

Aunt Martha's Health & Wellness, Inc.

2018 FOSTER PARENT LAW
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

FOSTER PARENT RIGHTS

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

Aunt Martha's ensures that our Foster Parents are treated with dignity, respect and consideration and as professional members of the child welfare team in the following ways:

- **Communication**

The Agency demonstrates respect for our Foster Parents by keeping the lines of communication open. Child Welfare Staff show Foster Parents consideration as a member of the Child Welfare team by working collaboratively with the Foster Parents to schedule home visits for dates and times that are convenient for them. The Agency ensures that telephone communication between Child Welfare Staff and Foster Parents is maintained, as it is an integral part of collaboration in case management. Foster Parents are provided with a Foster Care Staff directory quarterly, which lists the contact information for all program staff. Foster Parents are provided with staff's cellular phones numbers also in case of immediate need to speak with the agency. The Agency's emergency after-hours telephone number (708-747-7100) is disseminated with the Foster Parent Orientation Manual and is indicated on the staff directory. This information is disseminated to ensure Foster Parents have access to Child Welfare Staff after normal business hours.

Maintaining collaborative communication with Foster Parents and providing excellent customer service to them is of the utmost importance. Supervisors and Management conduct random semiannual visits and quarterly telephone calls to a random sampling of Foster Parents on each Case Manager's caseload in order to ensure that all safety issues are being addressed, to solicit Foster Parent feedback and to address any identified concerns or issues.

- **Collaboration/Case Planning**

Foster Parent's input is sought when making decisions about children in their care to obtain a thorough assessment of the child's needs in service planning. Foster Parents are made aware of all Agency and Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS/Department) related meetings that occur for the children who are placed in their care and are highly encouraged to attend all scheduled meetings. These meetings include but are not limited to, Child and Family Team Meetings, Administrative Care Reviews(ACR)s, clinical staffing and court hearings. Considered as resources, Foster Parents are able to provide the team with real time and pertinent information about the child and their progress. Foster Parents are also included in the case planning process during home visits and licensing monitoring visits. It is the Agency's policy that Staff and Foster Parents discuss case issues, concerns, and work together to implement necessary interventions. This ensures that the Foster Parents are involved in every aspect of the child welfare case.

Within the first 45 days of a child's placement in a home, the Clinical team will meet with the Foster Parents giving the opportunity for the Foster Parents to report specifically what is occurring in the home with the child. The Foster Parent has an opportunity to discuss if they feel the addition of clinical services to the home would assist with stabilizing any behaviors the child is exhibiting. Foster Parents are also included in creation of treatment plans for children receiving clinical services with the Agency. Child Welfare Staff obtains Foster Parents' input from when considering and/or pursuing placement of a child, this includes initial placements, internal moves and residential step down cases.

- **Treating as Professional Member of the Team**

As professional members of the team, the Foster Parents' assessment of children's behavior plays a significant role in adequate planning. With the Foster Parents' input, the Agency is better able to identify issues and services that are needed which ultimately affect the children's progress. This collaboration between the Agency and Foster Parents helps ensure that children's needs are being identified and met.

The Agency facilitates meetings to review and revise the Foster Parent Implementation Plan yearly. Foster Parents' input and feedback is necessary to guide the revisions of the plan annually, as they are members of the professional team. The input into the plan is collaboration from staff and Foster Parents who attend these meetings. Meetings are scheduled for day and evening hours to accommodate Foster Parent's schedules. Foster Parents are able to attend as many sessions as they wish and are able to obtain training credit for participation in the plan revision process. This year, the Agency designated Foster Parents as official Endorsers of the Foster Parent Implementation Plan.

The Agency continues to survey Foster Parents anonymously on an annual basis. The survey allows the agency to glean important feedback from Foster Parents regarding their satisfaction or discontent of the quality of services provided by the Agency. The Agency Management reviews and discusses the input from Foster Parents. The Management team believes that this input from foster parent is crucial in building and maintaining an effective program that holistically supports children in care. Management attempts to implement strategies and training to issues support families and staff that were identified in the surveys. This practice helps the Agency ensure that that Foster Parents remain an integral part of helping to improve the Agency's service delivery.

- **Foster Parent Activities**

The Agency sponsors a yearly Holiday Party for our children and Foster Parents. The Holiday Party is held at the Hollywood Theater in Woodridge, Illinois and includes all Foster Care families serviced by the Agency. The families view a movie, socialize, eat together and the children receive their gifts from the Agency. In 2018, the Agency is planning a Foster Parent Appreciation activity to acknowledge our Foster Parents for their service. The Agency is also planning a family back to school event in 2018.

The Agency will continue to engage Foster Parents in attending support group meetings. The meeting will include a Foster Parent to facilitate the support group meeting. The meetings will allow Foster Parents the opportunity to share ideas and concerns other Foster Parents, obtain information and tips to aid in fostering, and engage with designated management staff who will be part of the meetings.

2. The right to be given standardized pre-service training and appropriate ongoing training to meet mutually assessed needs and improves the Foster Parents' skills.

• **Pre-Service**

PRIDE Pre-Service Training is required for all persons seeking to become licensed Foster Parents. PRIDE Pre-Service Training was recently revised to incorporate expanded training on shared parenting and trauma informed practices. Non-related Traditional applicants receive 39 total hours of training. The first 27 hours of the training are offered in the classroom or online. The remaining 12 hours of supplemental training can be completed in the classroom or on-demand simultaneously while completing the 27 hours of training. Relative Caregivers are encouraged by the Licensing Department to complete the full PRIDE Pre-Service Training, however it is only mandatory that they complete 6 hours of training. Relative Caregivers may complete the 6-hour training via DVD or in the classroom.

• **In-Service**

Foster Parents are encouraged to regularly complete PRIDE In-Service Training. In-Service Training will assist Foster Parents with building their parenting and advocacy skills. The DCFS Virtual Training Center is readily available for Foster Parent use. Foster Parents may complete PRIDE In-Service Training modules on-line or they can attend classroom sessions. The Agency also has DVD copies of the Department's 9 sessions of In-Service training for Foster Parent use. These materials range in topics that are relevant to the population of children served. Although Educational Advocacy is not mandatory until renewal of the foster home license, the Agency has observed that is a valuable training for new Foster Parents and have implemented a policy that states Foster Parents must complete the training within 6 months on initial licensure. The Agency also gives Foster Parents access to computers on site for completion of training, if necessary. Foster Parents are also encouraged to visit their local library for books and other materials that will assist them with building their skills. The agency assists Foster Parents with completing the Training Credit Approval Form (TCAF) for submission to the Department, which is necessary for proper training credit.

Agency will facilitate one-hour in-service classroom training to Foster Parents during morning and evening hours during the upcoming year. The agency is in the process of planning topics for the meetings and will be based on input from Foster Parents and information the agency deems appropriate and necessary to support parents. The Foster Parents will be able to receive their board payments on the days the training are facilitated which is usually earlier than regularly scheduled board payments.

The Agency continues to conduct Town Hall meetings per calendar year. Foster Parents are able to obtain 2 hours of training credit per meeting. The Town Hall trainings center on topics that allow Foster Parents to add to their skill set in parenting children in care. The topics this past year included, Effective Communication, Empathy in Parent, Behavioral Management and Disciplinary Techniques, and Court Training and Foster Parent Implementation Plan Review were the training topics this year.

- **Co-Training**

The Agency utilizes a co-training model at Town Hall meetings. The Foster Parent who co-trains is selected based upon the training topic and their knowledge or interest in the specific topic. The Agency will continue with the co-training model, including training relevant to building and maintaining relationships with children, strength based approaches to helping children, and other topics that further secure placements of children. Our designated Foster Parent co-trainer participated in the Empathy in Parenting and Behavioral Management and Disciplinary Techniques. The co-trainer was able to engage foster parents about their experiences and input on the topics.

- **Utilization of Mutual Training Assessment Tool**

Agency staff consults with Foster Parents to assess what type of child they are able to parent adequately. The Caregiver Matching Tool is utilized for this purpose, in addition to engaging in candid discussions with Foster Parents. Licensing Staff discusses the Foster Parents' training needs during monitoring visits. Licensing staff surveys Foster Parents once a year minimally about training needs. At that time, Staff also engages in discussion with them regarding training that is required or desired. The Agency assist Foster Parents when they requested specific training. During the year, Staff collaborates and assists Foster Parents in identifying and registering for training. The Agency also works with Foster Parents when a need for supportive training is identified to enhance Parents ability parent..

Foster Parent training requirements are instituted based on the level of care provided for children. Foster Parents who care for children who are deemed in need of a higher level of care to address more specialized behaviors are required to complete additional training that include topics that are relevant to issues experienced by this population of children.

- **Ongoing Training Schedule and Calendar**

The Agency devises and disseminates agency training calendars during the year. Training calendars are made available to Foster Parents through mailings and at meetings. The Agency also assists Foster Parents with locating training offered by the Department and outside community agencies.

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 the children in the Foster Parent's care.

