

YOUTH SERVICE BUREAU
OF
ILLINOIS VALLEY

FOSTER PARENT LAW 2021
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Acknowledgments

We want to thank the 2021 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.

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**YOUTH SERVICE BUREAU OF ILLINOIS VALLEY
FOSTER CARE PROGRAM
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2021**

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ACRONYMS

Administrative case review (ACR) means a review of permanency planning open to the participation of the parents of the child, conducted by a person who is not responsible for the case management of, or the delivery of services to, either the child or the parents who are the subjects of the review. The administrative case review is also open to the participation of other professionals involved in assessing or treating the child, any legal representative of the parent or child, and the foster parents as specified in this Part.

A **child and family team meeting (CFTM)** is a gathering of family members, fictive kin, friends, and other invested stakeholders who join together to strengthen a family and provide a protection and care plan for the child to achieve child safety, permanency and well-being.

Screening Assessment and Support Services (SASS) is an intensive mental health program designed to provide crisis stabilization, pre-admission screening, assessment, and treatment of any child who may be at risk of psychiatric hospitalization and who is eligible for public funding. Services are child-centered, family-focused, community-based, and culturally competent, and occurring in the least-restrictive setting, and include multi-systems.

Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) is a short-term placement stabilization program that provides services to children in foster care. IPS is expected to provide a mix of formal and informal supports to families to promote placement stability. As such, each service array is flexible, individualized and tailored to the needs of the child and family. A typical service array might include individual and family therapy, respite, family support, crisis intervention, recreation supplies, tutoring, school advocacy, and psychosocial education.

Department of Child and Family Services – DCFS

Youth Service Bureau – YSB

Parent Resource for Information, Development and Education – PRIDE Training

Virtual Training Center – VTC

**YOUTH SERVICE BUREAU OF ILLINOIS VALLEY
2021 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 (YSB) recognize that foster parents are not only valuable resources, but a fundamental part of the child welfare team. YSB staff must treat all foster parents (licensed and unlicensed) with dignity and respect through timely responses, respectful interactions, and displaying professionalism. Accountability for this is held through monthly supervision with the case worker's supervisor and/or observation of the worker by the supervisor at various meetings that include the foster parent. If foster parents have any further issues, the foster parents can contact the licensing worker or case worker's supervisor.

YSB licensing workers ensure that our foster parents are knowledgeable about their rights by providing foster parents with a copy of YSB's current Implementation Plan and a copy of the YSB Client Rights. They will also be provided the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) Service Appeal Brochure and DCFS Client Rights, and they will be apprised of changes in DCFS policies.

The agency utilizes several methods of eliciting feedback regarding the foster parent's interactions with staff and what changes and/or improvements can be made to the foster care program. These include surveys conducted by licensing staff, inquiries by licensing workers at monitoring visits, one-on-one conversations, and written surveys provided to foster parents once a year while drafting the upcoming Implementation Plan. Additionally, every YSB office has an anonymous suggestion box that foster parents may utilize to provide feedback. Both positive and negative feedback is forwarded to the supervisor assigned to the case and/or to the Program Director. After investigating complaints or negative feedback, 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 also 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 case workers do. 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 Annual Case Reviews (ACR), court hearings, and Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM).

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 Parent Resource for Information, Development and Education (PRIDE) 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 visits, monthly case worker visits, ACRs, and/or counseling sessions. This allows us to mutually identify training needs for individual families and also trends across the agency.

YSB encourages foster parents to continue their education and improve their skills by attending training sessions on a regular basis. Currently, all trainings are done online due to the Covid-19 virus. As a result, YSB urges all foster parents to use the online Virtual Training Center (VTC) resource that is provided by DCFS. The VTC 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.

Foster parents are professional members of the child welfare team. We are increasing our focus on the skills and education they contribute to the agency as a whole. YSB recognizes the importance and benefits of continuing training, therefore we continue to assess ways to offer training topics that are relevant to caring for our youth in care. For example, YSB offers co-training that was implemented in 2016 after a number of foster parents requested assistance with the hair and skin care of children with different ethnic backgrounds. This training is provided on an as-needed basis.

