

**FOSTER PARENT LAW  
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

**Our Children's Homestead**

**2017**



**OUR CHILDREN'S  
HOME  
STEAD**

**ONE CHILD ♦ ONE DREAM™**

**Please find attached the 2017 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan.**

**We believe this document proves our unremitting desire to improve the lives of our children by informing our Foster Parents of their full rights and responsibilities as a Foster Parent with Our Children's Homestead.**

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# ***Preface***

*“You are critical to the success of every child...it takes your desire to make a difference in a child’s life and our commitment to supporting you as best as we can. As a passionate and dedicated team, we will together “make a difference, one child at a time.”*

***Kurt Friedenauer  
CEO  
Our Children’s Homestead***

By strategically utilizing a team of highly trained and regarded professionals, Our Children’s Homestead delivers case management, adoption, therapeutic services, extensive training, a respite program, mentoring program as well as a volunteer program as a part of its mission to make a measurable difference one child at a time.

Our Children’s Homestead believes each child deserves a well trained and supported team of professional Foster Parents and support staff if quality care is to be administered. The best way for these services to remain professional and of high quality is through the implementation of a team approach in which all parties involved are treated with respect, dignity and consideration. These qualities, if modeled appropriately and consistently, will ensure the children will receive the type of care ~~that~~ they deserve and need.

Contained in these pages are the 2017 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan developed by Our Children’s Homestead. A team of individuals met to decide what revisions would be made to improve upon our existing Plan. This group will continue to meet throughout the year to evaluate and update this plan, with the end result being the development of the Implementation Plan for 2018. We view this document as an “ever-changing” Plan as this document will reflect our continuous commitment to ensure safety, permanency and well-being for our children and families. Therefore, we welcome suggestions at any time in reference to ways the agency can enhance the implementation of this document.

As an agency, we recognize the need to focus on many aspects of foster care as they relate to the care of children. We will continue to evolve as an agency by researching, developing, and coordinating resources that will enhance our Foster Parents and staffs ability to deliver the highest quality of foster care services available. As part of our implementation plan process, Our Children's Homestead will continue to meet, discuss and execute improvements.

Our Children's Homestead welcomes new Advisory Board members, volunteers and Foster Parents who wish to be an integral part of an organization that believes in respect, dignity and consideration for the needs of the children we care for. If you or any other interested party would like more information or would like to make suggestions in relation to this Plan, please contact us at:

*Our Children's Homestead*

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# ***Acknowledgment***

We acknowledge the many hours and dedication the 2017 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan Quality Improvement Team have devoted to this project. We also acknowledge the individual reviewers, who devoted time and effort to assist with the creation of this 2017 Implementation Plan:

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## **Mission**

*Our mission is to build a strong, stable foundation of support for each youth we serve and develop opportunities that enable them to discover and sustain a positive future.*

## **Philosophy and Vision**

*Our vision is to accept “uniquely challenged” children, no matter what circumstances surround them, and work as a team to overcome any barriers that stand in the way of them being successful, proficient and belonging to a family. By not giving up on any child we accept, we help them achieve their full potential and realize their dreams.*

# **Foster Parent Rights Sections 1-15**

**Our Children’s Homestead believes each Foster Parent recruited, trained and licensed by our staff is entitled to be included in most aspects of professional involvement with a foster child as a full-fledged team member. The Foster Parent Law (Public Act 89.19) outlines certain Foster Parent rights which we as an agency are obligated to uphold. Our Children’s Homestead adheres to these rights and believes in the spirit and intent of these rights. Without professionally-minded Foster Parents, abused and neglected children have an uncertain future and sometimes, little hope.**

**What follows is a detailed narrative which explains how Our Children’s Homestead implements their Foster Parent Implementation Law Plan. A Foster Parent’s rights include, but are not limited to the outline which follows.**

## Right 1 Dignity and Respect

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

Our Children’s Homestead places a high emphasis on the manner in which Foster Parents are viewed and treated. Our Children’s Homestead believes that by providing proper and proactive training, evaluation, and consultation to our Foster Parents, they will be in a better position educationally, clinically and emotionally to provide the best of care for the children referred to our agency. It is the belief that children will be best served in an organization that shows dignity and respect towards their Foster Parents in written, verbal and non-verbal communications.

