



**Children's Home**  
Association of Illinois

**2022**

**Foster Parent Law**

**Implementation Plan**

## **Children's Home Association of Illinois (CHAIL)**

Section 1-15, Foster Parent Rights. A foster parent's rights which include, but are not limited to, the following:

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

Children's Home foster parents are treated with dignity, respect, and consideration as professional members of the child welfare team.

Each foster parent is a valued member of the Children's Home foster care team. Foster parents have unique and valued information regarding the child(ren) placed in their home and are encouraged to share their thoughts, opinions, and observations with the team. In turn CHAIL staff is committed to actively listening to our foster parents. This is communicated to our foster parents through timely return phone calls and emails. Staff is also considerate of the tone in which we use with foster parents. All of these actions are used to show respect to foster parents.

Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM) are a supportive place for foster parents to communicate their ideas, information, and concerns with the team. CFTM are regularly scheduled by the case worker on a quarterly basis. Foster parents are encouraged to ask questions and provide feedback during these meetings, and in turn are provided with updated information by the rest of the team members. CHAIL also conducts monthly family meetings in the foster home with the caseworker so that the youth and the case can be reviewed and discussed. The Children's Home Association of Illinois developed a checklist for the caseworker which includes pertinent information regarding the youth in care placed in the home and also information on each aspect of the case including dates for the next court hearing and administrative case reviews. This ensures that the foster parent is receiving all of the required and necessary information that the foster parent is entitled to as a member of the foster care team. This also allows the opportunity for the foster parents to have a voice and to be an integral part of the youth's treatment team. If at any point The foster parent does feel as though they are a part of the treatment team or that they are not being treated with respect the assigned licensing specialist for the foster home and/or the clinical coordinator of resources (licensing supervisor) can be requested by the foster parent to also attend the monthly family meeting. This allows licensing staff to be an active support and advocate for the foster parent. This also provides additional CHAIL staff to assess the dynamic between the foster parent and the caseworker which can then be reported back to foster care management.

Children's Home believes that foster parents' input is integral in developing short and long term goals for the foster children placed in their home. They are encouraged to take an active role as a professional team member. Therefore, foster parents are also invited to attend ACRs, Court, CIPPs, Pre-Placement staffing's, and Placement Review meetings. Foster parents are also invited to attend all Implementation Plan meetings, and

annual foster parent events. At any point of time during the placement of the youth in care the foster parent can request a meeting with all members of the case team to occur at a place and time that is most convenient to the foster parent's schedule. This meeting provides the foster parent(s) the opportunity to discuss the case, the youth in care placed in their home and also to convey and concerns or frustrations with any aspect of the case. Children's Home quality improvement department ensures that there is a foster parent survey distributed each year to solicit feedback regarding program services. The feedback from the foster parent survey is reviewed by management staff in order to ensure that foster parent rights are being upheld and implemented in the daily services provided to foster parents. In 2019 CHAIL's licensing team reviewed all past foster parent surveys to re-vamp the survey. CHAIL wanted to ensure that we are asking the "right" questions to garner feedback that we need in order to improve our service delivery to our foster parents. CHAIL quality improvement department also developed consent to survey form that is reviewed by the licensing specialist and the foster parent at the time of initial licensure. This form informs the foster parent that annual surveys are conducted and garners permission from the foster parent to be surveyed. It also allows the foster parent to specify the mode in which the survey is conducted. The foster parent is given the choice to be surveyed by phone, a paper copy through the mail with a return envelope provided, a link through their email address, or a link sent by text to their identified cell phone number. CHAIL wants to receive open and honest feedback from all foster parents to ensure that their rights and responsibilities are being upheld and that CHAIL staff is servicing the foster parents so that the foster parents are ensured to be an integral part of the foster care team.

In January of 2021 CHAIL started a monthly virtual support group for our foster parents called "Foster Parent Fellowship". All foster parents will be invited, both licensed and unlicensed relative foster homes. This group is facilitated by one staff member from foster care licensing. This hour long group provides our foster parents with a format to talk and share with one another. The foster parents introduce themselves and let everyone know how long they have been fostering and if they currently have any placements. Foster parents are provided the opportunity to ask questions about CHAIL or fostering. The staff member also provides an update with any new trainings, rules, changes, etc. The last time that CHAIL was able to provide an in person group was in early March 2020. In garnering feedback from our foster parents they are not yet comfortable meeting again in person.

Prior to covid, CHAIL hosted several annual events for foster parents. Foster parents were encouraged to attend the Foster Parent Law and Implementation Committee, the December Foster Parent Holiday Party, and the May Foster Parent Appreciation Picnic. There were also some events throughout the year where CHAIL takes the foster parents out to eat at local restaurants for a time for fellowship amongst the foster parents and to speak to the entire licensing team including the licensing supervisor. Foster parents enjoyed this time together and appreciate the opportunity to talk with licensing staff regarding any concerns they may have regarding The Children's Home. CHAIL hopes in the future to return to providing foster parents with in person events. Since covid CHAIL has worked to show our appreciation for foster parents in different ways such as stopping

by our parking lot on a Friday to pick up pizza for the family, which was done for foster parent appreciation month.

During the annual and semi-annual license monitor visits, feedback from each foster parent is solicited regarding their experience in foster care and as a member of the team. Any issues or concerns that cannot be addressed are referred to a team supervisor. In addition, foster parents have access to the management of the agency. Foster parents have access to Children's Home Foster Care caseworkers, therapists, licensing (resource) workers, clinical coordinators (supervisors), vice president, and CEO. Children's Home is willing to do what is necessary to ensure any emergencies, concerns or disputes are resolved appropriately and in a timely manner. CHAIL has a foster parent specific grievance policy which outlines the steps a foster parent can take so that any concerns can be addressed in a professional and timely manner. The licensing team is able and willing to assist foster parents in filing a grievance through the agency or at the statewide level with DCFS and the State advocacy office.

Children's Home has a 24/7 On-Call phone to ensure foster parents have access to staff at all times. There is a three tier system for on call so there is a team of foster care staff which is responding to a crisis which ensures the best outcome for the youth in care. After the initial call the foster parent makes a staff member must respond within 15 minutes. The initial response is through the phone but oftentimes the staff member will respond in person to the foster home. There is also a licensing specialist on call at all times to work immediately with the staff and foster parent, to assist in deescalating the situation in order to maintain placement stability. If that cannot be accomplished, the licensing specialist locates immediate respite for the youth in care if requested by the foster parent. There is also always a supervisor on call that can be utilized by the staff and foster parent for consultation or in person assistance if needed. Children's Home also ensures that non-emergency phone calls are returned in a timely manner, within two business days. Oftentimes caseworkers also provide our foster parents with their personal cell phone numbers for ease of communication and immediate access to staff that is familiar with the youth in care that is placed in their home.

## **2) The right to be given standardized pre-service training and appropriate ongoing training to meet mutually assessed needs and improves the foster parent's skills.**

Training is provided by DCFS, foster care program staff, and resources staff. Management, clinical, casework, nursing, educational liaison, and foster home licensing staff all contribute to the trainings that are offered. Training is also provided by licensed foster parents through the PRIDE classes. The DCFS PRIDE curriculum is used to train prospective foster parents. The DCFS PRIDE 27 hour in class training also includes an additional 13.5 supplemental hours of training including topics such as; life of the case part 1 & 2, trauma, and human trafficking. This training curriculum is offered both through zoom and online. CHAIL has made the decision for the best interest of all new foster parents that we require the training to be completed through zoom since in person

classes are not currently being offered. This allows the opportunity for new foster parents to gain the fellowship, knowledge, and participation that is provided by zoom trainers and along with other new foster parents. However, CHAIL is also cognizant due to foster parents schedules that not all foster parents may be able to attend the zoom class and therefore exceptions can be made for the entire PRIDE training to completed solely online on a case by case basis with approval from the licensing supervisor.

The formal opportunity for licensing to discuss training needs with foster parents is provided when the licensing specialist completes a monitoring visit every 6 months. This assessment, identifying pertinent training by the foster parent and licensing specialist, is documented on the CFS 597FFH. The foster parent training record is reviewed to ensure foster parents are current on required certifications such as CPR and First Aid, and the foster parent's current placements are discussed in terms of challenges the foster parents face and the additional support/information they may need. This is also done informally through regular phone contact with staff including caseworkers, licensing specialist, and therapists. Through child clinical assessments there is also an opportunity to identify training needs for the foster parents. Although there are specific requirements for training hours to maintain a foster home license, training for foster parents is also assessed based on the needs within the home and the child placed in the home. Therefore, regardless of the number of hours that are needed or have been completed, training is based on individualized assessment. Each month the licensing team provides every licensed and unlicensed home of relative foster parent a training specific newsletter which includes trainings being held by CHAIL, community trainings, and DCFS training opportunities. Additional training opportunities that the licensing team is made aware of that are not in the newsletter are then emailed to the foster parents so that all training opportunities are provided to foster parents in a timely manner.

CHAIL developed a training form for all licensed foster homes at the time of initial licensure and then every six months after licensure at the time of licensing semiannual and annual home monitoring visits. This form provides details as to how to register for the DCFS Virtual Training Center online and all necessary training requirements. A copy of the form is provided to the foster for reference purposes and then an acknowledgement form to be placed in the foster home agency file.

Foster homes that accept specialized level foster children are required to complete additional training hours based on the specific identified needs of the child placed in their home. The child specific training needs are identified with weekly contact by the caseworker and/or therapist and through additional contact with licensing staff. These child specific trainings are conducted one-on-one with the foster parents by the child's therapist, Children's Home consulting psychiatrist, licensing staff, caseworkers, nurse, IPS, and the educational liaison. Trainings for foster parents are identified to assist with the child placed in their home before placement disruptions occur.

Prior to Covid CHAIL provided CPR/First Aid sessions free of charge for all of our foster parents. We currently have one licensing staff that are certified by the Red Cross

to teach the class. The majority of the licensed foster parents are CPR and First Aid certified. Due to Covid we cannot currently offer in person classes.

Along with the trainings offered by CHAIL we are also able to utilize support groups and trainings through other local private agencies, as CHAIL is a member of the Peoria Area Wide Training Cooperative. As a member of this group, we are a part of the Foster Parent Cafés, which are now held virtually. The Foster Parent Cafés are a support group that is conducted in round table discussions. Every table has a “table host” who facilitates the discussion with the other foster parents at the table. Table hosts are comprised of both foster care staff and foster parents that have completed the table host training. Currently the CHAIL clinical coordinator of resources, one member of the licensing team, and several CHAIL foster parents have completed the table host training. Each table provides has a discussion topic that is relevant to fostering and the questions are based on the five protective factors that keep families strong including parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and social and emotional competence of children. This program is based on research through Illinois “Be Strong Families”. Since covid, the virtual Foster Parent Cafes were held from January 2021 through June of 2021. The Cafes were scheduled twice a month on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month in the evening for two hours.