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. All staff have assigned email addresses and office phone numbers where they can be contacted by their clients and providers. If a crisis does arise, foster parents have the assurance of knowing that YSB staff is available to help them through all emergency situations during regular hours and after hours.

YSB understands that most emergencies occur after business hours, 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 an extra layer 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 number 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 the child's medical history, behavioral or mental health concerns, agency information, disbursement forms for clothing and allowance funds, family and sibling visitation information, emergency contact information, a section for foster parents to document significant events, medication logs, and educational records.

- 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 by YSB according to the rates set by DCFS for both traditional and specialized care. Non-licensed relative homes are also reimbursed by YSB. 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. The YSB fiscal department 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 YSB payment error, the licensing worker will assist the foster parent in contacting the YSB 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. YSB case workers utilize the child portion of the DCFS Integrated Assessment to develop and document services that are or will be provided to the child and/or his or her foster family. YSB case workers meet at least monthly with foster parents to get feedback about the child and child's services. When a child is moved to a new foster home, the foster parents receives a copy of the child's portion of the service plan. The child's portion of the service plan includes the needs of the child, current services, and visitation with the birth family. Foster parents are encouraged and are invited, if clinically appropriate, 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 and at ACRs. 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 five 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. In addition, YSB understands the importance of keeping siblings connected as much as possible, therefore foster parents are encouraged to be a part of sibling visitation. YSB believes that sibling visitation should occur in a home or community setting and asks that foster parents who are fostering siblings to develop a relationship and facilitate sibling visitation. Case workers are available to assist in this development.

- 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.

YSB strictly follows the DCFS guidelines found in Rules 383 – Licensing Compliance Monitoring, Complaints and Enforcement – governing licensing investigations and enforcement of the DCFS 402 Licensing Standards of Foster Family Homes. 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. Foster parents will be provided information for the exact standard that they are being investigated. During the initial contact, the licensing representative will advise the foster parent of their right to have an advocate present. 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 along with any necessary corrective plan. They are also informed of their right to a supervisory review. 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. 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. Foster parents have 10 days from the date of the letter to initiate an appeal or supervisory review.

If a foster parent appeals the substantiated violation 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 informed of their right to receive additional and necessary information relevant to the care of the child during their initial PRIDE training. 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 team meetings, and 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.

Upon a child being placed in the foster home, case workers continue to provide information to foster families during home visits and phone calls. Home visits by the case worker are conducted weekly during 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. 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 five 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, supervision, Child and Family Team Meetings, and yearly surveys.

- 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 complete the YSB Child Profile form. This form is reviewed and approved by the case worker's supervisor before it is given to the licensing supervisor. 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. Case worker 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, IEPs, 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. For ACRs and team meetings there will be a 14 day notice; for CFTMs and IEPs there will be a five day notice. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring proper communication between case managers and foster parents, which is discussed during monthly supervision and review of case notes.

In the rare instance, due to safety reasons, a foster parent and biological parent cannot attend the same meeting in person, YSB staff will develop a plan for foster parents to contribute to the decision-making process. Examples of ways to include the foster parent are letters from the foster parents that are shared at the meeting, participation by phone, or holding multiple CFTMs. YSB realizes that foster parents may not be available 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 and aware of any decisions made that affect the child in their care as these decisions can also affect the foster parent.

Approximately one to two 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 visit, licensing workers remind foster families of the importance of attending court hearings. Case workers also provide dates/times of court hearings and any scheduled CFTMs via phone calls, email, and home visits. 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 also review foster parent's responsibilities while completing 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 what is in the best interests of the children living in the home. Foster parents must assess their own abilities. Foster parents need to look at their own strengths, weakness, and support systems. YSB believes it is important to protect the rights of the child and of the child's family, therefore information that is not essential in providing care for the child is never to be shared with the foster family. With

that said, the foster parent will be given as much information regarding the child as is known and able to be shared. To accomplish this goal, all case workers are required to complete the YSB Child Profile form when requesting placement. 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/payment authorization form, a copy of the child's portion of the service plan, the reason the child came into care, a visit schedule, 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.

