

*Illinois Department of Children & Family Services
Central Region*

*Foster Parent Law
“2016” Implementation Plan*



(Prepared in accordance with the Illinois Foster Parent Law – Public Act 89.19 Section 1-25)

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Introduction

History of the Foster Parent Law

In the late 80's as Chair of the Child Welfare Subcommittee, Representative Tom Dart traveled around the state listening to child welfare issues. Foster parents who were already involved in the Illinois Foster Parent Association attended those town meetings and began voicing their concerns. As a result, a select few were invited to testify in political forums. The result of Representative Dart's findings led to a legislative report of recommendations for improving the child welfare system. Included in those recommendations was a Foster Parent Bill of Rights.

Representative Dart introduced the Foster Parent Bill of Rights to the Illinois General Assembly, but because of its lack of legal language and corresponding responsibility section the Bill was referred back for negotiations. A Governor's Task Force was formed to create a "responsibility" section and to write the entire recommendation in a legal format. A few legislators, selected DCFS staff, and some of the original group of foster parents were assigned to this Task Force.

On June 3rd, 1995, Governor Edgar signed Public Policy 89.19 into law. The original Foster Parent Bill of Rights, now incorporated in The Foster Parent Law, became a reality on its third trip before the legislature. Its title is misleading because it is actually good child welfare practice that is not intended to be a solution, but a step toward better teamwork between DCFS and foster parents. Indeed, it is the foundation for all foster parent trainings, conferences, and work groups. It is also a part of new worker training and will be included in Best Practice.

The fourteen Rights and seventeen Responsibilities listed in the Foster Parent Law provide a job description for foster parents. The Foster Parent Law is also a part of DCFS policy and rule (Foster Parent Code 340). "The Department and purchase of service agencies are responsible for developing annual plans for implementation of the law to insure that foster parents are provided with the information and support to fulfill their responsibility to fully participate as a member of the child welfare team," (Foster Parent Code – Section 340.30). Annual plans must be submitted to the Illinois Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Council for review and approval. The implementation plan must state how each DCFS region or private agency will implement the law for their licensed foster parents. These plans are graded and must achieve a passing rate or they are returned to the agency for resubmission. An ongoing monitoring process was developed to hold regions and agencies accountable for their plans.

Section – I

Annual Report

Section I – Annual Report

Section 1-Annual Report

A. Foster Parent Involvement

The Central Region Foster Parent Bill of Rights Review Committee started meeting as a whole in early 2015 and continued to meet on a quarterly basis. Smaller sub-committee meetings were held more frequently to focus on specific sections of the plan. Area Foster Care Advisory Council Meetings were also held on a quarterly basis and areas of the Foster Parent Bill of Rights were included as a topic on the agenda. This committee had the opportunity to teleconference and/or meet in person to reach an approved plan for submission to the Office of Workforce Development, Parent and Caregiver Support. Efforts were made to specifically make changes as noted in the acceptance letter, by issues noted on the Supplemental documents and through verbal and written communications with Central Region caregivers. The 2016 plan was sent out in September for final comments from both staff and foster parents. Some of the suggestions made were added to our final plan and other comment/suggestions require ongoing discussion. Foster parents were involved in the Development of this plan through in-person local meetings, teleconference planning calls, participation in developing the supplemental pages and comments made on the implementation plan. The toll free Foster Parent Help Line and day-to-day contact with their licensing representatives and Foster Parent Support Specialist were also utilized to obtain feedback from foster parents. The following foster parents provided input to the 2016 Implementation Plan: Elizabeth Richmond, Michelle Roberts and Maria Levensood.

B. Direct Service Staff Involvement

Central Region's 2016 Foster Parent Annual Implementation Review Committee continues to be composed of several DCFS staff including the Regional Administrator, Area Administrators, Permanency Team Supervisors, Investigations Supervisors, Permanency Achievement Specialists, Foster Parent Support Specialists, Foster Parents, Permanency Case Workers and Investigators. Smaller subcommittee meetings were held more frequently to focus on specific sections of the plan. Meetings were held for the purposes of reviewing and re-evaluating the 2015 plan. Tasks were assigned to the committee members including review of policy releases and inserting them into the plan, reporting of Quarterly Bill of Rights meetings across the Region, trainings offered for foster parents and addressing deficiencies and solutions offered in response to information gathered at quarterly meetings and by Local and Regional Quality Improvement Meetings.

C. Deficiencies/Suggestions for Improvement noted in the 2015 Plan:

The scoring of the previous year's plan was reviewed and modifications made according to comments. Reviewer's comments were implemented in the draft of the 2015 plan. The Review Committee divided the work among the three sub regions: Peoria, Springfield and Champaign. The work has been inserted into the 2016 draft plan and provided to foster parents and staff for input regarding additions, deletions and corrections.

1. Include a clear statement of plan approval/endorsement of the final plan for the foster parent sign off.
2. Describe the way foster parents were involved in the development or review of your plan-related grievance procedure.
3. Remove Life Book information from Narrative #5. Demonstrate ways foster parents give input into visitation plans.
4. Describe ways foster parents are involved in the development of the visitation plan.
5. Describe how placements are based on strengths in Narrative #20 (5).
6. Revise Narrative #27 (12)-information re: allegations against foster parents is minimal and refers foster parents to the website. Some may not have easy Internet access.\
7. This plan was submitted with very minimal revision.
8. Please follow the Style Sheet we provide when writing your Annual Report.

Responses to Deficiencies/Suggestions for Improvement:

The suggestions were reviewed by the DCFS Administration and given to the Leadership Committee to implement in the 2016 plan. Changes have been incorporated and will be obvious to the Reviewer/Scorer. Specifics are listed below:

1. This year's plan includes a statement on each Final Approval-foster parent/staff sign off 2016 DCFS Central Region Foster Parent Implementation Plan which reads "your signature indicates you have received a final plan and approved for submission to the Office of Caregiver's Support Services."
2. Foster parents were given the opportunity to collectively provide input and submit comments through the Local, Sub Regional and Regional Implementation Planning Meetings regarding the Grievance Procedures.
3. Life Book information has been removed and ways in which foster parents give input into visiting plans is detailed in Narrative #5.
4. Visiting plans are developed and filed in court by the Placing Worker. The assigned caseworker reviews the original visiting plan with the foster parent at the initial meeting and at ongoing contact with the foster parent thereafter. The foster parent is asked to provide input re: days of the week, time of day and best location for the visitation to be scheduled. If the original plan does not work well for the foster parent, plans are revised to meet the needs of all involved. The foster parents are provided copies of all visitation plans by the caseworker for children placed in their care.
5. The use of the Caregiver Matching Tool was added.
6. Information about the CANTS 8, Notification of a Report of Suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect was added.

Responses to comments:

A new Leadership Committee was developed this year comprised of two Public Service Administrators (Permanency Supervisors) and one Office Coordinator. Two members of the Leadership Committee were involved in previous Bill of Rights work and one had no previous experience. The leader with no experience was able to provide a fresh perspective

that perhaps was not available in previous committees. The Leadership Committee developed a larger committee composed of many individuals who have worked with foster parents in various capacities and are involved in other leadership roles within the Agency. Additional members were from the Division of Child Protection. This perspective has helped to shape this year's plan including revisions.

The Style Sheet was made available to the Leadership Committee and has been used as the guide for the writing of this plan.

Central Region Foster Care Council Steering Committee continued to meet to work on the development of the 2016 plan. Field offices continued to utilize the Meeting Minute Template for uniformity in their Foster Parent Bill of Rights meetings. This template is designed to document the Foster Parent Rights and Responsibilities that are discussed, what is going well within their area, what is going well locally, any local issues to be addressed and any training that is provided. This template is easy to read and provides needed information. It provides feedback from foster parents and staff and is used to help collect data for the Region to include in this plan.

Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings have been successful throughout the Region. Quarterly meetings are held and foster parents are positive and enjoy the extra support. Most meetings are held in the evening to accommodate the foster parents' work schedules and involvement in extracurricular activities and other events of family life. Child care and meals are provided at some locations. Some meetings are held during daytime hours as this works better for some foster parents due to busy evening schedules. The focus of Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings is on the Foster Parent Rights and Responsibilities. There is a time during each meeting across the Region that is devoted to the Rights and Responsibilities as they are written in the law. Explanation of the Right and/or Responsibility is provided and it is then discussed among attendees including foster parents and staff. This discussion is documented in the Meeting Minutes utilizing the template as cited above. When Implementation Plans are developed, changes are discussed at Field Office All Staff Meetings. Supervisors review changes in team meetings and during weekly supervision with staff as necessary.

Regional Field Offices completed and submitted supplemental pages with comments from foster parents, staff and contracted Foster Parent Support Specialists for the 2016 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. The supplemental pages include specific local information, what worked well in their area and what could be done to make improvements. One of the most difficult areas in reviewing the plan with the foster parents is the lack of attendance at the Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings. Some Field Offices have more of an issue with attendance than others. Staff is supportive of the meetings and encourages participation in the meetings during contact with the foster parents. Some areas have considered phone in meetings and some areas provide a meal and child care in an attempt to increase attendance.

D. Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure Development/review by foster parents, and how it has been distributed to foster parents

In September of 2012 Central Region's Foster Parent Grievance Procedure was revised. Central Region Grievance procedure indicates submitting the grievance directly to the Area Administrator (who sends a copy to the Area Advisory Council and Regional Administrator) who will call the grieving foster parent within seven (7) business days and schedule a meeting to resolve issues. The meeting must take place within thirty (30) days. If not resolved at the Area Administrator level, a panel will ultimately decide with the Regional Administrator's approval. If the grieving foster parent still does not agree with the panel decision, the Regional Administrator may be asked to reconsider. The Grievance procedure was reviewed for comment (See Attachment - H).

During Foster Parent Advisory Councils meetings, Rule 340 – The Foster Parent Code is routinely distributed and foster parents are advised of how this relates to the yearly implementation plan and that the rule explains the scoring process. It is also explained that each Right and Responsibility is listed in the Rule and that these are the issues grieved under the Regions Foster Parent Grievance Process. There has been in depth training on Rule 340 - Foster Parent Law - in several locations during meetings.

Central Region DCFS management supports the use of the Foster Parent Grievance Procedure and will continue to convey this through Illinois Families Now and Forever, during foster parent meetings, general conversations with foster parents, and the toll free Foster Parent Help Line. Foster Parent Support Specialists also are very knowledgeable about the process and have the forms available upon foster parent request. The Foster Parent Grievance procedure/instructions and form is included in the Foster Parent Implementation Plan and Quick Reference Guide. The grievance procedure is discussed annually at the local quarterly meetings held with the foster parents.

Some things unique to Central Region Offices were:

Permanency Achievement Specialists attend the quarterly meetings and many of them provided training this year on Icebreakers. This relatively new concept within DCFS provides an opportunity for biological parents and the foster parents to meet early in the case to discuss the child in an effort to help the child have the most successful placement experience as possible. Topics such as likes/dislikes, religious practices, favorite activities, fears, comfort items, routines, school, extended family relationships, heritage and medical/dental history are discussed. Each area held a Foster Parent Appreciation event this year which included a meal out or catered in along with recognition, gifts and fun activities. Foster Parent Support Specialists are a nice addition to the local DCFS Field Offices. They are contracted individuals. Several of them have had experience being foster parents for many years and are often referred to as "Master Foster Parents." They assist foster parents and staff with the understanding and practical application of the Foster Parent Bill of Rights and Responsibilities. They serve as a liaison between staff and foster parents if there are issues, and to disseminate information. They are involved in the Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings and often arrange the training component of the meetings. They assist staff with placement matching and are a nice support to

foster parents and staff. They participate in various meetings at the local, regional and state level.

Some things that worked well and were successful:

The **Bloomington Office** holds monthly Area Foster Care Council Meetings. The meetings are attended by Foster Parents, DCFS and Private Agency Staff and Supervisors, and Foster Parent Support Specialists. They identify one of their strengths as being the teamwork with all of the agencies in the Bloomington/Normal Area. They keep abreast of training opportunities around the area and discuss the best method of notifying and encouraging attendance. Additionally, they always discuss and process at least one Right and Responsibility at each meeting and how this is implemented and adhered to.

The **Jacksonville Office** holds Quarterly Area Foster Care Council Meetings and foster parents are very receptive to the idea of meeting with birth parents. They are able to recognize just how important this is for children placed in their care. They also identify the amount and quality of support that foster parents receive from DCFS Administration and staff as a positive.

The **Jerseyville Office** rotates Area Foster Care Council Meetings and events between Jersey, Greene, Macoupin and Montgomery Counties. They had a discussion about Life Books and the importance of this for foster children. They also gathered demographic information on each foster parent to be maintained at the local office.

The **Charleston Office** schedules Quarterly Area Foster Care Council Meetings. The foster parents in this area report solid and positive working relationships with the staff in that office. They feel appreciated and part of the team. Each foster parent was given key chains and a note of thanks for all they have done on behalf of children and families. The Charleston office covers a rural seven county area and staff made a point to personally deliver this gift to every foster parent. The Linus Project donates blankets throughout the year for children entering substitute care and backpacks full of toiletries and gifts are provided by a local social service agency. The developmentally disabled clients of this agency put together the backpacks and deliver them to an All-Staff Meeting at that office. The Charleston Office also provided some diaper bags to foster parents that were donated by a local church. One way the foster parents can collect these things is when they attend a quarterly meeting.

The **Springfield Office** schedules Area Foster Care Council Meetings quarterly and combines meetings with the **Lincoln and Taylorville Offices**. Meeting locations rotate. Foster parents report that there have been fewer turnovers in caseworkers this year and that they have good working relationships with caseworkers. There was training on DCFS wards in the educational system held at one of the meetings this year.

