

THE BABY FOLD  
FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

THE FOSTER PARENT LAW  
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR 2023

A foster parent's rights include, but are not limited to, the following:

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

The Baby Fold's Statement of Beliefs is rooted in a foundation of teamwork and open communication, and valuing and respecting each individual. "Each individual is a unique child of God and as such we value and respect each individual. Teamwork and open communication among employees, clients, board members and volunteers (including foster parents) is essential to our purpose." We value, listen to, are kind to, and encourage others. We seek to find common ground, are considerate, seek partnerships, and listen in order to understand each other. By adhering to each foster parent right we treat them with dignity and respect.

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

Ease in accessibility to The Baby Fold Staff continues through enhanced communication efforts. Each child welfare specialist, licensing worker and child welfare supervisor is issued an agency cell phone equipped with texting and e-mail capabilities. This provides foster parents with easy access to the child welfare specialists and allows a quick response to their calls and text messages. Foster parents may contact the child welfare supervisor if their caseworker is unavailable and the foster parent has a pertinent need or question. Whenever possible, phone calls will be returned within one business day.

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

Child welfare specialists, licensing workers, and supervisors receive training and supervision that emphasizes the importance of teamwork with foster parents and the treatment of all team members with dignity and respect. Foster parents are encouraged to be part of the professional team through participation in staffings and joint training with child welfare specialists, licensing workers, and supervisors. Foster parents are also encouraged to contribute their input in developing plans for the care of the children in their home. Phone conferencing is used for including foster parents when they are unable to participate in person. As professional members of the team, foster parents have the right to receive answers to their questions and obtain assistance in problem solving.

Child welfare specialists respect foster parents as valued team members by seeking their input when scheduling parent/child visitation and child and family team meetings and when planning and decision making is occurring regarding the child, including recommendations for

permanency goals. Agency therapists maintain contact with foster parents for consultation in order to address the foster parents' concerns.

Foster parents are involved in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of service plan goals and treatment plan goals. Foster parents are informed of court hearings and administrative case reviews and are encouraged to be present and participate. Foster parents are provided with a form to complete prior to scheduled court hearings so their input can be considered by the judge. Foster parents receive training so they are prepared to function as the educational advocate for their foster children.

Foster parents are informed of opportunities to participate as team members and to develop their professional skills through quarterly newsletters. The newsletter serves as an additional means of communication, provides pertinent information, and enhances knowledge for the purpose of further emphasis on teambuilding.

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

The Baby Fold involved a group of foster parents in creating an agency foster parent manual. This manual is provided to foster parents at the final home visit prior to licensure, and serves as a tool for educating foster parents in their role as a professional member of the child welfare team. The manual is reviewed on annually to ensure accurate and up-to-date information. Foster parents and staff members may request an electronic copy of the manual.

The Baby Fold has an in-service training for foster care staff that familiarizes them with The Baby Fold's Implementation Plan, and focuses on working with foster parents and including them as a part of the professional child welfare team. In-service training will also inform foster care staff of the content of Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training that foster parents are required to attend and complete prior to becoming licensed.

Information is sought from the agency foster parents to ensure they are treated with dignity and respect. Foster parents are surveyed by the Quality Enhancement staff on an annual basis (when they have placements) and at the time their license is closed/surrendered.

The Quality Enhancement staff also completes a yearly foster parent survey. These surveys offer foster parents the opportunity to express their level of satisfaction with the treatment they received from the agency foster care staff. The information received from foster parents is provided to staff through quarterly Quality Enhancement meetings and individual supervision.

Licensing workers, child welfare specialists, supervisors, therapists, and interns meet with the foster parent group on a regular basis, no less than quarterly, to review The Baby Fold's Implementation Plan. Through participation in the group, foster parents are able to give input regarding program enhancement, provide suggestions for training and activities, and participate in planning events. Foster parents may use the agency foster parent group as a means of expressing concerns. Information received through the group members is provided to staff

during staff meetings. Additional training is provided, as needed, to address the necessary responsiveness to foster parents' expressed concerns.

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

**2. The right to be provided standardized pre-service training and appropriate ongoing training to meet mutually assessed needs and improve the foster parents' skills.**

Prospective foster parents are informed about PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training during their first contact with the agency. Licensing workers register prospective foster parents for PRIDE training promptly.

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

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

Licensing workers begin assessing training needs as part of the initial licensing assessment. Licensing workers assist foster families in developing training plans that will address the family's ability to meet the needs of children placed in their home. Licensing workers monitor progress toward the completion of training plans and address the ongoing training needs of foster parents at every license monitoring visit. Information about PRIDE module training, educational advocacy training, adoption training, community trainings, and agency-sponsored trainings is shared with foster parents, along with the list of resources that have been approved through the DCFS Office of Training. The Baby Fold offers written, audio, and visual resources for foster parents' use. In offering information about the variety of choices that are available for training, foster parents can then select the content and training method that best meets their needs.

During each semi-annual license monitoring visit, discussion occurs with the foster parent to assist them in identifying their training needs and interests. A tailored training plan leads to increased knowledge and enhanced skills needed to successfully parent children in their home. The foster parents' identified training needs are listed on the Licensing Monitoring Record. Training logs are kept by The Baby Fold in order to ensure that foster parents obtain the required hours of training and receive training that is in keeping with their needs and interests. Licensing workers will assist foster parents, as requested, in seeking resources for training that meets their needs and interests.

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

Using information obtained through licensing monitoring visits, feedback from the foster parent group, and foster parent survey results, agency training will be provided to foster parents that will assist them in meeting their required hours of training and focus on meeting their expressed needs and interests. The training schedule is developed quarterly and is advertised in The Baby Fold's foster parent newsletter.