Our Children’s Homestead has implemented a team approach in which all Foster Parents are members. The agency respects every Foster Parents preferences in regards to age, gender and behaviors they believe they are capable of working with. Therefore we incorporate Foster Parents in the matching process. When a placement is needed the agency communicates with the Foster Parent about the prospective placement focusing on the Foster Parent’s strengths in determining if the placement will be a good fit. The Foster Parent’s input is important in the establishment of court related objectives and treatment planning goals. In order to provide continuity of care, the foster care team’s input is incorporated into the Service Plan and Individual Treatment Plan for the child. Each Foster Parent is asked to identify any issues and/or special concerns about a child and for these issues to be addressed and considered in the treatment planning and delivery process. The treatment team, which includes the Foster Parent(s), meets at a minimum of quarterly and during these meetings; Foster Parents have the opportunity to complete a feedback form. Direct staff members visit with all of our children and families at least three times monthly and in many cases more. Each of these meetings is designed to garner input from the Foster Parent and are scheduled around their availability. Therapists visit the home weekly and allocate time during the visit for the Foster Parent in order to address both the mental and emotional demands of being a Foster Parent. During these meetings the service team is mindful of the Foster Parent’s time and demonstrates respect to the Foster Parent both in and out of the home.

To further acknowledge the agency’s respect of our Foster Parents, we have an agency worker on call 24/7. Foster Parents should never feel that they do not have the support of the agency behind them therefore there is always someone available to communicate with a foster parent regarding their concerns or help them resolve an issue that may be occurring at that time.

In addition, a clinical team member contacts all Foster Parents to arrange the scheduling of all Individual Treatment Plan (ITP) Meetings, as these meetings are

exclusively scheduled around the Foster Parents availability. This demonstrates to our Foster Parents that they are valued members of our team and that we are always considerate of and responsive to their needs.

To ensure Foster Parents have a recognized voice in agency management, we survey our Foster Parents on a regular basis to ensure that they are receiving quality care and that their concerns and issues are being addressed on both an individual and systematic level. These surveys are distributed annually and are anonymous in nature. Our agency also hosts a Parenting Workshop at least once a month. The workshop is lead by the Clinical Supervisor and provides foster parents with an environment where they can express frustrations and concerns and provide each other with support. They can also address issues they may be having with the agency and those issues are then related back to the appropriate individuals to be resolved.

## Right 2 Training

**“The right to the given standardized pre-service training and appropriate ongoing training to meet mutually assessed needs and improve the Foster Parent’s skills.”**

Our Children’s Homestead believes that by providing the best training to Foster Parents, the best services can be rendered to the children under their care. It is required that all Foster Parents receive the co-training model of PRIDE (Parent Resource for Information, Development and Education). Through the co-training model Foster Parents and Staff work together as a team to teach and mentor new foster parents. Given the complexities and severity of the problems of children that are referred for specialized care, all Foster Parents are provided with ongoing training and information for any new experiences and/or difficulties that arise.

A pre-service training program cannot cover all of the important areas necessary for a child with special needs therefore upon being licensed with Our Children’s Homestead; Foster Parents are required to complete Post PRIDE training. This training is led by our Clinical Director and one experienced Foster Parent. This curriculum includes OCH policy and procedures as well as information on parenting children with mental health issues and other special needs. This training must be completed before the foster home receives their first placement.

Part of providing a unique and innovative approach is by the delivery of individually tailored trainings to meet the needs of both the children in our care and our Foster Parents. Foster Parents contribute to determining trainings needed to serve the children in their care by discussing their training needs with their Licensing Representative during their Licensing Monitoring Visits. During the visit the licensing

worker will discuss with the Foster Parents upcoming trainings being offered by Our Children's Homestead as well as the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. The licensing worker will make sure the Foster Parents have information on the Virtual Training Center where they can register for online trainings and keep track of their training hours. Foster Parents are also encouraged to contact their Licensing Representative at any time to request training materials or resources they feel will benefit them in caring for the child(ren) in their care.

Once a month, the Foster Home Licensing Team along with consultation from any current service provider for the children in the home meet to perform a Foster Parent Staffing for any Foster Parent whose semi-annual Foster Home Licensing visit will occur in the following month. Part of this staffing is to discuss any Foster Parent related praise or needs with the team. This staffing also covers training recommendations.

The information gathered from this staffing (that is not determined to be critical or immediate in nature) as well as the Foster Parent's self-identified training needs are then reviewed during the Foster Home Licensing Visit. The Foster Home Licensing Representative discusses the Team's recommendations as well as elicits feedback from the Foster Parent as to what supportive trainings they feel will assist them to maintain the needs for and stability of the child(ren) currently placed with them via the Foster Parent Training Survey. If there are training needs identified that are not offered through the agency or through IL DCFS, the Foster Home Licensing Representative identifies and distributes resources that can be used to meet the training need. These resources include workshops, conferences, books, scholarly journal articles, videos and/or webinars.