The **Rock Island Office** holds quarterly Area Foster Care Council meetings. They are working as a team to recruit foster parents. They attend community events, have made local television appearances, utilized social media, attended the Jordan Rahn Forever Young Run and the Riverbandits game. Brochures are handed out to potential foster parents. Foster parents and staff are available to promote foster care and answer any questions. This Council specifically

noted in meeting minutes that their Foster Parent Support Specialist is very engaging and makes a lot of effort to get out and meet the foster parents. They report that training opportunities are vast through both DCFS and Private Agencies for all foster parents to attend.

The **Peoria and Pekin Offices** have joint Foster Care Council Meetings held on a quarterly basis. Staff assists with child care for these meetings and they have good attendance from the staff. The availability of child care increases foster parent attendance. Foster Parent Cafés are held in their area and rotate locations between DCFS offices and Private Agency offices. Foster parents report that they like being able to resolve issues and get answers to questions. They had an opportunity to meet the Area Administrator at one of their meetings and enjoyed this question and answer time with her.

The **Urbana Office** schedules Quarterly Area Foster Care Council meetings. They had a training provided at one meeting about Autism. There is good feedback from foster parents and foster parents feel comfortable sharing their concerns. They have noticed an increase in attendance from foster parents who have not attended the meetings previously.

The **Quincy Office** schedules Quarterly Area Foster Care Council meetings to review Foster Parent Rights and Responsibilities and “What do you want to know.” They have recently begun holding monthly support groups meetings for foster parents. They had training offered by the public school Board of Education called “Do you know where your children are online?” Additionally, they had training on Life Books and offered materials to begin the project with all foster children.

Icebreaker meetings and the Importance of Maintaining Family/Sibling Connections were training topics at many of the offices this year. At least one Foster Parent Right and one Responsibility are discussed at every office’s quarterly meetings. Often times, more than one are discussed. The process is positive and allows staff to provide information as to how the Rights are implemented and foster parents are afforded the opportunity to discuss how they have applied a Responsibility throughout their tenure as foster parents.

Some areas where things did not go well or things that were not accomplished:

The **Urbana Office** had a foster parent express concern that they were not fully informed about the past behavior of a youth they accepted into their care.

The **Rock Island Office** needs more foster parents and recruitment efforts are increasing. A recruiter for this area was hired.

One foster parent in the **Peoria/Pekin Area** reported she had done a sibling visit for a private agency child and never received reimbursement. This issue was addressed by the DCFS Foster Parent Support Specialist.

The **Bloomington Office** noticed a decline in attendance at monthly Area Foster Care Council meetings and had a lot of discussion about reducing the meetings to quarterly.

Foster parents in the **Jacksonville Area** reported a good working relationship with the local office, but reported issues when they accept foster children from other areas outside of the Jacksonville coverage area and with Private Agency placements.

The **Charleston Office** reported this same issue. One foster parent reported accepting a child into her home that was not seen by a caseworker in many months, citing the geographical distance from her home as the suspected rationale.

The **Springfield, Lincoln and Taylorville Offices** had reports of foster parents desiring improved communication with the staff, foster parents being notified of trainings in their area, opportunities for networking with other foster parents, improved attendance at meetings and child care to be provided at the meetings.

The **Quincy Office** struggles with foster parent attendance at their Area Foster Care Council meetings. Staff is present at the quarterly meetings, but it is difficult to recruit foster parents to attend. The Quincy Office is addressing attendance issues.

Educational Advocacy is scheduled for **Springfield** on November 16, 2015 and in **Peoria** on November 23, 2015. PRIDE training is set for November 7, 2015 in **Springfield**. Additionally, the **Springfield area** would like to develop a general foster parent letter of introduction for children entering substitute care.

The **Charleston and Decatur** offices plan to provide training on the Fictive Kin Policy.

Areas for Improvement:

Most, if not all, of the Area Foster Care Councils have problems with foster parent attendance. Many of our Field Offices have multi/county service areas. There are very rural areas in the region and foster parents are often a great distance from the field office. Offering child care and meals have been two things which seem to help increase attendance. This could possibly be provided in all offices. The **Bloomington office** would like to reduce their monthly Area Foster Care Council meetings to quarterly in an attempt to increase attendance. The **Urbana office** would like to see improved communication among staff and foster parents. It was suggested that a form be developed to be used by both foster parents and caseworkers to help recall concerning behavior and relevant information that can be provided during a child's move or when staying in respite care.

The **Springfield office** wants to make a concerted effort to continually review results from their foster parent surveys regarding any issues and training needs. The **Charleston Office** would like to see increased communication with caseworkers of other offices when children outside of their catchment area are placed in Charleston foster homes. **Jacksonville** would like to address the communication issues between their office foster homes and the Springfield workers when their homes are utilized for Springfield children. This also applies when Private Agencies in the Jacksonville area use the DCFS foster homes.

The Regional Administrator, Catherine Smith, remains committed to and supportive of foster parents throughout the Region. She plans to have continued communication with the foster parents by attending training, meetings and various events throughout the Region. The Area Foster Care Advisory Council Meetings and Foster Parent Appreciation events will continue throughout Central Region.

The Foster Parent Implementation Plan outlines Rights and Responsibilities for staff and foster parents for best practice. The foster parent is an integral member of the child welfare team and this is reinforced through DCFS Rules and Procedures and daily interactions with staff. DCFS Central Region takes seriously and embraces the task of ensuring that every foster parent and staff member are trained and have immediate access to the information contained in the law and this plan. This is accomplished through all staff meetings, supervision, management meetings and the Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings. The plan is available on the DCFS website under the Foster Care link after the plan has been submitted for review. Foster parents may access this link or request a copy from the local field office or their Foster Home Licensing Representative. They can also contact the Foster Parent Help Line at 866-368-5204 to request a hard copy or an electronic version be sent to them.

Section – II
Foster Parent Rights &
Responsibilities

Section II – Foster Parent Rights & Responsibilities

Section 2-Foster Parent Rights

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

Achievements

- A. Every foster parent has the right to be treated as a respected member of the team by having their concerns, questions, suggestions, and needs addressed in a timely and informative manner by Department staff. Telephone calls, e-mails and texts, should be responded to in a timely and appropriate manner. Full disclosure is paramount in order for child and family needs to be met. Notification of meetings, court, and school meetings are critical in order to insure inclusion of the foster parent with the child and family team. Area offices coordinate events such as Halloween parties, Christmas parties, coffees, roundtable discussions and picnics. Participation in all Department social functions and celebrations are open to foster parents.
- B. Regional Administration supports and directs all staff to know the importance of adhering to the Foster Parent Law. Surveys are sent regionally by the Quality Improvement/Quality Assurance Customer Satisfaction sub-committee to survey foster parents about their satisfaction with services they receive and whether services are being delivered to foster parents and foster children per policy and procedure. The results of these surveys are utilized to determine areas for improvements. In addition, the region retains one toll free number for the three sub-regions (866-368-5204). This line is used as a Foster Parent Help Line and also helps to reduce long distance charges to foster parents when calling the Regional office and, in some cases, local offices. The line was approved and became operational February 15, 2003 and continues today.

The Statewide Foster Care Licensing Customer Satisfaction committee also sends surveys to foster parents after licensing actions such as annuals and renewals. The questions on these surveys specifically ask foster parents about their experience with licensing and support staff and their satisfaction with the services of the Foster Care unit whereas the surveys sent by the Regional QI (Quality Improvement) /QA (Quality Assurance) committee pertain more to Casework and Child Protection services. The Statewide Foster Care licensing committee also sends a separate “Exit” survey when the foster parent terminates relationship with the department asking the foster parent what could have been done better to maintain licensure.

- C. Illinois Families Now and Forever is used as a positive communication tool for foster parents and staff. This newsletter has been especially helpful in keeping foster parents informed of upcoming events and to communicate any policy changes to foster parents in a timely manner. The toll free Foster Parent Help Line number is listed in Illinois Families Now and Forever and are handed out and explained during foster parent

meetings. In addition, the contact numbers for Foster Parent Support Specialists and staff are listed as well.

- D. Foster parents are encouraged to attend and be active in local meetings and trainings. Both staff and Foster Parent Support Specialists are encouraged to drive foster parents to the meetings.
- E. Foster parents are encouraged to attend Child and Family Team meetings regarding the foster children in their home and to offer their input. The Child and Family Team concept used truly demonstrates a belief in the teamwork approach within Central Region.
- F. Trainings are offered throughout Central Region to assist foster parents in developing skills necessary to participate as a member of the professional team. Trainings are offered throughout Central Region during foster parent meetings and support groups. Trainings are also available through community events. Foster Parent Support Specialists help to make foster parents aware of these training activities. Some area offices work with other licensed foster care agencies to recruit, train and support foster parents.
- G. The Central Region staff hosts a number of activities throughout the year to show appreciation to foster parents besides the May and June appreciation events. Some activities include “annual” Halloween and Christmas parties for foster parents and children as well as potluck events. Cards of appreciation were sent to foster parents by various field offices. Foster parent support groups/coffees are up and running throughout Central Region where foster parents have expressed interest.
- H. Regional Administrator, Catherine Smith, has made a commitment to foster parents by attending Area Foster Parent Advisory Council meetings. It continues to be the Regional Administrator’s goal to encourage teamwork among staff and foster parents. Area Administrators will continue to hold Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings in their respective areas to provide a sense of connectedness. Area Administrators continue presenting and reinforcing these rights during quarterly council meetings as well as utilizing their Quality Improvement process in their respective areas.
- I. Foster parents are provided with “brown” folders when they have DCFS foster children in their homes. “Brown” folders are the foster parents’ toolbox of what needs to be documented and how to document the information. All the forms within the “brown” folder are consistent throughout Central Region. Every folder consists of: medication log; behavior log; discharge summary; foster parent note page; allowance tracking sheet and instructions; what you need to know before signing on the dotted line; IEP information; educational log; clothing inventory (what the child came with and documents what the child left with); face sheet (workers name and number, supervisors name and number, child’s physician, religion, and names of who the child can be released to), and reimbursement amounts. “Brown” folders assist foster parents in providing accurate information concerning the child placed with them during professional staffing such as ACR, child and family team meetings, etc.

- J. Central Region DCFS management supports the use of the Foster Parent Grievance Procedure and will continue to convey this through Illinois Families Now and Forever, during foster parent meetings and general conversations with foster parents. Additionally, caregivers have help through the toll free Foster Parent Help Line. Foster Parent Support Specialists also are very knowledgeable about the process and have the forms available upon foster parent request. The Foster Parent Grievance procedure/instructions and form is included in the Foster Parent Implementation Plan (See Attachment H) and Quick Reference Guide.

The Central Region Grievance procedure indicates submitting the grievance directly to the Area Administrator (who sends a copy to the Area Advisory Council and Regional Administrator) who will call the grieving foster parent within 7 business days and schedule a meeting to resolve issues. The meeting must take place within 30 days. If not resolved at the Area Administrator level, a panel will ultimately decide with the Regional Administrator's approval. If the grieving foster parent still does not agree with the panel decision, the Regional Administrator may be asked to reconsider.

- K. Information and important telephone numbers that foster parents need to know are provided by the Foster Parent Support Specialist and/or Licensing staff, as well as through the toll free Foster Parent Help Line, Illinois Families Now and Forever, and Quick Reference Guide. Central Region field office staff continues to support foster parents with needed information like important local telephone numbers and contact information.
- L. Procedures 302.Appendix B, Services for Older Caregivers and Their Families (11/05/14).

- 1. These procedures provide DCFS and POS staff with direction and information that will support the safety and stability of children and youth living with older caregivers (**age 65 and older**). The following procedures ensure that older caregivers and the children for whom they care have access to services provided by the Department of Children and Family Services and the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA).

- 2. Policy Transmittal 2015.03 – Procedures 307 ICWA

These revisions to **Procedures 307** clarify a tribe's options to participate in Title IV-E claiming when an Illinois foster child is placed with or transferred to an Indian tribe. The revisions are required by HHS-ACF in order to bring DCFS into compliance with federal regulations.

2. The right to be given standardized Pre-Service Training and appropriate on-going training to meet mutually assessed needs and improves the foster parent's skills.

Achievements

- A. There are scheduled Pre-Service PRIDE Trainings, using a co-training approach, that foster parents are required to take prior to becoming licensed. DCFS or POS staff attends the 9th session panel to answer questions potential new foster parents may have. Foster parents are notified of Module In-Service Trainings and calendars listing dates of new Modules on an ongoing basis by various means, i.e., licensing representatives, staff mailing post cards, the VTC (Virtual Training Center), DCFS website, Illinois Families Now and Forever, local field office staff, etc.
- B. Illinois Families Now and Forever provide information regarding classes that are scheduled. Foster parents are encouraged to use community resources such as their local library.
- C. Each local field office is expected to utilize a co-training approach in which local field office staff and foster parent representatives participate as both co-facilitators and trainers. Co-facilitators are responsible for assessing training needs, accessing training materials and resources, and presenting information. Joint facilitation also occurs through local Foster Parent Law meetings with DCFS and POS agencies (See Attachment - A for a sample of locally sponsored trainings held throughout the region).
- D. Annual questionnaires, Foster Parent Support Specialists, QA (Quality Assurance)/QI (Quality Improvement) process, and Foster Care Licensing workers' assessments are all regularly utilized as mutual assessment tools to identify training needs of foster parents. These results will be shared at Central Region Area Office Foster Parent Council meetings.
- E. Foster parents were given training on new policy, procedures and initiatives during Area Foster Parent Council Meetings and other trainings. Additional trainings were offered to help foster parents meet the needs of children in their care. Some examples of training topics: Trauma; Education Systems; Internet safety/cyber bullying; Positive Discipline; Adoption Process; Life Book Training; Attachment Issues; Cultural Needs, Human trafficking; and the Juvenile Court System.
- F. The Central Connections section of Illinois Families Now and Forever lists foster parent training schedules that are arranged by the Training Institute in this region. Foster Care Licensing staff assists foster parents in locating and registering for classes.
- G. All area offices will send out a Foster Parent Training needs survey by the end of January of each year. A similar survey will be sent to both Casework staff and Licensing workers for them to assess their perceptions of training needs of foster parents. The results of these surveys will be discussed at the Central Region Area Office Foster Parent meetings and by the Central Region Foster Parent Council Steering Committee.