- **24 Hour, 7 Day Emergency Support**

Child Welfare staff are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and are always available to assist Foster Parents with any crises or emergencies that may occur with their children. The Agency operates after-hours emergency answering service, which can be accessed by calling 877-692-8686. This service is in place to help Foster Parents manage crises after normal business hours. The answering service will contact the appropriate Management staff who will assess the crisis and respond accordingly by contacting the assigned Child Welfare staff or Program Supervisor, if necessary.

The Foster Care Staff Directory lists office and phone numbers for Child Welfare Staff and is updated whenever there is a staff change. The directory is provided to all Foster Parents at least quarterly and upon request via home visits, mailings, and Town Hall meetings. The directory can also be e-mailed or faxed to the Foster Parents per their request. Fax and email addresses were added to the directory for the Foster Parents' convenience.

- **Methods for Accessing Support Services**

For crisis resolution, Foster Parents are informed that if their child is having a mental health emergency, they can contact Screening, Assessment and Support Services (SASS) for assistance, as well as the assigned Child Welfare Staff, and Clinical staff who work with the child/family. The professional team will work collaboratively until the crisis is resolved.

Foster Parents receive lists of resources for support, service information and Agency staff contacts upon placement of children in their home. This information includes program directories, organizational charts, agency programs and community resources, including medical, dental and mental health services offered by the Agency are also provided. Foster Parents are also provided with resources for support that are specific to the DCFS. These resources include, but are not limited to; the Illinois Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and the Adoptive Parent Association.

Foster Parents are informed that resources and other helpful information can be accessed by visiting DCFS's website at www.state.il.us/dcfs.

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

- **Regular Board Payment**

Aunt Martha's is responsible for issuing board payments to licensed Foster Parents. Board payments are mailed to licensed foster homes during the last week of each month. The Agency devises a board payment schedule yearly and disseminates to Foster Parents through mail or at Town Hall Meetings at the beginning of each year. There is an enclosure in the payment envelope that denotes the amounts to be allotted for the board payment, the child's allowance and the child's clothing.

The Department mails monthly board payments for Unlicensed Relatives from Springfield to the Foster Parents' homes.

Upon initial placement of a child, the Agency provides the necessary items for the clients with the Foster Parents' input or allow the Foster Parents to shop and receive financial reimbursement for items they purchased as deemed by Rule 359 Authorized Child Care Payments. The Foster Parents are informed of the approved amount for the necessary items authorized by the Department upon initial placement of a child into their home. In the event that a new placement occurs as a result of a placement disruption, the child's situation will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and to determine the need for items at that time. The agency makes every effort to obtain monies owed to children such as, clothing and allowance from previous Foster Parents to ensure children needs are met during transitions.

- **Payment for Additional Services**

Foster Parents are provided non-recurring fees, of \$19.79 per month for children in care. The non-recurring funds can be utilized to pay for recreational and developmental activities throughout the year. These activities include sports, tutoring, school trips, girl/boy scouts, music lessons, art lessons, day camp, summer camp, and Park District or YMCA classes. Foster Parents can access the non-recurring funds, by discussing their intent to use the funds with their Case Manager. Foster Parents provide the Agency with documentation that supports their request. The Program supervisor and/or Administrator approves the funds to ensure that usage is in accordance with Department Procedure 359-Authorized Child Care payments. The Agency now keeps a tracking log of monies spent for designated activities in which non-recurring fees are utilized.

If respite services are needed, Foster Parents are first encouraged to utilize the approved, alternate care providers identified on the CFS 452-4 Business or Employment Related Child Supervision Plan. This is the expectation for both Traditional and Specialized Foster Parents. If a Specialized, Unlicensed Relative or Traditional Foster Parent's alternate care providers are not available, the Agency will assist the Foster Parent in identifying an appropriate licensed Foster Parent to provide respite. For Unlicensed Relative Caregivers and Traditional Foster Parents, the Agency pays the identified respite provider directly by mailing a check to their home. Specialized Foster Parents' respite reimbursement is built into their board payment. Specialized Foster Parent board payment is much higher to accommodate respite and other provisions for those children who have higher level of needs. If a Specialized Foster Parent utilizes respite providers they identify, the Foster Parent pays the provider directly. If respite is provided by a licensed Foster Parent through the Agency, the monies to pay the respite provider is deducted from the Specialized Foster Parent's board payment and disseminated to the designated respite provider.

- **Timely Assessment and Payment Commensurate with Care**

Foster Parents' board payment amounts reflect the type of care they provide children. Unlicensed Relative Foster Parents receive the standard of need board payments. These payments have been determined by the Department and are solely based on the number of children in the home. Foster Parents that are caring for Traditional children receive a rate of reimbursement that has been determined by the Department and is based on the age of the child. Foster Parents that are caring for specialized children receive a higher rate of reimbursement because their children have more specialized needs that may require additional support services, home visits and increased transportation needs.

When children begin to exhibit increased behavior patterns that cannot be managed in the Traditional Foster Care Program, the Agency in collaboration with the Foster Parents makes a determination if a referral for a Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) is warranted. Upon the Department's approval for the child to be serviced in a Specialized Foster Care Program, the Agency will ensure that the increase in the Foster Parent's board payment will reflect the change of service type. This is done through the completion of the CFS 906-1 Placement/Payment Authorization form. The CFS 906-1 Authorization for Payment is completed within 5 days of approval for specialized care.

- **Method of Resolving Payment Problems**

When issues arise regarding incorrect board payment amounts, the Case Manager, Program Supervisor, or Administrator works with the Fiscal Department for resolution. In the event that a licensed Foster Parent does not receive their monthly board payment, they should notify their assigned Case Manager. The Case Manager and Program Supervisor will work the Agency's Fiscal Department to resolve the issue. If after ten days, the Foster Parent does not receive their board payment check, the Agency will cancel the check and request replacement check be issued to the Foster Parent. When a resolution cannot be resolved internally, the Administrator and Fiscal Department work collaboratively with DCFS and to obtain a resolution and final disposition regarding the issue.

Unlicensed Relative Foster Parents receive their board payment from the Department. When Unlicensed Relative Foster Parents encounter issues with payment, the Case Manager will assist the Foster Parent in contacting the payment unit in Springfield at 1-800-525-0499 to resolve the issue.

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

- **Foster Parent Participation in Development of Child's Service Plan**

The Agency encourages full participation from Foster Parents to support the development of an all-inclusive service plan. It is imperative that input from the entire professional team is included in the plan to ensure that the appropriate services and tasks are formed.

Foster Parent observations, input and feedback as it relates to the child in their home is sought and taken into consideration during the development of the service plan tasks. Case Managers solicit the Foster Parents input as it relates to child in their care and during the writing of the family's court reports and service plans The case manager discusses information that may be pertinent to case planning during home visits, Child and Family Teams, clinical staffing and other meetings.

- **Timely Notification of Changes in Service Plan/Permanency Goal and Method of Notification**

Case Managers notify Foster Parents of court hearings and Administrative Case Review (ACR) dates. Notification is done in person, via telephone, email, .or by mail. Foster Parents are encouraged to attend court and ACRs to give direct input to providers. Court decisions can inform changes in permanency goals, which necessitate changes in the service plan. Upon court ordered goal changes, the Agency amends the service plan as deemed necessary to reflect changes and provides the Foster Parent with an updated service plan. Foster Parents are notified of the outcome of ACRs and court proceedings via telephone calls or during home visits.

- **Foster Parent Participation/Input into Visitation/ Communication Plan with Birth Family**

Foster Parents are encouraged to help the child develop and/or maintain positive familial relationships via communication and visitation with their families. Assisting Foster Parents in preserving children's cultural identity is in alignment with the agency's goal of providing caring and nurturing environments. Case Management staff work with Foster Parents to develop the child and sibling visitation sections of the service plan. The Agency Foster Parents and birth parents determine the appropriate visitation plan and provisions for the plan based on case specific information. Foster Parents give input about children's schedules, activities and behavior issues as it relates to scheduling and facilitating visits. Foster Parents are encouraged to facilitate, monitor and transport children to visits with birth parents and siblings. Foster Parents are informed that reimbursement is available for visitation they supervise based on appropriate documentation and approval through the Department. The agency assists parents in completing the documentation is necessary.

The Agency provides color copies of Life Book pages for Foster Families and children to work together to ensure that children develop a record of their memories and connection to their birth families. The clinical staff also works with children with life books are part of the therapeutic process. Life book materials were added to the agency's placement intake packets for children. These packets are reviewed with and disseminated to the Foster Parent upon placement of each child in their home.

Licensing Specialists discuss cultural diversity during the initial licensing process and documents the conversation in the home study assessment. The Agency also offers Cultural Diversity Training on a regular basis. This training is available free of charge to Foster Parents, and teaches them how to interact with children and their birth families in a culturally sensitive manner. If it is found by the Agency that a home has difficulty with exposing children to their own culture, the Agency will staff the case and work collaboratively to identify activities and other resources to aid in cultural awareness, education and enrichment. An additional resource by the way of DCFS's PRIDE In-Service Training is available and encompasses information about cultural heritage.

6. The right to be provided 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; and the right to have decisions concerning a licensing corrective action plan specifically explained and tied to the licensing standards violated.

