

# **YOUTH SERVICE BUREAU OF ILLINOIS VALLEY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2015 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.**

Respect and dignity of our foster parents are fundamental ethical values that YSB believes is the center of our foster care program. If we show a sincere regard for the worth of our foster parents and all they sacrifice and do for children, then our program will continue to succeed and strive for excellence. Encouraging foster parents to participate in case planning, ACR's, court hearings, meetings, and support groups enables our foster parents to consider themselves a real part of the team.

YSB strives to acknowledge a foster parent's value as a human being by treating them with courtesy, politeness, and respect at all times. Caseworkers are trained on an ongoing basis during team meetings on the value of treating foster parents as we treat other team members. The foster parent is the one who spends the most time with the child. The foster parent has valuable information on the day-to-day activities and behaviors of the child.

Foster parents are offered support unique to their needs regarding the child placed with them. Contacts may consist of phone calls, family meetings, SOC services, or monthly contacts, depending on the needs of the child and the foster family. Agency policy is to return phone calls within 24 hours. Business cards with the worker's phone number are given to the foster parents.

During the licensing process, agency policy and programs are reviewed and left with the foster parents. The avenue for directing concerns is discussed with the foster parents upon licensure. The licensing worker conducts monitoring visits to the foster home within 60 days of licensure, then twice per year minimally or as often as needed.

During the licensing process, prospective foster parents are given names and phone numbers of existing foster parents to get firsthand knowledge and information about foster parenting through YSB. This serves to be an excellent way for foster parents to become acquainted with other families who have experience with fostering.

Foster parents receive a quarterly newsletter from DCFS that includes training news, updated policy changes, resource information, and records to be maintained by the foster parent. Letters or emails will be sent out more frequently when information needs to reach the foster parent immediately. The licensing department has increased communication to foster parents regarding agency procedures and trainings via email and standard mail. The Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan is available on the Youth Service Bureau's website, [www.ysbiv.org](http://www.ysbiv.org), for viewing.

Foster parents were invited to attend Implementation Plan meetings in the Aurora, Rockford, Glen Ellyn, and Ottawa offices to accommodate foster parents from the various areas. Foster parents received a copy of the Implementation Plan last year when the plan was completed. Newly licensed foster parents receive it with their licensing materials. The plan is available in the lobbies of all our YSB offices for anyone who wishes to obtain a copy. Foster parents were invited to review the plan on our agency's website. The Implementation Plan of 2015 and future plans will be available on our website, [www.ysbiv.org](http://www.ysbiv.org).

Foster parents were asked for their input in the plan for 2015. All foster parents were sent surveys to allow them to provide input to the agency. An envelope was provided to encourage them to respond with their feedback. Responses could also be emailed. Five foster parents representing all the geographic areas that YSB covers were involved in revising this year's Implementation Plan. Two caseworkers were also involved in the process.

A notice was published on craigslist in September 2014 indicating the period for public comment.

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 relative caregivers and potential foster parents will attend and successfully complete the Foster/Adopt PRIDE Pre-service training prior to licensure as a foster family home. The licensing worker will register the prospective foster parents for the PRIDE training after the first in home visit. Foster parents are encouraged to attend the Educational Advocacy training when it is offered at the end of their PRIDE classes; however, it is not required by DCFS to be completed until renewal of the foster home license. Foster parents must register themselves for this training.

Foster parents are required to complete Infant and Child CPR and First Aid prior to licensure, which is required to be certified every two years. Each foster parent is required to attend 16 hours of training every four years prior to the renewal of their foster home license.

Foster parents receive training that is appropriate to the needs of the children in their home. When the agency notices a recurring problem in the foster homes, we offer a training covering that topic. Recently we noticed a trend with investigations involving discipline issues and offered a training regarding appropriate discipline techniques. Training goals are mutually agreed upon between the licensing worker and the foster parent. They are surveyed each month during the foster parent phone questionnaire regarding their training needs and directed to appropriate trainings. Many of our foster parents have connected with others during their initial PRIDE experience, and those partnerships can continue and develop through training and support groups. The agency understands how busy foster parents are and tries to eliminate the amount of mail distributed to them with a phone call that addresses training, respect, and concerns.

All foster parents are provided with current schedules of local In-service Module Trainings and are encouraged to attend. They are also encouraged to register for trainings through the Virtual Training Center (VCT). In some areas local foster parent support groups provide training which they are notified of an encouraged to attend. Licensing workers assist foster parents in individual training through the DCFS Lending Library. Foster parents are notified of training opportunities through newsletters, email, or flyers.