- H. Caseworkers and Licensing workers will utilize regular meetings with foster parents (monthly visits, licensing monitoring visits, meeting before ACR and Court, Child and Family team meetings) to discuss ongoing training needs that the foster family has. Supervisors will ask casework staff about foster parent's ongoing training needs during staff supervision.
- I. In addition to the initial PRIDE training required for licensure, all DCFS licensed foster parents must complete sixteen clock hours of approved training during the period between each licensure renewal. Acceptable training includes: foster parent conferences sponsored by the Department; other conferences approved by the Department; training provided by a licensed child welfare agency whose foster care program is COA accredited; materials borrowed from the Department's Foster/Adoptive Parent Lending Libraries; training toward first-aid, Heimlich maneuver, and/or cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification; or other training approved in writing by the Department's Division of Training and Development Services. The licensing representative shall discuss this training requirement with foster parents and document on the CFS 590. Foster Parent Support Specialists (FPSS) meet with DCFS foster parents in the home on a monthly basis to discuss any training needs and child concerns. The FPSS reports back to their supervisors any need for child specific training and the foster parent is given information on where to attend the appropriate training. Many child specific training modules are offered in the DCFS Virtual Training Center where a foster parent can complete training, online, at their own pace. These training include, but are not limited to: Child and Family Team Meetings for Foster Caregivers, Early Childhood Intervention, Age Birth to Three Years, Eco-maps and Genograms: Tools for Case Management, Psychological First Aid, Guardianship and Advocacy, Adoption/Guardianship Certification Training.

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.

Achievements

- A. DCFS Central Region has Foster Parent Support Specialists that are available 24 hours a day 7 days a week to assist foster parents. The Foster Parent Support Specialists contact information is provided to foster parents. Adjunct First Responders are also available at time of crisis to provide additional support services in collaboration with the Foster Parent Support Specialist and staff.
- B. Foster parents are advised to contact their assigned caseworker during business hours and to follow the management structure by contacting the supervisor and then Area Administrator if a crisis occurs and the caseworker is not available. Foster parents are still advised that they can call the Child Abuse Hotline (800-252-2873) if they have an emergency after hours. Foster parents are informed by casework staff, Licensing staff, Foster Parent Support Specialists and via newsletter that crisis services such as the CARE

Line (formerly SASS), and the local mental health emergency lines are available to them in an emergency. DCFS Foster parents also receive a phone list ICE (in case of emergency) as part of quotation Quick Reference Guide to the foster parents' Bill of Rights." The phone list contains the likely emergency numbers of foster parent might need to use and an explanation of the service. Number and information on this list include; emergency services, abuse and abuse hotline, behavior crisis (cares, Medical and life threatening, poison hot line , run away and missing youth) (DCFS child location service.)

- C. Updates regarding regional organizational changes and staff vacancies are routinely given at the regional and local Foster Parent Advisory Council meetings. Central Region believes it is important that a "management structure" for any division, unit, worker, etc. be available and provided as well as how to access the information to prevent retaliation. Management structure and contact information can be obtained by calling the local office. In some areas where there are Foster Parent Support Specialists, they make sure the DCFS foster parent knows the management structure.
- D. Since February 15, 2003, DCFS Central Region has had a toll free Foster Parent Help Line in place for the region. Currently, this is another avenue for foster parents to have their non-emergency concerns addressed within the region. Foster parents are advised of these lines via Illinois Families Now and Forever, handouts at Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings, Caregiver Conferences, and licensing representatives and via their Foster Parent Support Specialists.
- E. Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) Training (SOC) has been offered throughout Central Region at regional foster parent meetings.
- F. The Foster Parent Reimbursement Program is a type of reimbursement that DCFS has for foster parents. To start the process, the foster parent asks their caseworker for a Foster Parent Reimbursement Program Claim Form. The foster parent can also call Sue Allen-Oats at DCFS in Chicago at 312/793-6068. She will send the necessary paperwork to the foster parent via mail. The Foster Parent Reimbursement Forms (CFS 851 and CFS 851-R) are also available on line by going to <http://www.state.il.us/dcf/library/commdcfs.shtml>; and then going to forms. Foster parents should remember to keep a copy of all documentation submitted for their own records. Foster Parent Support Specialists, where available, can also help foster parents gain access to the reimbursement program. The reimbursement program through DCFS is to provide "actual cash value" for damages such as personal injury, property damage and bodily injury caused by foster children. First party coverage may be provided for foster parents/relative caregivers, innocent victims or other claimants for their own property damage and bodily injury caused by a foster child while the child is in the care, custody and control of the foster parent/relative. It is considered excess coverage over and about any other valid and collectable insurance for which the caregiver has. Foster parents are also informed that there can be a \$50.00 deductible and that depreciation is also part of the process. Foster parents are told that they need to call their personal insurance carrier to see if they will cover it and if their personal insurance does not cover

a letter needs to be sent by the insurance carrier to the foster parent. If a police report has been made then a copy of the police report needs to be submitted with the claim. Along with estimates (usually 3 estimates if possible) should be submitted along with the claim. If the foster home or caseworker took pictures of the damage those pictures should also be submitted. Foster parents are informed that a group meets to decide on the claims. Foster parents are informed that the process takes time.

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

Achievements

- A. The Central Payment Unit number is 800-525-0499. Hours of operation: Monday through Friday, 8:30 A.M. until 11:30 A.M. Payment statements to foster parents list this telephone number. This number is also listed in newsletters. Regular board payment reimbursement rates are placed in the child’s folder that is given to the foster parent at the time of placement. Illinois Families Now and Forever will publish payment breakdowns at least annually. DCFS mails a payment schedule annually with board payments as well.

Monthly Reimbursement Schedule

Effective July 1, 2014

The following rates apply to traditional and licensed relative Department supervised homes as well as POS supervised homes under Performance Contracting.

Childs Age	Board	Clothing	Allowance	Total
0-11 months	\$366.00	\$39.00	\$13.00	\$418.00
1-4 years	\$368.00	\$44.00	\$14.00	\$426.00
5 to 8 years	\$371.00	\$ 59.00	\$15.00	\$445.00
9 to 11 years	\$379.00	\$68.00	\$25.00	\$472.00
12 and over	\$389.00	\$77.00	\$45.00	\$511.00

- B. Caseworkers help foster parents with the forms to get payments for respite, camp, etc. In Central Region, the Regional Business Office continues to make itself available for training and to answer any questions workers or foster parents have regarding respite payments. The Business Office continues to have training on respite, exceptions, payments for camp, as well as, the Foster Parent Insurance Program. The regional office personnel have worked to help foster parents receive services/supplies in a timelier manner by accepting faxed and emailed copies of documents from the worker until the original can be received via mail. Faxed or emailed copies are hand delivered the same day to the payment unit who data enters daily on the system. The tracking system tracks the date of respite as well as, the approved respite payment form arriving in Business

Offices. The regional protocol is sent to staff including foster parents so each know how to submit paperwork.

- C. Upon referral, the local Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) (previously called SOC) provider will assess children placed in traditional self-selected and home of relative homes. If it is determined that the child needs more services beyond what DCFS is providing or can provide, the Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) will assist in locating or purchasing the additional services for the child. If the child requires a more intensive placement such as specialized care or residential, the Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) can recommend this and caseworkers will follow the referral process in place to help a child qualify for higher levels of service. This process will include monitoring of multiple placements, issues dealing with specialized care, transitional and independent living issues, as well as, the possible need for residential placement. Cases involving children with the need for specialized foster care are contracted out to Purchase of Service (POS) agencies throughout the state. Each agency has their requirements in regard to additional specialized training and reimbursement rates for specialized care. Children that have specialized or intensive medical needs receive a referral to the DCFS nursing department. The case carrying social worker completes the nursing referral and consults with DCFS nursing staff and the foster parent to assist in determining training needs and availability according to the child's specific needs. If the child has been hospitalized and is to be discharged with medical equipment, foster parents receive training from medical staff, prior to the child leaving the hospital. In June, 2015, the System of Care program was recently changed to the Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) program. At this time, all workings of the program remain the same.
- D. The Proposed Policy Review of comprehensive changes to Procedures 302.360 **Health Care Services** (11-07-14)
1. Under the Affordable Care Act, youth who are exiting foster care or were formerly in foster care are eligible for Medicaid until age 26. HFS has developed an implementation plan for the expansion of Medicaid for these youth. Instructions to call the ERC for after-hours consents are replaced with instructions to call the Child Intake and Recovery Unit.
 2. Policy Guide 2015.05 – Day Care Staff Immunization Guidelines

The purpose of this Policy Guide is to inform Day Care Licensing staff of new department policy concerning immunizations of staff at licensed day care centers and homes, which are consistent with guidelines established by public health entities.
- E. The Central Region continues to support timely reimbursement and research all payment problems. Information was provided to foster parents at Regional Foster Advisory Council meetings on how to arrange for their board payments to be direct deposited, thus avoiding mail delays. Foster parents are encouraged to start with their local office and utilize their management structure to resolve payment issues. Foster parents can also utilize the Central Payment Unit (800-525-0499) if they have been unable to resolve a

billing issue at the local level. For detailed explanation regarding direct deposits contact 217-557-0930.

- F. The Business Unit in Central Region recognized that the process for submitting bills for payment for sibling visitations was confusing for foster parents. The billing unit with input from supervisors and support specialists put together sample forms and written explanations to guide in the completion of these forms. Options have been made available for direct deposit to expedite payment. Respite payment issues are being addressed and regional action plan is in place regarding this issue. Respite forms can be faxed and/or emailed from the worker to their respective Area Administrator until the original can be received via mail. Faxed or emailed copies are hand delivered same day to payment unit who data enters daily on the system. The regional protocol will be sent to staff as well as foster parents so each will know how to submit the paperwork. Workers will ensure addresses are regularly updated and entered in the system. Currently, there is ongoing training with staff and foster parents regarding respite care.
- G. In Central Region, the Business Unit sends a cover sheet out with all initial clothing vouchers as well as with infant care grant vouchers. This cover sheet is designed to ensure foster parents know the purchase guidelines so they do not have difficulty and delays at stores when trying to purchase items. The cover sheet also lists helpful instructions for the store on where to sign the form and where to send it. A self-addressed stamped envelope is enclosed to simplify the process. Clothing Vouchers are now automatically generated with the initial data entry of the 906. Durable medical supplies not covered can be obtained through a request by the caseworker with an exception to payment voucher. Replacement clothing vouchers can also be used for circumstantial changes, i.e., excessive weights gain or loss, etc. DCFS can prepare and distribute initial clothing voucher requests at the local field office. Contact the local office regarding initial personal items vouchers.
- H. Policy Guide 2014.19, Change in the KinGap Subsidized Guardianship Program.

The purpose of this Policy Guide is to provide information and guidance to DCFS and POS child welfare staff about recent changes affecting the KinGap subsidized guardianship program.

- I. Procedures 302.389.

These Procedures are intended to codify current practice of the Extended Family Support Program. The Extended Family Support Program (EFSP) provides short term services to children residing in the care of a relative for the foreseeable future for which short-term interventions will stabilize the relative household and allow for continued care of the child in the household. The following forms have been created: CFS 1448, Extended Family Support Program Referral DCP-Intact; CFS 1449-A, Referral Received Confirmation; CFS 1448-B, Case Ineligible; CFS 1448-C, Case Accepted; CFS 1448-D, Case Withdrawn Billing Form; CFS-E, EFSP Needs Assessment; CFS 1448-F, EFSP

Tracking Form for Request for CANTS and LEADS Information; CFS-1448-G, EFSP Closing Report and CFS 1448-PA, EFSP Post Adoption Referral Form.

- J. Policy Transmittal 2015.02 on the revised Procedures 359, Authorized Child Care Payments.
1. P359.42 reflects the new type service codes and descriptions for adoptions (both ward and non-ward) at the regular foster care rate effective after 7-1-2014 (0325 and 0329). The previous type service code descriptions have also been revised to reflect the effective time frame (end date).
 2. P359.44 reflects the new type service codes and descriptions for Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program at the regular foster care rate effective after 7-1-2014 (0383 relative and 0384 non-relative). Also updated, are the descriptions for the previous type service codes with an effective end date.
 3. P359.66 has been added to describe the process of Payment of Emancipation Funds to Youth.
 4. Appendix A reflects the rate table changes for licensed foster care, youth in college and scholarship (and added new type service codes where appropriate). Also included is the emancipation fund payment to youth, and increases to the pre-adoptive and ICPC home study fees.
 5. Appendix F – Added are the new adoption/SG/kinGap, emancipation fund codes and updated descriptions of old codes. There are a number of TOS that have been added. The added TOS codes have been in use but had not been previously added to P359 App F.
 6. Appendix I – Section V. has been updated to include the Office of Contract Administration as a front end review of the approval process in order to ensure compliance and to secure the proper additional approvals as required.
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.**

Achievements

Foster parents are engaged in the development of the case plan by the caseworker prior to completion of the initial service plan, and then prior to the subsequent Administrative Case Reviews. Notices for Administrative Case Reviews are mailed directly to the foster parent by the case review staff. Workers contact foster parents by phone, in-person and/or by written documentation. The visitation plan is developed within seven (7) days of initial placement. The caseworker then works with the foster parent and parent to negotiate times

and days that work best. The thirty (30) day family meeting includes participation by the parent, caseworker, supervisor, and foster parent. During this meeting the initial service plan is presented. The foster parent is actively involved in the completion of the child's section of the service plan. The Department continues to strive for foster parent involvement consistently throughout the region. Procedures 301.110 states that the permanency worker shall develop a social support plan for children ages 9 – 14 who enter substitute care following the death or loss of a parent or significant caregiver, or experience a death or loss of a parent or significant caregiver while in care. This social support plan shall be incorporated into the Family Service Plan.