In addition to PRIDE training, Our Children's Homestead Foster Parents are required to attend the IL Department of Children and Family Service's Educational Advocacy Training. Foster Parents who have potential water hazards on their property are required to be certified in C.P.R. and First Aid. We also require our Foster Parents be trained in Universal Precautions yearly to ensure they understand the importance of utilizing infection control techniques in their homes on a daily basis. Our Children's Homestead places a high emphasis on the proper pre-service training as well as the ongoing monthly in-service training of all staff and Foster Parents. Our Children's Homestead works with representatives from DCFS Training as a host site where DCFS trainings are offered. Licensing staff assist in finding outside resources for our Foster Parents that include workshops and seminars directly related to the care of specialized children. Regular "informal" trainings occur at monthly team meetings as well to ensure the Foster Parent receives suggestions, ideas, and options for working with the child or children placed in their home. This is done so that each team member can provide treatment as a trained professional in their approach to and care of foster children.

If a Foster Parent transfers from another agency or from the Department of Children and Family Services, the Licensing Supervisor and Licensing Representative(s) examines the Foster Parents pre-existing training portfolio from the previous agency. Our Children's Homestead believes that a minimum of 27 hours of initial PRIDE training

is required in order to adequately prepare a Foster Parent for success with specialized children as well as six hours of Educational Advocacy.

Our Children's Homestead is a treatment foster care agency and understands our Foster Parents can benefit from additional training related to the children in their care. IL DCFS licensing standards require each specialized Foster Parent attend an additional twelve hours of training per licensed year. This does not include the four hours required for traditional Foster Parents. This means every licensed specialized Foster Parent is required to complete at least 16 training hours per licensed year or the equivalent of 64 training credits for each 4-year Foster Home License renewal period.

Our agency provides monthly Foster Parent trainings that focus on specific topics that our Foster Parents are interested in learning about. Outside of the annual survey, Foster Parents are surveyed after each training on the usability and feasibility of that training. These surveys are used to determine if the training provided may need to be revised in terms of content or possibly discontinued. The training schedule provides twenty four hours of training per calendar year and Foster Parents can supplement training through community trainings, DCFS trainings, or the video and book library located at Our Children's Homestead. The agency has updated the video library in which Foster Parents can check out specific videos that discuss issues related to children involved with the child welfare system. In order to accommodate Foster Parents schedules, Our Children's Homestead provides at least one evening training a quarter along with monthly trainings during the day.

Once a year our agency has cultural diversity training to discuss issues related to interracial and intercultural placements. In addition to this training, each child's case is reviewed quarterly and the child's cultural and spiritual needs are discussed with the clinical staff at Our Children's Homestead. After this discussion, the permanency specialist and therapist will discuss recommendations for improving both cultural and spiritual diversity as well as cultural awareness with the Foster Parent and offer suggestions if needed, to improve the Foster Parent's awareness of these issues.

### **Attendance at Monthly Foster Parent Training:**

On a monthly basis, OCH holds training seminars for the OCH Foster Parents to meet the trends identified within the population we serve as well as to assist Foster Parents in obtaining their mandatory annual training hours required by IL DCFS and OCH. These seminars provide necessary information such as CPR training, training for handling ADHD children, medical and educational advocacy training and a host of other relevant topics. OCH has found these seminars are most successful for our Foster Parents when we hold an open Foster Parent Support Group meeting prior to the training. This makes for a more cohesive organization where the parents and staff can discuss current needs and opportunities to better serve the children and to support the parents.

OCH also encourages all Foster Parents to utilize the Virtual Training Center (VTC) resource offered by the IL Department of Children and Family Services. The VTC is

available through the internet and includes training announcements, up-to-date course schedules, course registration information and Foster Parent training transcripts. Benefits of the system include the following:

- ❖ 24-hour accessibility (The VTC can be accessed from any computer using a secure username and password at any time of the day or night)
- ❖ User-friendly interface (The VTC is easy to navigate)
- ❖ Immediate access to your training records (The VTC allows you to view and print your training transcripts. This will allow you to efficiently keep track of all trainings you have completed)
- ❖ Online training opportunities (The VTC now provides Foster Parents with PRIDE in-service modules that they can complete from their computer)

A Foster Parent who does not have access to a computer can contact their Foster Home Licensing Representative to request a copy of their training transcript.