YSB recognizes that all placement disruptions are detrimental for children in care, therefore stabilizing placement is a top priority. Case workers, licensing workers, supervisors, therapists, and other professionals make every effort to prevent disruptions in placement. YSB understands that placement disruptions will occur, therefore at licensure foster parents are provided with a copy of the DCFS Service Appeal Brochure, which outlines their rights regarding an appeal of change of placement. The DCFS Service Appeal Brochure is also provided by many ACR reviewers at biannual meetings.

Except under court order or 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 151-B Notice of Change of Placement, 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. A request to appeal the decision to have a child moved from the foster parent's home is to be made within five days of receiving the notice. Per DCFS policy, foster parents cannot appeal the

removal if the child was removed due to a court order or sibling consolidation. Foster parents must follow the steps on the CFS 151-B Notice of Change of Placement to make a formal request to appeal. 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 will accept a 14-day notice in writing or verbally. YSB works with children that have experienced trauma, therefore the 14-day notice allows for YSB to locate a home to have at least a minimum of one pre-placement visit prior to placement in the new foster home.

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. Since YSB covers numerous court systems, the case worker will help the foster parent understand their roles and responsibilities in court. 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. Supervisors ensure that case workers are notifying and encouraging foster parents to attend upcoming court dates through discussions, reviewing of case notes, and regular supervision. 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 or fictive kin, 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 utilize the YSB home.

For specialized placements, the licensing 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 access to 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 ACR.

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 the licensing supervisor and request informal reviews.

Foster parents have the right to grieve any disagreement with YSB's implementation of Foster Parent Law. Foster parents are encouraged 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 Improvement 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, a YSB staff member can be contacted. 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 know 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. YSB provides foster parents with a list of resources and phone numbers in the packet of policies at the time of licensure. These phone numbers include but are not limited to:

- Statewide numbers such as the Inspector General's Office, the Advocacy Office, and the Foster Parent Hotline.
- Local numbers: names and phone numbers for the YSB caseworker, supervisor and program director, SASS services, and after hours/emergency number.

Additionally, DCFS Statewide contact information is included each quarter in the DCFS Foster Parent Newsletter.

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.

Communication is first introduced to foster parents during PRIDE training classes. Licensing workers further discuss and encourage open communication and sharing of information while completing the home study and reviewing the compliance record. 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 their case worker's phone number and email address, and the agency 24 hour on-call number. During home visits and semi-annual monitoring visits, foster parents are asked to share any feedback they may have about their placement. Foster parents are also asked about their understanding of the responsibilities of foster care in their home. Foster parents are encouraged to maintain communication between visits through phone calls, text messages, and emails (that hold non-confidential information). If the agency or foster parents feel they are struggling in this area, the licensing worker will go with the case worker on a home visit to address the issue. The licensing staff will also recommend that the foster parent take the DCFS training "Working as a Professional Team Member." Foster parents are given surveys and yearly questionnaires to elicit feedback and to share information about the agency and its staff.

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 Foster Family Home License Compliance Record and the Foster Family/Agency Agreement, and at every monitoring visit. Foster parents are also given a

copy of the 402 Foster Family Home Licensing Standards, Foster Parent Law, Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan, and The Child Care Act of 1969 when they are licensed. To ensure every foster parent understands, they will sign an agreement that they have received these forms. Foster parents are encouraged to read the material in-depth. When DCFS or YSB make updates concerning confidentiality, licensing workers are responsible for providing that information to all foster parents.

YSB understands that navigating the rules of confidentiality can be difficult. Foster parents should request additional training or clarification if necessary to assist them in understanding the importance of confidentiality of our children and their families. Additionally, the requirement for confidentiality is reviewed with the foster parents on an ongoing basis by the case worker and licensing worker. When a foster parent is unsure of what information can be shared, foster parents are encouraged to speak with the child's case worker before releasing the information. The foster parent can be referred to the Virtual Training Center (VTC) for specific training on social media/confidentiality.