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

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

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

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

Foster parents are informed of all relevant agency training that is available to child welfare staff, through the monthly newsletter, as well as the PRIDE modules and training that is available in the community. Information regarding agency sponsored training is also e-mailed to foster parents.

Foster parents are encouraged to participate in agency training. Foster parents are encouraged to attend any DCFS sponsored caregivers' conferences/institutes. Information about the conferences is included in The Baby Fold's foster parent newsletter.

Foster parents, as training participants, are asked to complete evaluation forms for the agency training they attend. The foster parent group offers suggestions for desired and needed training. Along with the annual foster parent survey, this information is used to improve existing training and prepare future training.

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

Foster parents are encouraged to access the Path Crisis Center's Path-o-gram, a monthly on line newsletter which contains a wealth of information regarding local social service agencies' programs, including opportunities for training.

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

**3. The right to be informed as to how to contact the appropriate child placement agency in order to receive information and assistance to access supportive services for children in their care.**

For each child in their care foster parents are provided with names of the assigned child welfare specialist and supervisor. Child welfare specialists and their supervisors may be reached on their agency desk phone, agency cell phone (by calling or texting), or agency e-mail. Foster parents are also informed that they may contact the Child Welfare Services Manager if the child's worker and supervisor are not available. Foster parents may also contact a Family Development Specialist with questions or requests for services.

Foster parents receive the emergency on-call phone number that is answered 365 days a year, before and after business hours during the week, and throughout weekends and holidays. When foster parents call the agency after hours, the answering machine message instructs them how to reach the on-call phone for each foster care program.

Foster parents receive a child record folder for each foster child, which lists the DCFS emergency numbers needed to obtain authorization for emergency medical treatment for DCFS youth. Foster parents can access the DCFS Foster Family Handbook on line, or receive a digital copy that lists offices and phone numbers that are available for assistance. The licensing worker provides training to foster parents on resources available as noted in the handbook and The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual.

The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual includes information on available supportive services, including Screening, Assessment and Support Services (SASS), Intensive Placement Stabilization wrap services, and consultation services. Phone numbers for The Baby Fold's after hours emergency number, the Crisis Team and the DCFS hotline are included.

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

With The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual, foster parents receive a comprehensive list of important phone numbers. This list includes but is not limited to: the Medical Card Hotline, Poison Control, SASS/CARES hotline, the Advocacy Office, the Office of Inspector General and the DCFS Abuse/Neglect Hotline.

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

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

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

At the beginning of each fiscal year foster parents receive a schedule of dates of when monthly foster care board payments for foster parents will be sent. Checks are sent no later than the fifteenth of the month following the month when service was provided. Each foster parent is reimbursed according to the level of care DCFS has approved for the child, Specialized or Traditional.

Placement/Payment Authorization forms will be completed within 24 hours of the child's placement. When relative care providers become licensed, the Placement/Payment form will be completed within 24 hours of The Baby Fold receiving confirmation of the issuance of the license. The worker completing the 906 utilizes codes for the type of care a child is receiving and the payment that a foster parent should be given. The Baby Fold's business office issues reimbursement checks based on information on the 906 on a monthly basis. The Baby Fold's schedule for when checks are issued is mailed to foster parents on an annual basis at the beginning of the fiscal year. Unlicensed relatives receive their reimbursements from DCFS. Caseworkers and licensing workers assist unlicensed relative caregivers by providing phone numbers if there is a payment issue.

Foster parents receive a list of approved reimbursable travel expenses in The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual. Foster parents submit travel expenses at the end of each month and receive reimbursement by the fifteenth of the following month. Foster parents are encouraged to complete Illinois Department of Public Aid forms in order to receive reimbursement for transporting their foster children to medical and counseling appointments.

At the time of placement, foster parents are informed by Child Welfare Specialists of items that are considered non-recurring expenses. Foster parents may request non-recurring expense payment for children in their care. Foster parents must obtain approval from the Child Welfare Services Manager prior to incurring the expense. Most often the payment for these expenses is usually made directly from The Baby Fold to the provider. When prior approval has been

obtained, reimbursement will be made to the foster parent within fourteen days of submission of receipts.

Foster parents may request up to seven days of paid respite per year for each child in traditional and relative (including unlicensed relative homes) foster care. Foster parents are eligible for a minimum of fifteen hours of paid respite per month for each child in specialized foster care. Written respite plans are developed for specialized foster care children.

Upon confirmation that respite has been provided, within 24 hours the case worker will complete the respite payment form and submit it to their supervisor. The Baby Fold pays approved respite providers directly within fourteen days of confirmation that respite has been provided.

Foster parents may contact The Baby Fold's business office to resolve any payment problems.

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

The foster home placement agreement expresses the role and responsibilities of the agency and the foster parent related to the child being placed in the foster home. The foster home placement agreement specifically states that the foster parent needs to treat the parents courteously and refrain from criticizing them in the child's presence. The placement agreement also states that the foster parent will plan with the direct service staff before making religious commitments for the child such as baptism, confirmation, church attendance, church membership, and religious holiday celebrations. By signing the foster home placement agreement, the foster parent agrees to support the permanency goals for the child and to attend all court hearings and other staffings related to planning for the child.

Foster parents receive written notification of and are encouraged to attend all administrative case reviews. A copy of the child's portion of the service plan is given to the foster parent. As needed, tasks are added for the foster parent as they relate specifically to the child in their care.

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

Foster parents are involved in the development, implementation, and evaluation of service plan goals, for the child in their care, regarding the child's needs in the areas of education, medical care, development of social skills, emotional development, and the development of independent living skills. Foster parents are included in discussions regarding the child's adjustment to their placement, and participate in the completion of the child's summary portion of the client service plan.