- **Agency's Investigation of Alleged Violations and Dissemination of Information to Foster Parents**

The Agency informs Foster Parents about licensing complaint investigations during the initial licensing process. Upon notification of allegations of abuse, neglect or violations of the 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes, the Agency will conduct a staffing to determine the most appropriate course of action. After receiving a complaint of an alleged violation of the 402 Licensing Standard for Foster Family Homes, the Licensing Department has two (2) days to initiate the unannounced contact with the Foster Parent regarding the investigation. Response time varies, as some alleged violations require immediate observation to determine a plan to ensure the child's safety. When immediate response or need to remove child from the Foster Parent/foster home, the Supervisor or case manager notifies the Foster Parent via telephone or in person of the alleged allegations. The Agency's efforts to ensure unbiased investigation lies in the assignment of the completion of investigations. Licensing Specialist are not assigned investigations for foster families who are on their assigned caseloads. This helps to ensure that existing professional relationships are not a factor in the investigations.

- **Time Frames for Investigation as required by DCFS Rule**

Rule 383 dictates that once information that warrants the initiation of a licensing complaint investigation is received, the assigned Licensing Specialist two days to initiate the investigation and thirty (30) days to complete it. However, the investigation may be extended for an additional thirty (30) days. Foster Parents is kept abreast of the status of the investigation through verbal correspondence throughout the process. Once the entire investigation is completed, the Licensing Complaint investigation report is submitted to the Licensing Supervisor. The

supervisor has 7 days to review the file and approve the Licensing Specialist investigative findings. The Licensing Department has 5 days to contact the Foster Parent and apprise them of the Licensing Complaint investigation findings and decisions. The Foster Parents are notified of the outcome by mail. The letter indicates if any hat 402 Licensing standards were deemed to be violated, and a designated corrective action plan is indicated when necessary. If there were no standards deemed violated, the letter also indicates that the investigation was unsubstantiated and no further action is needed.

- **Procedures for appealing negative results/corrective action plans**

If the investigation is substantiated, the Agency gives the foster parent an option to attend a supervisory review. The results of the investigation, and any needed corrections, are discussed during the review. The Foster Parent is given a chance to explain their perspective and submit any additional documentation or proof to dispute the substantiated violations. A copy of the Corrective Action Plan is amended at that time if the Foster Parent has evidence that warrants reversal of the initials results of the investigations. If the Foster Parent is still in disagreement with the Agency's findings, the Agency will offer an Informal Hearing with the DCFS Licensing Administration. It is explained to the Foster Parent that the Agency will submit a report of the supervisory review to DCFS to initiate the informal review and the process that follows.

- **Person of Foster Parent's Choosing Present During the Investigation**

Upon conducting an unannounced visit to the home to initiate the Licensing Complaint investigation, Foster Parents are advised of their right to have a friend, witness or advocate present during their investigation interview. The Licensing Specialist presents and explains to the Foster Parent, a CFS 596-02 Right to Have Advocate Present Form immediately upon entry into the home. The CFS 596-02 explains to the Foster Parent that they have 4 hours to have their advocate of their choosing to come to the home before the interview commences. The Licensing Specialist is obligated to allow the entire 4 hours for the designated person to arrive. If the Foster Parents chooses not to have an advocate present, the initiation of the investigation will proceed immediately. The Foster Parent signs the CFS 596-02 indicating that the agency discussed their right to have an advocate present during the investigation.

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

It is the Agency's practice to inform Foster Parents of any information known about the child(ren) in their care. Foster Parents are informed of any changes regarding the children's service and visitation plan or permanency goals. The need for changes in service provisions is also discussed with Foster Parents upon identification of needs to seek their input. This information is given to Foster Parents during telephone interaction, emails, home visits and other meetings. During home visits, the Foster Parents are informed of all court dates, ACR's, and scheduled meetings, as well as what occurred

during these various meetings. Aunt Martha's believes that Foster Parents are better equipped to help children in care when they are aware of all issues.

- **Caseworker Training in Information to be Disclosed**

In addition to the Department's Foundations training, the Agency requires Supervisors and Management to train workers internally upon completion of Foundations training, through case management training, weekly team meetings and on a one on one basis during supervision to ensure that proper information is distributed to Foster Parents. All Case Managers participate in mandatory supervision, monthly all staff meetings, and bi-monthly case management training through team meetings.

Agency case managers are trained on how to ensure that all background information of a child is shared with the Foster Parents during home visits, attending Child and Family Team Meetings, court hearings, and ACR reviews. Supervisor and Management engage case managers on how to disseminate information in an empathetic and professional manner, especially with information that may be sensitive or difficult to discuss.

At the time of initial placement, Case Managers provide the Foster Parents with a Child Record Folder or documentation concerning the child. The Child Record Folder is to be maintained by the Foster Parents. Case Managers provide documents to the Foster Parents about child's family history, medical, psychological, educational information, behavioral, the child's case plan, and the child's interests and a copy of their Individual Education Plan (IEP) if applicable.

- **Caseworker Accountability in Sharing Information**

Case Managers are charged with communicating all important information gathered during training and meetings and ensuring that the pertinent child information is thoroughly discussed with Foster Parents and resolutions achieved if necessary. Program Supervisor follows up with Case Managers in supervision to discuss delivery of pertinent information to Foster Parents.

8. The right to be given information concerning a child from the Department as required under Section 5 of the Children and Family Services Act and from a child welfare Agency as required under Section 7.4 (c-5) of the Child Care Act of 1969.

- **Aunt Martha's Rules and Procedures Concerning Information Shared and How Information is Shared with Foster Parents**

It is the Agency's policy to provide the Foster Parent with all pertinent and known information about the children whom we are seeking to place in their home or who may already be placed in their home. When seeking placements for children, the Agency utilizes an internal Placement Request form, which indicates the needs for the child being placed. The Placement Request form has been recently updated and it now provides additional information about the child and their needs. Medical, behavioral, mental health, educational and information

regarding their visitation plans with birth parents and siblings is included on the form and shared with the prospective Foster Parent.

Information is provided to the prospective Foster Parent initially by phone during licensing staff's placement search process. This information is disseminated through the CFS 600-4 Sharing Information with Caregiver. The information is provided so that the Foster Parent has the opportunity to make informed decisions about their ability to meet that child's specific needs. If the Foster Parent decides to foster the child, all pertinent information is given in writing to the Foster Parent about child's family history, medical, psychological, educational information, behavioral, the child's case plan, and the child's interests and a copy of their Individual Education Plan (IEP) if applicable.

The Agency trains all Foster Care staff on information that is to be disclosed to Foster Parents and best practice for disclosing the information. There is initial training for all Foster Care staff. All new staff are given copies of the following Department policies/procedures: 301 Placement and Visitation Services, 314-Educational Services, 315- Permanency Planning, 402-Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes. Ongoing training occurs during supervision, all staff meetings, team meetings and weekly staff check-in meetings. New policies and adherence to existing policies are discussed and addressed in these forums.

- **Caseworker Accountability in Sharing Information**

Methods through which information is shared with Foster Parents includes, but is not limited to; home visits, court involvement, Child and Family Team Meetings, Administrative Case Reviews, and the service planning process. Case Managers create progress notes, which are subsequently reviewed by the Program Supervisor. During supervision, details regarding the case are discussed, and decisions are made regarding the disclosure of information to the Foster Parent at that time. Foster Parents are encouraged to inform supervisors whenever they feel that the Agency did not provide pertinent information regarding the child or the case. When the Agency suspects or is notified that Foster Parents were not informed of information properly, the Program Supervisor will discuss the issue with assigned Case Manager and initiate proper steps to resolve the issue. If actions are egregious or if lack of information sharing is a consistent issue, disciplinary measures will be implemented.

- 9. The right to be notified of scheduled meetings and staffing 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 staffing, and individual educational planning meetings; the right to be informed of decisions made by the courts or the child welfare Agency concerning the child; the right to provide input concerning the plan of services for the child and to have that input given full consideration in the same manner as information presented by any other professional on the team; and the right to communicate with other professionals who work with the foster child within the context of the team, including therapists, physicians and teachers.**

- **Foster Parents are Notified of and Encouraged to Participate in All Child-Centered Meetings and Staffing**

It is the Agency's policy to notify all Foster Parents of meetings and staffings. Notifications of meetings are provided at home visits, through phone contact, emails and by mail. The Agency encourages Foster Parents to attend court hearings, ACRs and other scheduled meetings. The Agency empowers Foster Parents by requesting that they attend meetings to convey their insight and contributions to the case personally. The Agency invites Foster Parents and encourages their participation by phone and in internal Care Coordination meetings. Care Coordination meetings are interdisciplinary staffing in which members of the professional team discuss the child's level of functioning, service needs and implement necessary services and/or interventions that address the clients in a holistic manner. If Foster Parents are not able to attend in person, they are encourage to participate by phone.

- **Foster Parents are Informed of Decisions Made by Aunt Martha's and Courts**

Foster Parents are informed about changes to children's services prior to implementation, as they are a part of the service planning team. When Foster Parents are not involved in case planning, they are informed immediately of any decisions made by the Agency or courts as it affects their home and the child(ren) in their care. Additionally, Foster Parents are kept abreast of decisions made by the Agency and the courts at the time of home visits, Child and Family Team Meetings and any other staffings. If a Foster Parent is unable to attend a meeting, staffing, court hearing or ACR, the Agency will inform them of any changes, plans or decisions during home visits or via telephone contact.