### **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.**

All foster parents are given all pertinent contact information at the time of placement including the caseworker and supervisor name and number, and the after-hours on call number which can be utilized any day of the week and at any hour. If it is a licensed foster home they already have been provided the name and number for their assigned licensing specialist and licensing supervisor. If or when other support services are put into place for the youth or foster parent that staff member provides their contact information. At the time of licensure the licensing specialist explains that the licensing staff and supervisor are a source of support and advocacy at any point in time when it is needed. The foster parents are directed that if they cannot reach the assigned caseworker or supervisor that any licensing specialist or supervisor can assist them. An agency issued cell phone is carried by the foster care on-call worker and he/she is expected to respond within 15 minutes when a call is received. This on-call worker is available to provide emergency support, including accessing support services such as SASS and Emergency Response Services. The on call worker has the ability to be able to respond in person to the foster home when needed. The foster care on-call worker also has access to the licensing on-call worker to facilitate emergency respite or emergency replacement if the situation is required. The foster care on-call worker and the licensing on-call worker will attempt to engage the foster parent in a discussion about the situation to better determine what action will be of the greatest therapeutic value for the child and then each worker does their part to achieve this end. Both tiers of the on call system also have access to a foster care supervisor on call for consultation purposes.

Caseworkers, therapists, licensing specialists, family support workers, and supervisors all have direct phone numbers and email. Voice mail greetings instruct callers to contact the program administrative assistant in the event of an emergency if the staff member is not available. The administrative staff will then identify a member of the management team to talk to the person that is seeking assistance.

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

Foster parent payments are distributed electronically via direct deposit by the 10<sup>th</sup> business day of the following month. Direct deposit has allowed our foster parents to access their board payments immediately, and has reduced the time spent waiting for checks in the mail. For those foster parents who are unable to open a bank account for direct deposit, a paper check is provided and mailed out on the 10<sup>th</sup> business day. Payments for youth at a traditional level of care are made based on the age of the youth. The amount of payment also varies dependent upon the level of care for the youth that is placed in the home. A youth in care can be assessed as being at a traditional level of care or at a specialized level of care, which is based on medical or behavioral special needs. In 2021 the State approved a 3% increase for the monthly foster parent reimbursement. CHAIL implemented this increase as of July 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 for all levels of care and also for respite care.

The level of care of a youth, which effects payment to the foster parent, is determined in two ways. When protective custody is taken by DCFS it can be evident from the investigator's assessment or other documentation which had been gathered that the child should be at a specialized level of care due to the amount of services that will need to be provided. The determination of specialized level of care can also be made after the youth has entered care by requesting a CIPP through DCFS. The CIPP brings together the youth, foster parent, and the youth's team to determine what service needs the youth may require. When a youth comes into care as specialized the foster parent's payment is at a much higher rate because the foster parent has to ensure that all of the extra needs of that youth are provided for, along with assistance by the agency. Therefore, the payment is commensurate with the level of care of the youth. When the youth enters care at a traditional level of care and a subsequent CIPP is held and the youth is determined to be eligible for specialized care the foster parent's rate of payment is increased immediately and becomes effective as of the date the CIPP was held. A youth's level of care is assessed at the monthly in home visits that the caseworker has with the foster parents. This ensures that the youth's needs are being met and that the foster parent receives the higher rate in a timely manner.

Computer generated electronic "timesheets" are emailed to each foster parent on the payment date, in order for the foster parents to be able to track their reimbursements for placement and respite care. Paper timesheets are mailed out to foster parents upon

request, for those foster parents who do not have access to email. The timesheet that the foster parents receive specify the amount of the reimbursement broken into the board rate and specifies the amounts of money to be used for clothing and allowance which is determined by the age of the youth. In the summer of 2022 CHAIL is set to “go live” with a new interactive data bases system named MyEvolv. Part of this new system is a “foster parent portal” in which a foster parent will be able to log on at any time to see the current and all previous timesheets for their monthly foster parent reimbursement.

Twice a year, payment dates are determined by the operations manager for the following 6 months. A list of the pay dates for the next 6 months are distributed twice a year in the foster parent newsletter. In addition, the next month’s payment date is listed every month in the Foster Parent Newsletter. Foster parent newsletters are distributed via email each month, by the 10<sup>th</sup> business date of the month. Newsletters are mailed out each month for those foster parents who do not utilize email. For those foster parents who receive electronic notices, a monthly pay date reminder is also sent via email prior to the pay date.

At the time of licensure each foster parent receives a detailed payment packet explaining the board payment, child’s clothing /allowance monies, respite policy, and “other” supplemental payments prior to licensure completion. The CHAIL licensing staff reviews the payment packet with each foster parent. Foster parents are encouraged to call the phone number listed on the packet to speak with the Operations Manager any time there is a question or concern regarding payment. The Operations Manager is a member of the licensing team who tracks all placements, any moves, and all respite. The Operations Manager generates all foster parent timesheets which are also reviewed by the licensing supervisor. Resolution of errors has priority status. There has not been an instance in which the Operations Manager was unable to resolve a payment issue in a timely manner, usually within two business days. Foster parents, respite foster parents, licensing staff, caseworkers, and/or treatment team members can be contacted by the foster parent to assist in resolving any disputes in payment.

Children’s Home payment rates are standardized rates that are specified in the DCFS contract, which is renewed each year. Each Traditional child’s rate is based specifically on their age (0-11mo, 1-4 yrs, 5-8 yrs, 9-11 yrs, 12+yrs). This payment rate also includes the child’s clothing & allowance money. When children step into the next age category, the payment is increased the next full month after the child’s birthday. Clothing and Allowance monies are determined solely by the child’s age, and are the same regardless of whether the child is placed in a specialized or traditional foster care program.

Supplementary checks for camp, mileage, infant care grant monies, clothing voucher reimbursements for new admits, and other reimbursable expenses are also issued on a prompt three to five day turnaround basis. Foster parents are informed during licensure and follow up is provided during CFT Meetings in regards to contacting their child’s caseworker regarding other expenses. Other expenses must receive prior approval from the foster care supervisor and program director, and a receipt must be provided after purchase in order for the foster parent to receive reimbursement.

Beginning fiscal year 2021 CHAIL also now provides all reimbursements to unlicensed relative homes with youth in care through CHAIL. The Operations Manager follows all of the same payment guidelines for unlicensed relative homes as licensed homes. The only difference is the rate of reimbursement which is set forth by the State. CHAIL does provide free respite to unlicensed relative caregivers for emergency situations. CHAIL still reimburses the unlicensed relative and also pays out the respite provider

**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.**

Within the first 14 days of placement, there is a Child & Family Team meeting that is required to occur which includes the foster parent and all staff that are members of the youth's team. At that time the foster parent is made aware that they are privy to all aspects of the case that are pertinent to the youth placed in their home. This includes being made aware of when there is administrative case reviews held by DCFS and that they will receive a copy of the youth's service plan.

During the initial licensure process Children's Home foster parents are trained by a licensing specialist. This training relays the expectation that they will support the goals outlined by the court, The Department of Children and Family Services, and the Children's Home Association of Illinois as it relates to the child's relationship with his or her family i.e. by maintaining a positive attitude about the child's family, supporting family visits, when appropriate inform family of the child's medical appointments, school functions and maintain an overall positive attitude regarding the child's permanency goal. The licensing specialist at the time of licensure encourages the foster parents to attend all court hearings so that they are able to receive an updates regarding and change made to the permanency goal immediately. If the foster parent is not able to attend the court hearing the caseworker notifies the foster parent of any change of the permanency goal at the next in home meeting with the foster parent, which occurs at a minimum on a monthly basis. In order to ensure notification by the caseworker to the foster parent of upcoming dates of DCFS administrative case reviews and court dates, along with any changes in permanency goal made by the court the caseworker utilizes a home visit form which is signed by the caseworker and the foster parent at each home visit.

The foster parents are provided a tool, "Shared Parenting", which was developed by the nationwide agency of "Be Strong Families. This tool outlines the many ways in which the foster parent can promote a relationship with the youth's family of origin. The tool is based on a continuum so that it provides a foster parent varying involvement for their own comfort level. The tool begins with promoting activities such as sharing report cards and school information, sharing information on family rituals and culture, and speaking positively and openly about one another. It then encourages contact between the foster

parent and birth family which includes attending school activities together, medical appointments, and facilitating open communication. It encourages to specifically assist with the reunification of the youth to the birth family and it provides clear ideas for how a foster parent can assist with this including transporting the youth to and from visits and interacting with the birth family at the visit, hosting visits in the foster home, shared parenting, inviting the birth parent to medical appointments, and planning with the birth parent for the return home of the child.

Foster parents participate in service plan development and provide input into visitation and communication plans. The caseworker reviews the 497 service plan outcomes, the permanency goal and the projected achievement date with the foster parent. Foster parents are notified of all administrative case reviews with an invitation by DCFS. The foster parents are allowed and encouraged to participate in the youth's portion of the case review. During the case review the foster parent is made aware of the ongoing needs of the youth, and the ongoing plan for the youth, including visitation with birth parents and siblings. If the foster parents are not able to participate in person they can call into the review. If for some reason the foster parent is not able to attend they are notified in a timely manner by the caseworker of any changes in the case plans or a change in permanency goal. Children's Home values the input of foster parents in the development and fulfillment of the service plan. Foster parent participation is a primary part of the service plan. During family meetings and counseling sessions, the caseworker and therapist seek input and feedback as to the child's progress in the home, community and school. Foster parent feedback and input are sought whenever changes are needed to the 497 service plan. They are informed of those changes during family meetings and provided copies of noted changes as it relates to them and the foster child.

When it is not possible to place children in foster homes that are culturally comparable, the agency promotes cultural awareness in our foster parents. This is done through ongoing group training and one-on-one training to better ensure the cultural needs of children are met when placements are outside their heritage. The licensing teams, as well as the case managers are involved in the education of the foster parents to be culturally aware of the needs of all children. The agency believes that respecting the diversity of others is an important part of how we serve our clients. We also have a group of foster parents who are willing to share their contact information with any other agency foster parents to provide consultation, advice, suggestions, and assistance for cultural education. Encouraging the foster parent to attend events specific to the culture of the children in their homes has become one of the priorities of the staff. Children's Home staff inform foster parents of trainings within the agency and the community that provide support and education to foster parents who may not be familiar with the child's culture. Foster parents are consistently informed of trainings held within the community through email, flyers, mailings, and the monthly newsletter. We want the foster parents to integrate the child into the child's heritage through community cultural events and activities that allow the child to learn about their culture and to experience expressions of that culture.

