parents to attend the 15 hour Child Trauma training offered by DCFS. During monthly home visits and semiannual monitoring appointments, staff asks the foster parents if they have any concerns or difficulties. Again, the goal is to be proactive, and work to prevent placement disruptions. Foster

parents are encouraged to notify the case worker as soon as possible of any developing issues, and not to wait for the next scheduled appointment.

Individual counseling, mentor programs, respite, and IPS (Intensive Preservation Services) services can be put into place to support the child and the foster family. If a child is specialized, or determined by the case worker to be at a high risk of disruption (multiple placements, engaging in illegal behavior, history of parental sabotage), the case worker will proactively offer or develop these services at the beginning of the placement. Clinical Intervention to Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings will also review supportive services, as well as CFTMs and ACRs. Foster parents are provided with YSB's on-call number and are encouraged to contact staff for any weekend/evening assistance in order to help stabilize the placement.

Case workers are responsible for continual assessment regarding the stability of a placement. They are taught about stabilization services during their DCFS training, and continue to discuss available services during monthly supervision and team meetings. Any problems with a placement that may cause eventual disruption are reported by the case worker to the program director and licensing worker.

When appropriate, case workers will educate foster families on IPS and Screening Assessment & Support Services (SASS). These programs may provide in-home counseling, a mentor for the child, training, or pay for resources that otherwise could not be funded through DCFS. All foster parents are informed of the possibility of respite at the time of licensure.

- 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.

Parenting children that have experienced significant trauma is stressful, and stressful situations need to be properly assessed and effectively dealt with by the foster families. Foster parents need to continually assess and tend to the stress levels within the home to help ensure foster children in their home can feel cared for and nurtured.

Licensing workers spend a significant amount of time discussing support systems, stressors, and the potential impact that a placement or the ending of a placement can have on all members of the family during the initial licensure. This information is documented in the DCFS home study and the child supervision plan. Also, the option of a "voluntary hold" is reviewed along with the other rules/standards found in 402. Finally, foster parents are given both the DCFS and YSB Client Rights form, which notifies them of their right to counseling for any member of the foster family.

On an ongoing basis, both licensing staff and case workers inquire about any situations that may be causing stress to the family. Even if the family denies any stress, but

appears to be experiencing significant life changes (death in the family, divorce, birth of a new child), the family is reminded about respite and voluntary hold options. They are encouraged to take the DCFS Training – Managing the Impact of Placement on Family, and informed of local support groups. All staff, including licensing, case work, and counseling make themselves available for talking through issues, brainstorming solutions, and simply lending a sympathetic ear.

Finally, foster parents are educated about respite during their licensure process (different programs for traditional and specialized homes) and encouraged to utilize this resource as a source of support and self-care. If a licensing worker or case worker feel that the foster parent is overwhelmed or exhausted from dealing with a particular child or situation, respite will be offered to them in an attempt to stabilize the placement and the foster parent. Foster parents will also be reminded about the possibility of obtaining respite services on the YSB Foster Parent Facebook group.

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

Foster parents are encouraged to be advocates for the agency and their foster children through participation in development of the yearly Implementation Plan, recruitment events or referrals, volunteer activities, and fund raising for the annual Foster Family Christmas Party. YSB and Community Christian Church teamed up to host the 1st annual Foster Parent Picnic. Both the YSB webpage and agency Facebook page provides notice of events and activities. In addition, all foster parents are mailed invitations to the Christmas party, even if they do not actively have placements.

The agency Christmas Party is one of the most successful and positive events held by YSB. Foster families have stated that the activity allows them to interact with other foster families and build upon their informal support systems. Foster children have stated that they enjoy meeting other children “like them”. Local businesses donate raffle prizes and money, as well as Christmas presents for all foster children in the agency. They are promoted on our websites and acknowledged during the Christmas party, which again leads to a positive view of the community and our families.

To further acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our foster families, and to promote the foster parenting experience in a positive way, YSB has developed a Foster Parent of the Quarter Program. Those foster families chose for this honor are promoted on the YSB webpage and agency Facebook page, as well as receiving a certificate and a gift card. Further promotion and acknowledgement comes from being featured in the DCFS quarterly newsletter. YSB typically has at least one family featured each year.

At this time, YSB does not have an in-house training in the public relations aspect of

foster parenting, and is unaware of a DCFS resource which foster parents could utilize. Licensing workers address in detail all issues of confidentiality with foster parents in regards to media. However, we would like to expand upon that. YSB is in the process of creating a Development and Marketing Department. It is our intention to meet with the staff of that program to discuss how they can include foster parents in this very important process.