- **Foster Parents' Input Into Case Planning is Encouraged and Given Full Consideration through Communication with the Team**

From the beginning of the Agency's professional relationship with Foster Parents, they are informed that they are members of the professional team and that their input, concerns and ideas are vital to working with the family. The Agency ensures that Foster Parents attend quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings in person or by phone to discuss permanency goals and developments of the case. During review of treatment plans, Clinicians and Foster Parents discuss the child's behavior at home and school. The level of involvement of Foster Parents in the child's treatment is dependent on the needs for each case. Foster Parents are encouraged to communicate their concerns and possible solutions to these concerns at any time and during the monthly home visits, Child and Family Team meetings, staffings, court, and ACR meetings.

Historically, Aunt Martha's has prided itself on working with Foster Parents in establishing appropriate and accurate service planning in a collaborative manner. Foster Parents are an integral part of the service planning team and Aunt Martha's ensures that Foster Parents are informed about changes to children's services prior to implementation. Foster Parents are active participants in the collaboration of services and discussion regarding their children's needs. When there are changes in services, upon receipt of the information by the case

manager, the Foster Parents are notified in person, by phone or via mail. When situations or critical issues arise, the agency consults the Foster Parent to obtain first-hand knowledge of the child's functioning at home and or school in order to work collaboratively in making the best decision possible for the child.

In addition, Agency Clinicians consult with Foster Parents regarding the development of treatment goals and review treatment plans every three months to comply with Joint Commission requirements. Aunt Martha's is accredited by Joint Commission (for the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations) in order to provide foster adoption services to families.

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

- **Information Given to Foster Parents at Intake and How Information is Disclosed**

If case dynamics allow, the establishment of working relationships between the Foster Parents and the children's biological families is expected. Through phone contact and supervision of child/parent visitation, many Foster Parents and Biological Parents establish positive relationships in which Foster Parents act in a supportive mentoring role. As a result, the families work collaboratively with the agency towards return home or permanence for the best interest of the child.

Upon initial placement of a child into a home, an Intake Packet is completed with the Foster Parent. An Intake Packet is designed to ensure that information is discussed and provided for the Foster Parent. The Foster Parent signs proper paperwork and consents that are required for the child's file. The Intake Packet contains but not limited to the following documents: CFS 600-4 Sharing Information with the Foster Parent, Caregiver Matching Tool, CFS 318 Sibling Contact Information, Initial Educational Profile, child portion of the family service plan if available.

When a child enters the Foster Care system, an Integrated Assessment is conducted to obtain historical and current information regarding the child, Birth Parents and biological family. In order to obtain this information, the child is interviewed, if age appropriate, as well as the Biological Parent, if available. Upon the completion and approval of the integrated assessment, the Foster Parent is provided the child portion only for their review and records. The child, Birth Parents, and Foster Parents are interviewed during the process.

- **Ongoing Sharing of Child Health and Well-Being Information with Foster Parents**

The Agency ensures that HIPPA laws are adhere to when working with children and families. Agency staff discuss and share only relevant information regarding the biological family with the Foster Family. Staff are educated to share pertinent information that does not violate any member of the teams' confidentiality. If any information is obtained that the Agency finds may place a child's health or well-being in jeopardy, the issue is discussed with the Program Supervisor and a plan to relay the information to the Foster Parent is devised and promptly implemented.

The right to be given reasonable written notice of:

- 1) any change in a child's case plan;
- 2) plans to terminate the placement of the child with the Foster Parent; and,
- 3) the reasons for the change or termination in placement. The notice shall be waived only in cases of court order or when the child is determined to be at imminent risk of harm.

- **Written Notice of Decision to Remove**

When the agency has to amend the service plan for the family, the foster parents are informed and given a chance to provide input or feedback. When a placement change is deemed necessary, the Agency staffs the case to determine the best interest and future placement for the child. The status of the case and the reason why a placement change is necessitated will be discussed. The Agency makes every attempt to engage the Foster Parent in preserving the placement by discussing service provisions and other supportive measure that may be necessary for the child to maintain the current placement. If it is found that the Foster Parents are uncooperative, unable or unwilling to continue the placement, the Agency will proceed to notify them in writing with a CFS 151B-Notice of Change of Placement Change form (CFS 151B), indicating the reason for change in placement.

If it is determined that a placement change is needed, the Agency completes a CFS 151B which indicates the reason for the decision for the removal of the child(ren). The Agency issues the CFS 151-B to the Foster Parents in person immediately and explains their appeals rights, if applicable. Immediate issuance of a CFS 151-B is not required for removals that are court ordered or removals for immediate risk of harm per policy. It is the Agency's practice to provide a CFS 151-B to Foster Parents, even in cases where children are removed due to imminent risk of harm. A copy of the CFS 151-B is submitted to the Guardian Ad Litem and the Birth Parents if, they are involved in the case.

- **Foster Parents Provided with Appeal and Emergency Review Process**

Upon issuing a Notice of Removal (CFS 151-B) to Foster Parent, the Agency provide the DCFS appeal and emergency review process and verbally explain to Foster Parents their appeal rights. The appeal rights information is detailed on the CFS 151-B as well. Foster Parents are informed that an appeal request for a placement removal has to be submitted to the Administrative Hearing Unit of DCFS within 3 days of receiving the Notice of Removal from the Agency. At the Foster Parent's

request, Case Managers will assist Foster Parents with completing the paperwork for filing an appeal.

11. 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 the 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.

- **Method for Notifying Foster Parents of Hearings and Their Right to be Heard**

During the initial licensing process and upon placement of a child in their home, Foster Parents are informed of their right to be an advocate by attending any court hearings that are held for the child(ren) in their care. Foster Parents are encouraged to attend court hearings in order to provide pertinent information to court officials, advocate for the child(ren) in their care and to report their observations, concerns and provide feedback as it relates to the case. Foster Parents are most frequently notified of court hearings by their Case Manager during home visits and via notification by telephone calls and mail.

The Agency provides Foster Parents contact information for court personnel and are encouraged to build and maintain relationships with court personnel so that their input can be shared prior to and during court hearings. Foster Parents are also provided contact information for court personnel through the Foster Parent Handbook that includes the Public Guardian, Cook County Clerks' office and other pertinent contact information.

- **Caseworkers Accountability in Notifying Foster Parents of Court Hearing**

It is mandatory for the Case Managers to have dialogue with the Foster Parents about court hearings. Case Managers are required to have ongoing conversation with Foster Parents about court hearing throughout the life of the child's case. Supervisor discuss Foster Parent's input during supervision. When the Supervisor becomes aware of a Case Manager's failure to notify the Foster Parent of court related information, the Program Supervisor instructs the Case Manager to contact the Foster Parent and document the conversation. Consistent failure to maintain communication with Foster Parents regarding pertinent court related information will result in disciplinary action.

12. The right to be considered as a placement option when a foster child who was formerly placed with the Foster Parents is to be re-entered into foster care, if that placement is consistent with the best interest of the child and other children in the home.

- **Method for Checking Past Placement Records**

When a child re-enters care, the Agency reviews the child's previous electronic records, including the placement history section of SACWIS, and the hard copy case file (if available) in order to ascertain a list of previous Foster Parents. The Agency will make a determination if there were any previous issues in those homes

that may not be in the child's best interest to return. If the home is found to be appropriate, the Agency will contact the Foster Parents, inform them that the child has re-entered care, and inquire about their willingness to receive the child back into their home. Simultaneously, if the child is able to communicate adequately, the program Staff will ask about the prior placement and if they would like to return to specific Foster Parents. Lastly, an updated home assessment will be completed to ensure that returning the child to the home and care of the Foster Parents is in that child's, and other children who reside in the home, best interest.

- **Process for Determining Best Interest Placement Decisions**

The Agency will pursue all avenues until the child is placed in a home that reflects the best interest of child and family. If it is found after conducting an updated assessment, that the previous home is not in the best interest of the child or the children who already reside in the home, Licensing staff will explore further placement options for the child. This may include other previous Foster Parents on record, newly identified relatives, Fictive Kin or traditionally licensed Foster Parents. The Agency will staff the information obtained, make a determination and document final decision regarding placement.

13. The right to have timely access to the child placement Agency 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.

- **Internal Appeals System**

Agency staff are trained to understand that Foster Parents have a right to convey any -dissatisfaction they have with the Agency and the right to have issues resolved in non-retaliatory manner. The Agency respects Foster Parents' right to file a service appeal and will work with the Foster Parent until an acceptable resolution is devised. If a Foster Parent feels that their rights have been violated in any way, they are first encouraged to work with their Case Manager and Case Manager's Supervisor to resolve the issue(s). When a resolution cannot be obtained at the direct service level, it is referred up the chain of command to the Program's Administrator, then Vice President of Foster Care for intervention. At no time, will a Foster Parent experience retaliation from the Agency as a result of exercising their right to file a service appeal.