**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.**

Investigations resulting from alleged violations of licensing standards are addressed by the lead licensing specialist within two business days unless immediate action is required. At the time of the investigation, the lead licensing specialist informs the foster parent of their rights, the investigative process, and their right to appeal. Within 30 days or less, unless an extension is required, after all information has been gathered a determination is made as to the appropriate action needed. The foster parent must be informed in writing of the extension. Children's Home explains the investigative process thoroughly and conducts all activities in a professional manner.

Foster parents are informed they may have a representative, such as family member or friend, present during the investigative interview. Such representation should be scheduled so as to not unreasonably delay the investigation or compromise the integrity of the interview. Foster parents shall be given up to 4 hours to have a foster parent representative present or a person of the foster parent's choosing during all aspects of the investigation and up to 24 hours for an attorney. The foster parent and lead licensing specialist discuss the alleged violation and action required for correction, if necessary. Any violations being investigated will be given to the foster parent in writing, with specific documentation of the exact standard alleged to have been violated, and its section number. When a licensing standard has been found to be violated and it is substantiated foster parents will be provided information as to the procedure for appeal. The first level of appeal is requesting a supervisory review with the agency's licensing supervisor. If the licensee disagrees with the results of the findings of the supervisory review, he or she is informed of his or her right for a second level of appeal, which is a review with the DCFS Regional Administrator.

Children's Home acknowledges that as an agency we have a dual role with the foster parent, that of serving as the licensing agent and participating with foster parents as a team serving the children and families. This is why the investigation duties are solely assigned to the lead licensing specialist and not the licensing specialist that is assigned to monitor the foster home. CHAIL feels it is important for the foster parent to maintain a positive relationship with their assigned licensing specialist so that consistent advocacy and support can be provided. CHAIL wants our foster parents to feel and know that they can contact their assigned licensing specialist at any point in time when assistance is needed.

In cases of a concurrent investigation with the Division of Child Protection (DCP) prompted by a report to the “hotline” on the foster parent, the DCFS concurrent protocol is followed by Children’s Home.

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

In an effort to provide our foster parents with necessary information, the foster care staff have made it a priority to provide all information received or knowledge obtained regarding the child(ren), to the foster parent. Often times when CHAIL receives a new case, we are not provided all of the information and details about the youth as they are new to care. CHAIL ensures that the foster parent taking placement of the youth is informed of everything possible prior to placement. As CHAIL receives additional information regarding the youth, that information is then immediately shared with the foster parent. Information can be shared by any and all foster care staff working with the youth and the foster parent.

Foster Care Core training is required for all foster care staff within the foster care department including, caseworkers, licensing specialists, supervisors, therapists, and family support workers. This training is the means used to assure that all foster care staff are well trained in their responsibility to disclose all information known about a client to the foster parent. The training session that particularly addresses this is entitled “Licensing Overview”.

Caseworkers are held accountable for informing foster parents of all information that is relevant to the care of the child through court hearings, Child and Family Team Meetings, parent-child visits, sibling visits, treatment team meetings, as well as other staffing’s and meetings that may develop. Accountability is monitored by the supervisor through regular supervision with the caseworker. All staff, for each case, is also held accountable for relaying information through quarterly staff reviews. Every foster care case is reviewed once a quarter internally with a formatted process. This review includes the youth’s caseworker, all casework supervisors, the foster care nurse, and therapists assigned to the case, the supervisor of the therapist, the licensing supervisor, family support workers, and the Vice President of foster care.

The CHAIL licensing specialist assigned to the foster home also informs the foster parents of their right to receive necessary information that is pertinent to the child placed in their home. The licensing specialist provides the foster parent a copy of CFS 600-4 Sharing Information with Caregiver. During the licensing process, the licensing specialist reviews the form with the foster parent so that the foster parent is aware of all of the information that they are entitled to receive about any foster child placed into their home. The foster parents retain the form as a reference for future placements and then sign an acknowledgement that they have reviewed the form which then is placed into their licensing file.

**8) The right to be given information concerning a 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.**

At the time of placement, or if possible, prior to, the worker shall provide to the foster parent, in writing, all available information necessary for the proper care of the child. The information to be provided to the caregiver shall include the following:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 likes and dislikes, etc.

In the case of an emergency placement, when all of the information is not available, the worker shall provide all known information verbally as it becomes available and subsequently provide this information in writing. If there is a disruption of placement, the licensing specialist verbally provides all known information regarding the youth to ensure the best match for the youth into a new foster home. When a foster parent is interested in a youth for placement the caseworker and therapist, if one is assigned, will also talk with the foster parent. When time allows CHAIL staff will also schedule pre-placement visits so that the foster parent can meet and get to know the child on a personal basis. Any CHAIL staff that is a member of the youth's team will answer any questions that the foster parent may have about the youth in care.

Each child's placement is initially a consideration of the licensing team. If this is a child referred from Centralized Matching, the licensing team will staff the new placement consideration with the foster care program before accepting the case. If the new referral comes to the agency via the CAPU rotation, the licensing team will identify a home and

inform the foster care program. This flow of information continues as new details become known about the foster child.

The performance of foster care staff in complying with these requirements is monitored by their supervisor in their regularly scheduled supervision, and failure to share this information could result in disciplinary action. In order to ensure that all CHAIL caseworkers are aware of the information that can be disclosed to foster parents, there is initial training and ongoing training. One focus of this training is on the CFS 600-4 which consists of all information that can be shared with a foster parent. All newly hired CHAIL employees will complete CHAIL foster care core training. Caseworkers will be trained on all information that can be shared with a foster parent and also on how to complete the 600-4. This training will focus on the importance of sharing information about a foster child to the foster parents, and specifically what information can be shared. The caseworker and the foster parent will both maintain copies of the CFS 600-4. If the foster parent has not received the necessary information that is to be disclosed to them, this can be relayed to the CHAIL management team in order to rectify the situation and to ensure that the foster parent receives all necessary information.

**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 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.**

Foster parents are an integral part of their child's professional team and are encouraged to be an active participant in all meetings and staffings related to the case planning and decision-making process and to communicate with each team member assigned to their foster child. Their thoughts and opinions are given full consideration in making case planning decisions about their foster child. Written notification of Administrative Case Reviews (ACR) is routinely provided by DCFS review staff. School district personnel provide written notification of school reviews. Foster care staff initiate contact with foster parents to ensure they receive notification of all reviews and to encourage their participation. Other direct notification is provided during routine monthly family meetings in the foster home with the child's team members or through regular phone contact. During the course of family meetings, activities such as modification of case plans, review of court decisions, review of changes in agency policy, and any other

decision to be considered in the child's interest are discussed with the foster parents by the child's team.

Foster parents are required to sign a Children's Home document entitled Traditional/Specialized Foster Care Monthly Family Meeting when they meet with the caseworker for the child. This is the agency's way of documenting that there was contact with the foster parent and the issues related to the child's care and service needs have been addressed. With the signature of the foster parent, they are stating that they understand the information discussed during the meeting. Documentation verifying foster parent's presence at Administrative Case Reviews and Individual Educational Plan school reviews are recorded on a sign-in sheet provided by both DCFS and the school the child attends.

**10) The right to be given, in a timely and consistent manner, any information a caseworker has regarding the child and the child's family which is pertinent to the care and needs of the child and to the making of a permanency plan for the child. Disclosure of information concerning the child's family shall be limited to the 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.**

Foster parents have access to confidential information regarding their foster child (ren) as outlined in Rule 402: Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes and the Program Confidentiality Policy. When a foster parent agrees to accept a child into their home, the licensing specialist will discuss the history of the child and family with that foster parent. Foster parents are also given the opportunity to read their foster child's main file at any time a child is placed with them and have questions answered by program staff. CHAIL emphasizes the benefit of a foster parent reviewing the child's file. However, disclosure of the child's family information is limited to information pertinent to the well-being of the child.

From the time of initial licensure foster parents are trained by the licensing specialist about the information that is to be shared with them regarding any child placed in their home. CHAIL utilizes the CFS 600-4 to ensure that the foster parent receives all necessary and pertinent information. During the licensing process the foster parents also sign an acknowledgement form before licensure that they have received a copy of CFS 600-4 and that it has been explained to them by the licensing specialist and the form is then placed in their licensing file. The information provided to the foster parent includes but is not limited to:

- Case information and history, which includes the SACWIS service plan, the reason the child came into care, permanency goal, and legal status.
- Health and medical information which includes known medical problems, communicable diseases, hospitalizations, mental health, emotional disorders,

current medication and prescriptions including instructions on when and how to dispense, immunization status, and medical card.

- Educational information and history which includes the current placement, grade level, IEP, IFSP, 504 special needs plan, case study evaluation, and a multi-disciplinary conference evaluation.
- Placement history which includes the dates of previous placements and the reasons for those placement changes.
- Behavioral and social information which includes criminal background, substance abuse, alcohol abuse, destructive behavior, sexual behavior problems, physical aggression, fire setting, elopement, eating disorder, and truancy.

The form provides that all information is provided to the foster parent verbally and written documentation can be provided within 10 business days.

Access to information about the child and his/her family does not end there. During the time a child is in placement, the foster parents will be notified of all information pertinent to the health and wellbeing of the child at Administrative Case Reviews, court hearings, psychiatric evaluations, and as their child's educational advocate, at multidisciplinary school conferences, when appropriate. Foster parents are informed and included in the process of establishing a permanency plan for their foster children. The treatment team for the foster child meets on a monthly basis, which includes the foster parents and caseworker. It may also include a therapist, family service worker, or a licensing specialist. This meeting is used to relay information in a collaborative setting. Our foster parents are also given a copy of their child's current service plan prior to the ACR.

In regards to residential step-downs and CIPP referrals, a pre-placement staffing is held with prospective foster parents, resources, and other assigned staff to review the child's file and to discuss and clarify the child's treatment needs. The identified foster parent for the youth is also invited to all monthly staffing's at the residential facility. The foster parent can either attend in person or by calling into the staffing over the phone. The staffing's include updated information on all areas of the youth including a milieu report, information from school staff regarding educational progress and needs, clinical report, and any information on the transition of the youth into a foster home.