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

Foster parents are informed of their rights and responsibilities during PRIDE training, and that is reinforced during their licensure. All foster parents review and sign a Foster Parent/Agency agreement that clearly defines these rights and responsibilities. They are also provided with copies of the 402 Standards and Child Care Act of 1969. After licensure, foster parents continue to be educated and reminded of their responsibilities during monthly home visits and semi-annual monitoring. They are provided with information on DCFS and agency trainings that provide further education, such as Educational Advocacy, Adoption and Guardianship training, and Working as a Professional Team Member. They are encouraged to suggest training topics and to become a co-trainer on topics that would benefit other foster parents.

Foster parents are encouraged by staff to attend and participate in CFTMs, ACRs, CIPP proceedings, and any other team staffings. These meetings give foster parents a voice and the opportunity to contribute to a child's service plan. It also allows them the opportunity to express concern about any tasks they have been given, if they have questions about their responsibilities.

Agency supervisors are made available to foster parents at these meetings, via phone, or a one on one meeting. YSB has a clearly defined grievance policy which provides access to the YSB Executive Director if needed. Foster parents are also able to contact other members of management, such as the CFO (chief financial officer) if they have concerns about payments.

12) The responsibility to know and, as necessary, to 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 rule and procedures governing investigations of allegations:

Foster parents are given instruction about the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act during PRIDE training. They are given the opportunity to discuss with a DCFS investigative worker (DCP) how reports of abuse and neglect are made and investigated. This occurs during the 9th session of the class, and often a licensing worker is also

available to answer questions. Following PRIDE, licensing staff review the DCFS “Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status” form (CANTS 22B) with each foster parent. Foster parents indicate their understanding of this responsibility by signing the form. Case workers also reinforce the importance of being a mandated reporter, and offer assistance to the foster parent. They will help them with each step in contacting the hotline, if requested

As previously discussed, foster parents are provided a copy of the agency’s policy and procedures regarding allegations that foster parents have committed child abuse or neglect. YSB coordinates investigative requirements with the DCP workers assigned to an investigation, and cooperate with all requirements for placement changes and/or protective plans. Licensing staff are available to answer any questions about the procedure and how this may affect their license. If a foster parent is the subject of a licensing investigation, either stand alone or in conjunction with a DCFS abuse/neglect investigation, licensing staff provide the foster parent with a copy of the “Right to Have Advocate Present” form (CFS 596-29).

- 13) The responsibility to know and receive training regarding the purpose of Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs), 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 are first introduced to this responsibility, as well as an explanation of the court processes, ACRs, service plans, and integrated assessments during the PRIDE training. The importance of participation is stressed both by the PRIDE trainers and the licensing staff during licensure. This information is further supported by the Foster Parent/Agency agreement reviewed and signed by the licensing worker and new foster parent. Licensing staff explain in general the types of court hearings a foster parent may be required to attend, and encourage participation at all other hearings. Licensing staff also discuss the importance of ACRs and what may be expected of a foster parent.

Continued education regarding court and administrative processes, as well as the service plan, is provided by the case worker. They are able to provide the foster parent with specific examples and details on how it pertains to the child in the foster parent’s care. This is done informally during monthly home visits, and in more detail at Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) and before each court hearing.

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

Foster parents are provided with information at the time of licensure regarding both the DCFS and YSB appeal procedures. Foster parents are provided with a copy of the DCFS Service Appeal Brochure and YSB foster parent policies, which contains both the internal appeals and Foster Parent Law Grievance appeal policy and procedure. All of these

documents specifically forbid retaliation by staff or agency employees against the foster parent for filing an appeal. Foster parents are also provided with the DCFS and YSB Clients Rights forms.

If foster parents have a concern or complaint regarding foster parent law, they are required to first discuss their concerns with the specific staff member and their immediate supervisor. If this does not address the issue, a formal grievance may be filed in writing and submitted to the Program Director. From there, it can be escalated to first the Quality Assurance Department and finally to the Executive Director. At any time during this process, the foster parent may contact the DCFS Advocacy Office. For detailed information on the Foster Parent Law Grievance Policy and a copy of the petition, please contact a YSB staff member. Foster parents are provided this policy at licensure and when they receive the yearly Implementation Plan.