Education on the Agency's appeal process is done early in the licensing process. Prospective Foster Parents are made aware that they have an avenue to pursue solutions to issues that they may be having with a Child Welfare Staff member or the Agency in general. Upon placement of a child in a home, the Foster Parents are given service appeal brochures and the service appeal process is explained to them at that time. Foster Parents are trained in service once yearly on the Agency's internal appeal and grievance processes. This training occurred at a Foster Parent Implementation Plan review meeting. This year's training occurred at the October 25, 2017 meeting.

- **Process for Accessing DCFS Appeals System**

Foster Parents are trained once yearly on DCFS's service appeal process. The training has been designed to teach Foster Parents the nuances of DCFS appeal and grievance filing processes. The Agency conducted a training on Agency and DCFS service appeal and grievance filing processes on October 25, 2017. The Department's appeal brochure is maintained in the Agency's Cook and Northern Region Foster Care offices and is available upon request. The brochure is provided to Foster Parents upon request or if the Agency believes that, the Foster Parent needs to know their appeal and grievance rights, such as upon notice to remove a child from their home.

14. The right to be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline established under the Section 35.6 of the Children and Family Services Act and the rights accorded to Foster Parents concerning reports of misconduct by Department employees, service providers or contractors, confidential handling of those reports, and investigations by the Inspector General appointed under Section 35.5 of the Children and Family Services Act.

- **Foster Parent Hotline and Office of Inspector General Information**

Upon starting PRIDE Pre-Service Training, Foster Parents are provided with a Foster Family Handbook that includes the contact number for the Office of Inspector General (800-722-9124) and the Department's Advocacy office (800-232-3798). The contact information for the Foster Parent Hotline and Office of Inspector General are also provided to the Foster Parents through several other methods. They are listed in the Child Record Folder, and various publications such as the Agency newsletter and brochures that are located at Agency offices. They are also disseminated at other various trainings and DCFS support groups. The Agency also provides Foster Parents with copies of the Foster Family Handbook upon placements.

FOSTER PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The responsibility to openly communicate and share information about the child with members of the Child Welfare Team.

- **Open Communication**

Foster Parents are trained on what and how information should be communicated to the Child Welfare Team, service providers and the birth family. This occurs during PRIDE Pre-Service Training and the initial licensing process. During the initial licensing process, and upon placement of children, Foster Parents are given a Foster Care Program Expectation Form to review and sign. The Foster Care Program Expectation Form addresses the need for effective communication between the Agency and Foster Parents. Foster Parents are given a Child Record folder upon initial placement of a child that includes important information regarding the child's medical, educational, clinical and birth family.

Foster Parents are trained to report any medical, behavioral, mental health, school issues and any significant events that occur with children and issues that affect their well-being at risk. The agency urges Foster Parents to communicate openly through email, telephone, text message and/or during home visits, licensing visits,

trainings, staffing's and other pertinent meetings as it relates to the safety and well-being of the child(ren) in their care.

The Agency ensures that Foster Parents have important phone numbers in order to communicate effectively with members of the professional team. The Agency provides a Foster Parent Orientation Handbook upon the first placement with the Agency. Contact numbers, which include, but are not limited; to Agency Program Staff, Guardian Ad Litem and other service providers. The telephone number to DCFS's abuse and neglect hotline (1-800-25-ABUSE) are provided to Foster Parents during the licensing process, home visits, Town Hall Meetings, and other trainings.

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

- **Confidentiality Training**

Foster Parents are trained on the Department's Confidentiality policy as it is indicated in the 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes in Pride Pre-Service Training and during the initial licensing and renewal processes. Aunt Martha's provides the Foster Parent with the Agency's Acknowledgement of Understanding Concerning Issues Surrounding Confidentiality to review and sign during the initial licensing process, at license renewal and upon each placement of a child into a home. The Confidentiality form explains what information regarding the child(ren) is confidential and what information can be shared with service providers and under which circumstances.

Prior to the initiation of clinical services, the Foster Parent is required to sign a confidentiality form as it relates to communicating and sharing information regarding the Mental Health Assessment. The Clinical Team reviews the consent and confidentiality forms with the Foster Parents annually thereafter.

- **Confidentiality Laws and Regulations**

The Agency ensures that the professional team is educated about confidentiality guidelines based on Part 431 Confidentiality of Personal Information of Persons Served by the Department of Children and Family Services. Foster Parents receive training, clearly defining the parameters regarding the confidentiality and release of information about foster children and their families. This occurs During Foster Adopt Pride Pre-Service Training, Agency Town Hall Meetings, at the initial placement of a child in the home, and during monthly home visits. Foster Parents receive information that minors who are 12 years and older must sign consent before the release of their mental health information. If a Foster Parent, at any time, is in doubt regarding the parameters of confidentiality, they are encouraged to contact a member of the Child Welfare Team or the child's Guardian Ad Litem, for clarification on what information is appropriate to share with a school, daycare facility, or any service provider outside of the Agency.

The Agency present information on the Department Normalcy Standards for Foster parents during a Town Hall Training Meeting in which they were educated on the specific things in which they can consent to such as, travel outside of state within a 48 hour time frame without obtaining the Department's consent.

3. The responsibility to advocate for the children in the Foster Parent's Care.

- **Educational Advocacy Training**

The Agency holds foster Parent accountable for advocating for children, by requiring their attendance at IEP meetings to articulate children's needs and other pertinent information. During Foster Pride Pre-Service Training, the Foster Parents are trained on how to appropriately advocate for the educational, medical and clinical needs for the children in their home. Educational Advocacy is a PRIDE In-Service Training that is designed to teach Foster Parents specifically how to navigate the school systems and advocate for their children's educational needs. The Agency encourages Foster Parents to complete this training within 6 months of becoming licensed, as the training is a valuable resource for advocating for children in schools. Also, Educational Advocacy is a required class that has to be completed before a Foster Parent can renew their foster care license. It is an expectation that Foster Parents attend school meetings and address concerns within the school environment that affect the children in their home. This responsibility to advocate for children's educational needs is discussed in the beginning of the licensing process and during home visits. The Agency monitors this by attending quarterly meetings and/or yearly IEP meetings with Foster Parents.

- **Court Training**

The Agency facilitated a Court Training for Foster Parents on October 25, 2017 at a Town Hall Training Meeting. The curriculum consisted of roles of court personnel, type of court calls, information discussed at court, and Foster Parents rights as it pertain to court, etc.

Foster Parents are informed of court dates during home visits, Child and Family Team Meetings and through call and emails. They are strongly encouraged to attend court dates to advocate for the well-being needs of the children in their home.

- **Service Appeals**

The Agency ensures that Foster Parents are aware access Appeal Process if necessary. Foster Parents receive training once yearly on how to utilize the service appeal process. If a child is removed from a foster home, the Case Manager reviews and discusses with the Foster Parents their rights to appeal and advocate for themselves and the child(ren) in their care. A brochure is located in the Child Record Folder and a copy can be requested from any member of the Child Welfare Team. If Foster Parents require assistance with the Appeal process, Case Management will assist them with completing the appeal if necessary.

- **Foster Parent Participation**

The Agency recommends that Foster Parents attend court hearings, including mediations and Court Family Conferences, Administrative Case Reviews, Agency staffings, clinical staffings, school staffing, Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP), Discharge Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (DCIPP) and other significant meetings that pertain to the child placed in their care. During these meetings, Foster Parents are given an opportunity to engage in dialogue to express their concerns and provide feedback regarding the child in their care. Attendance at meetings allows Foster Parents to receive information first hand and gives them the opportunity to advocate for their child accordingly. The Agency notifies Foster Parents of meetings through written correspondence and verbal invitations.

4. The responsibility to treat children in the Foster Parent's care and the children's families with dignity, respect, and consideration.

- **Treating Children with Dignity and Respect**

Foster Parents are trained in PRIDE Pre-Service Training to treat all members of the Child Welfare Team with dignity and respect, this includes the children and their birth families. While potential Foster Parents are attending PRIDE Pre-Service Training and simultaneously participating in the home study process, the licensing staff discusses the requirement of the 402 Licensing Standards for Foster Family Homes, as it pertains to the treatment of children and families. The 402 Licensing Standards require that Foster Parents not refer to a child or their families in a derogatory manner. The Acknowledgement Concerning Prohibition of Corporal Punishment form states that the use of derogatory language in regards to the child or the family is a violation of DCFS policy. Foster Parents must agree to adhere to the policy by signing the form. If negative or derogatory behavior towards children and their families is observed, Case Managers address the issues as deemed appropriate. When warranted, Program Supervisors will intervene to ensure that the issue is resolved in a respectful manner.

The Department of Children and Family Services and Aunt Martha's has a goal for the Foster Parents and the Birth Parent(s) to establish positive relationships with one another. During the Informational Meetings and initial licensing process the importance of developing positive, supportive relationships with birth families is stressed to potential Foster Parents. To further assist in understanding the importance of having and showing dignity, respect, and consideration to the children and their families, the Agency provides each Foster Parent with a copy of the current Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. This plan is given to Foster Parents during the initial licensing process and Quarterly Town Hall Meetings.