Foster parents are consulted in establishing the visitation plan, as to the days of the week and times that are most convenient for the foster parents and child's schedules. Other means of parent/child and sibling contact, such as phone calls and letters are discussed and included in the

visitation plan. Foster parents are provided with a copy of the Sibling Contact Information Form CFS 318. Foster parents are encouraged to host sibling visits and are reimbursed for hosting and supervising sibling visits.

When unplanned changes occur in the case plan or the permanency goal, verbal notification will be provided to the foster parent within one business day.

Foster parents are notified in writing fourteen days prior to a child being moved from their home. Foster parents are required to provide the agency with a fourteen days written notice when they wish to have a child moved from their home.

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

- 6. The right to be provided a fair, timely, and impartial investigation of complaints concerning the foster parent's licensure, to be provided the opportunity to have a person of the foster parent's choosing present during the investigation, and to be provided due process during the investigation; the right to be provided the opportunity to request and receive mediation or an administrative review of decisions that affect licensing parameters, or both mediation and an administrative review; and the right to have decisions concerning a licensing corrective action plan specifically explained and tied to the licensing standards violated.**

Complaints concerning a foster parent's licensure come from a variety of sources, including routine contacts with the foster family by agency staff, reports of others outside the agency, and as a result of a report to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.

Per 89 III. Adm. Code 383, upon receipt of a licensing complaint the assigned licensing worker initiates a licensing complaint investigation within two days of the complaint. The licensing worker explains that he/she is conducting a licensing investigation, and informs the foster parent of the alleged violations. Foster parents are informed, both verbally and through the receipt of the Foster Parent Rights Related to Licensing Complaint Investigations Form, that they may have a person of their own choosing present, and the foster parent is given four hours to have that person present. Persons chosen to be present must sign the Confidentiality Statement for Authorized Representatives During Licensing Complaint Investigation Form.

The foster parent is informed that there will be a hold placed on their home regarding future placements, until the licensing investigation is completed. Every attempt is made to complete a licensing complaint investigation within thirty calendar days of the complaint. Foster parents are notified in writing if thirty additional calendar days are needed to complete the investigation.

Within fifteen days of completing the investigation the agency makes a formal determination of whether or not a licensing violation has occurred. Foster parents are sent a certified letter with the findings of the investigation within five days of a determination being made. Each finding is linked to a specific licensing standard. A corrective action plan also connects the elements of the plan to the specific licensing standards.

Foster parents are informed that they may request an informal supervisory review within ten days of the postmark of the certified letter. They are also informed of The Baby Fold's formal appeal process and the DCFS Appeal Process.

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

Child welfare specialists are trained regarding all information that is to be shared with foster parents concerning the children in their care. For initial placements, within sixty days of placement the worker will complete the entire Child/Caregiver Matching Tool, adding information that has become available through the integrated assessment including school reports, medical records, and psychological or psychiatric evaluations. The completed Child/Caregiver Matching Tool is signed by the child welfare specialist and the supervisor and then filed in the child's case record.

In signing the Foster Home Placement Agreement, the child welfare specialist agrees to discuss with the foster parent information regarding the child's family and background in order to assist the foster parent in understanding and helping the child. Child welfare specialists continue to evaluate and assess the need for foster parents to receive other pertinent information regarding a child in their care on a case by case basis. Such case issues are discussed between the child welfare specialist and the supervisor during supervision. Pertinent information is then shared with the foster parent as it relates to the children in their home.

Supervisors are responsible for holding child welfare specialists accountable for sharing pertinent information with the foster parents. Through individual supervision, and team meetings, supervisors ensure that pertinent information has been shared with the foster parent.

Child welfare specialists and licensing workers routinely check the child's record folder that the foster parent maintains, to ensure that the foster parent has all the necessary information. Foster parents receive updated information through the school staffings, medical appointments, agency staffings, court hearings, and Child and Family Team Meetings that they attend.

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

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

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

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

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

- 9. The right to be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings concerning the foster child in order to actively participate in the case planning and decision-making process regarding the child in their care, including individual service planning meetings, administrative case reviews, interdisciplinary staffings, and individual educational planning meetings; the right to be informed of decisions made by the court or the child welfare agency concerning the child; the right to provide input concerning the plan of services for a child and to have that input given full consideration in the same manner as information presented by any other professional on the team; and the right to communicate with other professionals who work with the foster child within the context of the team, including therapists, physicians, and teachers.**

All case workers receive training on the inclusion of foster parents in all staffings related to planning for the child. Foster parents are encouraged to attend and participate in all staffings related to case planning for the child in their care. During the monthly foster home visit, the worker will receive input from the foster parent, regarding service planning for the child. All foster parents are also invited to attend child and family team meetings. When scheduling child and family team meetings, caseworkers determine foster parents' availability prior to scheduling the meetings. When foster parents are unable to attend in person, caseworkers invite them to participate over the phone or electronically.

All foster parents are notified in person, writing, or electronically of administrative case reviews. DCFS directly sends administrative case review notifications to parents. The Baby Fold holds other interdisciplinary staffings, in which foster parents will be notified in person, by electronic communication or through writing. Foster parents are encouraged to provide input regarding the Implementation plan. Foster parents participate in the review of treatment plans for any children in their care receiving therapy.

When children receive therapy services at The Baby Fold, the foster parent participates in the assessment and treatment planning process. Foster parents whose children receive therapy may consult with the child's therapist.

Individual educational planning meetings are attended by the foster parents. All licensed foster homes complete Educational Advocacy training prior to renewing their foster home license in order to participate as a parent in the child's educational services.