Traditional and home of relative referrals often come with limited information. The information that is available to CHAIL staff is shared with the foster parents.

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

A Notice of Change of Placement (CFS 151-B) is mailed or hand-delivered to the foster parent in the event of a placement change. The Notice of Change of Placement describes

in detail the reason why the placement with the foster family has been/will be terminated and what steps can be taken to appeal a change in placement. The Notice of Change of Placement specifically cites the DCFS policy that supports the placement move of the foster child. Absent imminent risk, foster parents are given 14-day notice of plans to move a child from their care based on DCFS rule and policy. The Notice of Change of Placement includes information on how a foster parent can appeal through requesting a Clinical Placement Review with DCFS if they disagree with the decision to move a child. A foster parent may request a Clinical Placement Review if they feel that the move is not in the best interest of the child. The notice provides a phone number and fax number available to request an appeal to review the decision. The caseworker notifies the licensing team when a 14 day notice to move a youth is going to be issued to a foster parent. The assigned licensing specialist contacts the foster parent once the notice is issued so that the appeal rights and policy can be thoroughly explained to the foster parent. The licensing specialist also offers the foster parent assistance in appealing the notice if the foster parent chooses to do so. Once the DCFS clinical review for the appeal is scheduled the caseworker notifies the assigned licensing specialist and the licensing supervisor so that licensing staff can attend the appeal review with the foster parent to provide the foster parent with support. Throughout the appeal process the licensing specialist continues to assist the foster parent with any further levels of appeals.

For our youth in care that are placed in licensed foster homes when a relative or fictive kin placement is identified the caseworker notified the licensing team immediately. This allows the opportunity for the foster parent to be notified immediately of a possible change of placement to a relative home. This move is often difficult for our licensed foster parents so we want to inform them right away to be a support for them during the possible transition of the youth. The licensing team keeps the foster parent updated in regards to the progress in vetting the appropriateness of a move to a relative home so that the foster parents are prepared for the move. When it has been determined that a move to a relative home is appropriate then formal notice is provided to the foster parent which includes information as to how to appeal the move if the foster parent chooses to do so.

In order to prevent as many unnecessary moves as possible, CHAIL has implemented a placement review process, in which a meeting is held immediately when it identified that a youth may be at risk of moving foster home placements. When a placement is assessed by any member of the team as unstable or the foster parent or youth in care is struggling the caseworker immediately request a placement review through the Vice President of foster care or the Clinical Coordinator of Resources. The placement review's sole task is for the entire foster care team to convene and brainstorm solutions in the early stages of at-risk foster placements. The meeting is to consist of the caseworker, casework supervisor, lead licensing specialist, licensing supervisor, any clinical team members involved with the youth, and the foster parents. If appropriate the youth can also attend. This placement review is facilitated by the vice president of the foster care department or the Clinical Coordinator of Resources. The meeting is scheduled based on the availability of the foster parent in order to best accommodate their schedule. We look to the foster parent to provide input in regards to what additional services the youth or they might need. We all try to identify additional services to assist and benefit the youth and

the foster parent. Best case scenario, an action plan is developed in order to implement additional services in order to stabilize the youth within the current foster home.

The decision to make a placement change is made by the entire treatment team, including foster parents, foster care staff, the biological parents, if legally permitted to be involved in the case, and the youth, if appropriate. Justification for the move must be entered into the case record and must attest that the change is clearly in the youth's best interest. Youth will be moved in a manner that is the least disruptive to their physical, emotional, academic, and therapeutic well-being. If at all possible, moves will be made during normal waking hours, during school breaks, within the same school district, and to a home that is no further from the youth's city of origin. Every opportunity to provide closure with the foster parents from whose home the youth is moving from, to better ensure a smooth transition into the new foster home, is provided. This past year the licensing team implemented a new process which is completed by the lead licensing specialist. Whenever a youth in care changes placement we realize that this can have a profound impact of the foster family that the youth has been placed with. Within a week of a child leaving a foster home for any reason the lead licensing specialist contacts the foster parent to provide support. This is also an opportunity for the foster parent to express any needs that they may now have as a family or any concerns that they may have regarding CHAIL and CHAIL staff that was a part of the youth's team.

**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.**

Children's Home caseworkers are expected to inform and remind foster parents of upcoming court activity when the worker attends the monthly home visits, during the quarterly Child and Family Team meetings or through telephone communication. The caseworkers are to encourage all foster parents to attend the court hearing of the children in their homes, inform that they can make recommendations and have input where applicable and allowable under the law. If the foster parents are not able to attend the hearing, the foster care caseworker or casework supervisor contacts the foster parents within 5 business days by phone, mail or in person to provide any updates.

During the initial licensure process the licensing specialist talks with the foster parent about court and the importance of their attendance. It is explained that the best way for the foster parent to know all aspects of the case is to attend court. Due to confidentiality foster care staff can not disclose the progress of the birth parent's court ordered services. However, when a foster parent attends the court hearing they are then made privy to all aspects of the case. This assists them in preparing for the foster child's future and the dynamic of their own home environment.

CHAIL is in the process of developing a new court training for all foster parents based on feedback from foster parents and also from the review of last year's implementation plan. The licensing supervisor has developed the outline and is working with CHAIL support staff to complete a power point presentation for this training. This training will be implemented in 2022 and it will be held virtually until in person classes can be held again. This training will assist foster parents in their understanding of the court process which is integral to the case and the youth in case placed in their home.

Caseworkers are held accountable for notifying foster parents of court hearings in the same manner as all other job performance expectations. Their performance is monitored by their supervisor in their regularly scheduled supervision, and failure to keep foster parents informed of court activity could result in disciplinary action.

Foster parents are encouraged to speak to the casework supervisor in the event that there is a continued issue or concern. Foster parents are invited to provide information and/or recommendations that pertain to the foster child for the permanency review court report prepared by the caseworker and to review the portion of the court report that is relevant to the child. Foster parents receive satisfaction surveys once a year and have the opportunity to note any communication failures.

**13) The right to be considered as 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 other children in the foster parent's home.**

Each child's placement history is taken into consideration by the licensing team, casework staff, and therapeutic staff when looking to secure placement for children that have previously been in care, or have siblings that are currently in care or have previously been in care. When a child re-enters the foster care system, we generally are informed by CAPU that this is a child who had previously been in a particular foster home. If determined to be an appropriate placement, the former foster parent is contacted. The agency data maintenance system, Tier, maintains information on foster care placements for the previous 10 years. CHAIL utilizes this data base in order to ensure that all previous foster parents that has placement of the youth are identified and taken into consideration if the youth re-enters the foster care system.

The foster care team at Children's Home utilizes "Placement Decision" staffing's that include the licensing team, foster care caseworkers, clinical staff and the foster parents, when possible, to consider a child's best interest when making complex placement decisions. Our current placement practice gives priority to former foster parents when that placement is consistent with the best interest of the child and the other children in the foster parent's home, and when it is in compliance with licensing capacity requirements as defined by Rule 402. We strongly support the effort to keep siblings together and we strongly encourage permanency through adoption when return home is not an 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.**

The Children's Home grievance procedure for foster parents states that foster parents have the right to have their concerns regarding specific staff members (the caseworker, the therapist, the family service workers and the licensing specialist) respectfully addressed. If the foster parent is comfortable having a discussion with the staff member they are having the conflict with, they are free to attempt to resolve the issue. If the foster parent does not feel comfortable addressing the staff member or feels as though their concern was not resolved after addressing the staff member that foster parent is encouraged to contact their licensing specialist. If the concern is with the licensing specialist the foster parent can then contact the Clinical Coordinator of Resources (licensing supervisor). If the foster parent's concern has not been successfully addressed with the staff member with the assistance of the licensing team, a meeting will be arranged by the licensing supervisor to include the supervisor of the staff member, the licensing specialist, and the foster parent. If a plan of resolution is not been agreed upon by the parties during the meeting with the supervisor, a formal grievance can be filed in writing and submitted to the Vice President of the program. In all cases, the Vice President will respond in writing to a formal grievance within two (2) business days. Another meeting will be convened by the Vice President with all interested parties involved to resolve the grievance. The Vice President will also notify the Executive Vice President of Children's Home of all formal grievance/appeals that are filed. If the foster parent is not satisfied with the decision of the program Vice President the Vice President will review the situation in conjunction with the Executive Vice President of Children's Home. A decision on each grievance shall be made no later than 10 business days after the grievance was filed. The grievance policy is designed so that the foster parent can "appeal" any decision through the entire process up until the final decision is made by the Vice President. If the foster parent does not agree with the final outcome of the filed grievance the clinical coordinator of resources would encourage the foster parent to call the Statewide Advocacy Office so that a resolution could continue to be sought. The grievance policy also states that at any time within the internal CHAIL grievance process the foster parent can contact the Statewide Advocacy Office.

The licensing specialist reviews the agency grievance/appeal policy with potential foster parents during the initial licensing process and annually thereafter during a monitoring visit. This review includes a description of the process as well as the grievance/appeal form on which complaints are documented. Each foster parent is then asked to sign the grievance/appeal policy document, indicating they understand the process and have received the materials. The foster parent and licensing agency each retain a copy for their individual records. At this time the foster parent is also encouraged to provide any feedback regarding the procedure so that revisions can be made as necessary.

Every year the clinical coordinator of resources (licensing supervisor) reviews the agency grievance plan with a committee of foster parents also involved with the Implementation Plan committee. As a group we go over the entire grievance procedure to garner any feedback regarding any changes or revisions that need to be made to the policy. In reviewing the grievance policy each year there are changes made based on feedback from the foster parent committee and therefore the policy was revised on 11/02/18. Some revisions were made due to changes within the agency management structure. The revisions also include the specific names and contact phone numbers for the staff that should be contacted throughout the grievance process. The time line was also changed from 30 calendar days to 10 business days. Foster parents felt that if a situation was egregious enough that a grievance needed to be filed that a determination of that grievance should be conducted and a resolution met in a timelier manner.

The grievance policy is also posted on the CHAIL website for foster parent review at any time. Along with the grievance policy, there is a link to the email address of the Clinical Coordinator of Resources (licensing supervisor) so that immediate feedback can be provided. The foster parents are reminded of this posing and link throughout the year through annual home visits, support groups, and in the foster parent newsletter.

Any feedback that is received by the Clinical Coordinator of Resources is reviewed. The Clinical Coordinator of Resources has the ability to reach out to upper management at any time to make and changes or updates on the policy based on the feedback from the foster parents. As noted above the foster parents have a voice in several ways regarding any revisions to the foster parent grievance policy including, an annual committee, during the licensure process, annually one on one with the assigned licensing specialist at a home visit, and the policy is posted on our agency website and any feedback can be emailed directly to the Clinical Coordinator of Resources.