Life Book materials are included in the Foster Parent Orientation Manual. This manual is disseminated upon the completion of the licensing process. Each time a child is placed in a foster home, the Case Manager will provide the Foster Parent with Life Book materials. Life Books are utilized to assist children in capturing their life through written expression and photographs. The use of the Life Book will

encourage the Foster Parent to cultivate an understanding of the child's family with respect and dignity. The Agency will work in conjunction with the Foster Parent and child to develop the Life Book. The agency will work collaborate the foster parent and child to ensure the continual development. If the child is receiving therapeutic services, the Life Book will be utilized as a therapeutic tool. The Life Book will travel with the child through achieved permanency.

- **Monitoring**

The assigned case manager monitors the treatment of the client and their birth. The Case Manager should have regular discussions regarding well-being, safety and other needs with the Foster Parent, birth parents and client depending on the child's age. The assigned Supervisor facilitates monthly supervision with the assigned Case Manager to discuss the case progress. Additional Clinical support is provided to Foster Parents when the Agency becomes aware that impairments may exist with the Foster Parents inability to treat the child with dignity or respect. This support may include family therapy with the Foster Parent and the child, psycho-educational development with the Foster Parents or other methods, as deemed appropriate.

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.

- **Mutual Assessment**

Foster Parents are assessed on a consistent basis throughout the initial licensing home study process. The licensing staff assesses the prospective Foster Parent's motivation for fostering, their parenting style, previous parenting experiences, their readiness to accept a placement and the possible impact of the child's placement on their home. Licensing staff discusses these issues in detail throughout the licensing process and consistently after licensure. Foster Parents are encouraged to assess their environment, schedule, and support system prior to completing the licensing process and on an ongoing basis.

Foster Parents are responsible for communicating difficulty and obstacles in parenting and requesting assistance and support from the Agency. When requested, the Agency will work collaboratively with the Foster Parent to seek additional resources. If the Agency identifies possible issues or observe that a Foster Parent may have a heightened level of stress, the Agency will discuss the concern and work to identified resources, training, or other resolutions.

The Agency continues assessments of Foster Parents while children are placed in foster homes by conducting Foster Parent Competency Checklists. The Checklist is based on the identified parenting competencies that all Foster Parents should possess to be successful, addressed in the Foster Adopt Pride Training. The Foster Parents have a responsibility to engage in the process by assessing their own ability and discussing needs with the agency. If deficiencies in parenting are identified,

the Agency works collaboratively with the Foster Parent to discuss issues and identify referrals, training, and assistance as deemed appropriate. During home visits, staff inquires if Foster Parents are in need of specific training, and if identified, staff and Foster Parents work together to meet the training need. The agency attempts to stress that training referrals are not always punitive, but resourceful and helpful to assist and support the family.

- **Training Assessments**

The Agency identifies prospective foster homes based on the client's needs and the Foster Parents' strengths. Staff and Foster Parents discuss changes in placement preferences on an ongoing basis. The Agency also conducts a mass surveying of Foster Parent's preference for children quarterly. In addition, a Caregiver Matching Tool is utilized to further make a thorough assessment of the appropriateness of the match. The Caregiver Matching Tool allows Foster Parents to identify parenting strengths and ability to handle certain behaviors.

Foster Parents are responsible for seeking training that aids their skill set as Foster Parents. When difficulty arises in locating specific training, Foster Parents should seek assistance from the Licensing Specialist or Case Manager. Specialized Foster Parents are responsible for the completion of 64 training hours over a four-year period. Traditional Foster Parents are responsible for completion of 16 training hours over a four-year period. Foster Parents are given information about various training opportunities within the Agency and those offered by DCFS.

- **Placements**

The Caregiver Matching Tool allows Foster Parents to identify parenting strengths and ability to handle certain behaviors. The pre-placement visits allow the prospective Foster Parents the opportunity to observe a child before a child is placed in a foster home, the prospective Foster Parents, when possible, are asked to participate in pre-placement visits with a prospective foster child. The pre-placement visit allows prospective Foster Parents to meet and interact with the child. They also have the opportunity to ask questions about the child and their needs. This gives the Foster Parents an opportunity to assess if they are capable of meeting and responding to the mental, emotional, and behavioral needs of the child. In their home, and get some idea of whether the child and the family can integrate.

- **Support**

The Agency encourages Foster Parents to use their identified support system when they began to identify stressors in parenting. Utilizing support systems give Foster Parents a chance to break from the daily stressors of being a parent. When occasions arise that prevent usage of their own care plans, the Agency assist Foster Parents in locating an appropriate caregivers. Whether identified by the Foster Parent or Agency, the need for additional support in parenting is taken seriously and the Agency takes all necessary steps to alleviate pressures and stress by working with Foster Parents to identify stressors and resolutions.

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

- **Internal Support Groups**

The Agency provides a number of opportunities for the Foster Parents to associate and communicate with each other and share experiences in care for children. These opportunities include Town Hall meetings, Holiday Party, the Foster Parent Law and Implementation Review Process, and through various trainings offered by the Agency on a monthly basis.

The Agency will reinitiate an internal Agency support group in 2018. Several Foster Parents have committed to participating and a co-chair was identified. Although past supports groups dissipated due to lack of attendance, the Agency is hoping for renewed interest for a support group by highlighting benefits of gathering with other parents, who may be experiencing the same things and obtaining informal assistance in problem solving issues with children.

The Agency disseminates a foster care newsletter called, "NEWS ON THE GO!" The newsletter provided the Foster Parents with information about various Agency and DCFS events in which Foster Parents were able to interact with other Foster Parents in various regions in Illinois.

- **Affiliations**

Foster parents are provided with resources and information that is specific to the Department of Children and Family Services, which include but are not limited to: the Illinois Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council and the Adoptive Parent Association. Foster Parents are informed that these important resources can be accessed by visiting the Department's website at www.state.il.us/dcf. Although the Agency has not facilitated an internal Foster Parent Support Group, the Agency continued to engage Foster Parents in participating in other designated support group meetings and activities, which are beneficial to them. Foster Parents are encouraged to attend the Department's support group meetings in their respective D.C.F.S. regions, in the absence of an Agency facilitated support group.

7. The responsibility to assess the Foster Parent's ongoing individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.

- **Foster Parent Assessment**

Ongoing training needs for Foster Parents are discussed between the Licensing Specialist, Foster Parents and Case Managers. Prior to each licensing monitoring visit, Licensing Specialist completes an internal Case Management Consultation Form. This form is utilized as a tool in which Case Management staff can inform the licensing staff of any concerns within the foster home, including parenting issues.

Once issues are identified, the Licensing Specialist discusses the issue, which provides the Foster Parent the opportunity to acknowledge any support, or trainings they may need. The Foster Parent and Licensing Specialist determine the appropriate resolution regarding the documented concerns noted at the monitoring visits or communicated by the Case Manager. If deemed necessary, clinical support will be available to provide psycho-educational and other specific educational trainings, which can be accessed by the Case Manager on behalf of the Foster Parent.

Foster Parents' common training needs are addressed via Town Hall meetings. Topics for Town Hall meetings include pertinent that aids in caring for children and covers an array of parenting situations. Training topics arise from surveys by Foster Parents, topics on new Department policies and other information that may be relevant and important for all parents to be educated about to help assist in appropriate parenting. The Agency also pay attention to trends or epidemics that affect children and youth in care and attempt to devise training surrounding those subjects. If additional training is required or requested, Agency staff will assist the Foster Parent in locating appropriate resources. The Foster Parent will be responsible for following through with completion of recommended training. Foster Parent Competencies, which are conducted annually also, help staff and Foster Parents identify possible training needs.

8. The responsibility to develop and assist in implementing strategies to prevent placement disruption; 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 foster children and foster family if preventive strategies fail and a placement disruptions occurs.

- **Early Identification of Children at Risk of Placement Disruption**

The Foster Parent has a responsibility to collaborate with the agency to exhaust all possible measures to avoid placement disruptions. These avenues include adequate and timely notifications of issues, including challenging behaviors and interfacing with the Agency to identify placement stabilization services, Screening Assessment Support Services(SASS), Intensive Placement Stabilization(IPS), and CIPP. Foster Parents should communicate any issues and concerns to the Case Manager during home visits and Case Managers should ask open-ended questions at home visits to gather information about clients' behaviors or issues that may have arisen in the home. Foster Parents are encouraged to use respite to in order to time that may be used to relieve stress and renew the Foster Parents commitment to resolving the issues that may be causing the child's placement to disrupt. If deemed necessary and to prevent placement disruption, the Clinical unit will be consulted to intervene with the family to address any current concerns prior to referring the family to external services. Agency will encourage Foster Parents to contact the Agency's Foster Parent Advocate in stressful situations for support.

All youth ages four and up receive a clinical assessment for the first thirty days upon admission to the foster care program. During the assessment, Foster Parent(s) are provided with support to help with the transition into the home. Following the end of the assessment, youth's needs are assessed and clinical recommendations and possible referrals are provided. This process aids in identifying needs and addressing them to prevent placement disruption.