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 - Confidentiality of Personal Information of Persons Served by the Department of Children and Family Services - and HIPPA guidelines for sharing medical and mental health information. Foster parents are informed that not all information regarding biological parents and/or siblings 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 required to participate in Educational Advocacy training, currently provided online, for their first renewal. DCFS policy only requires that one foster parent attends Educational Advocacy within the first 4 years of licensure. YSB believes the training is beneficial for both foster parents because both foster parents share responsibility in advocating for foster children in their care. At each monitoring visit, licensing workers discuss training requirements, including the Educational Advocacy training. 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. (Foster parents encouraged to take it sooner if child has special needs or an IEP.)

YSB does not have specific court training, therefore it is the responsibility of the case workers to provide ongoing instruction to foster parents about the court process. Also, foster parents are informed (via the Foster Parent/Agency Agreement) of the agency's commitment to providing a lawyer and/or seeking 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 to accommodate the foster parent's schedule to ensure their participation. Foster parents should also be actively involved in all aspects of their foster child's life, including but not limited to therapy appointments, school, and medical/dental appointments.

Finally, foster parents are provided with a copy of their Service Appeal brochure at licensure, and are required to sign the YBS Client's Rights and 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://www2.illinois.gov/dcfs/aboutus/notices/Documents/Rules_337.pdf#search=part%20337

YSB's appeal process can be found on their website at (under public policy, client grievance policy):

http://www.ysbiv.org/about/internet_privacy.aspx

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 parent's care and the 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. YSB staff are expected to model dignity and respect by returning calls within 24 hours, accommodating the foster parent's schedule, arriving on time to scheduled appointments, and displaying respectful communication. PRIDE training covers this topic for foster parents as well as reviewed with foster parents by licensing staff during initial licensure and semi-annual monitoring. Foster parents are reminded that the Department forbids corporal punishment, verbal abuse, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family. If a foster parent does not follow this licensing standard, they may be in violation of the licensing standards and may be subject to a corrective plan. Foster parents are also encouraged to

participate in shared parenting between biological parents and their child(ren) if appropriate.

Licensing workers discuss the importance and requirement of foster parents to protect all children from neglect and abuse and to treat all children in the home equitably. YSB defines equitably as treating children fairly, which is different from treating children equally or the same. This means that foster parents should meet each of their child's needs individually. 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 Family Home Licensing 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 alone, 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 their 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.
 - Referencing or speaking about the child(ren) or child(ren)'s biological family in a respectful manner; support discussions from the child about their family with encouragement and sensitivity.
 - Allowing and encouraging the child(ren) to participate in extra-curricular activities (and providing transportation to and from activities or making arrangements for transportation).
 - Being 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.
 - Providing an open and welcoming environment for the child on a daily basis.
- 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.

During the licensing process, foster home applicants and the licensing worker complete a checklist of behaviors commonly seen in foster children to determine strengths and

weaknesses. When a weakness is identified, 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 with both 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 Placement Stabilization (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 visits) 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 case worker, supervisor, and licensing staff. In either situation, the licensing worker will inform the case worker of a family who is interested in fostering a youth in care needing a placement. The case worker will, in turn, contact the foster home to give them further information so the family can make an informed decision.

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. The licensing staff has developed a support group directory to give to the case workers so they can relay the information to foster parents. YSB believes that foster parents attending in-class PRIDE is a great way to build a network of support. During initial licensure, licensing workers will encourage foster parents to get to know the other foster parents in PRIDE.