Caseworkers notify the foster parents of all upcoming court hearings and the purpose for each hearing. Foster parents are given the opportunity to express their opinions regarding case

dynamics through the submission of a formal statement or the completion of an internal Baby Fold form. Documents are submitted to the court and reviewed by the judge prior to the court hearing. If the foster parent chooses not to attend a court hearing, the caseworker informs the foster parent of any decisions made by the court at that particular hearing. Information regarding unplanned changes in the case plan or the permanency goal will be provided to the foster parent through verbal notification within one business day. Foster parents are provided with the name and business phone number of the child's Guardian Ad Litem.

Foster parents are encouraged to attend all medical appointments concerning the foster child. They are requested to have ongoing contact with the child's school, attending parent/teacher conferences and all other school staffings. Foster parents are encouraged to have contact with other professionals who work with their foster children.

Specialized foster parents participate in the referral and assessment process being referred for psychiatric evaluations. They are encouraged to attend ongoing appointments with the child psychiatrist for the purpose of monitoring medications prescribed for the foster children.

Foster parents have accessibility to The Baby Fold's clinical director, a licensed clinical psychologist, to discuss a child's behavior and psychological needs. Foster parents are also included in the consultation process, and have an understanding that cases may be further referred to The Baby Fold's interdisciplinary team.

Foster parents are most often notified in person, over the phone, or electronically of opportunities to participate in decision-making regarding the children in their care. Phone and in-person notification is documented in case records. Some notifications are in writing.

- 10. The right to be provided, in a timely and consistent manner, with any information a caseworker has regarding the child and the child's family which is pertinent to the care and needs of the child and to the making of a permanency plan for the child. Disclosure of information concerning a child's family shall be limited to that information which is essential for understanding the needs of and providing care to the child in order to protect the rights of the child's family. When a positive relationship exists between the foster parents and the child's family, the child's family may consent to disclosure of additional information.**

When possible, attempts are made to obtain and provide families with all pertinent, child-specific information prior to, or at the time of, the child's placement. New case information received from the DCFS Centralized Intake, will be shared with the prospective foster parent. The intake worker will seek additional information from the DCFS investigator, and the current DCFS caseworker if the case has been served as an intact family case. For new cases, at the shelter care hearing, the caseworker will obtain further information regarding the child's behavior, medical needs, and educational placement. This information will be provided to the foster parent.

The Child/Caregiver Matching Tool is completed to describe the child's characteristics and identify their individual needs. The Child/Caregiver Matching Tool is signed by the child welfare specialist and the supervisor and is placed in the case record.

Children requiring specialized care are often referred with an informational packet. General information is shared with the prospective foster parents prior to them accepting placement of the child. When children are placed in emergency circumstances there may be little information available. In those instances, the assigned child welfare specialist begins the process of gathering information about the child and sharing all relevant information with the foster parents as soon as possible. Information shared includes medical history and current medical status; developmental and educational history and status; information regarding prior abuse, neglect, previous placements, and relationship with family members and significant others; information regarding child's behaviors, habits, interests, and routines. Information obtained through the comprehensive assessment, regarding the child, will be provided to the foster parent.

The confidentiality of the child's family is protected unless the family member has signed a consent for the release of information. Without violating the confidentiality of the biological parents, foster parents will be provided with as much information as possible regarding the parent/child visits as it pertains to the care and the needs of the child. Information will be shared with the foster parent as soon as possible following the parent/child visit.

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

Foster parents receive written notice of any change in a child's case plan. When the agency terminates a child's placement, foster parents are provided with a fourteen-day written notice, the CFS 151 Notice of Decision form. CFS 151 outlines reasons for the placement change. Foster parents also receive written notice of their right to appeal this decision. The caseworker informs the foster parent of the appeal process and explains how an appeal can be filed. Fourteen-day written notice is not required when a court orders removal of the child from the foster home, or when an imminent risk of harm is present.

**12. The right to be notified in a timely and complete manner of all court hearings, including notice of the date and time of the court hearing, the name of the judge or hearing officer hearing the case, the location of court proceeding and the court docket number of the case; and the right to intervene in court proceedings or to seek mandamus under the Juvenile Court Act of 1987.**

The child welfare specialist assigned to the child informs the child's foster parents, in person, by phone, or in writing, of the next scheduled court hearing related to the child, including the date, time, place, judge, GAL (guardian ad litem), and docket number. The child welfare specialist is held accountable for notifying foster parents of court hearings. Completion of this task is verified through supervision with the supervisor, and documentation of the phone notification in a case note, or retaining a copy of the written notification in the case file.

Foster parents learn of their right to intervene in court proceedings or to seek mandamus under the Juvenile Court Act of 1987 through PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training and in

reviewing the DCFS Foster Family Handbook. Agency staff also relay this information to foster parents.

Foster parents can obtain a Foster Parent Report form to complete or can submit a written statement prior to the court hearing. This allows them to share information with the juvenile court judge regarding their perspective of the youth in care.

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

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

The Child/Caregiver Matching Tool is completed to determine the child's current needs and whether the former foster family is willing to care for the child. The Child/Caregiver Matching Tool must be signed by the child welfare specialist and the supervisor. Placement decisions are approved by The Baby Fold's Child Welfare Services administrative staff, ensuring that previous foster families have been considered prior to implementing a placement decision.

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

Information is included in The Baby Fold's foster parent manual on The Baby Fold's foster parent grievance process. A copy of the agency policy and procedure for foster parent grievances is provided to the foster parent at the time of placement of a child in the foster home. A copy of the grievance process is also provided to foster parents on an annual basis when they receive a copy of the updated implementation plan. The process is also reviewed on an annual basis by the foster parents and staff who provide feedback regarding the implementation plan. Foster parents are informed that this grievance process may be used to address alleged violations of the Foster Parent Law. Agency staff refer to the grievance process and provide additional copies of the process when foster parents question or disagree with an agency decision. Inclusion of the Department Director and the Chief Executive Officer in the grievance process ensures that acts of harassment or retaliation are prevented.