### Right 3

## Contact with Our Children's Homestead

**“The right to be informed as to how to contact the appropriate child placement agency in order to receive information and assistance to access supportive services for children in the Foster Parent's care.”**

In addition to providing training for our Foster Parents, it is our belief that Foster Parents need to have ongoing monthly consultations available to them. The consultation is an additional resource to prepare for disruptions in the placement of children while maintaining a stable environment. Since Our Children's Homestead desires to prevent foster children from moving from one foster home to another, staff members from the agency are available on a 24 hour basis. Our Children's Homestead has implemented a 24 hour on-call system in order to be available in this capacity. This system is organized by rotating staff responsible for emergencies on a weekly basis.

All Foster Parents are given the on-call emergency contact number upon placement of a child into their home. A weekend and after hours on-call contact system is also utilized for crises and emergencies. All on-call staff members and direct service staff members are trained to respond to emergencies with Foster Parents, and will work with community agencies in the development of emergency and contingency plans to ensure uninterrupted care of the children. Foster Parents are also given the number to contact placement stabilization and SASS (Screening, Assessment and Support Services) to

keep on file. These numbers are included in the Foster Parent informational material and are also given to all Foster Parents at the time of the 48 hour staffing.

On-call staff have access to all other staff members' telephone numbers in the event additional staff are needed when a crisis or emergency arises. All staff members are given an on-call rotation list as well. Foster Parents also receive the contact numbers of their child's therapist. When a clinical crisis occurs outside of normal business hours (8:30AM to 5:00PM), the on-call staff member will contact their Supervisor and/or the Clinical Coordinator to assess and determine the appropriateness of referring the child in crisis to outside services (i.e. SASS). If no outside emergency services are needed, the Clinical Coordinator will provide the appropriate clinical interventions necessary. If there is a need for the staff member on-call to go out to the home or to the hospital it will be done in a prompt and professional manner.

If a crisis does arise, a Foster Parent can have confidence in knowing that Our Children's Homestead staff is there to help them through the crisis. When Foster Parents have the support and backing of Our Children's Homestead staff, they will be in a better position to provide optimal care for their children. Our Children's Homestead has also implemented an Emergency Foster Parent Program. This consists of a group of foster parents who are assigned weekly to work with the on-call worker to provide respite after hours and on weekends.

An organizational chart defining the chain of command is presented to each Foster Parent as they become licensed with this agency. Each Foster Parent can refer to and utilize this organizational chart as a resource when they need assistance.

If needed, the on-call worker can reach the Chief Executive Officer or designee in the event of a crisis.

## Right 4 Timely Financial Reimbursement

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

Foster Parents will be shown dignity, respect and be treated as team members, therefore should be paid in a timely manner. Foster Parents receive their board rate check and other reimbursements once per month. Foster Parent board checks are sent to Foster Parents on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month. If the day falls on the weekend, the Foster Parents' board payment is available on the Friday before the scheduled reimbursement date. At this time any additional special reimbursements will also be distributed as well. If a Foster Parent provided respite for a Foster Child they will receive the daily rate for the number of nights that child was placed in their home. The respite reimbursement from the previous month will be included in their board payment. Foster Parents have three options to obtain their board rate: They may elect to receive

their board payment at the office, have it mailed to them or utilize our direct deposit program. The Finance Department is responsible for ensuring that all Foster Parent reimbursements are accurate and timely. If there is a delay in payment Foster Parents are notified prior to date payment is suppose to be issued so they can plan accordingly. If a Foster Parent has a payment problem, they may contact the Finance Department directly to discuss the problem and to ensure that the payment issue is corrected. The Chief Financial Officer works diligently to make sure payment problems are resolved immediately and has open communication with all Foster Parents regarding payment issues. Permanency workers can also be contacted by the Foster Parent to address any questions regarding the board payment and actively advocate for The Foster Parent if additional financial assistance is needed to due to unforeseen circumstances.

Our Children's Homestead provides services for different levels of care; Traditional, Specialized and Residential or Group Home Care. The rate received by the Foster Parent is based on the child's level of care. When a child is determined to need a higher level of care and is stepped up from Traditional to Specialized our Foster Parents receive a "difficulty of care rate" added on to their board payment. The "difficulty of care rate" for the Foster Parents is \$623.78 monthly.