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. YSB acknowledges that not every family has those resources, therefore licensing workers can arrange for mentoring with experienced foster parents. Staff can also provide foster parents with a list of support groups, including, but not limited to:

- Pecatonica – New Life Bible Church – Fosters United Family Support Group
- South Barrington – Willow Creek Community Church – foster and adoptive programs and resources
- Wheaton – College Church – DuPage County DCFS Foster Parent Support Group
- Online – Family Matters Information and Parent Training Center – supporting children with disabilities

In addition to the 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. 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 parent’s ongoing individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.

During licensure, foster parents review a tolerance checklist with licensing staff to determine what trainings may be needed. 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 visit, 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 are required to take 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.

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, to recognize 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 worker staff provide all known information about the child so that foster parents can make 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 parents 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. Licensing workers also recommend foster parents to visit <http://empoweredtoconnect.org/> and to read *The Connected Child* by Dr. Karyn Purvis to have greater understanding of the impact of trauma on relationships. During monthly home visits and semi-annual monitoring visits, 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. YSB also provides one-on-one training to provide foster parents with the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) model to minimize placement disruptions.

Individual counseling, mentor programs, respite, and Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) 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, CFTMs, and ACRs will also review supportive services. 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. As added support, specialized youth receive 15 hours per month of respite care. While YSB encourages specialized families to use friends or family known to the youth, YSB will assist in locating our licensed families to provide respite. A copy of the specialized youth respite policy is given to all specialized foster parents but can also be requested at any time.

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 payment 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 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. The Behavior Support and Management training resumed in 2018, with a focus on trauma informed care and de-escalation techniques (therapeutic crisis interventions). The training is designed to help foster parents understand the trauma experienced by the children in their care and the impact it may have on their emotions and behaviors, as well as ways to help the child cope with this trauma. 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.

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 seek guidance within local support groups. All staff, including licensing workers, case workers, and counselors, make themselves available for talking through issues, brainstorming solutions, and simply lending a sympathetic ear.

The option of a “voluntary hold” is shared with foster families during the licensure process and discussed at monitoring visits. YSB permits for voluntary breaks from fostering in two ways:

- Written or verbal notification to the agency of the family’s wishes to be “on hold,” which will result in the family not being contacted for placements. Note:

families must maintain licensing standards including training requirements and allow 6-month monitoring visits to occur.

- Inactive Status requires families to work with YSB's licensing representative to complete necessary forms that are submitted to DCFS. Inactive Status should only be requested for a short-term basis, 6 months or less. In most cases, YSB will only approve requests that are based on life changing events. Note: families must maintain licensing standards but 6-month monitoring visits will not occur.

Foster families are encouraged to reengage in fostering after the family feels refreshed and ready for the fostering experience again. 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.

Finally, foster parents are educated about respite during their licensure process (different programs for traditional and specialized homes) and are 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.

YSB recognizes that foster parents are doing the daily work of caring for our youth, therefore foster parent are YSB's best resource for sharing the benefits and successes of fostering. Foster parents are encouraged to be advocates for the agency and their foster children through participation in the yearly revision of the Implementation Plan, through recruitment events or referrals, and through volunteer activities. YSB's website, agency Facebook, and updated mailings notify foster parents of these opportunities.

In the past, four foster families invited YSB licensing workers to promote the foster experience at their local church. A long-time crisis foster parent of YSB assisted YSB's community presenter and a licensing worker on a local radio show to discuss the benefits of becoming a foster parent. YSB has held recruitment events at Lone Buffalo in Ottawa, Summer Splash in Rock Falls, Best 4th of July in Kids Korner in Streator, a blue ribbon campaign at Financial Plus and Handy Foods, and a coffee clutch in Woodstock. Future events will be held when Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

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. Every time a foster parent receives the Implementation Plan, it is explained that the foster parent shares the responsibility of ensuring this plan reflects their actual work as a part of the child welfare team. This also helps ensure that foster parents have their voices heard. 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 Foster Family Home Licensing Standards, Foster Parent Law, and Child Care Act of 1969. After licensure, foster parents continue to be educated and reminded of their responsibilities during monthly home visits with caseworkers and semi-annual monitoring visits. 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. Additionally, foster parents are provided Virtual Training Center (VTC) instructions to access DCFS approved trainings online.