When a child is diagnosed with a mental illness, the permanency worker shall discuss with the parents and the caregivers the importance of being educated about the child's mental health diagnosis. The available services will be included in the Family Service Plan.

- A. The Caseworker provides timely notification of changes in the case plan and the permanency goal to the foster parent by phone, in-person, and/or written documentation with a follow up copy of the written revised plan sent to the foster parent. When changes are made in the child's service plan, foster parents are informed of the right to appeal and are provided with a copy of the Appeal Process brochure.
- B. Foster parents are informed verbally at the time of placement concerning the need to explore relative placement and recognize the need for sibling placement whenever possible. Upon establishment of the permanency goal, the foster parent has a right to be provided a copy of the written plan concerning the placement of a child into the foster home. Discussion also occurs with the foster parent at the time of the Child and Family Team meeting with a written copy of the plan provided once it has been established.
- C. The Department recognizes the importance of including foster parents in the development of visitation plans for children in their care along with their parents. During contact with foster parents visitation is discussed regarding the time, the day and location's impact on the children and adjustments are made according to the needs of the children with consideration being given to the foster parents suggestion and recommendations. Invited to initial Child and Family Team meeting. In June, 2015, the Department implemented the fictive kin policy. This policy further supports maintaining significant relationships for a child by allowing persons with whom the child has a meaningful relationship to be considered for placement, even though no blood or legal relationship exists. The Department's Affidavit of relationship has been updated to a Statement of Relationship to better reflect the broadening of placement possibilities. Moreover, upon a child's entry into care, the worker is to begin a log listing significant persons in a child's life.

Visiting plans are developed and filed in court by the Placing Worker. The assigned caseworker reviews the original visiting plan with the foster parent at the initial meeting and at ongoing contact with the foster parent thereafter. The foster parent is asked to provide input re: days of the week, time of day and best location for the visitation to be scheduled. If the original plan does not work well for the foster parent, plans are revised

to meet the needs of all involved. The foster parents are provided copies of all visitation plans by the caseworker for children placed in their care.

D. Action Transmittal 2014.02 regarding Placement Services for Unlicensed Relative Home (10-31-14)

1. Because relative caregivers do not have to be licensed before they can accept children into care, it is crucial that Procedures 301.80 are followed every time related children are placed with an unlicensed relative caregiver.

2. **Interstate Placement of Children (11-07-14)**

Revisions are based on 1) OIG recommendations 08-1983, recommendations 1a, 1b and 1c which relates to required notification of various Department Divisions when the Interstate Compact is violated and 2) Inclusion of guidelines from **Policy Guide 2007.05, on the Timely Completion of Interstate Home Studies.**

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.**

Achievements

A. Rule 383 – Licensing Enforcement outlines the procedures to be followed in the investigation of licensing complaints in foster family homes. Rule 383 is followed in Central Region. Licensing complaints are initiated within two (2) business days of receipt of the complaint. Licensing complaint investigations are completed within thirty (30) calendar days unless a thirty (30) day extension is granted. Foster parents are advised by their foster care licensing worker of their right to have a person of their choosing present during the licensing complaint investigation. See form CFS 596-29 "Right to Have Advocate Present." Foster care licensing workers advise the foster parents of this right prior to conducting the investigation and also advise foster parents that they can have up to four hours to arrange for this person to be present if they are not already. Foster care licensing workers work with the foster parents to develop corrective action plans that address areas of non-compliance with the licensing standards. Foster parents are notified verbally during the licensing complaint investigation of any non-compliance areas that need to be corrected and the process of monitoring for corrections. Foster parents also receive written notification of the outcome of the licensing complaint investigation. This correspondence cites the specific licensing standards violated, notes a timeline for correction and notifies the licensee of their right to appeal the findings of the licensing complaint investigation. Information regarding the Licensing Complaint

Investigation process has been published in Illinois Families Now and Forever, which are sent to foster parents. The Foster Family Handbook given to all foster parents at PRIDE Training explains the licensing complaint investigation process and the associated appeal process. Training regarding complaints and DCP investigations has been offered at local offices for foster parents.

- B. Central Region DCFS foster parents who have been notified of a substantiated licensing complaint have the right to request a Supervisory Review of the findings. The notification letter of substantiated findings explains the right to request a Supervisory Review. They must request the Supervisory Review in writing within ten (10) days of receipt of the letter. These reviews may result in no changes being made regarding the status of a substantiated licensing complaint or revisions may be made to one or more licensing violations as well as to the corrective action plan as result of the review. The review could also result in the supervisor revising the substantiated finding due to additional or new information being available. In addition, if the violations are of serious or reoccurring nature, the supervisor could recommend that this be automatically referred on for an Informal Review which can include a possible outcome of the recommendation that the license be revoked.
 - C. If foster parents are not satisfied with the outcome of the Supervisory Review, they are notified that they have the right to an Informal Review with the Foster Care Manager. Foster parents are notified of this right during the Supervisory Review and by letter after the Supervisory Review. Foster parents must request the Informal Review in writing within ten (10) days of receiving the letter notifying them of the outcome of the Supervisory Review.
 - D. If the result of the Informal Review is a recommendation to pursue revocation of the license and Central Office of Licensing accepts this recommendation, foster parents are notified by letter from the Central Office of Licensing of their right to an Administrative Hearing on this matter.
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.**

Achievements

- A. Caseworkers are trained in all information that is to be disclosed to the foster parents when they attend foundations/core training and this is reinforced during supervision and team meetings when policy and procedures are reviewed. Confidentiality Training for foster parents will continue to be offered periodically during Area Foster Care Advisory Council Meetings throughout the region.
- B. Workers communicate and share any additional information with the foster parent during monthly home visits and phone contacts. This sharing of information is documented on case notes as a way to ensure the information is shared. During supervision supervisors

will review with caseworker all new case information. This ensures that all necessary information is being shared with foster parents.

- C. At the time a child is placed in a foster home, the foster parents are advised of all known relevant information concerning the child consistent with the rules of confidentiality. This information is outlined on CFS 600-4. It should be noted that “relevant” child information provided to the foster parents would include any information known about the child/child’s history, including medical, educational, behavioral, and emotional information, at the time of placement, as outlined in Administrative Code Section 301.120 “Sharing Appropriate Information with the Caregiver.” Other information given to foster parent would include a copy of the child’s portion of the client service plan, including any visitation arrangements and all amendments or revisions; case history of the child, including how the child came into care; the child’s legal status; the permanency goal for the child; a history of the child’s previous placements; and reasons for placement changes, excluding information that identifies or reveals the location of any previous foster or relative home caregiver; and other relevant background information about the child of which the caseworker is aware, including but not limited to any prior criminal history; information about any behavior problems, including fire setting, perpetration of sexual abuse, destructive behavior and substance abuse habits; likes and dislikes; etc. Mental health information can be shared only as specified in 89 Ill. Adm. Code 431.110 (Disclosure of Information of a Mental Health Nature). Information regarding Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), AIDS Related Complex (ARC) or Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) test results shall be shared only in accordance with 89 Ill. Adm. Code 431.110 (Disclosure of Information Regarding Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)). At the time of placement, supervisors review information with assigned caseworker and assigned caseworker shares information with caregiver via the “CFS600-4 Sharing Information with Caregivers”. It is handed out to the foster parent, reviewed, and they sign it. This form is completed upon initial placement and each subsequent placement and a copy is retained in the child’s case file. Staff are trained on providing information to foster parent at their foundations training, supervision and through the dissemination of new policy’s/procedures. Foster parents are reminded via newsletters and during Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings to ask specific questions before accepting a child for placement. A list of questions to is distributed during PRIDE and contained in the Foster Parent Handbook and periodically published in local foster parent newsletters.
- D. When any new programs are offered that would benefit children, foster parents are informed of these through mailings, telephone calls, newsletters, Area Foster Parent Advisory Council meetings and Illinois Families Now and Forever.
- E. Foster parents are included in quarterly Child and Family Team meetings and receive and share information first hand through the meetings. The supervisor will discuss the need for full disclosure during supervision, and if a foster parent is not present at a team meeting, the caseworker will review with them the information shared at that meeting.

- F. The Integrated Assessment process has been implemented statewide. During the assessment process, the caseworker and if required clinical screener interview foster parents for their perspective regarding child behavior and to address any special needs of their child. This provides a framework for the creation of the service plan.
 - G. All foster parents are surveyed at least yearly regarding casework services. In addition, Foster Care Licensing surveys are sent regarding, annual/renewal contact and closing contact. The aggregated information from surveys is shared with the statewide licensing manager/supervisors, licensing staff at the statewide licensing quarterly meetings and foster parents through the Area Foster Parent Advisory Councils. This information provides guidance for corrective action planning, as well as, informing foster parents that their comments were heard in order to improve service delivery and overall satisfaction.
 - H. When the CANS tool is completed (within the first 30 days) the caseworker will go over this form with the foster parents. Supervisors will ensure compliance by discussing the CANS tool with the caseworker during supervision.
 - I. When Service Plans are written, casework staff will go over the child portion/information with the foster parents. Supervisors will ensure compliance by reviewing the documentation with the caseworker during supervision.
 - J. At 16 years of age, each youth in DCFS custody or guardianship should have a State of Illinois Identification Card or a driver's license. If a youth in ILO/TLP or SEYS needs a state-issued ID card, the Permanency Worker shall assist the youth in obtaining one.
 - K. Procedure 315.310 - The caseworker shall include a requirement on the SACWIS Family Service Plan that all guns in the birth parents' home have trigger locks and be stored in a locked safe or cabinet when a child has signs of depression and/or suicidal ideation and will return home
8. **The right to be given information concerning a child (i) from the Department as required under subsection (u) of Section 5 of the Children and Family Services Act and (ii) from a child welfare agency as required under subsection (c-5) of Section 7.4 of the Child Care Act of 1969.**

Achievements

- A. Per Rule 340.40 caseworkers are required at the time or prior to placement, whenever possible, to provide in writing all relevant information concerning the child. During supervision, supervisors will ensure that the caseworker is providing up-to-date information on the child to the foster parent. When Department staff calls foster parents for placement all information known regarding the child is told to the foster parents so they can make an informed decision. If the placement was found through CAPU the worker calls the foster parent to make sure they were given all the information regarding the child and answer any questions the foster parent may have.

- B. Caseworkers are trained in all information that is to be disclosed to the foster parents when they attend foundations/core training and this is reinforced during supervision and team meetings when policy and procedures are reviewed. Confidentiality Training for foster parents will continue to be offered periodically during Area Foster Care Advisory Council Meetings throughout the region.
- C. When a child is first placed in care the investigator gives the foster parent all known information regarding the child, including any information from the physical the hospital and any medications that are prescribed. The foster parent is informed at that time which school the child is attending and is asked if they will take and pick up that child from school when possible. In other cases the foster parents enroll the child in their school district and the records are then requested by the school. Foster parents are taught how to do this in PRIDE Training and also in the Educational Advocacy Training. Where available the Foster Parent Support Specialist will talk the foster parent through enrolling a child in their school district.
- D. After the Shelter Care hearing a visitation plan is made with the input of the foster parent and that schedule is given to the foster parent and parent. HealthWorks then calls the foster parent and gives them all known medical information pertaining to the child, (depending on the information the caseworker may be given the information and then shared with the foster parent). A packet is given to the foster parent by the investigator with HealthWorks phone numbers so foster parents can also call to get information as needed.
- E. Within 45 days of the initial placement, an integrated assessment is done on new placements and information regarding the child is shared during this time with the foster parent.
- F. The service plan is written up and expectations for the foster parent are set and the foster parent portion is given to the foster parent along with the child portion (child portion is given to age appropriate children). Foster parents have informed licensing and casework staff if they will work with birth parents and to what extent. In the Rock Island field office composition books were ordered and given to the foster parents to share information back and forth between the foster parent and birth parent. So when a child goes on a visit the book is sent along so if the birth parent has a question or foster parent has a question it will be answered.
- G. As information becomes available the caseworker shares that information with the foster parent through phone conversations and monthly visits. Child and Family Teams are also used to build a relationship between the foster parent and the birth parent so information regarding the child is given during these meetings.
- H. In Central Region, “brown” child folders are given to foster parents to keep pertinent information regarding the child and this folder goes with the child if the child moves to another foster home. This “brown” folder contains a fact sheet with the child’s name, DOB, worker, and parents’ names. The “brown” folder also includes medication logs,

behavior logs, educational information, a clothing and personal allowance sheet, medical information and any written records pertinent to the child's needs. So all the information that is known about the child stays with the child and is there for the new foster parent to review.

- I. When adoption is the goal and a permanent home has been established, the caseworker goes through the entire file and gives medical, educational as well as all pertinent information regarding that child to the adoptive home. Sometimes the foster parent will receive a copy of the redacted file. Staff realizes the importance of the adoptive home having information on a child that they are making a commitment to.
 - J. Supervisors, during monthly supervision, go over each case and what information has been given to the foster parent. Supervisors have access to the workers case notes in SACWIS and have the ability to look up each case. Supervisors often receive phone calls from foster parents when the worker is not available or has not been in the office and shares information. In some cases when information becomes available and the worker is not able to call the foster parent the supervisor will call the foster parent and share the information. Peer reviews are done with files to check compliance that all information is being shared.
 - K. By keeping foster parents informed about any new information, placements are stable and children are not being moved and are maintained at the same home until permanency is achieved.
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.**

Achievements

- A. The Administrative Case Review (ACR) unit sends written notification to foster parents of all Administrative Case Reviews (ACR's). Caseworkers also notify foster parents of ACR's if the child moves after notices have been sent. Caseworkers will review with foster parents the child portion of the ACR prior to the ACR for input and feedback.
- B. Caseworkers inform foster parents during in-person visits, telephone contact and letters about court hearings, Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) and clinical staffings. Foster parents are notified of all significant service providers and how to contact them. They are encouraged by the team to participate in all facets of child service

provision. Their input is given full consideration. Supervisors will discuss foster parent participation in the child's services during supervision with the caseworker to ensure foster parents have been made aware of the child's services.