When placement changes are necessitated, children experience trauma during the process due to the loss and separation from Foster Parents, friends, and school. There may be a change in their school, environment, community and service providers causing the child to regress and/or show lack of future progress. Every effort should be made by the Foster Parent and Agency to minimize the risk of placement disruptions.

- **Support for foster children and family members if preventative strategies fail**
Foster Parents should make every effort to work with the Agency to avoid placement disruptions. The Agency will seek placement stabilization services, additional clinical resources and other possible resources. If the identified services are not successful, the Foster Parent should work collaboratively with the Agency for the best plan possible to transition the child from the home. In the event a placement disruption cannot be prevented, the Agency holds the Foster Parents accountable for providing a notice of removal. It is important that Foster Parents acknowledge that moving is traumatic for children regardless of the reason and time is needed to find an appropriate subsequent home. Conversely, if the Agency has assessed that the child's placement is no longer in their best interest, the Agency will issue the Foster Parent a notice of removal. If the Agency issues the notice of removal, Foster Parents are also made aware of the appeal process and the Case Manager will assist the Foster Parent with appealing the removal of the child from the home. The notice of removal affords the Agency the opportunity to locate the most appropriate foster home placement and to prepare the child for transition.

During the period of transition, the Agency makes every effort to help the child(ren) and Foster Parent make a positive transition. The Agency will provide clinical services if deemed necessary and/or increases visitation to the home during the transition to support the family. In addition, the Agency encourages the Foster Parent to maintain a relationship with the child(ren), if appropriate.

- **Training**
The Agency continues to provide trauma informed training to our Foster Parents. It is important for Foster Parents to understand how trauma affects children and how valuable it is to be skilled in caring for trauma-affected children. The Agency educates Foster Parents about services provided by the Department such as Clinical Intervention Placement Preservation (CIPP) and Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS). This information is disseminated during home visits, at training and in the event that it has been assessed that placement disruption may occur.

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 from Foster Parenting.

- **Training to Recognize and Minimize Stress Factors**

It is the Foster Parents responsibility to understand that fostering can be rewarding, challenging, joyful, and also stressful at times. Foster Parents must recognize their limits and access training and resources that are meant to assist them with stress management. Foster Pride Pre- Service Training provides the Foster Parents with initial education about the various stressors that are part of being a Foster Parent and referrals for resources are provided within the Foster Parent Handbook. The Agency, through various trainings and Town Hall meetings, continues to train on the impact that fostering can have on the Foster Parents and their relationships with family and friends. The Agency facilitated the training, "Effective Communication" at a Town Hall Training meeting, which focused on identifying stress factors and self-care techniques.

- **Respite**

Foster Parents have a responsibility to recognize and to be conscious of the strain that fostering children can put on their families and them personally. They are encouraged by the Agency to utilize respite consistently to minimize the pressures that come with fostering. Prospective Foster Parents are required to identify at least two trusted individuals that could serve as a backup caregiver/support to assist them with respite and/or babysitting. In the event that Traditional and Specialized Foster Parents are unable to retain an appropriate respite provider, the Agency will assist with locating a provider. For Traditional Foster Parents, the Agency will pay for respite services per day, per child. Specialized Foster Parents' respite is included within their monthly board payment, which also includes an allowance for respite per month. If the Agency locates respite for Specialized Foster Parents, the monies are deducted from the board payment to pay the respite provider.

Foster Parents are encouraged to network with other Agency Foster Parents and build fiduciary relationships as is relates to providing respite care for each other's children. The Agency encourages and supports the utilization of previous Foster Parents to provide respite services for children that were formerly placed in their care and/or who are caring for siblings of the Foster Parents children. The Agency also has licensed Foster Parents who are only interested in providing respite care and refers Foster Parents seeking respite providers to them, if necessary.

- **Voluntary Hold**

It is the Agency's position that most Foster Parents have the best intentions after making the decision to foster youth in care. However, we understand that negative situations and other life circumstances may make the continuation of fostering a very difficult choice for Foster Parents. As a result, the Department offers Foster Parents the option to have their license placed on voluntary hold. The Foster Parents are informed of this policy during the initial licensing process, at each

licensing monitoring visit and at the time of license renewal. An in-depth discussion is had with the Foster Parent at the time of their decision to request that their license be placed on voluntary hold. The procedure for being removed from voluntary hold is also discussed. If circumstances change and parenting becomes more conducive, the Foster Parents can request to be placed on active status again.

- **Counseling and other Supports**

Upon placement of each child into a foster home, the Clinical staff provides an assessment to determine if the child and/or the family requires therapeutic in-home support services. Therapeutic clinical services are designed to assist the Foster Parent with minimizing stress for the child and family and promotes trauma informed transition from the care of birth parents and previous Foster Parents. If a child in their home exhibits a need for clinical services, Foster Parents may request that the Clinical staff conduct an assessment on the child. If it is assessed that the family requires therapeutic intervention, The Clinical staff provides training to the Foster Parents to assist them to be able to identify stressors in the home and provide them with the tools to manage stress effectively. Foster Parent's responsibility for engaging in the clinical support process is to minimize any potential stresses that that may occur with placement. Foster Parents can request counseling consultation and/services through their Case Managers or directly to Clinical staff. If the Agency deems necessary, Foster Parents will be offered counseling as a supportive measure.

10. The responsibility to know the rewards and benefits to children, parents, families, and society that comes from Foster Parenting and to promote the Foster Parenting experience in a positive way.

- **Foster Parent Events/Activities**

The Agency is committed to its continual efforts to determine the best way to recognize the hard work and dedication that Foster Parents exhibit and to obtain maximum level of participation in Foster Parent Events and Activities.

Foster Parents are informed of events/activities at the Town Hall Training meetings and via the newsletter "News On The Go; Foster Care Division." The newsletter provides the Foster Parents with tips on safety, healthy eating, trainings, as well as information on planning healthy and exciting family activities. Foster Parents are also reminded of upcoming events/activities by Foster Care staff during monthly home visits, at licensing monitoring visits and via telephone. Foster Parents were surveyed at the September Town Hall Training meeting and provided ideas and feedback as it relates to activities and events that they would be interested in for themselves and their families. The ideas and feedback that Foster Parents provided have been taken into considered and activities and events will be coordinated and implemented per their wishes.

Foster Parents are strongly encouraged to participate in the annual Foster Parent Implementation Law Plan Committee meetings. The committee meetings are

facilitated twice weekly during the months of September and October. At these meetings, the Foster Parents are responsible for giving input about the information in the plan and what changes can be made to better service them as Foster Parents and to ensure that they understand their rights and adhere to their responsibilities. It is made very clear to Foster Parents that the Foster Parent Implementation Law Plan is "their" plan and that their participation in the review, revision and endorsement of the Foster Parent Implementation Law Plan is a very important and crucial process for the final document that is submitted to the Department.

- **Training in Public Relations**

In an effort to increase recruitment of Foster Parents to the Agency, recruitment efforts have become focused on specific areas and the needs of youth in care. The Agency has implemented new practices of providing incentives to Foster Parents who refer others to be Foster Parents with the Agency. This allows the Agency to support and encourage Foster Parents to use their business resources and talents to assist and aid in the well-being of the youth in care. It also allows Foster Parents to promote the Agency, all the services available to children and families.

The Agency's marketing team works with the licensing staff to identify and discuss marketing tools that address positive language and perspectives as it relates to fostering. In the next year, the Agency will facilitate a training to help Foster Parents glean the significance of their roles as it relates to public relations.

11. The responsibility to know the roles, rights, and responsibilities of Foster Parents, the professionals in the child welfare system, the foster child, and the foster child's own family.

- **Training and Co-Training**

The Agency has identified an experienced Foster Parent to Co-Train during the Town Hall Meetings. The Co-Trainer is present for each meeting and assists the Trainer in several areas including, but not limited to; facilitating interactive activities, taking questions from Foster Parents and providing a point of view based on their professional and personal foster parenting experiences that relates to the topics.

- **Team Member Meetings**

The roles, rights, and responsibilities of all members of the Child Welfare Team are conveyed at each placement of a child into a foster home and during Child and Family Team meetings. Aunt Martha's strongly encourages the Foster Parents to become an active part of the Child Welfare Team and familiarize themselves with each member's responsibilities and the specific role that staff will play in the life of their family. If there are any changes in the roles, rights, and responsibilities of any team player the Foster Parents are informed in-person, via mail or through telephone calls.

- **Foster Parents have a recognized voice within the agency**

Per DCFS rule and procedure, the Agency must adhere to Policy 340 and review the Foster Parent Law Implementation plan on an annual basis. As the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan details the rights and responsibilities of Foster Parents, it is imperative that Foster Parents participate in the review, revision and endorsement of the Foster Parent Implementation Plan. As a result, Foster Parents are invited to participate on the Foster Parent Law Implementation Committee. Foster Parents are highly encouraged to participate in the Foster Parent Law Implementation Committee as their valuable input and feedback is crucial to the writing of the Plan. Foster Parents are notified of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Committee via mail, home visits, licensing monitoring visits and through telephone contact. The Foster Parents are informed that they have a voice and are a part of the professional team by being able to have their questions and concerns addressed during Town Hall Meetings, Clinical Staffings, Child and Family Team Meetings and any other time that they have concerns.