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 an opportunity to have their voice heard and to contribute to a child's service plan. It also allows them the chance 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 during one-on-one meetings. Foster parents are able to follow the chain of command all the way up to the YSB Executive Director if needed to resolve issues. Foster parents are also able to contact other members of management, such as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) 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 ninth 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 with each foster parent. Foster parents indicate their understanding of this responsibility by signing the Mandated Reporter Status form. It is important to know that the willful act of failing to report child abuse and neglect as a mandated reporter is a class A Misdemeanor for the first offense. Case workers also

reinforce the importance of being a mandated reporter and offer assistance to the foster parent. Case workers and licensing workers can help foster parents with each step in contacting the hotline, if requested. DCFS Mandated Reporter training is also available through the Virtual Training Center.

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 cooperates 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 standalone or in conjunction with a DCFS abuse/neglect investigation, licensing staff inform the foster parent with their right to have an advocate present.

- 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. Additionally, this information can be found in the PRIDE handbook.

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. This pamphlet is also provided to foster parents at all ACRs and if a child is removed from the home (given

the child has been placed in the home for more than 30 days). 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 then their immediate supervisor if the issue is not resolved. 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 the Quality Improvement Department and finally to the Executive Director. At any time during this process, the foster parent may contact the DCFS Advocacy Office. 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 and right to contact the Office of the Inspector General or the foster parent advocacy office 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 are expected to understand the importance of accurate and relevant records regarding a child's health history, family history, needs, and behaviors. The agency often receives feedback from foster parents 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 Foster Family Home License Compliance Record form, which is a 21-page summary of the 402 Foster Family Home Licensing Standards. A section of the 590 covers the importance of maintaining documentation, 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. Records to be maintained by the foster family include but not limited to:

- The name and date of birth of the child, the legal guardian of the child, religion of the child, and arrangements for education of the child;
- The name, address, and telephone number of the child's physician, guardian, and supervising agency;
- The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of person to contact in case of emergency, including the names of persons to whom the child may be released;
- Sibling and biological parent visitation forms if supervising visits;
- A record and/or receipts for distribution of allowance and clothing funds;
- The CFS 432 Consent for Out of State Travel or Extended Trips;
- Completed medical, dental, vision, hearing and other specialty appointments; immunizations the child has received; any physical problems, limitations, or allergies the child has; any current recommendations for special medical care; log of medication prescribed and given; and all medical-related consents;
- Copies of child's school records, i.e. report card, disciplinary notices, meeting notices, and Individualized Education Plan;
- Copies of evaluations completed (psychological, psychiatric, developmental, etc.)
- Records of completed foster parent training and other relevant 402 documentation;
- And a record of the emergency evacuation plan and quarterly rehearsals.

Foster Parent's responsibilities to the children they serve also include the guarantee that the foster child(ren) in their home receive annual physicals including updated immunizations as required by the state of Illinois, dentals, vision screenings, and hearing screenings. Well-being is an important part of meeting the basic needs of every child, therefore well-being is monitored by DCFS and YSB on a monthly basis. At every monitoring visit, foster parents are reminded of this responsibility and are given an opportunity for clarification.

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.

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.

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. 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.

During the initial meeting with potential foster parents, licensing workers discuss the family's willingness to take placement of children who are of a different race/cultural background. Licensing workers also share the importance of integrating a child's culture into the home by promoting culture through food, traditions, visiting museums, and/or attending community events. Incorporating the child's culture will help in supporting one's sense of self. If a family needs additional assistance, YSB staff will provide other tools and resources to help the family support a child's ties to their biological family and culture. Foster parents will also be educated on recognizing different ethnic and

cultural backgrounds in their PRIDE training course. 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.

YSB offers an African American Hair and Skin Care training that is facilitated by an experienced foster parent and a YSB staff member. This training is offered as needed. The facilitators are also available to come to a foster parent's home for individual consultation on how to care for African American hair and skin. 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 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.