1. Caseworkers invite and/or ask foster parents to attend initial and subsequent family meetings for their input in developing the service plan. Foster parents receive their portion of the written service plan at required case milestones. Through the Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement process, the 2005 Peer Review instrument was enhanced to capture compliance with the above issues.
2. Prior to a scheduled court hearing the caseworker will review the child portion of the court report with the foster parent for input and feedback. If a foster parent is unable to attend a court hearing or meeting, the caseworker contacts the foster parent following the hearing in regards to any outcome that impacts the child's placement or permanency. Any other pertinent information is shared with the foster parent during the next regular contact unless the foster parent calls the worker prior to the next visit requesting the information.
3. Educational Advocacy Training is offered throughout the region to foster parents. One foster parent from each home must be certified. While one does not need Educational Advocacy Training prior to becoming licensed, one foster parent from each home must obtain this training prior to renewal of their license. Currently, once Educational Advocacy Training has been completed, it does not have to be repeated or renewed.

C. Policy Transmittal 2015.05 – Procedures 314 Educational Services

1. **Procedures 314, Educational Services** have been revised. The revisions updated and incorporated the previous **P302, Appendix G, Youth in College/Vocational Training Program** into **Procedures, 314.75, Post High School Education Programs**. The Youth in College/Vocational Training Program provides financial and supplemental support services to adolescent youth for whom the Department has court ordered legal responsibility that are enrolled and attending full-time in an accredited college, university or vocational program. This contains the policy on the Community College Payment Program which assists youth with the payment of classes and expenses for Illinois community colleges when other grant funding is not available.
2. The revisions also updated and incorporated the previous **Procedures 302, Appendix S, Education and Training Voucher Program** into **Procedures 314.75, Post High School Education Programs**. The Education and Training Voucher Program provides financial support services to eligible youth that are enrolled in an accredited college, university or vocational program.

In addition, the **CFS 407-3, Application for Community College Payment Program Funds** and **CFS 449-4, YIC-VT, Participant Survey** forms were revised. They are a necessary part of the programs listed above.

The revisions are based on 1) OIG 14-0322, recommendation #10 which relates to the role of the Permanency Worker and the Office of Education and Transitional Services in assisting the youth in applying for college, 2) amendments to statute 705 ILCS 405/2-10.2, which allows a parent to be a court appointed Educational Surrogate Parent and 3) updating the entire **Procedures 314, Educational Services** to match current practice and job titles.

3. The Integrated Assessment process has been implemented statewide. During the assessment process, the caseworker and clinical screener interview foster parents regarding child behavior and to address any special needs of their child. This provides a framework for the creation of the service plan.
 4. All foster parents are surveyed at least yearly regarding casework services. In addition, Foster Care Licensing surveys are sent regarding, annual/renewal contact and closing contact. The aggregated information from surveys is shared with the statewide licensing manager/supervisors, licensing staff at the statewide licensing quarterly meetings and foster parents through the Regional Foster Parent Advisory Councils. This information provides guidance for corrective action planning, as well as, informs foster parents their comments were heard, in order to improve service delivery and overall satisfaction.
- 10. The right to be given, in a timely and consistent manner, any information a case worker has regarding the child and the child's family which is pertinent to the care and needs of the child and to be making of a permanency plan of the child. Disclosure of information concerning the child's family shall be limited to that information that is essential for understanding the needs of and providing care to the child in order to protect the rights of the child's family. When a positive relationship exists between the foster parent and the child's family, the child's family may consent to disclosure of additional information.**

Achievements

- A. The workers provide the foster parents with all known information about the child at the time of the placement (such as health, school, mental health, likes/dislikes, activities involved in, and special needs) within the parameters of confidentiality. As new information is obtained, the worker passes on that information to the foster parent through home visits, phone calls, and staffings. Workers are required to accurately identify and document any disability affecting a child's ability to communicate and to advise the foster parent of this.
- B. Foster parents receive a Health passport for each child in their care. This contains medical and educational information on the child.

- C. The increased use of family meetings when children are in care fosters the sense of teamwork among all parties and improves communication.
- D. Foster parents are advised of questions they should ask a placing worker through PRIDE classes, newsletters and resource staff visits. The list of questions is also published in the Foster Parent Handbook which is available on the DCFS website.
- E. When staffing levels allow, Foster Parent Support Specialists go to the foster home within 72 hours (of being notified of the placement) to review information provided to the foster parent by the placement worker, required records and forms, answer questions and assist the foster parent in obtaining any needed materials or information.

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.

Achievements

- A. In the event that the decision was made to move a child, the foster parent is provided with a 14-day written notification CFS 151, Notice of Decision. The only exception is pending DCP investigations and court orders. They are told the reason for the move, notified of their right to appeal and what the appeal process is. They are provided with a copy of the Appeal Process brochure (CFS 1050-32). If the foster parent is in agreement, the 14-day notification period can be waived. A copy of the CFS 151 and CFS 1050-32 is available for viewing on the DCFS website at www.state.il.us/dcfs.
- B. Staff also gives foster parents the CFS 151-B, Notice of Change of Placement, which provides the caregiver, parent, ward, and Guardian Ad Litem with clinical review rights. A copy of the CFS 151-B is available for viewing on the DCFS website at www.state.il.us/dcfs under the forms section.
- C. Foster parents can request a clinical review in place of or in addition to an appeal. If a foster parent wishes to challenge the removal of a child they may request a clinical review or file a service appeal per Rule 337 or both. If both a clinical review and an appeal are requested, the clinical placement review will be done before the appeal hearing. This information was reviewed and shared during a Regional Foster Care Executive Council meeting.

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.

Achievements

- A. Caseworkers notify the foster parents verbally in advance of a court hearing regarding the following: a) court dates, b) time, c) docket number, d) courtroom, f) GAL (Guardian Ad Litem), g) DCFS recommendation(s). Caseworkers document this notification in a case note. This exchange of information regarding court is reviewed in supervision with the worker.
- B. During PRIDE Training the trainers remind foster parents about their right to attend court hearings and the importance of attending these hearings. Court training is provided throughout the region in order to assure that staff and foster parents remain updated on roles, responsibilities and the legal process. Some sub-regions cover court trainings annually while others may do court trainings every other year. Some offices have a DCFS attorney that may provide the trainings. In other areas, the Assistant State's Attorney has provided trainings for the offices and foster parents.
- C. Foster Parent Support Specialists also encourage foster parents to attend court hearings and encourage the foster parent to be proactive and call the court or the caseworker if they are unsure of the next court date.
- D. Foster parents are encouraged during Area Foster Parent Advisory Council meetings to utilize the management structure to resolve concerns. This would apply if they feel they are not receiving the information they need to fully participate in court hearings regarding the children in their care.
- E. Foster parents are reminded about upcoming court hearings at the Administrative Case Review.
- F. The investigators and caseworkers notify the foster parents of results from a court hearing within 24 hours of a decision if they were not present in court.
- G. The caseworker and investigator notify the court of the foster parents name and address for each ward.
- H. The investigator and caseworker notify the foster parent of emergency hearings and other unscheduled meetings as soon as possible.
- I. Foster care licensing workers are encouraged to remind foster parents during the annual home visit and other meetings to attend all court proceedings.
- J. Foster parents are given a flow chart of the court system in PRIDE Training and the Foster Parent Handbook. Foster parents are reminded at foster parent meetings that the Foster Parent Handbook is available on the DCFS website at www.state.il.us/dcfs in English and Spanish.

- K. In some counties, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA workers) have been assigned to interact with the children and foster parents and report back to the Juvenile Court on how the child is doing in placement, concerns about reunification and permanency, school performance and any other issues relating to the child's well-being. As the caretaker for the children in their care, the foster parents have valuable information to share with this worker. The foster parents can also discuss concerns with the child's Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) who represents the child's interests in Juvenile Court.
- L. The Regional QI (Quality Improvement)/QA (Quality Assurance) committee provides various tools for supervisors to ensure that they are verifying and reminding staff to ensure that foster parents participate in discussions about changes to the visitation plan, specific sections of the case plan, are notified of upcoming court hearings and that this is documented. DCFS supervisors continue to use the Practice Memos that were developed. It remains beneficial to use a section of the supervisory notes that prompts the supervisor to discuss this with staff during their monthly supervision and to remind them to notify foster parents about any upcoming court hearings if they had not already done so. Court hearings are also covered in quarterly supervisor reviews. Supervisors also have access to the worker's case notes in our computer system to assure that the worker has documented their discussions with the foster parents.
- M. Central Region recognizes that ensuring foster parents have proper and timely notice of court hearings is extremely important. Because of this, some offices focused on this as their QI/QA project related to ensuring they were complying with the Foster Parent Law. Some offices now have clerical staff mail the court notice directly to the foster parents of record as soon as the notice is received. Caseworkers are responsible for ensuring foster parents are notified timely of court hearings through ACR's, in-person meetings, child and family team meetings, and phone calls.

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

Achievements

- A. Central Region utilizes the following methods for checking past placement records to ensure foster parents are considered as a placement option for foster children re-entering the system who were formerly placed in their care:
 - 1. When foster children re-enter the system the investigator ensures that a search is conducted on the Department's IMSA and SACWIS systems. The CM07 screen in the IMSA system and the Case Assignment Payment Unit (CAPU) provide data relevant to a foster child's previous placement history.

2. The investigator consults with those persons having past knowledge of the child's previous placements such as Foster Parent Support Specialists, placement workers, and previous foster parents. Relative home placements take precedent unless it is determined not to be the child's best interest. If previous placement is private agency, contact is made with that agency for access to those homes directly. The involved administrators and managers will ensure notification of the placement decision communicated to the former foster parents in a timely manner. When appropriate and time allows the former foster parent will be allowed to offer input in the decision making process.
 3. Investigators and placement workers discuss previous placement history with verbal children soliciting their opinions and exploring the relationship with each of the previous foster families. Documentation will identify how a family selected is in the child's best interest while honoring his/her opinion.
 4. Previous investigators and placement workers may also be consulted for additional information about a child's previous placements.
- B. Central Region's process for determining best interest regarding placement decisions includes supervisors of placement workers ensure the "Best Practice" policy to make sure former foster parents are considered for children previously in care. Former placements are documented in the child's case file. If the former placement was a positive experience, effort is made to replace the child there, if at all possible. These discussions take place during supervision. The new fictive kin policy assists in utilizing prior foster parents as it supports placing children with persons with whom they have a significant, meaningful relationship, despite blood or legal ties.

When a child is returned home from a private agency foster home placement, and replacement occurs, the former home will be considered to lessen the trauma to the child.

(Note: On some occasions (rare), when replacements are made over the weekends and/or in the middle of the night, investigators may not be immediately aware of previous placement information, especially if the family or child cannot tell them.)

The 2012 Foster Parent Bill of Rights Committee highly recommended a one pager be sent to the Regional Quality Council and the Statewide Advisory Council to review the CAPU procedures for replacements of foster children. In the event a child re-enters care, Central Region staff recommend utilizing the management structure to ensure placement with previous foster home occurs. This management structure consists of:

1. Investigator.
2. Supervisor.
3. Area Administrator.
4. Regional Administrator.

If the decision is made not to place with previous foster parent, then the involved Area Administrator will ensure notification of the placement decision is communicated to the former foster parent in a timely manner.

C. Procedures 301.80

Amendments to the Child and Family Services Act and Child Care Act of 1969 in Public Acts 98-804 and 98-846 include “fictive kin” as relatives for placement purposes. Fictive kin are any individuals, unrelated by birth or marriage, who are shown to have close personal or emotional ties with the child or the child’s family prior to the child’s placement with the individual. Amendments to Procedures 301.80 instruct DCFS and POS staff who make placement decisions how to identify and assess fictive kin, as well as all other relatives, as positive placement resources and supports.

The **CFS 458-A, Affidavit of Relationship**, is being renamed “Statement of Relationship.” Relationship choices added to the form and include “step-grandfather”, “step-grandmother”, “partner of one of the above by civil union”, and “I am a close family friend or have a trusted relationship with ____.” A section entitled “Resource Information” is added to list if the relative wants to be a resource for placement, visitation or other contact. Space is added to list the names any related children being placed with this relative.

CFS 458-B, Relative Placement Resources and Positive Supports is a new form to be used by the placing worker or permanency worker when asking about relatives who may be a possible resource or support for the family.

Procedures 301.80 Relative Home Placements (Draft 4-2015)

CFS 458-A Statement of Relationship (draft 4-29-15)

CFS 458-B Relative Placement Resources and Positive Supports (Draft 4-2015)

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.

Achievements

- A. The Foster Parent Handbook explains the appeal process to the foster parent. The handbook covers how to appeal a licensing complaint investigation, service appeals, and appeals of findings of abuse and neglect. Foster parents are reminded in newsletters and local foster parent meetings that the Foster Family Handbook is available on the DCFS website at www.state.il.us/dcfs. Brochures are available in reception areas.
- B. The Foster Parent Support Specialists offer guidance and assistance to foster parents who wish to appeal a decision by offering information regarding appeals and encouraging the foster parent to advocate for themselves and their children by utilizing the DCFS management structure when a problem arises.