DCFS service appeals brochures are provided to foster parents and they are informed that they may file a service appeal with DCFS. If requested, the caseworker will assist the foster parent in writing the appeal.

**15. The right to be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline established under Section 35.6 of the Children and Family Services Act and all of the rights accorded to foster parents**

**concerning reports of misconduct by Department employees, service providers or contractors, confidential handling of those reports, and investigation by the Inspector General appointed under Section 35.5 of the Children and Family Services Act.**

Foster parents learn about the DCFS Advocacy Office (phone number 1-800-232-3798) and the Inspector General's Office during PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training and through review of the DCFS Foster Family Handbook. The Baby Fold's foster parent manual lists the toll-free number for the Office of the Inspector General (1-800-722-9124). The number is also published in The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Newsletter and provided on the business card. Agency staff remind foster parents of these resources when foster parents question or disagree with DCFS or agency policies, practices, or decisions.

**A foster parent's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:**

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

PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training prepares prospective foster parents for their roles as team members and emphasizes the value of open communication. The Baby Fold's policy on Principles of Communication is shared with foster parents via The Baby Fold's foster parent manual, and agency staff encourage open communication and sharing of information among all members of the child welfare team. Foster parent involvement in staffings, court hearings, administrative case reviews, and home visits provides a forum for open exchange of information. Foster parents also need to notify their caseworker of any significant events regarding the child(ren) in their care.

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

Issues of confidentiality are covered in the PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training, the DCFS Foster Family Handbook, The Baby Fold's foster parent manual, licensing standards, and The Baby Fold foster home placement agreement. Agency staff work with foster parents to help them identify information that is confidential and the reasons for adherence to confidentiality. Confidentiality is reviewed with licensed foster parents at every six month license monitoring visit.

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

Agency staff are trained to recognize the role of foster parents as advocates for children in their care. PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training, Educational Advocacy training, annual court training, the DCFS Foster Family Handbook and The Baby Fold Foster Parent Manual help inform foster parents regarding their roles as advocates. Foster parents are encouraged to advocate for their foster children in all arenas, including staffings, Administrative Case Reviews,

multi-disciplinary staffings, court, meetings with the guardian ad litem, and Child and Family Team meetings.

According to the foster home placement agreement foster parents are to be active participants in the child's education by facilitating his/her educational program, maintaining regular contact with school staff, and attending all staffings. Licensing workers register foster parents for Educational Advocacy Training and ensure completion per licensing standards.

Foster parents are informed of the DCFS and agency appeal processes, the Inspector General's office and the DCFS Advocacy Office as resources to consider utilizing in their role as advocates. Copies of the DCFS service appeal brochures are provided to foster parents in the child's record folder. The Baby Fold's grievance process is provided to foster parents annually and is also included in the Foster Parent Manual.

#### **4. The responsibility to treat children in their care and their families with dignity, respect and consideration.**

PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training, licensing standards, and the foster home placement agreement all emphasize the responsibility of foster parents to treat children in their care and their families with dignity, respect and consideration. Sensitivity to children and birth families is an integral part of the orientation training provided to new foster parents at The Baby Fold.

The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual includes the agency's Christian values. The manual includes a copy of the Client Rights form, outlining the rights to which children and clients are entitled. Information is included regarding relationships between foster parents and biological parents. Through the Foster Parent Manual and discussion with foster care personnel, foster parents are informed of the role of the caseworker in assessing the safety and well being of each foster child, and are made aware that private face to face contact will be made with the foster child at least one time per month.

Foster Parents are expected to participate in the initial family meetings as a way to initiate contact and communication with birth parents. These meetings provide an opportunity for foster parents to begin building bridges with the birth families for the benefit of the children. Foster parents are also expected to participate in child and family teams. Their participation provides an opportunity for all involved persons to share information and develop strategies that will assist birth families in meeting their goals. Foster parent participation in child and family teams also assists children in care to observe all involved parties working together. Participation in child and family team meetings provides foster parents with opportunities to build relationships with birth parents and to share information about the child and to work together on common goals. Foster parents also are encouraged, when deemed appropriate, to involve birth parents in as many medical appointments and educational meetings and activities as possible. Child welfare specialists and other staff help facilitate a family's involvement by keeping birth parents informed of dates and times that appointments and activities are being held.

Training is available on trans-cultural parenting for foster parents to further enhance their abilities to understand and work with children and families of other races and cultures. The Baby Fold values getting feedback from families on what training topics they would find helpful. Foster parent input drives what trainings staff holds in person or virtually.

Agency staff reinforce this responsibility with foster parents in their regular contacts with foster families. This includes weekly or monthly case management contacts by the caseworker and semi-annual monitoring visits by the licensing worker. During these contacts staff will model dignity, respect and consideration through their discussion of the family and the foster child with the foster parent. As needed, staff will reiterate licensing standards emphasizing appropriate treatment of the foster children and their families.

Violations of licensing standards will be reported via The Baby Fold's Licensing Complaint Report and will be signed by the staff member making the report and their supervisor.

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

The agency and foster family engage in a mutual assessment process at the time of licensing and through continued monitoring visits which includes an assessment of family strengths and limitations and the types of children whose needs can be met by the foster family. Foster Parents complete a Foster Parent Preference Checklist that allows them to state demographic preferences and give placement preference information based on their personal strengths, limitations, and desires. At the time of the six months monitoring visit with the licensing worker, the foster parent may make changes to their Preference Checklist. Through completion of successful placements, the strengths, capabilities, and talents of the foster family are noted. These factors are taken into consideration when the agency considers foster families for possible placements. The agency utilizes the Child/Caregiver Matching Tool to ensure that the needs of each child will be met in the proposed foster placement. Agency staff urge foster parents to consider their strengths and limitations when the agency presents them with the referral of a child.