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.**

YSB maintains a 24-hour access to an on-call worker for foster families for each geographic area we serve. Foster parents are given the afterhours number for their respective area from their caseworker upon placement.

Procedure on how to access the on-call worker is provided to all foster parents as a part of placement. Supervisors and caseworkers rotate on-call responsibility on a weekly basis. The on-call staff will access CARES (as necessary). In-person response by the on-call worker will be provided at the request of the foster home.

The agency website is updated throughout the year with current events and resources.

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

Foster parents receive a copy of the agency's reimbursement policy upon licensure. Foster care reimbursement will be paid by check or direct deposit to the foster parent on the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month for the previous month's days in care. Reimbursement made to the foster parents is commensurate with the type of foster care provided and the age of the child.

All caseworkers are trained on our agency reimbursement policy which defines what costs will be reimbursed to the foster parent, i.e., camp fees, sports equipment, school fees and school pictures. The caseworker fills out the reimbursement form and gives it to their supervisor for approval. Once it has been approved, it is forwarded to the Fiscal Department. Foster parents should call the Fiscal Assistant at 815.431.3038 with payment questions or discrepancies. Payment discrepancies will always be handled in a timely manner by the fiscal department at the Ottawa Office.

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

It is the practice of YSB to provide a stable, safe, and nurturing home for the children in foster care. Foster parents are encouraged to participate in the development of the service plan of children placed in their home. They will be provided notification of changes in the service plan or permanency goal through in-person, phone, or written contact. If a scheduled meeting, court date, or ACR is cancelled, the caseworker will contact the foster parents at least 24 hours in advance. The caseworker will discuss with the foster parent the visitation schedule and plan for the children placed in their home. Caseworkers meet with foster parents within the first 48 hours of placement to discuss visitation plans, the Integrated Assessment, and answer questions the foster parent may have.

Caseworkers meet with the foster parents within ten days of the child's placement to share information. Inclusion of foster parents in case planning will be monitored through monthly supervision between the caseworker and supervisor. During licensure foster parents are made aware of their right to be involved in service planning.

Prior to licensure, the licensing worker has applicants fill out the Religious Faith/Cultural Background Information form to aid proper placement of children with respect to their own

religion and cultural background. When possible, YSB places children within these boundaries. The Caregiver Matching Tool CFS 2017 is completed by the caseworker or licensing worker prior to placement of a child in a foster home.

Foster parents are encouraged to participate in quarterly child and family team meetings to address reunification and the changing needs of the child. The licensing worker will fill out the CFS-250-A Caregiver Self-Assessment as Reunification prepared with the foster parent to increase placement stability.

Youth Service Bureau has an in-house counseling program called Solutions Counseling that is available to foster children to discuss issues related to placement in foster care including separation from their birth families. Caseworkers fill out a referral form and submit to Solutions and a therapist is assigned to conduct an assessment and give recommendations. If it is recommended that the child receive therapy, a therapist will be assigned to the child. Referrals will be responded to within ten working days.

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.**

Foster parents are advised of their right to appeal at the beginning and end of a licensing complaint investigation. Written policy and procedure regarding licensing complaint investigations is provided to all foster parents prior to licensure.

All YSB foster homes will be provided a fair, timely, and impartial investigation of any licensing complaint. DCFS policy regarding Licensing Complaint Investigations is followed when a complaint is received in licensing. The licensing worker will initiate an investigation within two business days of receipt of the alleged complaint. The licensing worker, per DCFS requirement, will make an unannounced visit to the foster parents' home to initiate the investigation. At this visit, the licensing worker will advise the foster parent of their right to have an advocate present during the investigation.

The licensing worker will give foster parents a written statement of their rights. Foster parents will be advised that they have four hours to have someone present or 24 hours to have a lawyer present. The Complaint Investigation must be completed within 30 days. However, the investigation may be extended an additional 30 days if the licensee is so notified in writing. Foster parents will be notified in writing the results of the licensing complaint investigation via Certified Mail. Foster parents will be an active part in the development of a Corrective Plan if one warranted. Foster parents will be informed of their right to receive both mediation and an administrative review of the results of the licensing complaint investigation.