- C. Foster parents seek guidance from foster care licensing workers regarding the appeal process. Foster care licensing workers advise foster parents of their appeal rights concerning Licensing Complaint Investigations.
- D. Foster parents are encouraged by Foster Parent Support Specialists to document any violations with specific information pertaining to the incident. Foster parents are free from retaliation.
- E. Foster parents are encouraged to contact the licensing supervisor and/or the caseworker supervisor with specific information pertaining to any incident.
- F. Foster parents are provided a Notice of Decision regarding placement decisions and given the Service Appeal Process brochure.
- G. Foster Parent Support Specialists, supervisors and staff inform foster parents of the Advocacy Office telephone number (800-232-3798). The Advocacy Office responds to complaints, concerns, inquiries and suggestions about the Department of Children and Family Services. The Advocacy Office staff provides referrals to appropriate DCFS staff and suggestions to executive staff for improvements and changes. The Advocacy Office brochure is distributed periodically via foster parent newsletters.

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.

Achievements

- A. This right is explained to foster parents in PRIDE Training. The Foster Parent Hotline number (800-624-5437) is also listed on the DCFS website. During sub-regional foster parent meetings foster parents are encouraged to use the website as a resource.
- B. The Foster Parent Handbook contains information and phone numbers to access assistance. The Central Payment Unit (800-525-0499) (Fax: 217-557-0639 / Direct Deposit: 217-557-0930), Office of Advocacy for Children and Families (800-232-3798) and the Inspector General's Office (800-722-9124) telephone numbers are also listed in the handbook. This book is given to foster parents in PRIDE Training. During local Foster Parent meetings foster parents have been reminded of the valuable information on the DCFS website www.state.il.us/dcf. This includes a list of the numbers for the Foster Parent Hotline, Advocacy Office and Inspector General's Office. Also available are brochures from the Inspector General's Office and Advocacy Office.
- C. Foster parents are given a list of important numbers which is included in the Quick Reference Guide.

- D. Foster parents are reminded of this right by the Foster Parent Support Specialists when an issue is discussed. They are also reminded at yearly meetings with the foster care licensing worker and at local foster parent association meetings.
- E. “Illinois Families Now and Forever” periodically lists the numbers of the Advocacy Office, Inspector General’s Office and Central Payment Unit.
- F. The toll free Foster Parent Help Line (866-368-5204) is an additional resource for foster parents.
- G. Household pets are to be observed for any outward signs of abuse or neglect, to observe whether pets are well-socialized with family members, and to ask licensees whether any household pet has demonstrated aggression towards any household member or others.
- H. In almost all cases, the foster parents have access to the children’s GAL(s), who can assist in reporting case management issues to the court, as well as facilitate resolutions through The Department and utilize The Department’s legal division

Section 2-Foster Parent Responsibilities

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

Achievements

- A. The foster parents are taught about open communication through teamwork in the following trainings: 1) PRIDE and 2) the Teamwork Module.
- B. Foster parents are reminded of this responsibility at each PRIDE session.
- C. Caseworkers meet with foster parents in their home to share information about the child on a monthly basis.
- D. The foster care licensing worker and Foster Parent Support Specialists discuss this issue with foster parents at in-person meetings and in telephone conversations.
- E. The foster parent is trained and reminded that they are to keep vital records on the children in the child’s folder. This includes: a) the Medication and Behavior log, b) case notes, c) the Health Passport, d) other medical records. Caseworkers pick up copies of the Medication and Behavior logs during visits but Foster Parent Support Specialists are encouraging foster parents to keep a copy for their records too. This is discussed at Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings. The Behavior and Medication Log policy is distributed to foster parents by their Foster Parent Support Specialists, foster care licensing worker, caseworkers and foster parents are provided with new logs by their caseworker and Foster Parent Support Specialists when they accept a new placement.

Policy Transmittal 2015.05 – Procedures 314 Educational Services –

Procedures 314, Educational Services have been revised. The revisions updated and incorporated the previous **P302, Appendix G, Youth in College/Vocational Training Program** into **Procedures, 314.75, Post High School Education Programs**. The Youth in College/Vocational Training Program provides financial and supplemental support services to adolescent youth for whom the Department has court ordered legal responsibility that are enrolled and attending full-time in an accredited college, university or vocational program. This contains the policy on the Community College Payment Program which assists youth with the payment of classes and expenses for Illinois community colleges when other grant funding is not available.

The revisions also updated and incorporated the previous **Procedures 302, Appendix S, Education and Training Voucher Program** into **Procedures 314.75, Post High School Education Programs**. The Education and Training Voucher Program provides financial support services to eligible youth that are enrolled in an accredited college, university or vocational program.

In addition, the **CFS 407-3, Application for Community College Payment Program Funds** and **CFS 449-4, YIC-VT, Participant Survey** forms were revised. They are a necessary part of the programs listed above.

The revisions are based on 1) OIG 14-0322, recommendation #10 which relates to the role of the Permanency Worker and the Office of Education and Transitional Services in assisting the youth in applying for college, 2) amendments to statute 705 ILCS 405/2-10.2, which allows a parent to be a court appointed Educational Surrogate Parent and 3) updating the entire **Procedures 314, Educational Services** to match current practice and job titles.

- F. Confidentiality is discussed at the following meetings with foster parents: a) PRIDE, b) annuals, c) Foster Parent Support Specialists visits.
 - G. The limitations of open communication related to confidentiality are discussed during Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings. Policy Interpretation 2000.15, which was issued on November 22, 2000, is frequently handed out and discussed at Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings. This policy interpretation clarifies that subsequent foster parent cannot talk directly to the prior caregiver about a child.
2. **The responsibility to respect the confidentiality of information concerning foster children and their families and act appropriately within applicable confidentiality laws and regulations.**

Achievements

- A. Confidentiality laws and regulations are explained in PRIDE Training and also in the “You Need to Know in Illinois” sections of the training manual available during class and

currently provided online. Foster parents may also access **Rule and Procedures 431, Confidentiality of Personal Information of Persons Served by the Department of Children and Family Services**, sections 431.100 and 431.110, which is available on the DCFS website.

- B. Confidentiality is explained in the Foster Parent Handbook on pages 49 and 50. The laws and regulations are included in this handbook. The handbook was distributed to each foster parent during the PRIDE Training and available on the DCFS website.
- C. The Foster Parent Support Specialist's remind foster parents of confidentiality during in-person and telephone contacts.
- D. Confidentiality is discussed through on-going training and meetings with foster parents.
- E. Legal staff has provided on-going training on confidentiality during meetings. Current policy training addresses confidentiality and changes that effect foster parents are shared.
- F. Periodically Illinois Families Now and Forever will have information addressing confidentiality. This newsletter specifically quotes laws and regulations taken from policy and procedure.
- G. Added language on HIPAA Release of Information, HIPAA Section 164.512(b)(1)(ii), including language from Policy Guide 2003.05
- H. Added language on Release of Mental Health Records, Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Confidentiality Act, [740 ILCS 110/ 9(5) and 110/11(i)].
- I. Added language about who has access to records, [325 ILCS 5/11.1]; [325 ILCS 5/11.2]; [325 ILCS 5/4].
- J. Added Section 431.105 Disclosure of Alcoholism and Other Drug Abuse Records including language from Alcoholism and Other Drug Abuse and Dependency Act [20 ILCS 301/30-5].
- K. Added language on file retention [325 ILCF 5/7.7].

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

Achievements

- A. The foster parents are informed about this responsibility in PRIDE Training and Educational Advocacy Training. Workers encourage and support foster parents in the responsibility to advocate for children in their care.

- B. Foster parents are reminded of the responsibility in the Service Appeal Process (CFS 1050-32). Foster Parent Support Specialists, caseworkers and administrative review staff also remind foster parents of the responsibility.
- C. Foster parents need to be knowledgeable about their right and responsibility to better advocate for children in their care as ensured in the foster parent law and foster parent implementation plan. Foster parents are notified that copies of the Regional Foster Parent Law Plan and Rights and Responsibilities are available on the DCFS website under the Foster Care link. A printed version of the Central Region Foster Parent Implementation Plan is made available to all licensed homes and can be accessed on-line. To view or print a copy, anyone with internet access may go to the DCFS website www.state.il.us/dcfs under the Foster Care link. Foster parents may also pick up a hard copy at their convenience from the nearest DCFS office. Some areas distribute Foster Parent Law plans to foster parents at committee meetings, scheduled events, etc. but all areas are required to review the Foster Parent Implementation Plan with foster parents and collect comments. Foster Parents are asked to provide written acknowledgement that they have received, reviewed and commented on the plan. (See Attachment - C).
- D. Licensed foster parents are required to attend Educational Advocacy Training prior to first renewal of their license. However, PRIDE Trainers and Foster Parent Support Specialists encourage foster parents to take Educational Advocacy Training prior to licensure or as soon as possible after licensure. Trainers and Foster Parent Support Specialists remind foster parents of how valuable this training is to helping them ensure the child's educational needs are met.
- E. Substitute care givers (including residential administrators and their designees) may consent to a child's participation in athletic activities. Substitute care givers are required to use Reasonable and Prudent Parenting Standards when making such decisions.
- F. The caseworker, foster care licensing worker and Foster Parent Support Specialists encourage foster parents to attend Child and Family Team meetings, Administrative Case Reviews, medical appointments, Individual Educational Plans, Integrated Assessment activities, and routine school staffings as well as court and Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP).
- G. The caseworkers, supervisors and Foster Parent Support Specialists help the foster parents identify resources for their foster children.

Policy Transmittal 2015.04 – Procedures 302 Appendix M Transition Planning

Procedure 302 Appendix M, Services Delivered by the Department: Transition Planning for Adolescents has been revised adding language instructing Permanency workers to provide administrative case reviewers with a copy of the Casey Life Skills Assessment (CLSA) results for all youth ages 14 to 21 regardless of living circumstances in addition to documentation of programs or services in which the youth is participating. This may

include chores and/or training and direction that the youth is receiving in their foster home or living arrangement.

Compliance results are being reported to DCFS Administration thus documentation of services.

- H. Casework staff has access to Child Welfare Nurse Specialists who can address medically complex children when a referral has been completed. They can assist in identification of resources for medically complex children or locating medical training resources for foster parents. HealthWorks in available counties distribute a list of medical and dental resources to foster parents. The DCFS website lists additional resources.
 - I. DCFS has educational liaisons that have presented valuable educational information at Regional Foster Care Advisory Council meetings regarding advocating for foster children's educational needs. These liaisons are available to assist foster parents with problematic educational issues.
 - J. Periodically, court personnel and DCFS legal staff are asked to train foster parents on the court process. This enhances the foster parent's understanding of the court system and prepares them to advocate for the children in their care. Caregivers are directed to the Foster Parent Handbook for detailed court system information.
- 4. The responsibility to treat children in the foster parent's care and the children's families with dignity, respect, and consideration.**

Achievements

- A. This responsibility is explained in PRIDE Training by caseworkers and through ongoing in-services. Foster parents are reminded of this responsibility by the caseworker and by the foster care licensing worker at their annual and renewal visits.
- B. Central Region Quality Council Training subcommittee began a project to change policy and procedures to govern the use of Life Books at the point children enter care. The Department recognizes the importance of Life Books. In January 2014, policy was developed to direct staff on life book development. Staff is to partner with the birth family, foster/relative caregivers and the child during the first 45 days after initial placement. Staff can gather supplies from their local office to provide to the family for the development of the life book. Family pictures should be requested and the child depending on age can add drawings to the book. The case worker and foster parent have also been provided with website information for additional resources for life book development. These sites are included elsewhere in the plan.
- C. Family workers through home visits monitor this responsibility. Foster care licensing staff also monitors and reviews this area of responsibility during annual and renewal visits and discuss with the foster parent if there is a concern.

- D. Foster parents are encouraged to transport and in some cases supervise visits with parents and siblings. Foster Parents are encouraged to converse with biological parents regarding child specific issues. This year P.A. 97-1076 expanded the definition of “sibling” for purposes of placement and visitation, the Department’s responsibility to place siblings together whenever possible, and the responsibility of permanency workers, post adoption/subsidy workers and caregivers to encourage children to build and maintain relationships with their siblings. The department stresses the importance of siblings maintaining their relationships and works with the foster parents to ensure this occurs.
 - E. This responsibility has been written in the Licensing Standards for Foster Homes. All foster parents sign an agreement at initial licensure and renewal that states they acknowledge that corporal punishment; threats and derogatory comments cannot be used. Workers encourage foster parents to use positive reinforcement and self-esteem building techniques when working with foster children. Also, local sites offer training on non-violent, age-appropriate discipline for children.
 - F. If staff or a foster parent identify an issue related to the understanding or respect of the child and family’s religious, ethnic or cultural background, the caseworker and licensing worker will work together to identify resources to address this concern.
- 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.**

Achievements

- A. Foster parents will be encouraged to fill out the yearly training needs survey that is sent out in January. A similar survey will be sent to both Casework staff and Licensing workers for them to assess their perceptions of training needs of foster parents. The Foster Parent Support Specialists discuss training needs with the foster parent and assist by notifying foster parents when training they have identified become available.
- B. The foster care licensing worker review Foster Parent Training Logs during annual and renewal visits. However, it should be noted both the licensing worker and foster parent themselves can now view the training transcripts on the Virtual Training Center (VTC) provided the foster parent has registered with VTC. Licensing workers will discuss with foster parents training needs, and ways to meet those needs during their visit with the foster home.
- C. The Training Institute arranges Pre-Service and In-Service Trainings for foster parents in Central Region. The Training Institute can provide foster parents with a catalog of available books and tapes they could use to obtain in-service credits or to research issues related to fostering. The list of available materials can be found on the DCFS website (www.state.il.us/dcfs).