In the event a grievance is filed, Children's Home does have in place practices that would help ensure that no retaliation takes place, such as no longer placing children in the foster home. Management supports use of the grievance procedure by foster parents and helps staff to understand and support the process. Any employee of the agency determined to be engaged in harassment or retaliation against a foster parent who has filed a grievance would be subject to the appropriate disciplinary action.

**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 informed of the Advocacy Office for Children and Families and The Office of Inspector General during the licensing process, and through the foster parent newsletter. The contact information is also provided to every foster parent on the CHAIL grievance policy which is provided to the foster parent during initial licensure and annually thereafter. This information is also reviewed with foster parents during any investigation, the appeals process, and any placement moves. Information on the Foster Parent Hotline/Office of Inspector General can also be obtained from the DCFS foster care offices.

Anytime a foster parent expresses to any foster care staff that they feel that their rights are not being upheld. Or if the foster parent has been through the agency grievance policy and they feel as though there has not been a resolution the foster parent is provided again information regarding the foster parent hotline/advocacy office including the contact number so that they can call. CHAIL makes every effort to ensure that our foster parents are heard and that their rights are upheld.

The Office of Inspector General accepts complaints regarding the conduct of child welfare service providers employed by DCFS or private agencies. Anonymous complaints are accepted. OIG will not reveal the name of a complainant during an investigation. CHAIL will start providing foster parents the DCFS brochure on the OIG during the licensing process. The licensing specialist will provide training on this during licensing and foster parents will sign an acknowledgment of receiving the brochure and training which will be a part of the foster home file. The information in the brochure will also be published in the agency foster parent newsletter annually.

The Advocacy Office for Children and Families responds to complaints, concerns, inquiries, and suggestions about DCFS and designees. The advocacy office staff provides referrals to appropriate staff and suggestions to executive staff for improvement and changes. Anyone can call the advocacy office. CHAIL will start providing foster parents the DCFS brochure on the Advocacy during the licensing process. The licensing specialist will provide training on this during licensing and foster parents will sign an acknowledgment of receiving the brochure and training which will be a part of the foster home file. The information in the brochure will also be published in the agency foster parent newsletter annually. The advocacy office brochure provides many pertinent phone numbers for services that a foster parent may need such as day care, medical card, payments, adult protective services, child abuse and neglect hotline.

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

**16(1) The responsibility to openly communicate and share information about the child with other members of the child welfare team.**

This responsibility is clearly stated while in the initial licensing process and training, and restated throughout our evolving, mutual working relationship. Foster parents are members of the child's team. As members of the child's team, the foster parents are included in planning and implementing various strategies for the child. Communication between foster parents and Children's Home staff is ensured by their inclusion as members of the decision-making process. This incorporation also extends to regular family meetings that are held in the foster home that include staff, foster parents, and the child. Foster parents are trained on what information should be shared with agency staff regarding the child placed in their home during the initial licensing process. This information is also prompted by the caseworkers when they meet in person with the foster parent on a monthly basis. The caseworker utilizes an internal CHAIL document entitled "Foster Care Monthly Family Meeting". The caseworker collects the following information by talking with the foster parents regarding the child(ren) placed in their home. The information gathered includes but is not limited to progress/accomplishments, upcoming appointments/court/ACR, significant concerns/issues, visits with family, medical concerns, medical appointments, educational progress, mentoring, and counseling. This form is completed and is then signed by the caseworker and the foster parent which is present at the meeting. This process ensures that foster parents and caseworkers are having communication with one another. Communication between foster parents and staff is also ensured by our on-call system, which offers 24-hour access to staff in case of emergencies.

The caseworker is also required to conduct quarterly child and family team meetings (C&FTM). These meetings include the caseworker, the casework supervisor, and other support staff, the biological parents, the youth in care, and the foster parents. The foster parents are invited and encouraged to attend these meetings as the foster parents are the vital team member to relay updated information regarding every aspect of the youth. The foster parents are the member(s) of the team that care for the youth 24/7 and are involved in every aspect of the youth's life including the home, school, and community.

Throughout the life of the case the caseworker and licensing staff encourages shared parenting between the biological parents and the foster parents. This provides a forum of open communication regarding the youth in care.

IN 2020 CHAIL implemented a process through the licensing team which is initiated and led by the lead licensing specialist. When a youth in care is initially placed into foster care, a youth transitions to a new foster home, or a youth is disrupted from a placement the lead licensing worker contacts all foster parents involved in the youth's life.

Immediately after initial placement the lead licensing specialist contacts the foster parent who has a new youth in care placed in their home. The lead licensing worker talks to the foster parent regarding the adjustment of the youth into their home and assists in identifying any possible service needs for the youth. There is also discussion in regards to any needs that the foster parent may have or has identified for any member of the foster family. When a youth is transitioning to a different foster care placement the lead licensing specialist facilitates open communication to ensure that all information about the youth is gathered and then also relayed to the subsequent foster parent that the youth in care is moving to.

**17(2) The responsibility to respect the confidentiality of information concerning foster children and their families and act appropriately within applicable confidentiality laws and regulations.**

Respecting confidentiality is addressed in DCFS Pride Training, at the time of initial licensure and continues to be addressed on a periodic basis by all agency staff. This is addressed to ensure that each foster parent understands that respecting confidentiality is not just a responsibility but has legal connotations as well. During training and before licensure, all foster parents are given a copy of Rule 402: Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes in which the responsibility of maintaining confidentiality is clearly stated. Foster parents are also reminded of this responsibility by licensing staff during regular monitoring visits of the home, which occur at least every six months. The rule of confidentiality is documented at every monitoring visit on the CFS 597-FFH, which is signed by the foster parent and the licensing specialist.

**18(3) The responsibility to advocate for children in the foster parent's care.**

State training requirements include completion of Educational Advocacy training before the first renewal of the foster home license. Basic training also include an overview of the court system, ACRs, case conferences, and educational advocacy in the community. These trainings reinforce the responsibility of the foster parent as an advocate for their foster child in the community as a whole. Foster parents as advocates are encouraged to attend school staffing's along with ACRs, case conferences, and court hearings which enable them to advocate for the child(ren) placed in their home.

During the process of initial licensure the licensing specialist explains to the foster parents(s) the structure of the CHAIL team and the responsibilities of the staff. We train our foster parents that the licensing team, their assigned licensing specialist, and the licensing supervisor are their advocate. Therefore, if at any point in time when the foster parent is licensed with CHAIL they have a worker specifically assigned to them. If at any point in time the foster parent feels that their voice is not being heard as part of the foster care team the foster parent can contact the licensing team for assistance. The

licensing specialist and licensing supervisor then work within the foster care team to rectify any concern the foster parent has.

It is the responsibility of the foster parent to provide input to the foster care staff regarding the plan of services for the child and to actively participate in the case planning and decision-making process concerning the child. This includes advocating for the physical, mental, and emotional health of the foster child. If a foster parent is struggling to meet these expectations, licensing staff are to be notified by the caseworker and the licensing team will problem solve the issue with the foster parent. Service appeal brochures are made available to foster parents at the semi-annual Administrative Case Review by DCFS. In addition, training and individual assistance is provided to the foster parent on the appeal/grievance process if needed or requested. Included in the appeal/grievance policy that the foster parent signs during the time of licensure, there is information on the Advocacy Office, including the contact number and when the Advocacy Office should be utilized.

The Children's Home Association of Illinois also has an agency specific grievance policy which allows a foster parent to file a grievance on behalf of the youth in care that is placed in their home. This policy includes grievances based on complaints of abuse, complaints of service by the agency, complaints of service planning, or reporting staff misconduct. The policy is clear that the foster parent must put the grievance in writing which first goes to the program supervisor/clinical coordinator and then follows the chain of command up to and including the President/CEO of the agency. At any point in time the foster parent has the ability to document on a form provided to them that they "desire further appeal". At the time of initial licensure and annually the policy, procedure, and a blank grievance record is provided to the foster parent and the process is explained by the licensing specialist. The foster parent signs a form, Grievance Policy and Procedure Announcement, which is witnessed through signature by the licensing specialist and placed into the family foster home file. The foster parent is also provided a copy for their own records. In regards to complaints of abuse, information is provided regarding the state child abuse hotline. If the foster parent feels that the grievance is not resolved by the agency the Clinical Coordinator of Resources would direct and encourage the foster parent to contact the Advocacy Office. There have been instances, in which the Advocacy Office was not able to assist the foster parent; at this point licensing staff encourages the foster parent to directly contact their local State representative/congressman. These are cases when CHAIL has no control to change a systematic problem that may exist. The representative's office then works directly with a DCFS liaison to resolve the grievance.

A key aspect of foster parents actively advocating for the youth in care placed in their home is an understanding of the juvenile court process. Throughout this past year a new court training is in development for our foster parents. This training has been developed in conjunction with the input from our foster parents and foster care staff. CHAIL has garnered information from our foster parents regarding their current knowledge of the court process, what questions they have about the court process for youth in care, and what specific things they want to know about the court process.

#### **19(4) The responsibility to treat children in the foster parent's care and the children's families with dignity, respect, and consideration.**

DCFS rule 402, Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes, outlines foster parent's responsibility to treat foster children and their families with dignity, respect, and consideration is reviewed during state PRDE training and during the initial licensing process.

During regular family meetings held in the foster home, treatment team members monitor and assess that the rights of the foster child and their birth family are adhered to, and that they are treated with dignity and respect. Staff members are encouraged to bring their concerns to the attention of the resources staff if they believe a child or their family is not being treated with dignity, respect and consideration, and a follow-up plan is developed to address the concerns. We have found that some situations are the result of a misunderstanding by staff or foster parents, and other situations are an expression of the stress level in the foster home or of some crisis with which they are dealing. In these cases, intervention by the licensing specialist has helped to ensure that the foster parent is afforded the respect and voice needed to provide the child with stability and allowing the youth to ultimately remain in the home.

Licensing staff monitors the foster home twice yearly to insure that the 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes, the Child Care Act, and the Children's Rights policy are adhered to by the foster family.