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.**

All information known about a child will be disclosed to the foster parents prior to placement of a child into their home. All additional relevant information received by the agency about the child during his/her placement will be provided to the foster family. An initial Child and Family Team

meeting is held within 48 hours of receipt of the case. The assigned caseworker and the foster care supervisor are present during the initial meeting. Documentation is made on a Child and Family Team Meeting form. Foster parents may request a meeting with the caseworker, licensing worker and/or foster care supervisor to review child file information in accordance with confidentiality laws. Foster parents are encouraged to contact any and all service providers to discuss pertinent information regarding the child and his/her progress. Caseworkers follow Rule 301.120 Sharing Appropriate Information with the caregiver. Caseworkers are provided initial training through Foundation training and are trained to disclose all relevant information regarding children in care to the foster parent. Caseworkers are held accountable for sharing information with foster parents by the supervisors through monthly supervision meetings and their annual evaluation.

8. **The right to be given information concerning child from the Department, as required under Section 5(u) of the Children and Family Services Act, and from a child welfare agency, as required under Section 7.4 (c-5) of the Child Care Act of 1969 [20 ILCS 520/1-15].**
- A) At the time the caseworker places a child with a foster parent or prospective adoptive parent, or prior to placement of the child, whenever possible, the worker shall provide available information in writing (except as provided in subsection (a) (8) (B)) about the child necessary for the proper care of the child to the foster parent or prospective adoptive parent. The information to be provided to the caregiver shall include:**
- i) The medical history of the child including known medical problems or communicable diseases, information concerning the immunization status of the child, and insurance and medical card information;**
  - ii) The educational history of the child, including any special educational needs and details of the child's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) when the child is receiving special education services or 504 Educational Special Needs Plan, if applicable;**
  - iii) A copy of the child's portion of the client service plan including any visitation arrangements and all amendments or revisions; case history of the child, including how the child came into care; the child's legal status; the permanency goal for the child; a history of the child's previous placements; and reasons for placement changes, excluding information that identifies or reveals the location of any previous foster or relative home caregiver; and**
  - iv) Other relevant background information of the child, including any prior criminal history; information about any behavior problems including fire setting, perpetration of sexual abuse, destructive behavior and substance abuse habits; and like and dislikes, etc.**
- B) In the case of an emergency placement, when all of the information referenced in subsection (a) (8) (A) is not available, the worker shall provide known information verbally as it becomes available and subsequently provide this information in writing.**
- C) In advance of placement, the caseworker may provide the foster parent or adoptive parent with a written summary of the information listed in subsection (a) (8) (A).**
- D) Within 10 working days after the placement, the worker shall obtain from the prospective adoptive parent, foster parents or other caregiver signed verification of receipt of the information described in subsection (a) (8) (A) and forward a copy of the information to the child's guardian ad litem.**
- E) Supervisory review and approval is required prior to providing any information to the foster parents or prospective adoptive parents.**

As stated in the above right, caseworkers shall disclose any information relevant to the care of the child being placed with the caregiver. Caseworkers shall document on the CFS 600-4 Sharing Information with the Caregiver within 10 days of placement.

YSB holds their staff accountable for providing accurate information in a timely manner to the foster parent. Known medical history and educational information including IEP's are given to the foster parents as it is received by the agency. Caseworkers are responsible for collaborating with other service providers to receive the most current and up-to-date information available.

YSB provides a Child Resource Folder to the foster parents. The folder is given to the foster parent by the caseworker within the first ten days of placement. The folder includes physical and dental forms, medication and behavior logs, and clothing and allowance forms. A listing of community resources is also included. The folder is for the foster parents to keep all information about the child in one place. A copy of the birth certificate and the child's social security number will be given to the foster parent to put in the folder. The medical card and a health passport if used are kept in the folder. The folder travels with the child from placement to placement. YSB trains all caseworkers on the policy and procedure during monthly staff meetings.

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 planning meetings, administrative case reviews, interdisciplinary staffings, and individual educational planning meetings, the right to be informed of decisions made by the courts or the child welfare agency concerning the child; the right to provide their 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.**

Communication is the backbone of a good foster care program. When a new foster parent is identified, YSB does an intake and obtains all information regarding avenues of contact including all phone numbers and email addresses. Upon placement or licensure foster parents are given telephone numbers and email addresses for the licensing worker and caseworker. They are also given instructions on how to reach their worker or the on-call number in an emergency. In the event a worker cannot be reached, the foster parents are encouraged to contact the supervisor. Regular communication happens at staffings, court hearings, home visits, school conferences and ACR's which the foster parent is encouraged to attend. If the foster parent is unable to attend, the worker receives their feedback via email or a phone conversation and the concerns of the foster parent are shared with the other professionals on the team. Foster parents are given the same notification status, as are all members of the professional team. All communication is directed through the caseworker by means of personal contact, phone contact, email or by letter.