- D. When foster parents are experiencing stress, the Foster Parent Licensing worker, Foster Parent Support Specialist and Permanency worker will encourage foster parents to utilize respite; place themselves on voluntary hold, to utilize support groups offered in the community, and or short term counseling.
 - E. Foster parents with areas needing improvement, and who wish to strengthen or gain more knowledge in identified areas (i.e. Trauma Training, Discipline Training, etc.) through the mutual assessment process are referred for specific trainings.
 - F. Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard; the purpose of this policy guide is to inform DCFS and POS child welfare staff and A & I licensing staff of new requirements in the Title IV-E that require caregivers to apply the reasonable and prudent standard.
 - G. Licensing staff complete the Foster Parent Preference Checklist with foster parents when they first become licensed. This helps the foster parents identify behaviors, issues, or special needs children have that they feel comfortable or do not feel comfortable working with. Completing this checklist also spurs a conversation about issues and behaviors that the foster parents would like to work with if they had training or were more knowledgeable with. By their signature on the 906 Placement Agreements, the foster parents acknowledge this responsibility “to treat the parents courteously and refrain from criticizing them in the child’s presence.” Changes in the Departments’ procedures have now instituted a change in the use of this form. A Central Assessment Unit (CAPU) has replaced field staff in assessing and locating a foster home placement. While this specific form is no longer used after the initial licensing visit, workers, both licensing and placement, continue to have a discussion with foster parents about children that they are willing to care for. When foster parents are called about placements they are free to ask specific questions about the child that the worker would like to place in their home. Foster parents always have the right to say no to a placement, if they do not believe it is a good match for their home.
 - H. In the Central Region Bill of Rights Quick Reference Guide has a frequently asked question about training resource for foster parents.
 - I. Placing workers utilize and complete The Caregiver Matching Tool to assess the strengths and deficiencies of foster parents to ensure an appropriate match is made based on the child’s needs and the foster parents strengths.
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.**

Achievements

- A. Through team efforts and Foster Parent Law activities, foster parents are able to meet and network with other foster parents. Illinois Families Now and Forever newsletters publish information about Foster Parents Associations and support groups. Foster Parents

Support Specialists, caseworker, licensing worker and placement supervisor provide support and information to foster parents. The Statewide Foster Care Representatives share information about upcoming meetings or policy issues that foster parents should submit comments on. They will also convey issues from the Area Foster Care Advisory Council to the Statewide Council when warranted.

- B. Foster Parent Support Specialists and staff provide information regarding local, state and national foster parents associations. During PRIDE Pre-Service training potential foster parents are educated on the importance of foster parent support groups and encouraged to participate. Foster Parent Support Specialists and staff provide information to foster parents about support groups, foster parent cafés, and supportive trainings.
 - C. The DCFS website (www.state.il.us/dcf) publishes the minutes from the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and Adoption Advisory Council. The website also lists the meeting schedules for these groups as well as contact information. There is also a link on the DCFS website to the Illinois Foster/Adoptive Parent Association. During foster parent meetings, foster parents are encouraged to attend statewide meetings and to join local and statewide foster parent associations.
- 7. The responsibility to assess the foster parent's on-going individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.**

Achievements

- A. Surveys are sent out annually to foster homes to assess training needs. Foster parents are encouraged to participate in facilitating training and to make suggestions for potential trainers or topics.
- B. Evaluations from previous training events will be used to assess needs for future trainings. Through monthly visits with caseworkers, licensing, or Foster Parent Support Specialists some of the concerns may be discussed and possible trainings identified.
- C. The Training Institute periodically assesses foster parent training needs. The DCFS Foster Parent Support Specialists have advocated for specific training for foster parents in their areas when they recognize a need or foster parents have expressed a desire for a particular training.
- D. Licensing staff are aware of the types of training foster parents are requesting or needing. They share this information with training personnel at DCFS. Foster parent Support Specialists, where available, are helping foster parents find the training or organizing the training that foster parents request.
- E. A foster parent is required to have 16 hours of training prior to their renewal. Licensing staff works with foster parents to identify specific training needs and to help them locate appropriate and beneficial training.

- F. Training is provided on a regional level to ensure foster parents have the opportunity to access training on any new initiatives, laws and policies effecting foster parents. This includes training on expanded law regarding child safety seats and Integrated Assessment Training.
 - G. Local offices will forward information on relevant trainings that occur in the community.
 - H. Based on child death review teams and OIG recommendations, this section regarding the proper storage of methadone, prescription drugs and other substances that may be noxious that accidentally may be consumed by children has been added to the procedure into the corresponding forms. These revisions were made to the check lists to enhance uniformity in the application and completion of the forms. The CFS1050-66-3 Practice Methadone Safety brochure has been created to inform care givers of the dangers of improperly storing methadone and is to be distributed to all parents in recovery programs on workers current and future caseloads.
- 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.**

Achievements

- A. Foster parents are encouraged to use respite during times of stress. Foster Parent Support Specialists maintain close contact with foster parents to help families identify their needs and prevent disruptions. In some areas, caseworkers have given the foster parents their home telephone numbers, as this direct contact with workers is helpful in preventing placement disruptions. If a child is exhibiting behaviors identified by caregiver or caseworker that require care beyond a typically developed child, the worker will initiate referral for higher level of care (formerly CAYIT).
- B. When it is in the best interest of the foster child, the Director of DCFS may waive any requirement under Rule 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes as long as the waiver complies with the Child Care Act, ANCRA, or any other applicable law. In cases where Director's waivers are requested, clinical staffings are frequently held to review and determine whether the child's needs are met without disrupting other children already placed in the home. Prior to a waiver being requested all casework staff that have a child placed in the home, as well as the licensing worker, must agree that this is in the children's best interests. There will also be a determination of whether the foster parents have the skills and supports to make the placement successful. Verbal waivers may be given, but will be followed up in writing. Only a licensing worker or placing worker may request a waiver.
- C. DCFS provides pre and post disruption support to foster parents, children and their families, in many ways. This would ideally be done when difficulties with the child's

adjustment begin and can be written into the adoption subsidy as part of the post adoption/aftercare planning. For pre disruption cases with an assigned caseworker, the foster parents notify that worker of any problems that they are having. An assessment of need is made between the foster parents and caseworker. Issues may be addressed through case management, through the child and family team support system, through referral to further support services provided through contracted agencies and community partners such as Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) (SOC) Services. A SOC worker meets with the family on a weekly basis for support and guidance and assists with referrals to other community services such as counseling, support services, possible provision of a youth advocate, big brother/big sister, or any other appropriate services. The SOC worker will continue to work with the foster parent, child, and service providers in the event of a disruption, especially if the goal is for the child to return to the foster parent's care. The Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) provides more intensive services, interventions and supports to children and foster parents to prevent placement disruptions and to maintain children in the least restrictive environment. Trainings or updates from local Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) Providers are periodically provided at local Foster Parent Law meetings throughout the region. Casework staff and Foster Parent Support Specialists help foster parents understand what the Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) can provide. The caseworker or foster parent can make the actual referral by contacting the Crisis and Referral Entry System (CARES) at 800-345-9049. Referrals can also be made within DCFS through DCFS Clinical, DCFS nursing staff, or through review of the case through the CIPP process. Placement preservation/supportive services for post adoptive cases are initiated through Adoption Preservation Program at the adoptive parents' request.

- D. Foster parents are advised to contact the child's caseworker first if there is a non-life threatening emergency during business hours and if unable to reach the caseworker to proceed up the chain of command. In a non-threatening emergency situation after hours or on weekends, foster parents can contact the standby worker by contacting the State Central Registry (SCR) Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 800-252-2873. Also, foster parents can contact the CARES number at 800-345-9049 if they have an after hour's crisis involving the foster child. If there is a need for a home visit to provide placement stabilization services foster parents can expect a worker from the Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) Provider to be at their home within 60 minutes (urban area) or 90 minutes (rural area). DCFS foster parents also receive a phone list entitled I>C>E> in case of emergency as part of the (Quick Reference Guide to the foster parents bill of rights.) the phone list contains the emergency numbers a foster parent might need to use and an explanation to the service. Number and information on this list include; emergency service, Abuse and Neglect Hotline, Behavior Crisis (CARES), Medical and Life Threatening, Poison Hotline, Runaway and Missing youth (DCFS Child Location Service.)
- E. Other ways in which the Department provides post disruptive supportive services are via the licensing worker, SASS/SOC, DCFS Clinical staffing (especially when a child is psychiatrically hospitalized), and the Adoption Preservation Program. Foster Parent Support Specialists and Adjunct First Responders are available to help with crisis

situations and to prevent placement disruptions. They are available to help all family members deal with the stress of difficult placements.

F. Procedures 329, Locating and Returning Missing, Runaway, and Abducted Children. The purpose of this Policy Transmittal is to issue revised Procedures 329, Locating and Returning Missing, Runaway, and Abducted Children. The revised procedures include Illinois' Auditor General's recommendations to the Department of providing specific timeframes when caseworkers and caregivers report and search for children who may be missing from care. The definition of "Missing Child" has also been amended and reorganized for clarification. Additionally, the procedure has been reorganized for ease of reference. These revised Procedures 329, render Policy Guide 2014.21 obsolete.

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.

Achievements

A. PRIDE Training and Trauma Training covers recognizing and minimizing stress factors throughout most of sessions. Module 9 of PRIDE Training covers the impact it has on families.

B. Respite is available and encouraged in times of stress. Central Region has established guidelines for respite. Foster Parent Support Specialists help facilitate access to respite. If a foster parent experiences a specific stressful event such as a death or significant illness in the family the assigned Foster Parent Support Specialist will contact the foster parent to offer respite rather than waiting for the foster parent to ask. The caseworker will also assist with facilitating respite to ensure the foster parents' needs are met.

C. The foster care licensing workers and the Foster Parent Support Specialists have informed foster parents of the voluntary hold process. During times of family stress foster care licensing workers and Foster Parent Support Specialists will contact foster parents and suggest that they utilize the voluntary hold process so they do not continue to get placement calls. Foster parents are told that they only need to contact their foster care licensing worker to be put on the voluntary hold list or to be taken off the voluntary hold list. Foster care licensing workers explain to foster parents that once they are placed on voluntary hold they will not be able to take placements until they contact their licensing worker to request that they be taken off hold. Foster care licensing staff periodically contacts the foster parent to determine if they want to be taken off hold. Workers are advised of the hold so that foster parents are not contacted. The CFS 2011, Placement Hold Request form is completed and submitted to the Placement Clearance Desk.

D. DCFS also has funds available when the foster families feel the need for counseling. If there is a family tragedy; Foster Parent Support Specialists, caseworkers and licensing

staff will contact the family to offer their support and will advise them of the short term counseling available to address these issues.

- E. Caseworkers, licensing staff and Foster Parents Support Specialists are available to help the family in the case of placement disruptions. Foster Parent Support Specialists can help link foster parents who are experiencing disruptions with other foster parents who have had similar experiences. Foster Parent Support Specialists are available 24 hours a day 7 days a week to support foster parents.
- F. Caseworkers are encouraged to return foster parent calls in a timely manner so questions are answered expeditiously, thereby reducing foster parent stress.
- G. Caseworkers communicate with foster parents to allow for an ongoing assessment of stressors in the foster home, and help create a plan to manage these ongoing stressors.

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.

Achievements

- A. Regular foster parents meetings are available on local and state levels to share and promote positive aspects of foster parenting. The Central Region has had annual Foster Parent Appreciation and Recognition Banquets and/or social activities such as parties and picnics. In other areas, foster parents were given awards and gift certificates.
- B. Foster parents are asked to help in the recruitment of new foster parents and on Foster Care Licensing Surveys. Information has been given to foster parents about the media and the need to go through the office of communication. In Module 9 of the Foster Parent Handbook foster parents are encouraged to have their friends and family who are interested in fostering call their local agency to inquire.
- C. Several Central Region foster parents have consented to having their story told in articles that are published in Central Connections, which is a part of Illinois Families Now and Forever. These articles promote the rewards and positive benefits to children that occur because of their role as foster parents.
- D. The Regional Youth Advisory Board has presented a panel of teenage DCFS youth in care to speak to staff and foster parents about their positive and negative experiences with the DCFS system and with foster parents they have lived with. The presentation is done in a way to protect confidentiality but it has a profound impact on the audience. In addition, these teens; some of which are enrolled in college, military or vocational training, really illustrate what successes can be possible. This panel has made presentations to the Regional Foster Care Advisory Council, Regional Quality Council meetings, Foster & Adoptive Institutes and at management meetings. This is a way to

provide training to foster parents on promoting positive public relations about foster parenting.

- E. During the roundtable session at PRIDE Trainings, former and current wards present information to potential foster parents about the impact foster parents have had on their lives.
- F. Articles about DCFS wards who have won DCFS scholarships are published in Illinois Families Now and Forever. These stories illustrate the positive impact foster parents have on children.
- G. Foster parents are utilized in an official and informal capacity as recruiters.
- H. Caseworkers, licensing staff, and Foster Parent Support Specialists consistently convey appreciation for foster parents during their contacts year-round. February is designated as “Warm a Foster Parent” month.

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.

Achievements

- A. DCFS trainings welcome the participation of foster parents. Foster Parents Rights and Responsibilities are clearly explained in PRIDE Training. Foster parents are informed of the Foster Parent Law through the Illinois Families Now and forever, on D-Net, direct mailings and local office foster parent meetings or activities. The Training Institute can provide advanced notifications of upcoming trainings as well as being listed on D-Net. There have been slots specifically reserved for foster parents at Prevent Child Abuse Conferences and foster parents are encouraged to register for this conference.
- B. Foster Parent Law meetings are an example of the co-training methods and are being utilized in each field office. Foster Parent Support Specialists provides additional copies of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan and explain the role of each team member. Local offices have meetings to implement the Foster Parent Law plan in their local area. The Foster Parent Law meetings are also a way in which foster parents have a recognized voice within the agency.
- C. The Area Foster Care Advisory Councils hold regular meetings throughout the region with management to discuss training issues and concerns. During Foster Parent Advisory Councils meetings Rule 340-The Foster Parent Code is routinely distributed and foster parents are advised of how this relates to the yearly implementation plan and that the rule explains the scoring process. It is also explained that each Right and Responsibility is listed in the Rule and that these are the issues grieved under the Regions Foster Parent Grievance Process. There has been in depth training on Rule 340-Foster Parent Law in several locations during meetings.