If foster parents have a concern or complaint regarding case worker decisions and interactions with staff not covered by foster parent law, they are responsible for accessing the YSB internal appeals process. The YSB internal appeal is to address case worker decisions and interactions with staff not covered by the Foster Parent Law. Foster parents are provided a copy of this policy at the time of licensure, and upon request. The procedure mirrors the Foster Parent Law Grievance procedure, with the exception that the foster parent appeal would be heard first by the case worker, the supervisor, the Program Director, and then the Executive Director. YSB case workers are trained on all appeal processes during team meetings and individual supervision. A copy of this internal appeals process is available upon request and the YSB website.

If foster parents do not believe their concerns are being addressed appropriately, they have the responsibility to contact the Office of the Inspector General regarding child welfare services.

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.

YSB foster parents understand the importance of accurate and relevant records regarding a child's history, needs and behaviors. The agency often receives feedback on the importance of complete information when accepting a child for placement, and licensing staff are able to relate that to ongoing documentation for future care of the child and/or return to the parents.

During the initial licensure, licensing staff review the CFS 590 form, which is a 21 page summary of the 402 standards. A section of the 590 cover the importance of documenting, and provides examples of what information must be known and recorded by the foster parent. YSB provides a Child Folder in which foster parents can maintain

the necessary documents and information. This folder follows the child to any future placements, and if returned home, relevant information from it can be provided to the biological parent. Foster parents are also provided with a copy of 402 standards, the Foster Parent/Agency Agreement, and the YSB foster parent policies, which outline the procedures and regulations of YSB.

At every monitoring appointment, foster parents are reminded of this responsibility, and are given an opportunity for clarification. They are offered, for example, copies of the Medication Administration Log (CFS 534). They are encouraged to keep a copy of all training certificates and documentations, and provide one copy for their licensing file.

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

The responsibility to share information with subsequent caregivers is a part of the necessary communication between foster parent, agency and when appropriate, the biological parents. PRIDE training offered by DCFS educates foster parents on the benefits of communicating and shared parenting. Case workers also reinforce this expectation when providing the foster parent with the Child Folder and when gathering information to complete a Child Profile.

YSB recognizes that there may be instances when it is not appropriate for caregivers to communicate, such as when a child is removed from a foster home due to abuse or neglect. However, even in those instances, there is the opportunity to gather information about the child that is necessary for care in the new home. Foster parents are encouraged to utilize the Child Folder, which would provide, at a minimum, basic information regarding previous medical exams.

If there are no concerns about the safety of the child, or inaccurate information that could cause harm to a child, both foster parents are contacted, and asked if the agency can share their contact information. Staff encourage the new foster home to contact the previous home with questions regarding the child's routines, educational requirements, behaviors, and "favorites" (food, clothes, stuffed animals, etc). If the foster homes are not comfortable with this, the case worker will make attempts to obtain this information and pass it on to the new home.

When a child returns home to a biological parent, case workers follow the same procedure previously described. However, not all foster parents are comfortable working with biological parents, and vice versa. Again, information in the Child Folder, and information gathered via interview with the foster parent is shared with the biological parent by the case worker. YSB takes this one step further and encourages an ongoing exchange of information between biological parent and foster parent at the beginning of the placement and throughout the child's time in substitute care. If either

party is not comfortable with direct communication, or discussions at the time of visits, resources such as a daily journal can be utilized.

- 17) The responsibility to provide care and services that are respectful of and responsible 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.

Whenever possible, YSB follows the DCFS directive in placing children with relatives, siblings, or foster homes within the same race or ethnicity as the foster child. When this is not possible, it is even more important that the child's foster parents provide care that is respectful of the child's cultural needs and his/her relationship with the biological family.

Potential foster parents are interviewed about willingness to take placement of children who are of a different race. Both during the licensure process and during the PRIDE training courses, discussions are held regarding cultural and ethnic needs. YSB offers an informal mentoring program, in which a new foster home is connected with an experienced foster home. The experienced home will often be the same ethnicity as the foster child or someone who has successfully parented children of a different ethnicity. They are able to create and help foster parents locate resources that maintain a child's cultural identity.

To further assist foster parents, African American Hair and Skin Care training is held at least annually. The trainers, a case worker and a foster parent, are also exploring other cultural trainings that could be presented to YSB and community foster parents. If a foster parent requests additional education, YSB staff will locate an in-person or online training, or will develop a training curriculum within the agency to meet that need. Finally, YSB maintains a closed Facebook group for YSB foster parents to share tips, resources, and ideas, which will provide another resource for meeting cultural needs.