Foster parents are informed of decisions made and are encouraged to provide input into case planning. The program's peer file review specifically checks to insure notice is always provided to foster parents regarding reviews and court appearances. Written policy regarding the inclusion of foster parents in case planning is provided to all foster homes prior to licensure. Supervisors monitor the inclusion of foster parents through monthly supervision with foster care caseworkers. Caseworkers complete a SACWIS case note to document the invitation of foster parents to the Child and Family Team Meetings and all other staffings and meetings regarding the child in their

care. Foster parents are invited to attend any meetings and/or appointments regarding the child placed with them. This allows the foster parents to share relevant and pertinent information with other service providers. This also allows the foster parent to be effective advocates for the child placed with them. Because the foster parent is considered the nucleus of the program, their input is given full consideration. Foster parent involvement in meetings, staffings, ACR's and court is crucial and helps facilitate the relationship between foster parents and the rest of the team.

- 10. The right to be given, in a timely and consistent manner, any information a caseworker has regarding the child in 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 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 parents and the child's family, the child's family may consent to disclosure of additional information.**

The licensing worker and the caseworker will ensure disclosure of all necessary information at placement. As stated previously, all pertinent information is provided to foster families in the Child Resource Folder upon placement of the child. The caseworker completes A Child Profile that contains school information, criminal history, behavior patterns, medication, and history of abuse.

Within 48 hours of receiving a case there is a meeting between the birth family, caseworker, and the supervisor. This meeting facilitates the child's best care plan. On-going Child and Family Team meetings will occur at least quarterly and continues throughout the life of the case. The agency utilizes the Integrated Assessment Program as outlined by the Department. This allows foster parents to have better information about the child being placed in their home which helps them better meet that child's individual needs. This assessment process looks at the medical, emotional/behavioral, social, educational and developmental aspects of the child and family. Foster parents will be provided all information that is pertinent to the health and well-being of the child that is permitted in accordance with confidentiality laws.

- 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 the child is determined to be at imminent risk of harm.**

Caseworkers notify foster parents of changes in the service plan/permanency goal during monthly visits or via email or phone calls. Each worker's schedule is available to staff so if a foster parent becomes confused about a hearing date or time, the information can be obtained by anyone in the office quickly.

A clinical staffing will be held with the caseworker and the supervisor prior to the decision to move a child from a foster home.

Foster parents will be given a 14 day notice from the agency and the agency will be given 14-day notice from the foster parent regarding the movement of a child from a placement. Foster parents will be trained on this procedure during the initial licensing process. Foster parents will be advised of the exceptions to this rule such as court orders and imminent risk. Foster parents and agency staff will sign, prior to licensure, YSB's Family Agency Agreement acknowledging this has been discussed and explained.

Foster parents will be given an Appeal Brochure to instruct the foster family on how they can appeal the move of a child from placement. Foster parents will be given instruction on how to utilize the appeal process.

**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 hearings, 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.**

Foster parents are encouraged to attend court hearings and other such meetings to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the juvenile justice system. Foster parents will be informed of court dates, location of court, and the presiding judge via correspondence from the caseworker or foster care supervisor, as the information is made available. If the foster parent is unable to attend court, the caseworker will notify the foster parent of the next court date, type of hearing and any concerns that arose during the hearing. Peer file review specifically checks files for proof of written correspondence with foster parents regarding all court hearings. Any problems will be referred to the foster care supervisor.

The caseworkers will document in a case note that they have informed the foster parent of the court date, ACR, staffing, IEP, or other meeting regarding the child.

**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 if that placement is consistent with the best interest of the child and other children in the foster parent's home.**

YSB utilizes its computer database to check past placement history for any child in need of placement. If the child was previously placed under the agency's supervision, all efforts will be made to place the child with his/her previous foster parents. The child's best interest, other children currently in placement at the foster home, and current license capacity will be determining factors in the decision. DCFS will be asked to check their computer system for prior agency involvement and placement information. YSB will check the computer database for prior involvement and placement information. The licensing worker and foster care supervisor will contact the foster parent to discuss the placement option.