- D. Foster parents are encouraged to participate in the Illinois Foster/Adoptive Parent Association to maintain a recognized presence within the agency management organization. Illinois Families Now and Forever list local Foster Parent Associations and their contact numbers as well as Statewide Foster Parent Organizations. The DCFS website has links to Illinois Foster Parent Organizations as well as National Foster Parent Organizations. During Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings, foster parents are encouraged to use the DCFS website as a resource for information on foster parent associations and DCFS rules, policies, and policy interpretations.
- E. The DCFS Central Region Administrator, as well as, the Area Administrators, and other DCFS management staff regularly attend Area Foster Care Council meetings and other regional meetings and are open to hearing and working to resolve foster parent issues. Central Region utilizes a Foster Parent Steering Committee made up of foster parent representatives from each of the Area Office Councils to provide information exchange with regional management staff. Concerns brought up at area office meetings are shared with regional administrators and resolutions are sought by staff. This process allows foster parents to have a direct voice with area and regional management.
- F. Central Region strives to train DCFS staff and foster parents together whenever possible on new initiatives and policies. Joint training topics have included training on SOC, Integrated Assessment, child safety seat laws and equipment demonstrations, Child and Family Team meetings, confidentiality, the Foster Parent Law, purposeful visitations, etc. In addition, whenever possible Central Region tries to utilize foster parents and staff trainers together. Training offered through Pride Pre-Service and In-Service Training utilizes a co-training model.
- G. Foster parents are also invited and encouraged to attend Child and Family Team meetings and Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP), community agency professionals and parents. This gives foster parents a direct venue to express their concerns or issues.

Foster Parents are invited to attend local office monthly “all staff” meetings to encourage interaction, communication and obtain joint training.

- H. **Policy Guide 2015.07, Procedures 300 – Appendix B, The Allegations System.** The purpose of this Policy Guide is to provide DCFS and Purchase of Service staff with information regarding recent changes to **Allegation #60 Environment Injurious to Health and Welfare (Neglect)**. This Policy Guide also updates SCR Hotline and Child Protection staff regarding the separation of **Allegation #10 Substantial Risk of Physical Injury (Abuse)** from **Allegation #60 Environment Injurious to Health and Welfare (Neglect)** and formally implements the revised **Allegation #60** into procedure and investigative practice. This Policy Guide is effective immediately and shall remain in effect pending the completion of the revision of **Procedures 300** later this year.

- 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.**

Achievements

- A. Foster parents are informed of their mandated reporter status during PRIDE Training. They are provided with the hotline number to report abuse or neglect. At this time, mandated reporter training is not a required training for potential foster parents prior to becoming licensed. Information about being a mandated report is briefly covered during PRIDE Pre-service in session 8 of the pre-service training, and again covered during the panel presentation in session 9 of pre-service by the investigator. Mandated reporter training is offered on the DCFS Virtual Training Center website www.dcfstraining.org or www.state.il.us/dcf where foster parents may complete the course, online, at their own convenience. This training includes:
1. A pre-training assessment (13 multiple-choice questions).
 2. 60-90 minutes of self-paced interactive training.
 3. A post-training assessment (13 multiple-choice questions).
 4. A Certificate of Completion.
- B. Foster parents sign a form acknowledging they are mandated reporters during the licensing process. Foster parents are part of the professional team and are responsible for assuring that children are safe and free from abuse and neglect.
- C. The Foster Parent Handbook given to new foster parents has a section about mandated reporters and a section that explains the investigative process as well as Foster Parent Rights during a Child Abuse and Neglect Investigation. The Foster Parent Handbook is available on the DCFS website at www.state.il.us/dcf.
- D. Foster parents receive ongoing information through trainings, newsletters, staffings, and Illinois Families Now and Forever concerning responsibility of reportable child behaviors as noted on the behavior log. In the event a foster parent does not have access to a computer, information from rule 300 will be provided by licensing worker; foster parent support specialists, caseworker and the foster parent help line at the foster parents’ request.
- E. DCFS provides foster parents with a brochure entitled “What You Need to Know About Child Abuse and Neglect Investigation in Licensed Facilities.” (CFS 1050-55) Information in this brochure includes the fact that foster parents have the right to have someone present of their choosing during an investigation interview. More information about foster home investigation can be found in Rule 300 available on the DCFS website at www.state.il.us/dcf.

- F. In the event of an investigation involving a foster parent, the Investigator will provide a copy of a CANTS 8 Notification of a report of suspected child abuse and neglect to the foster parent who includes name of children involved in suspected abuse or neglect, where the alleged incident occurred and the abuse and neglect allegations. The CANTS 8 also outlines the investigative process.
1. The investigative process.
 2. Results of the investigation.
 3. State Central Register (SCR) informs you of:
 - a. The law.
 - b. Length of time on register.
 - c. Who can get information from the State Central Register.
 - d. Appeal.
 - e. Juvenile court.
 - f. Criminal court cases.
 - g. The effect of being registered on the State Central Register.
 4. Notice of Intent to indicate.
 5. Administrator's teleconference.
 6. An expedited appeal hearing.

The CANTS 8 also included information regarding an expedited appeal hearing should the report be indicated.

- 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 these proceedings.**

Achievements

- A. PRIDE Training emphasizes taking an active role in planning for the child. Foster parents are provided with information about court proceedings, client service plans and Administrative Case Reviews and encouraged to attend and participate. They are advised of what their role is and how important it is to take an active role.
- B. Foster parents provide input to the caseworker and clinical screeners during the creation of the integrated assessment and service plan. This process facilitates a collaborative approach to permanency planning for children and encourages foster parent involvement throughout all legal and administrative activities.
- C. There have been training sessions that include a detailed explanation of the court process, legal timeframes and the foster parents' right to be heard. During this training, DCFS Legal Counsel has encouraged foster parents to call them with any questions about the court process. This training will continue to be offered periodically throughout the region. There is a chart provided explaining legal time frames that is presented and

explained to foster parents during PRIDE Pre-Service Training. They are also provided with a flow chart that explains the court process and time frames.

- D. Foster Parent Support Specialists, caseworkers and licensing staff regularly stress to foster parents the importance of foster parents participating in service planning for the child, participating in Administrative Case Reviews and court proceedings.

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

Achievements

- A. PRIDE Training informs foster parents about appeals and their rights. All foster parents were provided with a brochure "The Service Appeal Process" (CFS 1050-32) and (CFS 1050-55). All new foster parents receive a copy of the Foster Parent Law Rights and Responsibilities and Foster Parent Handbook both of these documents are described the Service Appeal Process. During PRIDE Training, foster parents have the opportunity to discuss the service appeal process with their trainers and representatives from the field. This allows a more practical understanding of what happens during an appeal and steps taken to preserve foster parent rights.
- B. Foster parents receive information and participate in discussions on this subject at local office Foster Parent meetings and Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings.
- C. Foster parents are informed of their rights routinely through the Service Appeal Process brochure (CFS 1050-32) and by the "What You Need to Know About Child Abuse and Neglect Investigations in Licensed Facilities" brochure (CFS 1050-55). Foster parents who are the subject of a Child Abuse and Neglect Investigation are given a copy of the "What You Need to Know About Child Abuse and Neglect Investigations in Licensed Facilities" brochure (CFS 1050-55). Both of these brochures are periodically handed out during Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings throughout the region. Foster parents are advised by Foster Care Licensing staff and Child Protection staff of their right to have a person of their choosing present during a licensing complaint or child abuse investigation.
- D. Foster parents are advised and trained per policy when the issues they are appealing involve the move of the child. They also have the right to a clinical review.
- E. Foster Parent Support Specialists, caseworkers, and foster care licensing staff, are knowledgeable regarding the Service Appeal process, and assist foster parents in understanding their appeal rights and how to prepare and submit an appeal, as well as where to go to get any questions answered. Staff shares this knowledge during visits, and assist foster parents in navigating this process.
- F. Training on investigations in licensed facilities is done periodically throughout the region and during these trainings the appeal process is also explained.

- G. Foster parents are provided with contact information for staff and management at the local field office. Foster parents can contact staff and management regarding questions, complaints and/or appeals. The local management structure and the regional management structure are periodically handed out at local and Area Foster Care Advisory Council meetings.
- H. Additionally, casework, child protection and management staff understands the appeal process and work with foster parents to ensure that their rights are acknowledged and preserved.

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 they foster parent is licensed or affiliated.

Achievements

- A. PRIDE Training teaches foster parents what records are to be kept.
- B. When a foster parent takes placement of a child they receive what is called a "brown" child folder. "Brown" child folders are the foster parent's toolbox of what needs to be documented and how to document the information. All the forms within the "brown" child folder are consistent throughout Central Region. Every folder consists of: medication log; behavior log; discharge summary; foster parent note page; allowance tracking sheet and instructions; what you need to know before signing on the dotted line; IEP information; educational log; clothing inventory (what the child came with and documents what the child left with); face sheet (workers name and number, supervisors name and number, child's physician, religion, and names of who the child can be released to), and reimbursement amounts. Each area can add additional information specific to their area and if new forms are necessary to add to the folder the Foster Parent Support Specialist LEADS will let the Foster Parent Support Specialist know. It is the responsibility of the foster parent to update records for the child in their care as needed.
- C. The Foster Parent Support Specialists and/or foster care licensing staff also trains foster parents during visits to keep accurate records in order to ensure they have the necessary documentation to advocate for services to meet a foster child's special or changing needs. Foster Parent Support Specialists, foster care licensing staff and caseworker staff checks these records during visits and offer suggestions if records are lacking.
- D. Foster parents were notified via their Foster Parent Support Specialists, foster care licensing workers, caseworkers and through newsletters when the new medication and behavior log policy guide was issued. The behavior and medication logs were distributed and discussed during a Regional Foster Parent Advisory Council meeting and distributed in Illinois Families Now and Forever.

- E. During monitoring visits, foster care licensing workers check to ensure that foster parents are keeping required records and remind them this is a violation of Rule 402.26 a 1-12 if they are not maintaining these records. Department staff can assist foster parents in the event questions arise regarding any form completion.
- F. The section of the Foster Home Licensing Rule (402.26) listing records that foster parents must maintain is periodically published in Illinois Families Now and Forever.

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

Achievements

- A. PRIDE Training covers sharing information with subsequent caregivers. Good practice dictates that communication between caretakers would transpire in all circumstances. This expectation is covered in the Foster Parent Handbook, and is facilitated and encouraged by the Resource, Casework, POS staff and foster parents. Policy Interpretation 2000.15 issued November 22, 2000 clarifies the Departments position on how information should be shared with subsequent caretakers. This policy interpretation outlines that information from one caretaker to another should only be shared through the caseworker. This policy guide has been reviewed and distributed at Regional Foster Parent Advisory Council as well as via Illinois Families Now and Forever.
- B. Child and Family Team meetings are held throughout the life of a case and prior to a child returning home. Foster parents should be invited to all Child and Family Team meetings regarding a child in their care. This affords the foster parent and birth parent an opportunity to share information with the team.

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.

Achievements

- A. Section 302.30 has been revised to incorporate general updates, and to inform staff that language aids are available to staff and clients in order to help determine the correct language needed in order to help someone who may walk into a DCFS office and may not be able to communicate in the English language. Additionally, information regarding the Office of the Burgos Coordinator which has compiled community based foreign language resource which may be used by DCFS and POS staff in order to effectively communicate with clients and is available for consultation has been added.

- B. Below are the D-Net links to the **CFS 1050-63-4, Communication Accessibility, CFS 1050-63-6, Multi Language Interpreter** posters and the **CFS 1050-63-7, Multi Language Interpreter** cards introduced in revised Section 302.30.
- C. http://dnet/Affirmative_Action/Forms/Affirmative_Action_Communication_Poster.pdf.
- D. http://dnet/Affirmative_Action/Forms/AA_Language_Interpreter_Poster.pdf.
- E. http://dnet/Affirmative_Action/Forms/AA_Language_Interpreter_Card.pdf.
- F. As usual, Staff may order the language aids, posters and cards, from stores.
- G. An entire PRIDE In-Service Module is devoted to this issue. Information is shared during the Foster Parent Association meetings and activities and at the Area Foster Care Advisory Council Meeting.
- H. Foster parents have provided training to other foster parents and staff, one-on-one and in small groups on cultural issues including, hair and skin care, foods, traditions, and holidays and religious practices.
- I. Foster parents are encouraged by staff to share their knowledge and experience with other foster parents in need of assistance.
- J. The DCFS Training Institute is offering a Trans-Cultural Parenting Training, which utilizes a self-awareness model.
- K. A Module Training that is periodically offered to foster parents is titled “Ouch! Practical Help for Black Hair and Skin.” This class teaches concrete techniques and information.
- L. DCFS supports community involvement and maintaining or placing children in their neighborhood of origin when possible. Also, foster parents and biological parents are encouraged to exchange information relevant to a child’s needs, education, culture, and spirituality.
- M. Recruitment for Spanish speaking homes is done in conjunction with Hispanic cultural celebrations (i.e. Mexican Independence Day, Food Pantry Giveaway events, etc.) using the Hispanic population to help spread the word regarding foster home recruitment and share information through conversation while helping distribute book markers, flyers, brochures with foster care needs, etc. alongside DCFS staff and the CASA Advocacy Center of Rock Island County. The Esperanza Latino Community Services Network Foster Home Recruitment Workgroup has joined up with Resource Development Services (RDS) and become the Foster Care Alliance. An alliance comprised of DCFS and community partners. A trilingual Foster Care Alliance banner is presented at every event the Foster Care Alliance participates in, as well as, distribution of recruitment materials in both Spanish and English in the Rock Island area.