Through the use of the Child/Caregiver Matching Tool, the areas in which the foster parent may need additional assistance are identified. Once a child is placed the agency works with the foster family and includes them as a member of the professional child welfare team to help identify the supports and resources needed to meet the needs of the child. Child welfare specialists make referrals for needed services for foster children on their caseloads.

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

Training needs are examined throughout the time that a family is licensed with the agency, both relating to the needs of an individual child as well as training that applies to foster parenting in general. The foster parent's training logs are reviewed with them at each monitoring visit. Training that is pertinent to the foster parent's needs is discussed and training options are noted.

**6. The responsibility to be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations in improving the quality of care and service to children and families.**

Foster parents learn of foster parent associations and support groups through PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training, the DCFS Foster Family Handbook, Families Now and Forever and The Baby Fold's foster parent monthly newsletter.

Licensing workers discuss the ongoing training needs of the foster parents during the licensing monitoring visits and inform them of workshops and conferences that are available to them.

The agency supports the attendance of foster parents and staff at the annual Caregivers' Conferences.

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

All foster parents are invited to a welcome dinner at the agency. This offers foster parents the opportunity to meet agency staff, as well as, both new and experienced foster parents. The Baby Fold also offers a Nurturing Parent group for foster parents as needed or requested. Through these groups, along with PRIDE training, foster parents become acquainted with one another and develop supportive relationships.

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

Agency foster parents utilize one another to provide respite.

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

Foster parents receive information regarding ongoing training requirements through receipt of the licensing standards and The Baby Fold's foster parent manual. Family development staff and foster parents together assess training needs and complete and sign the Licensing Monitoring Record form, which contains the training plan pertaining to the child(ren) placed in the foster home.

Through regular license monitoring and case planning activities foster parents and the agency identify training needs, as they pertain to the care of the children currently placed in the home, and in preparation for accepting future placements. The Caregiver Matching Tool is used to identify areas in which the foster parent may need assistance through additional training. The Baby Fold informs foster parents through personal contacts and the monthly newsletter of ongoing module training, agency training, and outside training that can meet those training needs. If necessary, the licensing worker will seek a training resource to fulfill a particular need. As stated in The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual, The Baby Fold will reimburse foster parents for travel expenses to attend agency-approved training.

Foster parents are informed of information resources, such as articles, books, audio tapes, video tapes, and community support groups. They are encouraged to use the DCFS Virtual Training site.

Through the foster parent newsletter and the foster parent committee meetings, foster parents are invited to suggest training topics that can be addressed through the foster/adoptive parent training sessions. Foster parents can access training through the Foster Parent College DVD series and the Trust Based Relational Interventions (TBRI) Healing Families DVD series. The Healing Families series includes: TBRI Overview, Attachment: Why It Matters, Children From Hard Places and the Brain, Playful Interaction, Healthy Touch, A Sensory World and Trust Based Parenting.

**8. The responsibility to develop and assist in implementing strategies to prevent placement disruptions, recognizing the traumatic impact of placement disruptions on a foster child and all members of the foster family; and the responsibility to provide emotional support for the foster children and members of the foster family should preventive strategies fail and placement disruptions occur.**

Caseworkers utilize the Caregiver Matching Tool, the social history information, and placement information to identify the early signs of children who may be at risk of disrupting from or creating disruption within the foster home. These pieces of information help to identify areas for developing strategies to prevent placement disruptions. A plan is then developed for prevention of disruption. The plan may include additional support services and further training for the foster parent.

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

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

The Baby Fold and foster families work together to access Intensive Placement Stabilization services, SASS services, respite, counseling, and other services needed to prevent a disrupted placement. Workers will maintain the required in-person contacts to assess problems, work with the foster parents on problem solving, and assist in seeking appropriate supportive resources as needed. Linking the foster parent with another foster parent may be used as a source of additional support.

When respite care is utilized as an intervention strategy to prevent a placement disruption, the caseworker, supervisor, and the foster parents will discuss the issue and develop a plan to address the issues that are resulting in struggles for the child and foster family.

Licensing workers and child welfare specialists encourage foster families to utilize needed services to ensure that foster children and members of the foster family receive emotional support when placement disruptions occur. Upon receipt of a written notice from a foster parent for the removal of a foster child, a plan will be made for supporting the foster child and the foster family through the transition.

Foster parents may request counseling, training, or support services for themselves and their family members should placement problems or a placement disruption occur. Foster parents are

encouraged to seek assistance and support, as needed, from other social service agencies, their church/pastor, or local support groups. When possible and appropriate, foster parents may maintain contact with a foster child following the disruption of the placement.

Baby Fold staff are available 24 hours a day to assist foster parents when problematic behaviors arise. The on-call worker can provide assistance himself or herself or can contact the child welfare specialist, supervisor, or therapist involved in the child's case. A response form is completed by the on-call worker, informing the caseworker and supervisor of the reason for the call, any response given, and anything requiring further follow-up by the worker is noted. This form is provided to the worker the following business day.

When critical incidents and/or unusual incidents occur, the required forms are completed that include a plan for resolution of the problem.

Foster parents have the availability to consult with The Baby Fold's therapists and clinical director regarding the child's problematic behavior in order to reduce the potential of placement disruption. Information is collected from the child welfare team, including the foster parents, and clinical tools are used to assess the child's functioning. Behavior plans are developed for use in the foster home.

Foster parents are encouraged to avail themselves of support services in order to prevent placement disruption, including the use of respite services.