**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.**

YSB has a policy and procedure for foster parent grievance of foster parent law and for internal appeals. YSB provides foster parents with the step by step procedure for how to grieve a violation of foster parent law. The internal appeals procedure provides the steps to take when a foster parent disagrees with a decision concerning a foster child. Both policies prohibit retaliation by any staff member toward the foster parent. Foster parents are trained on both these policies prior to licensure and are encouraged to contact the licensing worker or foster care supervisor to discuss any unresolved issues. Foster parents are given the Service Appeal Brochure on external DCFS appeals whenever a critical decision is made that affects the child placed with them. DCFS discusses their appeal process at every Administrative Case Review.

**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. [20 ILCS 520/1-15].**

Our agency encourages foster parents to notify the appropriate sources if misconduct is suspected. During the initial licensing process and upon receipt of this Plan, foster parents are given the phone number for the Office of Advocacy, the Child Abuse Hotline, and the Office of the Inspector General. These same numbers are reviewed with the licensing representative at an in-person visit.

**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 about the child with other members of the child welfare team.**

Foster parents are encouraged at all times to contact their licensing representative or caseworker with questions or concerns about the foster children in their home. Supervisors are encouraged to address these issues as well. A 24 hour on-call phone system is available to foster parents at all times. Foster parents are invited to family meetings, staffings and periodic forums sponsored by YSB. Caseworkers maintain a minimum of one monthly in-home visit with all licensed foster families and two monthly home visits with unlicensed relatives. After a foster family receives their license, the licensing representative monitors the home at least once every six months.

PRIDE training is an important piece in assisting the foster parent to learn how to access the channels of communication. Foster parents are notified of upcoming module trainings through mailings and direct contact with their licensing representative.

Foster parents licensed through YSB are expected to adhere to the Family—Agency Agreement which they sign prior to licensure. Through monitoring visits from the licensing worker and monthly in-home contact by the caseworker, the responsibility to communicate and share information is reinforced and reviewed with the foster parents. Foster parents are expected to attend staffings, Administrative Case Reviews, court hearings, and meetings directly relating to the child in placement. During staffings foster parents are encouraged to provide pertinent information regarding the child's behavior, adjustment to the home, and additional needs of the child.

Upon initial placement foster parents will receive a Child Resource Folder. This folder is to keep all pertinent documentation including but not limited to medical, school and personal information about the child. A cover sheet listing all required information to keep will be in the folder. The folder is to follow the child through placement. Foster parents are encouraged to keep notes of progress, activities and changes on the child.

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

Caseworkers are trained on Confidentiality by Human Resources when they are hired. Foster parents are initially educated on Confidentiality laws in the Foster/Adopt PRIDE Pre-Service Training. Any additional training needs on Confidentiality is assessed on a case by case basis and is available to any foster parent upon request.

Foster parents are provided a copy of Confidentiality laws and regulations prior to licensure and receive updates as needed. A YSB Statement of Confidentiality agreement is signed prior to licensure and upon each renewal. If it appears that confidentiality has been violated, a licensing investigation can ensue.

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

Foster parents are encouraged to be advocates for the child placed in their home at staffings, ACR's, CIPP's, case conferences, and court hearings.

YSB's Solutions Counseling Program is available by referral from the caseworker to provide in home counseling for children in care to help stabilize a placement. Foster parents are strongly encouraged to be active participants in the child's counseling, including taking him/her to counseling appointments and meeting with the therapist once per month or as needed. Foster parents are an important part of a child's progress in counseling as they observe if the child is making progress, identify possible triggers and evaluate coping skills.

Educational Advocacy Training is required only upon renewal of a foster home license. Foster parents are encouraged to take Educational Advocacy if they receive placement of a child that has an IEP.

At the time of licensure, all foster parents are given information on who the Educational Advisor is in their respected area from DCFS.

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

Foster parents are trained initially through the Foster/Adopt PRIDE Pre-service training and on an ongoing basis to treat children in their care with dignity, respect and consideration. Foster parents sign pre-licensing forms including the Religious Faith/Cultural Background form, Mandated Reporter form, Acknowledgement of Understanding Concerning Prohibition of Corporal Punishment and/or Verbal Abuse, Threats, or Derogatory Remarks, and the Family—Agency Agreement.

Children are encouraged during counseling and at home visits to discuss any concerns with their treatment while in foster care. Caseworkers are responsible for monitoring the way children are treated in the foster home. Foster parents are trained to never speak in a negative manner about the biological family members. YSB staff will at all times model dignity, respect and consideration during their contact with the foster parents and foster children.