#### **20(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.**

Recognition is given that this responsibility is unending and always evolving. The child's team shares this responsibility with the foster parents. Every effort is made to make placements based on the foster parent strengths, training, and the preferences of the foster parents. During the process of initial licensure, the licensing specialist assesses the foster parents strengths and limitations to assist with placement of a child into the foster parent's home. The licensing specialist then utilizes the CFS 604-1 Foster Home Utilization Assessment every six months during semi-annual and annual home visits as a form of ongoing assessment of the foster parents. In discussing current placements, previous placements, and/or respite, the licensing specialist is able to continue to assess the foster parent's strengths and preferences. This information can then be used to best match a foster child with the foster home. Also, after initial licensure, the licensing specialist staffs the new foster home with the licensing team so that all members of the team have the knowledge of the strengths and preferences of the foster parents for

purpose of placement. This staffing occurs during the weekly licensing team meeting conducted by the Clinical Coordinator of Resources.

As a part of the licensing team CHAIL has a Lead Licensing Specialist. The primary job duty of the lead licensing specialist is to facilitate all placement and respite needs for our foster parents. Once a foster home is licensed through CHAIL the lead licensing specialist will schedule a time to meet with the foster parent(s) in their home, in order to further discuss placement preferences. This time will also provide both the lead licensing specialist and the foster parent(s) to develop a working relationship with one another. This will also provide the foster parent(s) the opportunity to get to know the specific licensing staff that will be contacting them for placement and respites. The lead licensing specialist will also follow up with foster parents after all respites to garner feedback about how the youth did in their home and with their family. Once a foster home is identified that works well with a youth, this information can then be utilized to provide the youth with a consistent respite home that they are familiar with. This also allows the placement foster parent(s) and the respite home to develop a supportive relationship with one another. The lead licensing specialist will also follow up with foster parent(s) after a placement disruption to gather information about what worked and what did not work with the placement and why. This information will assist the lead licensing specialist guide our foster parent(s) in the future when deciding whether or not to accept a youth as a placement into their home and to help ensure that the best matches can be made of youth with our homes.

The licensing team holds a weekly meeting with all licensing staff and the licensing supervisor. The licensing supervisor developed a specific agenda with detailed items to be discussed. This meeting allows the entire licensing team to be updated in many areas. One specific topic discussed is any of our foster parents who may be struggling in their personal lives, such as death, illness, or any other area of life that would be a barrier to taking any youth for placement or respite care. In identifying these foster parents we are able to help support and protect the vulnerable time in the foster parents life when they may need to focus their attention on self-care and ensuring the care of everyone in their home. The licensing team and CHAIL foster care staff are then able to ensure that the foster parents receive the time needed before taking a youth in care for placement or respite care. We value our foster parents and respect the difficult parts of life in which they may need a break. We also utilize our current data base system to track not only the foster parent placement preferences but also the mutual assessment of the foster parents strengths and limitations.

Respite care is available for all the foster parents to support them in their role. In regards to respite, foster parents receive a “free” respite day each month (up to 24 hours of care) for each specialized foster child placed in their home. Children’s Home recognizes that the special needs of specialized foster children can be taxing and stressful for foster parents. Therefore, CHAIL encourages foster parents to utilize this free respite day each month to prevent burnout. While foster parents who have Traditional foster children placed in their home do not receive “free” respite days, they are permitted to request respite at their own expense. Foster parents are also encouraged to have at least one

alternative care provider to provide relief in stressful times. We also have a population of unlicensed relative homes which are paid a reimbursement monthly by the State. This amount is minimal and primarily covers the basic cost of providing daily care to a youth in care. CHAIL immediately starts working with the home in regards to foster home licensure which provides a higher rate of reimbursement. However, during the licensure process CHAIL recognizes that these foster parents may not be able to financially afford to pay for respite. CHAIL also recognizes that these relative homes have often changed their entire lives to accommodate caring for relative foster children and also need a break. Therefore, CHAIL will approve and pay for the youth in care to have respite to provide some stress relief for the relative foster home. Foster parents receive support from licensing, caseworkers, therapists, and family service workers. Support groups have also been formed to give additional support and training. Other support is available through special services such as the IPS (intensive placement stabilization) program for children in traditional care.

As foster parents are required to obtain ongoing training hours, they are encouraged to identify training topics related to the diagnosis/behaviors of the child(ren) placed in their home. These child specific trainings are facilitated, one-on-one with the foster parents, by the child's therapist, resource specialist, and caseworker.

Additional ways foster parents can obtain credit hours are through outside accredited training, attending committee meetings for foster care, and book reports on subjects relating to the diagnosis or behaviors of their foster child(ren). Foster parents are also encouraged to attend training opportunities sponsored by DCFS. DCFS is now providing additional topics of training online that can be accessed by any foster parent through the VTC (virtual training center). CHAIL also continues to partner with other local agencies which have been able to provide training from "Be Strong Families". These trainings are specific to different populations of youth in care.

Traditional and licensed relative foster parents are also expected to have ongoing training hours each year. The CPR/First Aid sessions have been one of the most successful trainings prior to covid. Since covid CHAIL is not allowed to provide foster parents with in person CPR classes. The licensing team maintains a spreadsheet of all foster homes to ensure that all foster parents have received CPR/1<sup>st</sup> aid training and the data also reflects when the two year renewal is needed.

All foster families are informed of the services the IPS program provides to help stabilize children in traditional and relative placements. If there is a request for a specialized child to have the services, approval has to be given by DCFS. IPS is generally a 6 month program, but an extension can be requested, if needed. This program works with the child and the foster parents in their community and at the child's school. Children's Home casework staff is very aware of IPS services, as the agency has an IPS contract. CHAIL has also implemented an internal placement stabilization program which can be utilized by foster parents caring for any level of child, including specialized foster children. The licensing team also provides placement stabilization services to the foster parents. If anyone on the CHAIL team has identified that a foster care placement is unstable and

could result in a change of placement for a youth, the placement stabilization worker is assigned and will meet with the foster parent within a week of the referral. The placement stabilization worker works closely with the foster parent to identify all of the issues and concerns within the family system and youth. Once the issues have been identified, the placement stabilization worker works individually with the foster parent to provide additional training and may also refer the foster parent to additional services or trainings. The placement stabilization worker can also request that the caseworker refer the youth for additional services. The placement stabilization worker contacts the foster parent on a weekly basis until the foster parent and team feel that the placement is stable.

## **21(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.**

Prior to covid, CHAIL hosted several annual foster parent events each year. These events include our licensed foster parents and our unlicensed home of relative foster parents. These events include a dinner and fellowship event in March, a picnic in May for foster parent appreciation month, the Implementation committee event in August, and the holiday party held in December. Children's Home hosts these various foster parent appreciation events to promote interaction and support between foster parents. Since covid CHAIL has utilized virtual monthly zoom meetings and other "events" to show our appreciation to foster parents.

CHAIL's clinical coordinator of resources is a member of the Peoria Area Cooperative Training. Prior to covid the group met one time a month and is comprised of staff from all Peoria area child welfare agencies to focus on foster parent training. This cooperative identifies trainings for foster parents throughout the Peoria area and provides information on foster parent support groups through other child welfare agencies.

CHAIL hosts a monthly foster parent group through zoom called "Foster Parent Fellowship". This groups provides foster parents with the opportunity to understand the benefits of working with other fosters to improve the quality of care and service to our children and families.

CHAIL also encourages our foster parents to seek membership with the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council. Within the DCFS Central Region there are three foster parents which can become members of the council. We explain to our foster parents, who would like a voice at the State level, that the council's main objective is to advise and consult with the Director of the Department of Children and Family Services, or the designee, on all matters involving or affecting the provision of foster care to abused neglected, or dependent children and their families.

## **22(7) The responsibility to assess the foster parent's ongoing individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.**

Foster parents assume responsibility for participating in the training program and remaining aware of their ongoing training needs through regular interaction with program staff. Foster parents are required to complete 27 hours of in person PRIDE training and an additional 13.5 hours of supplemental training before becoming licensed. Within each four year renewal period all foster parents are required to complete an additional 16 hours of training which includes the foster parent completing training on educational advocacy and LGBTQ. When a foster parent provides care for a child who is identified to be at the specialized level of care there is additional yearly training that is required. CHAIL provides all licensed foster parents with a training entitled Expectations of Specialized Foster Parents. This training was developed and implemented as it was assessed by foster care staff that foster parents caring for specialized youth required additional training specific for caring for a youth with specialized needs.

In addition, we require all of our foster parents to have First Aid and CPR training. General trauma training is highly encouraged as it provides a basis of understanding for working with the youth our foster parents serve. DCFS provides a 15 hour in person class taught by a trainer, specific to trauma, which is offered semiannually within our community. DCFS also now offers a three hour online training specific to trauma, which is also a part of the supplemental courses required for licensure. Foster parents licensed prior to this time can go online to take the three hour trauma training.

Licensing specialists meet with all foster parents at least twice a year for monitoring visits and one of the assessments made at that time is the need for ongoing child specific training. The clinical coordinator of resources reviews the 597-FFH which specifies the training needs and then provides feedback to the licensing specialist as to how to best meet that specific training need. All foster care staff, including caseworkers and therapists, are aware that any specific training needs for foster parents can be relayed to the clinical coordinator of resources who will ensure follow up with licensing staff during supervision. Once the needs have been identified, the licensing team will work on identifying a training specific to that need. The training can be within the agency, the community, or one-on-one. Foster parents are apprised regularly in the agency foster care newsletter and through individual mailings of training opportunities. Relevant training provided through outside sources may also be submitted for training credit.

**23(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.**

Foster parents are educated on various strategies to prevent placement disruptions, including behavior management techniques and the use of respite. Regular contact allows staff the opportunity to provide ongoing support to foster parents. During these contacts, information is shared so that members of the child's team have a sense of when a child may be at risk of disrupting. At the point of placement instability, the child's team convenes the program's placement review to problem-solve the various issues in order to stabilize the placement. This review is comprised of the caseworker, supervisor, clinical team members, licensing team members, nurse, educational liaison, the foster parent, and when appropriate, the child. The placement review is facilitated by the Vice President of foster care. When the child's team has determined that significant issues are still present that could lead to a placement disruption, other avenues are explored, such as a referral for IPS services, a referral for a clinical staffing through the DCFS Clinical Practice and Field Support Office, or to submit a request to the CIPP (Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation) where DCFS, foster parents, other team members and the child/youth meet to discuss ways to provide placement stability and level of care. The agency has also implemented a placement stabilization program which works closely with the foster parents and the foster child to assist in preventing placement disruption. The placement stabilization worker provides additional support to the foster parent and assists in identifying any training needs specific to the foster child in the home.