In addition, Foster Parents are surveyed various times during the year regarding services, training and issues. Foster Parents are encouraged to be candid in their feedback as it ensures that the Agency addresses any concerns they have and implements any ideas for improvement. If Foster Parents feel uncomfortable discussing specific issues verbally, they are encouraged to email their Case Management team instead.

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 Abuse and Neglect Child Reporting Act; and the responsibility to know child welfare Agency's policy regarding allegations that the Foster Parents have committed child abuse or neglect and applicable administrative rules and procedures governing investigations of those allegations.

- **Mandated Reporter Training**

Foster Parents are first informed of their role as a Mandated Reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect and their responsibility to nurture, not harm children, and keep them safe in Pride Pre-Service Training. Prospective Foster Parents are also informed during the initial process that Licensed Foster Parents are Mandated Reporters and are made aware that their status will change once they become licensed. Post licensure, Foster Parents can conveniently access Mandated Reporter training on-demand by visiting the Department's training website at www.dcfstraining.org and can update this training yearly.

- **Mandated Reporter Acknowledgement/Contract**

Foster Parents are required to sign an Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status, the Acknowledgment of Understanding the Prohibition of Corporal Punishment and the Program Expectations forms. By signing these forms, the Foster Parents indicate that they understand their responsibility in reporting neglect or abuse in their role as a Foster Parent. The responsibilities of a Mandated Reporter, as well as what constitutes corporal punishment is discussed thoroughly with the

Foster Parent during the initial licensing process, annual licensing monitoring visits and at licensure renewal.

- **Allegations/Investigations**

The Department's policy regarding Rule 383 Licensing Enforcement and the Agency's procedures regarding licensing complaint investigations and DCP investigations are discussed with Foster Parents prior to licensure. Abuse and neglect investigations, as well as licensing complaint investigations, are thoroughly discussed with the Foster Parent. The Agency explains the role of Agency staff regarding notification of allegations against foster parents for abuse or neglect against a child. They are explained that when allegations are presented, the agency must investigate to determine the validity and that no Foster Parent is automatically deemed guilty of violating any rules until the conclusion of the investigation(s). The Agency explains that The Department may conduct an investigation and there can be a concurrent licensing complaint investigations and what each of them entails.

The Foster Parents are made aware of the impact that investigations might have on their family, as well as their foster care licenses. As a part of educating Foster Parents about the specific guidelines for reporting abuse and neglect, Foster Parents are also trained on what constitutes an Unusual Incident Report. This training occurs during the initial licensing process, at licensure renewal, at Town Hall Meetings, and during monthly home visits.

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 Parents' designated role in these proceedings.

- **Training on Foster Parent Participation**

During Foster Adopt Pride Pre-Service Training, the Foster Parents are educated on the purpose of the Administrative Case Reviews, the client's Service Plan, as well as what takes place during the various court proceedings. During home visits, Case Managers provide the Foster Parents with informal training on what occurs at Administrative Case Reviews, the Foster Parents' role in the service plan process, and the importance of their involvement in the various court proceedings. Foster Parents are also educated on how important their observation and knowledge is valuable to the planning process for families.

- **Emphasis on Permanency Planning**

From the beginning of a child being placed in a home, the participation from Foster Parents is crucial. Participation in the Integrated Assessment yields vital information about the child that assists with adequate case planning. The agency collaborates with Foster Parents to develop the service plan. Foster Parent input is vital regarding the children that are in their care. Foster Parents are invited and the agency encourages them to attend court proceedings and Administrative Case Reviews as a member of the professional team. They are encouraged to

attend case reviews so that they can engage in a discussion about the client in their home, their progress, and any identified barriers to progress and any other issues present.

The Agency continuously reminds the Foster Parents of the important role they play in the life of the child, his/her family, and as a member of the Child Welfare Team, and encourages them to participate in the case review process to provide valuable input.

14. The responsibility to know the child welfare Agency's appeal procedure for Foster Parents and the rights of Foster Parents under the procedure.

- **Agency Internal Appeals Process**

Foster Parents receive information about the appeal process, as well as the Foster Parent Hand Book, which explains their rights. The Agency will attempt to work with the Foster Parents to reach an amenable resolution. If an amenable resolution cannot be reached, the Agency will ensure that the Foster Parent is aware of the process for filing a grievance. Information and forms are included in the Agency's Child Record Folder, which provides Foster Parents with the step-by-step instructions regarding the appeal process. The Agency is available to assist the Foster Parent in filing an appeal/grievance, when requested.

Foster Parent were educated and participated in a discussion about needed revisions in the grievance policy this year during a Foster Parent Implementation Plan review meeting that occurred on October 25, 2017.

- **Foster Parent Rights**

The Foster Parent's rights are explained during licensing process, Town Hall Meetings and in the Foster Parent Implementation Plan. Foster Parents' right to appeal without retaliation is clearly explained to them at various times and is taken seriously by the Agency.

The responsibility to know and understand the importance of maintaining accurate and relevant records regarding the child's history and progress: and the responsibility to be aware of and follow the procedures and regulations of the child welfare Agency with which the Foster Parent is licensed or affiliated.

- **Maintaining Records**

Foster Parents' responsibility is to maintain accurate records is discussed on an on-going basis. Discussions are held during the initial home study process, at licensing monitoring visits and home visits. The Agency provides the Foster Parents with a Child Record Folder, which includes the following: specific information about each child placed in the home, contacts and telephone numbers of members of the Child Welfare Team, contacts and telephone numbers of Agency Clinics, medication, allowance, and clothing logs, and medical and dental forms. It is the Foster Parents responsibility to maintain and accurate Child Record Folder that includes: medical, dental, educational, clinical, birth family and permanency

planning information. When Child Record Folders are not readily available, the Foster Parent may utilize a folder or similar to maintain records. The Agency will ensure that the proper information is included.

- **Regulations/Expectations of Maintaining Records**

The Foster Parents must allow the Case Manager to review the record folder on a monthly basis to ensure that the client needs are being appropriately met and addressed. Also during the licensing monitoring visit, the Foster Parents must allow their Licensing Specialist to review the various forms and documents that they have been providing the child's Case Manager. The Foster Parents are reminded about complying with the DCFS 402.26 Licensing Standard for Record Maintenance, which states that Aunt Martha's Licensing Department is required to monitor records kept by the Foster Parents on a child. The Licensing Specialist will document whether Foster Parents comply with this rule. If there are any deficiencies in the Foster Parents' record keeping, the Licensing Specialist will educate the Foster Parents on how to improve the record keeping process. The Licensing Specialist will then set up a follow-up date to ensure that the Foster Parent complies with the 402.26 Licensing Standard

- **Client Records for Placement**

The Child Record Folder is to be transported with the child as they move from placement to placement. The reason is to ensure that the entire client's medical, educational, and clinical paperwork is in the client's record folder. The Case Manager will obtain the Child Record Folder from the previous Foster Parent before moving a child to a new placement. When Agency provided Child Record Folders are not readily available, the Case Manager will ensure that client records are obtained and stored a folder or equivalent.

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

- **Transferring/Sharing of Child's Records**

The importance of communicating and sharing information regarding the child is discussed during the initial licensing process, when a child is initially placed in a home and during the Child and Family Team Members. The Agency encourages open communication between Foster Parents, members of the Child Welfare Team and birth parents. The Agency also regularly reminds Foster Parents of their responsibility to share information. The Agency usually facilitates communication between Foster Parents to ensure that shared information is appropriate and is in alignment with confidentiality policies. This helps to ensure that a child will receive the appropriate care and services in the home, community, and public environment. Foster Parents are informed that the information that is received and observable is valuable and should be communicated to the rest of the professional team.

16. 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/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's and the responsibility to take action to address these issues.

- **Training**

Foster Parents are informed of their responsibility to recognize differences in children's cultural needs. This is first impressed upon prospective Foster Parents during the Agency's Informational Meetings, initial home study process and PRIDE Pre-Service Training. Ongoing discussion is held regarding Foster Parents responsibility to meet the cultural needs of each child placed in their home. Foster Parents are encouraged to discuss how they would ensure that children's cultural information and exposure to cultural activities will be managed in their home.

Foster Parents are educated on the importance of learning about the backgrounds and cultural practices of a child placed in their home. The Agency offers a Diversity Training that Foster Parents can attend and learn more about Cultural Awareness. Agency staff are trained on Cultural Awareness thereby giving all staff members the ability to provide one-on-one training to Foster Parents. At home visits, the Case Management and Clinical teams reiterate with Foster Parents the importance of meeting the cultural needs of the children placed in their home.

- **Resources**

Foster Parents are encouraged to enroll in the Agency's Diversity Training and any pertinent Department Training that will help address cultural needs of children. They are also encouraged to use their local library for books, magazines' and brochures to educate themselves on client cultural needs. The internet and various search engines can be used to research client's cultural needs and appropriate cultural activities and events. The Agency makes every effort to resolve any issues the Foster Parents might have regarding how to address children's cultural needs and practices.