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

Foster parents initially fill out a Tolerance Behavior Checklist to acknowledge behaviors they may or may not be comfortable with. YSB completes the CFS-506-I, Initial Foster Home Licensing Assessment with foster parents during the initial licensing process. This identifies strengths of the foster parents and is used to place children with families that can best meet their needs.

Placement decisions will be made as a team by the foster parent, the licensing worker, the caseworker and the licensing supervisor. A foster parent's strengths will be considered when making placements. YSB believes that placing a child in proximity to their community of origin and with a family that has the ability to meet the child's needs is crucial to the child's development. Foster parents are randomly surveyed by phone monthly by clerical staff to rate the following components of the foster care program: training, payment, communication/information, caseworker visits, and licensing. Foster parent training needs are identified based on the foster family's strengths and weaknesses as identified during semi-annual monitoring visits and as training needs arise. The Aurora office offers 3-4 trainings every six months. The Ottawa office holds one or two every six months. Attempts to hold trainings in Rockford have been unsuccessful because the building is not accessible after 6 p.m.

We reassess the support needs of the foster parents on a continuous basis. During the four year licensing period the licensing team periodically evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the foster parent. The CFS-506-R Foster Home Renewal Licensing Assessment is completed prior to renewal. In depth discussions take place with foster parents that address training they have attended, what they have learned, and how the training has helped them in their ability to care for children in foster care. It also addresses placements the foster parent has had and how they would like to be utilized in the future and what behaviors they are equipped to manage.

The licensing worker keeps an updated list of foster families that briefly outlines strengths and weaknesses, needs of child, how many children are residing in the home and their needs. This will be utilized in making placement decisions.

Respite Foster Care, SASS Support teams, and SOC Services will be provided as needed for foster parents. This will aid the foster parents in preventing emotional fatigue.

**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 are notified about opportunities to join the Illinois Foster Parent Association through the DCFS newsletter. Foster parents have been encouraged in the past to attend support groups. Unfortunately, they have been unsuccessful.

YSB offers foster parent support groups, foster parent "buddies", monthly training opportunities, and an annual Christmas party to promote positive relationships with its foster and adoptive parents. The Glen Ellyn office offers foster parent buddies where they hook newly licensed foster parents up with experienced foster parents for added support. One goal for next year is to initiate a foster parent support group that would meet quarterly. The meeting location would rotate each quarter to allow as many foster parents as wanted to attend the meetings.

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

Foster parents are expected to fulfill the DCFS training requirements as outlined in the Foster Parent Training Policy. Foster parents are expected to attend training's provided at the agency or in the community that directly relate to the child they foster.

Foster parents participate in a monthly phone survey that asks about training needs or suggestions. Supervisors may review the survey results each month on line so they can problem solve and address any training needs that a foster parent may have.

Training is discussed with foster parents at the semi-annual monitoring visit and they are encouraged to participate in trainings which they would find beneficial. YSB sends each foster parent detailed notification of all trainings which includes course description, credit hours, location, date and time of each class.

**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 preventive strategies fail and placement disruptions occur.**

If preventative strategies fail for foster children and family members, YSB will provide the necessary support services for the child and foster family.

As members of the team, foster parents help identify placement problems and cooperate with services such as SASS or CARES and Systems of Care (SOC). Their cooperation with therapists is necessary for the successful development of a positive placement experience. During monthly home visits, the caseworkers discuss any new or ongoing issues that are occurring in the home and affecting the stability of the placement. Between visits the foster parents are encouraged to notify the caseworker as soon as possible of any developing issues so that they can be addressed in a timely manner, optimally before escalation occurs.

The caseworker and supervisor identify children who are felt to be at-risk for multiple placement disruption. These children are referred to System of Care prior to moving to the next home.

Foster parents are responsible to share information with the child's caseworker to aid in minimizing placement disruptions. Foster parents are responsible to allow the agency every avenue possible to maintain a placement and prevent the child from moving to a more restrictive living arrangement, if there is not imminent risk to the child or other children in the foster home. Foster parents are trained on the purpose and availability of stabilization service through Systems of Care (SOC) at initial licensure and individually on an as needed basis.

Foster parents can call YSB's designated 24 hour on-call number for their geographical area for support as needed. Staff is available via telephone or in person, depending on the need of the family.