**9. The responsibility to know the impact foster parenting has on individuals and family relationships; and the responsibility to endeavor to minimize, as much as possible, any stress that results from foster parenting.**

The Baby Fold offers many forums for foster parents to address the stress they experience as foster parents. Training sessions assist foster parents in identifying and minimizing the stress. Agency staff are available by phone at all times to assist foster parents in recognizing stress and formulating strategies for preventing, reducing, or eliminating stress. Stress management and self care training is available and can be accessed.

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

The quarterly newsletter gives tips and suggestions to foster parents for reducing stress related to foster parenting. Foster parents can consult with The Baby Fold's therapists and clinical director and they can request counseling as it relates to the fostering experience, including requesting emotional support for their family when a foster child returns to their biological family. Licensing workers can refer foster parents to PRIDE module training that addresses the impact of foster parenting. Licensing staff help reinforce the services that are available to foster parents to effectively manage the stress associated with foster parenting.

Through the Foster Parent Manual and orientation training, foster parents are made aware of the procedure for utilizing respite care. Foster parents are encouraged to use respite care and approved child care arrangements as preventative measures to avoid placement disruptions.

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

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

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

Through participation in the foster parent group, foster parent attendees have the means to make suggestions regarding ways the program can be improved for their benefit, assisting them in more effective foster parenting. It also provides a way for foster parents to have input as to ways the agency can acknowledge and express gratitude for their service.

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

Foster parents receive encouragement through their contacts with agency staff and other foster parents, and through the receipt of the foster care newsletter. Training sessions bring foster parents together to encourage and support one another.

Items with the agency logo, such as shirts, coffee mugs, and book bags are used to promote foster parenting. Foster parents are able to purchase items with the agency logo at the same time as agency staff.

The Baby Fold Story, a newsletter with a circulation of 25,000 which includes the agency’s foster parents, highlights accomplishments of foster parents and promotes foster parenting in a positive way. The annual Baby Fold Festival of Trees enhances community awareness of all agency programs including the agency’s foster care program. The Baby Fold utilizes both print and broadcast media to promote foster parenting. Brochures for recruitment of foster parents have been developed.

Churches are used as a means of contact in order to promote foster parenting and give recognition to those who are foster parents. Church bulletins, church newsletters, and church programs are used for this purpose.

Foster parents actively recruit additional foster parents. They are encouraged to participate in foster parent recruitment events within the community. Licensing workers identify foster parents who have the skills and experiences to assist in recruitment events where staff will also be present to answer questions. Foster parents are identified who are comfortable with public

speaking and are willing to share in recruitment events by telling their own stories and sharing their own experiences on a voluntary basis.

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

Foster parents are informed of and encouraged to attend state events that acknowledge and support foster parents. The Baby Fold’s annual foster parent/family appreciation events acknowledge the efforts and accomplishments of our foster parents.

The Baby Fold’s quarterly foster parent newsletter features a foster parent spotlight. A foster parent is selected from staff nominations and is recognized for their significant accomplishments in foster parenting.

#### **11. The responsibility to know the role, rights and responsibilities of foster parents, other professionals in the child welfare system, the child and the child’s own family.**

Foster parents learn about the roles, rights and responsibilities of foster parents and others on the child welfare team through PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training, the DCFS Foster Family Handbook, The Baby Fold’s Foster Parent Manual, The Baby Fold’s orientation session, Families Now and Forever, The Baby Fold’s quarterly newsletter, The Baby Fold’s Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan, and contacts with the agency and other professionals

Foster parents are encouraged to attend the foster parent group which oversees The Baby Fold’s Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. Quarterly meetings are announced in The Baby Fold’s newsletter and via e-mail reminders. These meetings afford families access to open communication about one another’s roles, and responsibilities. Foster parents are encouraged to ask questions and express concerns in order to clarify the roles of other members of the professional team. The foster parent group meetings also provide an opportunity for foster parents to express concerns and/or issues that need to be addressed in order to improve service provision and/or communication between agency personnel and foster parents. The Child Welfare Services Manager also attends the meetings, providing an opportunity for foster parents to express concerns directly to management staff.

At the time case managers issue *The Baby Fold’s Foster Parent Manual*, foster parents receive an overview of its contents. This includes information regarding foster parents’ rights and responsibilities, as well as a copy of The Baby Fold’s Implementation Plan and grievance procedure. Information regarding the roles of the various members of the child welfare team is provided. A copy of the Client Rights form is included.

The Baby Fold’s Foster Parent Newsletter features information on one foster parent right and responsibility. Foster parents are encouraged to contribute articles to the newsletter. The Foster Parent Newsletter is also utilized to keep foster parents informed of staff changes and of applicable community services and programs.

DCFS PRIDE modules are co-trained by PRIDE trainers, some of whom are also foster parents. Agency staff who have completed PRIDE training provide an overview of PRIDE to all staff members on an annual basis. This gives staff members a better understanding of the information that is provided to foster parents so they can clarify foster parents' questions and concerns about roles and responsibilities of different team members.

The responsibilities of foster parents are listed on the foster home placement agreements. It is reviewed with the foster parent by the caseworker when placement occurs. The Baby Fold has created a foster parent manual which also includes foster parent responsibilities. The responsibilities of agency staff members are also described in the agency's foster parent manual. Discussion of the foster parent's responsibilities will be ongoing through the quarterly newsletter, and during meetings occurring between foster parents and foster care staff. Child welfare specialists assist foster parents in understanding worker roles and responsibilities through discussions occurring during routine casework contacts in the home. Licensing workers also offer support and guidance to foster parents during monitoring visits, to clarify questions pertaining to team members' roles and responsibilities.

Foster parents are encouraged to attend and participate in court hearings, Administrative Case Reviews, school staffings, child and family teams, and treatment team staffings. Foster parents are integral participants on Child and Family Teams.