The therapist or caseworker will work to provide opportunities for closure with the foster parents from whose home the youth is moving to promote a smooth transition into the new foster home. Supportive services are provided throughout this process by licensing, casework, and clinical staff in recognition of the trauma that is felt by both the child and the foster parents when this occurs. Reducing disruptions continues to be one of the primary objectives of all staff.

In order for CHAIL staff to identify when a placement is at risk for disruption open communication is a necessity. Open communication is encouraged by CHAIL to occur between all members of the treatment team which include the foster parents, licensing specialist, caseworker, and therapist. Caseworkers are the primary point of contact for the foster parent and they are in the foster home on a regular basis. When there is open communication, the foster parent is able to relay any behaviors or problems with the youth placed in their home. This is communicated in many ways through regular home visits, phone contact, email, etc. Part of successful communication includes the timely responsiveness to the foster parent by CHAIL staff. When a foster parent reaches out to any member of the treatment team, it is of the utmost importance that the foster parent is

heard and that a plan of action is developed to stabilize the placement. CHAIL understands the importance of developing a solid trusting relationship with the foster parent so that open and honest communication can be developed between all of the members of the treatment team. Caseworkers assess stability based on the information they receive from all life domains including behavior in the school, community, and in the foster home.

CHAIL has a placement stabilization program that works one on one with the foster parent and youth in the foster home. This program is utilized for both traditional and specialized level foster children. The placement stabilization worker works closely in the foster home with the foster parent(s) and the child to identify and provide training to meet the specific needs of the foster parent and/or child. The placement stabilization worker has also taken on the role of providing the foster parent with additional support on a regular and consistent basis. The placement stabilization worker is part of the treatment team and works to collaborate with the caseworker, supervisors, licensing, and a therapist, if one is involved.

**24(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.**

CHAIL recognizes the impact that stress of fostering can have on our foster families. Therefore, assessing stress levels is an ongoing function of the child's team, which includes the foster parent. Monthly family meetings are held to discuss problems or issues in the home with the caseworker, foster parent, and youth in care. This is also a time when CHAIL staff can assist the foster parent in identifying any additional supports they may need or want. When needed, the agency will provide foster parents with information on where they can receive counseling services, some of which are based on the level of income of the foster parent. Accessing alternative care providers and other forms of respite are commonly used strategies by foster parents when stress levels are high, but respite is also encouraged by the agency to prevent stress from escalating. A significant service of the licensing team is to make respite arrangements for foster parents and to manage respite payments.

When the treatment team (caseworker, therapist, licensing specialist) becomes aware that the foster parent may be experiencing stress, their licensing specialist is informed and a variety of resources are made available to the foster parent. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of respite time, additional support to manage the child's issues and/or behavioral needs, foster parent support group, and placement stabilization services. The agency also provides foster parents with 24 hour support and counsel, through our on-call system. Through the agency's on-call system, the foster parent can receive support to navigate emergency situations. On-call staff has the ability to go to the foster home after

hours in person to assist the foster parent. In assessing the crisis, the on call staff can also contact the licensing staff that is on call to identify emergency and immediate respite if necessary and in the best interest of the youth in care, the foster parents, and all other household members.

There are several ways in which training can also help reduce the stress of fostering. CHAIL offers support groups which include fellowship time amongst the foster parents. It is beneficial for foster parents to hear other foster parent's struggles and to be aware that they are not alone in their journey of fostering. The community also offers a variety of trainings including monthly Foster Parent Café's. When a foster parent is struggling with a youth placed in their home it can also be beneficial for the foster parent to receive one on one training. CHAIL staff can assist in identifying the specific concerns the youth and foster parent are having and can then provide the foster parent with additional information which can often offer further insight as to why a youth is displaying a specific behavior. Oftentimes this is additional information and training regarding the effects of trauma, mental health diagnosis, and information on psychotropic medication. The staff can also then offer ways in which the foster parent can better assist the youth with the behavior.

In regards to respite, foster parents receive a "free" respite day each month (up to 24 hours of care) for each specialized foster child placed in their home. Children's Home recognizes that the special needs of specialized foster children can be taxing and stressful for foster parents. Therefore, CHAIL encourages foster parents to utilize this free respite day each month to prevent burnout. The CHAIL Operations Manager tracks and confirms each respite used for the month to ensure respite parents are paid. Respite providers caring for specialized children are paid a flat rate per night to care for specialized foster children. Should foster parents not utilize their free respite day, the respite money is paid out to the foster parent to save or use as they need. The amount of respite money paid out is the daily rate minus the child's clothing/allowance money (which has already been paid out in full). Foster parents who wish to use more than the one free day, may do so at their own expense. The foster parent payment is reduced based on the number of "extra" respite days used, and that money is given to the respite care provider in addition to a supplementary amount subsidized by CHAIL, to pay the respite care provider.

While foster parents who have Traditional foster children placed in their home do not receive "free" respite days, they are permitted to request respite at their own expense. The foster parent payment is reduced based on the number of respite days used, and that money is given to the respite care provider in addition to a supplementary amount subsidized by CHAIL (if needed), to pay the respite care provider a set rate amount per night. At any time, the treatment team may approve additional "free" respite nights for either Specialized or Traditional children, in order to maintain and stabilize the placement. These additional free nights are approved for a set length of time, and are fully subsidized by CHAIL, who pays the respite caregiver. Additional respite funding may also be approved in order to secure respite for children who are more difficult to place due to the child's special needs. If necessary, CHAIL will supplement respite rates

at no extra charge to the foster parent in order to secure a respite. These supplemental respite payments must be approved by a CHAIL supervisor prior to the respite. All respite arrangements and payments are facilitated by the licensing team. CHAIL also encourages foster parents to develop an internal support system with their network of family, friends, and other foster parents to provide emotional support and respite when needed.

Foster parents are informed that they can place their foster care license on “voluntary hold”. At any point in time, foster parents can request that their license be placed on a voluntary hold and CHAIL will immediately implement the hold . During this time, foster children will not be placed in the home and it allows the foster parent and agency to continue to assess and implement services to relieve stressors that may or may not be related to the fostering experience. These stressors are relayed to the entire licensing team at the regularly scheduled licensing team meeting which occurs once a week. This ensures that when needed our foster parents receive a break from placement and respite calls. The assigned licensing specialist then regularly follows up with identified foster parents for support and to provide the foster parent the opportunity to inform us of when they are ready and able to take additional youth in care for placement and respite.

### **25(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.**

The responsibility to know the rewards and benefits to children, parents, families and society is inherent within the foster parent training offered and the on-going interactions between foster parents and treatment team members. Foster parents are informed in a variety of ways of events and activities that promote the foster parenting experience in a positive manner - the monthly foster parent newsletter, treatment team meetings, individual mailings and foster parent support meetings. CHAIL currently uses recruitment materials which focus on the benefit of our current foster parents recruiting other community members. The motto that is used is “I Foster Care”. CHAIL has printed materials including t-shirts, fabric bags, pens, and window clings for the foster parents. This year we have added merchandise such as hooded sweatshirts, notebooks, and reusable plastic cups with fitted lids and straws. CHAIL foster parents are able to show their pride in being foster parents and the need for additional foster parents to serve the youth within the community. Our foster parents are excited to talk with people who broach them for information. The foster parents have also have recruitment postcards to give to people when they inquire about fostering.

The agency is part of the Peoria Area Cooperative Training committee which seeks to promote and support the foster parenting experience in a positive way throughout the community.

In recognition of the critical role that licensed foster parents play in the recruitment of foster parents, the agency provides a \$100.00 “finders bonus” to foster parents, who refer

a new foster home, at the time of licensure of the new home. Then the agency provides an additional \$100.00 to the referring foster parent, at the time a child is placed into the home of a new family whom they had referred to the agency for licensure. Casework and clinical staff are also reminded at their staff meetings that our best recruitment and retention tool is satisfied and happy foster parents; casework and clinical staff remain an integral part of our recruitment program providing timely and effective services. Last year a professionally made series of videos made regarding fostering which is posted on the CHAIL website and was also posted on social media.

CHAIL licensing is also working on developing a training to prepare foster parents to represent the agency in a positive manner and to help promote fostering within our community.

### **26(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 foster child's own family.**

Pride training begins the process of foster parent orientation to the child welfare system with its various roles. PRIDE training includes educating the foster parents on the rights and responsibilities of foster parents. During the initial licensing process, the licensing specialist reviews with foster parents the "Responsibilities of Foster Parents" form. This form is signed and dated by the foster parents and the licensing specialist once it is reviewed, and a copy of the form is mailed to the foster parents. In addition, "Foster Parent's Roles, Rights, and Responsibilities" training is provided as part of the mandatory one on one training with a foster parent prior to initial licensure. CHAIL also currently has this information available on the agency's website.

Roles, rights, and responsibilities are also reviewed annually with the foster parents at each foster parent's annual home monitoring visit, which is completed by the licensing specialist. The foster parent is provided a copy of the current Implementation Plan for them to review and provide any feedback. The foster parent then signs an acknowledgement form that they have reviewed the plan and understand their rights and responsibilities as a licensed foster parent. Also, each year there is a committee comprised of foster parents to review and provide direct feedback to licensing staff regarding the agency's Implementation Plan. At the committee meeting foster parents are provided a list of the rights and responsibilities and are asked to review them. Then licensing staff talks with the foster parents to ensure that they feel as though CHAIL is ensuring that their rights as foster parents are being met, and that we are assisting them in meeting their responsibilities as foster parents. Licensing staff records and reviews all information gathered by the foster parent committee in order to guide CHAIL daily practice within the foster care department. Licensing staff also provides CHAIL foster care management with the feedback so that new policy and procedure can be developed and implemented in order to meet the needs of our foster parents.

Foster parents are provided with the contact information of all members of the youth's treatment team at the time of placement, which the caseworker, supervisor, licensing specialist, licensing supervisor, therapist, and the vice president of foster care for the child in their home. The foster parents are also provided all pertinent on-call numbers for assistance after business hours. Foster parents are encouraged to contact supervisors when they have a question or concern that cannot wait for the caseworker, or the foster parents believe the situation requires management involvement.

CHAIL conducts regular child and family team meetings in which the entire team including foster parents and biological members of the youth's family are all present to discuss the youth and case progress.

CHAIL provides regularly scheduled training for all new staff within the foster care department, including, caseworkers, management, therapist, licensing, family support workers, and also support staff. This day long training is facilitated by the lead caseworker. For each domain different staff within the foster care department provides training on their pertinent job duties. This year licensing staff will include training on foster parent rights and responsibilities. This will ensure that all staff within the foster care department is aware of how we as an agency assist our foster parents in meeting all of the rights and responsibilities.