Caseworkers are responsible for continual assessment regarding the stability of a placement. Any problems with a placement that may cause eventual disruption are to be reported by the caseworker to the program supervisor and the licensing worker. Upon an assessment of current issues, a behavior modification plan is put in place. In the event of recurrent instability, the case will be staffed with the supervisor at a minimum of bi-weekly.

Systems of Care (SOC) services are available for foster families providing relative foster care and traditional foster care. SOC is now available for a limited amount of time with specialized placements.

The Integrated Assessment Program allows for a solid foundation at the beginning of a case to provide individualized appropriate services to the children and families we serve.

YSB staff can assist foster families in accessing SOC services, respite, counseling, SASS Services and other needed services to prevent a disrupted placement. Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) is available for a child or youth who has service needs beyond the capability of existing foster care contracts and cannot be met by Systems of Care (SOC) services. The caseworker or supervisor will request these services when they feel additional supports, services or placement types are needed. Foster parents are an integral part of the CIPP process.

**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.**

YSB strives to offer any resources to its foster parents that can help with the day to day stress of foster parenting. YSB offers respite to foster parents to help when a break is needed to maintain the physical and mental health of the foster family.

Foster parents are responsible to utilize agency services and their support network in any way possible including respite to help minimize stress. It is the foster parent's responsibility to communicate respite needs in a timely fashion. YSB will add a respite plan sheet to the Child Resource Folder in the next year. Policy and procedure regarding respite is reviewed with the foster parents during the initial licensing process.

Training opportunities for helping foster families acknowledge and minimize stressful situations are provided during Foster/Adopt PRIDE (Pre-service) training and made available to foster parents on an ongoing basis. YSB foster parents are encouraged to attend the DCFS sponsored conferences. YSB will assist with respite care when the foster parents wish to attend a conference or training on foster care, during a family emergency or when the foster parent needs a break.

Foster parents are informed of the short term voluntary hold policy, which allows any home at any time to take a break for a period of time they determine. While on hold a foster family will not be called for placement until they determine the hold is over. It is the philosophy and practice of the program not to put pressure on a foster home to do more than they feel is right for their family.

The staff of the foster care program is trained to understand the stress that can be caused to a foster family and will make every effort to recognize when support is needed for any member of the family. YSB will provide six counseling sessions with a therapist from the Solutions Counseling Program if needed or requested by the foster family.

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

Foster parents are informed of events/activities that acknowledge and support foster parents and are encouraged to participate. YSB provides resources for foster families facing personal crisis. In appreciation of foster parent dedication, YSB sent thank you cards with a magnet to all foster parents during foster parent appreciation month.

The foster care recruitment and retention committee is headed by the licensing supervisor. The licensing staff meets once a month, alternating offices.

Foster parents are encouraged to actively participate in the recruitment of other foster families. Foster parents may request business cards, supplied by the agency, to aid in the recruitment of other foster homes.

Foster parents are encouraged to participate in news releases, broadcasts, and news articles. YSB has arranged for local radio interviews, newspaper articles about positive foster parenting and the need for more foster parents. YSB holds informational meetings for the public to inform them about the need for foster parents. Foster parents, approved foster children, and agency staff participate in media coverage.

**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 and staff are trained to understand the roles, rights, and responsibilities of the child welfare team during the licensing process. The PRIDE curriculum is designed to train foster parents on the importance of being a member of a professional team. Another benefit of becoming a licensed home is being informed of changes to their rights and responsibilities through the DCFS newsletter and correspondence with the licensing staff. Foster parents and licensing staff sign the "Family—Agency Agreement" acknowledging their responsibilities as a member of the foster care team.

Foster parents are encouraged to follow the chain of command with any concerns or questions. One of the questions on the foster parent survey measures their knowledge of what to do if they have a problem or complaint. They are encouraged to contact agency staff including the Executive Director, Frank Vonch, 815.431.3026 or via email [frankv@ysbiv.org](mailto:frankv@ysbiv.org) with any issues they may have.

**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 will be trained during the Foster/Adopt PRIDE Pre-service Training on their responsibility to serve as a mandated reporter. Ongoing training including supervision plans and mandated reporter status is made available to foster parents. Foster parents must sign the Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status prior to licensure and upon renewal of their foster home license. Mandated Reporter Training is available online through DCFS. YSB also provides foster parents with the Mandated Reporter Training Manual in a paper copy for those who do not have access to a computer and internet or who are not comfortable completing online training.