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

Foster parents receive training on their responsibilities as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect through PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training, the DCFS Foster Family Handbook, and The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual. During the licensing process, foster parents sign an acknowledgment of their responsibilities as a mandated reporter. Agency staff reinforce the need for foster parents to report suspected child abuse and neglect. Foster parents can also access a free online training on the responsibilities of mandated reporters on the DCFS Virtual Training Center.

PRIDE module training and training on sexually problematic behaviors provide the opportunity for foster parents to gain understanding regarding child sexual abuse and reactive and sexually aggressive behavior.

The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual and the Foster Parent Newsletter alert foster parents of their responsibility for reporting unusual incidents, including suspected incidents of abuse or neglect, and sexually aggressive acts committed by DCFS youth.

The DCFS Foster Family Handbook provides information about the process related to a child abuse or neglect investigation. DCFS and agency staff also provide information about the administrative rules and procedures that apply to such investigations in licensed and unlicensed

foster homes. DCFS administrative rules and procedures are available on the DCFS website. The DCFS website will be posted in The Baby Fold's foster parent newsletter. A copy of applicable DCFS administrative rules and procedures will be provided to foster parents upon request.

**13. The responsibility to know and receive training regarding the purpose of administrative case reviews, client service plans and court processes, as well as any filing or time requirements associated with these proceedings; and the responsibility to actively participate in the foster parent's designated role in these proceedings.**

Foster parents are educated on administrative case reviews, client service planning, and court processes through PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training, the DCFS Foster Family Handbook, and The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual. Foster parents are encouraged to attend all agency training regarding these topics. The foster home placement agreement outlines the processes and encourages foster parents to attend and participate in applicable proceedings.

Child Welfare Specialists and licensing workers encourage foster parents to participate in administrative case reviews, child and family team meetings, and court hearings. This lends to more informed foster parents on child's permanency goal for the child and encourages involvement in the child's permanency planning.

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

The PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training and the DCFS Foster Family Handbook provide information on the DCFS service appeal process. Copies of the DCFS Service Appeal brochure are provided to foster parents at the time of placement. This brochure outlines what appeals can be filed.

Licensing workers and child welfare specialists are available to assist foster parents with the appeal process should it be requested. This includes assistance with drafting and submitting the appeal.

The DCFS Advocacy Office (phone number 1-800-232-3798) is also available to assist foster parents with the appeal process. Information regarding the DCFS Advocacy Office is located in the DCFS Foster Family Handbook and The Baby Fold Foster Parent Manual.

The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual includes The Baby Fold's foster parent grievance procedure. It specifies that The Baby Fold makes available to all foster parents a process to express and resolve grievances and is to be used for grieving alleged violations of the Foster Parent Law.

A copy of the grievance procedure is updated and given to foster parents annually. The grievance process is mailed to foster parents with the implementation plan every year. Foster parents receive information on The Baby Fold's grievance procedure in The Baby Fold's Foster Parent Manual at the time of licensure and when complaints arise.

The Baby Fold's Vice President of Quality Improvement reports grievances to the Leadership Team for risk management analysis. The Chief Executive Officer ensures patterns of grievances, and/or specific problematic or unresolved issues for which liability may be incurred, are reviewed by the board, or applicable board committee, quarterly or as needed. The review is conducted in a manner that protects confidentiality of the person(s) served.

**15. The responsibility to know and understand the importance of maintaining accurate and relevant records regarding the child's history and progress; and the responsibility to be aware of and follow the procedures and regulations of the child welfare agency with which the foster parent is licensed or affiliated.**

Foster parents learn the importance of record keeping through PRIDE and through a review of licensing standards. During the licensing process and through continued monitoring visits, The Baby Fold's licensing worker instructs the foster parents on the required records to maintain. For unlicensed relatives, the case worker provides information to the foster parents about the need to keep records pertaining to a child's progress.

The agency provides the foster parent with an expandable, divided folder for each foster child. The folder sections are labeled and contain copies of the required forms for record keeping. Instructions are included in each child's record folder. Agency staff reviews these records during visits to ensure that all necessary records are being maintained.

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

Through PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training foster parents are informed of the importance of teamwork and sharing pertinent information regarding the children in their care.

Agency staff instruct foster parents to keep each child's record folder current. Child welfare specialists review the record folder each month during the in-home visit. Licensing workers review the record folder two times per year during their bi-annual monitoring visits. This ensures all necessary information is included when a child moves from the foster parent's home.

Additionally, foster parents complete a behavior summary to be given to the next caregiver if a placement change occurs. The foster parent will work with the caseworker to develop a plan for sharing information with the subsequent caregiver. If in the child's best interest, the foster parent is encouraged to meet with the future caregiver to present information and answer questions in person. The foster parent will work with the caseworker to determine the appropriateness of developing a plan for any on-going contact with the subsequent caregiver and the child.

Foster parents are encouraged to develop life books for children to take with them. The life book project includes educational workshops for foster parents and children on the page development and compilation of the life book. It is encouraged that foster parents, staff, and children collaborate on the development of life book pages.

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

PRIDE Pre-licensure/Pre-placement training addresses the need for children to remain connected with their biological families and their culture. Module training, agency training, and outside training are available to foster parents for increased understanding of how to meet a child's cultural identity needs. Agency staff encourage foster parents to participate in activities that will enhance their ability to meet the cultural needs of the foster children in their home. Foster parents are encouraged to use Child and Family Team meetings as an avenue for engaging biological families in conversation about their culture and how to support a child's cultural needs while in care.

Staff assist foster parents with the identification of a child's area of need, and make appropriate referrals for services or training specific to those areas of need.

In addition to agency and DCFS training opportunities, The Baby Fold also informs families of community cultural events through the quarterly foster parent newsletter.