CHAIL is an agency with approximately 450 employees and many different programs including foster care. The agency training coordinator will offer some agency wide trainings to foster parents as well as staff. Some of the topics in the past have included Mental Health First Aide and trauma. Licensing staff will continue to coordinate with the agency training coordinator to ensure that there are training opportunities which can include both staff and foster parents.

**27(12) The responsibility to know and, as necessary, fulfill the foster parent's responsibility to serve as a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act; and the responsibility to know the child welfare agency's policy regarding allegations that foster parents have committed child abuse or neglect and applicable administrative rules and procedures governing investigations of those allegations.**

Foster parents are taught that they are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act as part of the licensing process. Foster parents sign an "Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status" form prior to becoming licensed. Foster parents are trained on their status as a state mandated reporter through the DCFS PRIDE training. All agency staff are also trained on mandated reporting through the agency when first employed. Therefore, any agency staff can assist in informing and/or training a foster parent in their role as a mandated reporter.

Foster parents are also informed that they may be subject to allegations of abuse or neglect while having children in their care. When allegations are made against foster parents, DCFS will conduct an investigation by the Division of Child Protection. Foster parents are informed that children may be removed from their home if the DCFS investigator or Children's Home believes that children are at imminent risk-of-harm. Foster parents are informed that as a child welfare agency, we must comply with DCFS rules and procedures specific to the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act and the investigations associated with such. Regardless of the outcome of the CFS abuse/neglect investigation the allegations are referred to the licensing team for an internal licensing investigation, following the protocol in Procedures 383, Licensing Enforcement. The licensing investigation is done in order to determine whether or not a DCFS licensing standard has been violated by the foster parent. If it has been determined that the foster parent has violated a licensing standard a corrective action plan is put into place to assist the foster parent in gaining compliance for all licensing standards.

**28(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 those proceedings; and the responsibility to actively participate in the foster parent's designated role in those proceedings.**

Foster parents are given an extensive overview of these processes with strong emphasis on the importance of their involvement and their legal right to be part of the court hearings and ACRs during the process of initial licensure and PRIDE training. Ongoing training regarding the ACR and court process is available to the foster parents, and these opportunities are shared with the foster parents by the licensing staff as they become available.

Each month a family meeting is held in the foster home with the caseworker. During these family meetings, feedback from the foster parent is sought and strongly encouraged by staff. The family meeting is documented on a monthly contact sheet, which also has the dates of the next ACR and court hearing on the form. All of the participants at the family meeting sign the monthly contact form and upon request, are given copies. Foster parents are notified of upcoming ACRs through DCFS notices sent to the home. Casework staff are responsible for notifying foster parents of upcoming court hearings at family team meetings and encouraging the foster parents to attend. Foster parents are also encouraged to be a part of the meeting with the youth in care and the GAL assigned, which is required to occur every six months.

**29(14) The responsibility to know the child welfare agency's appeal procedure for foster parents and the rights of foster parents under the procedure.**

Instruction regarding CHAIL appeal procedures is provided to all foster parents during the process of licensure. The foster parent agency grievance form is provided to foster parents during the licensing process and annually once they are licensed. The licensing specialist explains the procedure to the foster parent, including the hierarchy of appeals. The foster parent signs the form acknowledging that they received information regarding the grievance process and understand the process and their rights as foster parents in the process. A copy of the signed form is provided to the foster parents, who are encouraged to maintain a reference file of all signed documentation. All agency foster care staff members are trained on the agency's appeal process. Therefore, all staff is responsible for assisting a foster parent in completing the appeal process.

Along with the right for the foster parent to file a grievance and appeal rights within the agency the foster parent is also informed of all other appeal rights that they have. Throughout placement of a youth in their home a foster parent has the right to appeal any decision made regarding the youth. There are also other situations within the life of a case that the foster parent has appeal rights. For example, the foster parent is provided a copy of the youth placed in their home portion of the service plan. The foster parent is informed at the administrative case review of their appeal rights through a DCFS appeals brochure. If the foster parent is given a 14 day notice to move the youth in care from their home they are provided a DCFS notice which includes the notice of the right to appeal and how to file an appeal. Anytime a foster parent has the right to appeal the assigned licensing specialist or the clinical coordinator of resources (licensing supervisor) is available to assist them with the appeal process and to also support and advocate for them throughout the appeal process. Whether it be an appeal hearing or a clinical review that a foster parent attends the assigned licensing specialist for that foster parent and the licensing supervisor attend in order to provide support and advocate for the foster parent.

Regardless of the situation or the type of appeal, if the foster parents feel as though there was not appropriate or fair resolution the licensing team will encourage them to contact the State advocacy office or a State representative/congressman. Licensing staff will ensure that the foster parents have a voice with any decision made directly about them or the youth in care that is placed in their home.

**30(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.**

The necessity of accurate record keeping is covered in Pride training, with emphasis on the importance of maintaining complete records. This requirement is supported and reinforced by caseworkers, supervisors, therapists, licensing, and foster care nursing staff. CHAIL licensing specialists review DCFS rule 402 with all prospective foster parents, which includes a detailed list of information pertinent to the child which the foster parent must track. This includes but is not limited to records of immunizations, record/receipts

for distribution of allowance and clothing funds, out of state travel consent, and medication logs. CHAIL supports the foster parents in maintaining these records. An example of this is foster parents whose foster children take medication are sent “medication logs” and a return stamped envelope each month, which they are to complete in order to allow monitoring of each medication the child is prescribed. Once completed, these logs are sent back to the foster care nurse in order to be reviewed and logged. The foster parents send the “medication logs” back to the nurse in envelopes already stamped and addressed. Once received, the information is shared with treatment team members for any needed follow-up. The original completed form is placed in the foster child’s file.

CHAIL licensing staff will provide foster parents a folder to keep important and required documents. This folder will be provided during the initial licensing process. The folder will include blank copies of pertinent forms such as medication logs, behavioral logs, and mileage sheets. We will inform foster parents that if additional copies are needed they can request those from any foster care staff. The folder will also provide the room necessary to store documentation such as medical appointments, visitation logs, or any other pertinent information specific to the youth in care placed in the home.

One of the best tools for a foster parent to document the child’s history is to utilize life books. CHAIL provides foster parents with life books called “My Awesome Life”. This tool can be used for foster parent and youth in care to work on together. This a way in which to help the youth document their history. This can also assist the foster parent in showing the youth how much progress they have made. If the youth in care is adopted into the family there is then a section of the life book that can be inserted called “My Adoption”.

### **31(16) The responsibility to share information, through the child welfare team, with the subsequent caregiver (whether the child’s parent or another substitute caregiver) regarding the child’s adjustment in the foster parent’s home**

Foster parents are expected to provide all pertinent information to the child welfare team. This responsibility is relayed to all foster parents during initial and ongoing training. Foster parents are invited to attend a formal placement review committee meeting when a placement move is being considered. Information regarding the current placement can be shared with the child welfare team to be forwarded to the subsequent caregiver. The caseworker will provide any and all information to the new caregiver that has been received from the previous foster parent. In addition, the child’s case file is available for the prospective or new foster parent to review with the team. During the licensing process the foster parents are given a copy of the CFS 600-4, “Sharing Information with the Caregiver”, by the licensing specialist to ensure that the foster parent is aware of all of the information that they should be provided regarding any youth that is placed in their home. The foster parents also sign an acknowledgement form that they have received the document for retention in their foster home file. The foster parents are encouraged to

track a foster child's information provided to them by a caseworker once a child is placed into their home.

The CHAIL foster care department works together as a team to ensure that information is shared amongst the entire team including the foster parent. This starts with all staff being informed. CHAIL conducts a weekly meeting with the Vice President and all foster care supervisors to discuss any cases where follow up is required and who is responsible to ensure that everything has been done for the youth and foster parents. There is also a weekly coordinators meeting in which all supervisors of foster care and the Vice President of foster care are able to discuss and brainstorm anything that could benefit our youth in care and our foster parents, along with other topics. Twice a month there is a meeting held in which every case in the foster care department is staffed by the assigned caseworker, family support worker, therapist, educational liaison, nurse, Vice President, and every supervisor including the licensing supervisor. These staffing's are essential to ensure that the needs of our youth and foster parents are being met by the agency. Through all of these meetings communication regarding the youth in care is discussed at length and then that information can be relayed to the foster parents by any member of the foster care team.

CHAIL also encourages shared parenting between the foster parent and the biological parent throughout the life of the case. Family engagement training, which is specific to this, was developed and is currently being provided on a quarterly basis to CHAIL foster homes and other licensed foster parents within the city and are licensed through other agencies. This training will provide foster parents with specific ways in which the foster parent can share information regarding the youth placed in their home with the biological parents. The shared parenting techniques are a continuum of contact between the foster parents and the biological parents to allow the foster parents to be comfortable with the contact that they have. CHAIL encourages family engagement with the foster parents to help best serve the youth in care that is placed in the home as it ultimately benefits the youth and their ability to thrive while being placed in a foster home. The training also explains how shared parenting also benefits the foster parents.

**32(17) The responsibility to provide care and services that are respective of and responsive to the child's cultural needs and are supportive of the relationship between the child and his or her own family; the responsibility to recognize the increased importance of maintaining a child's cultural identity when the race or culture of the foster family differs from that of the foster child; and the responsibility to take action to address these issues.**

If race, culture, or national origin has been raised as an issue, the procedures are followed to complete the "Inter Ethnic Act Assessment" form, CFS 2018. At the time of any cross racial placement, we include discussion and support of special care and services which may require some foster parent education. Additionally, cross-racial placements include

team interaction on a case-by-case basis with the focus on the individual child's adjustment needs.

The licensing team makes every effort to place children in foster homes that are culturally comparable in regards to race and religion. When that is not possible, the agency promotes cultural awareness in our foster parents through one-on-one training to better ensure the cultural needs of children are met when placements are outside their heritage. The licensing team, as well as the case management teams, are involved in the education of the foster parents to be culturally aware of the needs of all children. The cultural trainings include information on how to care for the skin and hair of the children in their homes who are culturally different. The agency believes that respecting the diversity of others is an important part of how we serve our clients. Encouraging the foster parent to attend events specific to the culture of the children in their homes has become one of the priorities of the staff. Children's Home staff inform foster parents of trainings within the agency and the community that provide support and education to foster parents who may not be familiar with the child's culture. Foster parents are consistently informed of trainings held within the community through email, flyers, mailings, and the monthly newsletter. We want the foster parents to integrate the child into the child's heritage through community cultural events and activities that allow the child to learn about their culture and to experience expressions of that culture.