The licensing worker reviews making abuse and neglect calls, Licensing Complaint Investigations, and Child Abuse and Neglect allegations with the foster parents. YSB's Licensing Complaint Protocol is provided at initial licensure. YSB follows DCFS policy and procedure during an investigation.

**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 are trained in PRIDE to know the importance of participating in case planning. The policy is distributed to foster parents at initial licensure. Foster parents are encouraged by their caseworker to participate in ACR's, court hearings, and other staffings on behalf of a child in their care.

YSB's written policy and procedure requires the inclusion of foster parents in case planning. Caseworkers will notify foster parents prior to ACR's, court hearings, and any other meetings and encourage their involvement. It is the practice of the foster care program to train staff on the importance of involving foster parents in case planning.

Caseworkers discuss at their monthly home visits the importance of foster parent participation in court, ACR's, and other staffings or meetings that relate to the child. Caseworkers advise foster parents that if they cannot be present at a court hearing, ACR, or other meeting that their input can be given via phone call, email, or written report from the foster parent to be shared. It is the foster parent's responsibility to be involved in their child's service plan.

**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 copies of YSB's Foster Care Internal Appeal Policy and Foster Care Law Grievance Policy prior to licensure. They are trained on both policies and the rights of foster parents are spelled out. Foster parents are encouraged to utilize these policies if a problem occurs.

The DCFS Service Appeal Process is available to all foster parents and the process is explained in PRIDE training. The Appeal Brochure is mailed out or delivered to families with the Annual Implementation Plan upon request. If a foster parent decides to file an appeal, YSB supplies the foster parents with an additional copy of the brochure. The licensing worker and caseworker will assist a foster parent on how to proceed with an internal or external appeal.

The Office of the Inspector General addresses complaints concerning Illinois child welfare services. Brochures from the Office of the Inspector General are provided and made available to foster parents in the Foster Parent Handbook that they receive in PRIDE.

**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 are expected to maintain up to date records on the children in their care including but not limited to medication logs, behavior logs, visiting records, and clothing and allowance logs. These forms are reviewed by the caseworker at the monthly home visit.

Foster parents are trained during PRIDE regarding record keeping and its importance. The licensing worker will review records during monitoring visits. It is the responsibility of the foster parent to complete a medication log every month on each child in their home that is taking

prescription medication. This responsibility is covered on the monthly foster parent phone questionnaire.

**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 parent's home.**

Foster parents are encouraged to attend any and all meetings directly related to the child to share information with other members of the Foster Care Team. Foster parents shall thoroughly acquaint themselves with members of the Team to discuss progress and concerns with the child.

Foster parents are given a Child Resource Folder when the child comes into care. The folder is to keep all pertinent medical, school and other personal information about the child. This folder is kept with the child if he/she moves from the foster home. If a child moves from a foster home, the caseworker will have a checklist of items that need to accompany the child to their new placement, whether it is return home to birth parents, move to another foster home or another facility type. This checklist consists of all personal items of the child, the Child Resource Folder and medications.

Foster parents are encouraged to keep notes about the child's progress and pertinent changes. Foster parents shall complete behavior and medication logs monthly on the child(ren). Foster parents are expected to turn in all required documentation on a monthly basis including but not limited to behavior and medication logs, clothing and allowance forms, visiting records, and medical information. This information will help the foster parent inform caseworkers, medical providers, school personnel and other providers involved with the child identify any abnormalities that occur in the child's daily routine.

The agency strongly encourages pre-placement visits, as well as pre-placement telephone contact between caregivers. If at all possible, potential caregivers meet with previous caregivers and discuss the child and their specific behaviors. When this type of communication is not possible or beneficial, the child welfare team works together to promote the successful transfer of information to the new family.

**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 [20 ILCS 520/1-20].**

Foster parents will be trained in the area of cultural sensitivity through the Foster/Adopt PRIDE training. The agency will make available and encourage foster parents to attend training regarding multi-cultural issues on an ongoing basis. Internal and external resources will be made accessible or available to foster parents in supporting cultural sensitivity. Foster parents are responsible to be supportive of a child's culture, ethnic background, and religion. It is the foster parent's responsibility to ask the licensing worker or caseworker for information about a culture, religion, or race in order to support a child's ties with his or her cultural background. Many of the local foster parents have cross-cultural placement expertise and are used as reference/support people for new foster families.