Our Children's Homestead is required by the DCFS contract to allocate \$18.80 per month (\$0.90/day) for various child related expenses. This is referred to as "Assistance to Youth." Our Children's Homestead allocates considerably more, \$74.11 per month for children less than 12 years of age and \$111.39 per month for children over 12 years of age. Assistance to Youth covers expenses that include school related fees, camp expenses, lessons in recreation or artistic endeavors and memberships to places like the YMCA, Boys Scouts and Girl Scouts. Our Children's Homestead pays the Foster Parents directly for these expenses by allocating for these expenses directly in the per diem rate.

Although the Assistance to Youth can be utilized to cover the costs of camps there are other options that are provided to the Foster Parent by the agency. Permanency Specialists provide Foster Parents with information regarding camps that are specifically for foster children where the costs are covered as well as help them identify nearby organizations that offer camps at a reduced rate.

Foster Parents occasionally have children with specialized needs such as clothing, cribs, car seats and other items that are beyond the Assistance to Youth expenses. In these cases, if deemed necessary by the Permanency Specialist and as evidenced by the Permanency Specialist that the cost is beyond the Assistance to Youth expenses, the Permanency Specialist will submit a purchase requisition at the Foster Parents' request.

The benefits from available donations made to our agency will be dispensed according to the needs of the foster home and children. Our Children's Homestead staff will work with all Foster Parents in providing resources that enable our children to flourish and grow in a stable environment.

When a special circumstance arises that would benefit a child clinically and the child's Youth Assistance Fund and all other special service fees have been depleted, the Foster Parent may request funding from Our Children's Homestead to cover the expense of the item or activity. All funding for such activities will be processed through the Life Enrichment Alternative Program (LEAP). Foster Parents must document the expenditures made on the child's behalf from the Youth Assistance Funds as well as demonstrate these funds cannot cover the cost of the item or activity being requested. This documentation must be submitted to the child's Permanency Specialist. The permanency specialist will forward the documents to their Supervisor for review who will then forward the documentation to the Director of Community Relations. The LEAP request will be reviewed by the CCO and the Director of Community Relations to determine if the request can be fulfilled.

If a child is placed into a foster home with minimal personal belongings, the Foster Parent can contact the child's Permanency Specialist for assistance in obtaining necessary items for the child.

## Right 5 Placement Plan

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

All Foster Parents who care for children are notified of all Administrative Case Reviews (ACR), Individual Treatment Plans (ITP's), Clinical Treatment Plan Meetings and Court Hearings by mail correspondence as well as by a direct staff member. The Permanency Specialist and Foster Parent work together to create the tasks and objectives in the service plan as they relate to the child in their care. Foster Parents are strongly encouraged to attend ACR and court hearings so they can give their input regarding the child. Foster Parents will be sent written notification of court dates, ACR and visitation as soon as the permanency specialist is made aware of these dates. Outcomes of court and ACR proceedings are always relayed back to the Foster Parents before or during the next home visit. If a child's goal is changed Foster Parents will be notified by the Permanency Specialist within 24 hours. Foster Parents help in the development of the visitation plan by providing dates and times the child will be available for the visits. During the Child and Family Team Meeting the Foster Parent is present and contributes to the creation and review of the foster child's service plan.

Within 48-hours of any new placement, the team, which includes the Permanency Planning Specialist, the Intake Coordinator, the Permanency Specialist Supervisor, and the assigned Therapist, will meet with the foster child and Foster Parent in the new placement. A preliminary assessment and a plan which outlines the intensive front-end services will be completed at that time. Foster Parents will be provided a 906 verifying placement along with a copy of the child's medical card, school information, medication and medication logs and any important contact information. In recognizing the importance of establishing and maintaining healthy familial communication, Foster Parents have the right and expectation to meet with the child's therapist to maintain purposeful and child-centered communication. This rule and procedure affords the foster family the opportunity to receive services to support a difficult placement and helps minimize placement disruptions.

Our agency works diligently to ensure Foster Parents are fully informed about a child's special needs, frequency of involvement with his or her birth family, previous placement history, and historical involvement with IL DCFS. At the placement staffing, Foster Parents are given written information about the child which details all information that can be disclosed to a Foster Parent per IL DCFS policy including previous behaviors that may have occurred in other foster homes. The staffing is an opportunity to discuss the child's current plan regarding permanency, services and treatment as well as a time to make any revisions to the current plan. Foster Parents are then consulted at least quarterly about the child's treatment plan and service plan. This is to determine if the goals are still applicable and appropriate and also what goals and services are being met or which ones are still needed. Foster Parents are also notified during tri-monthly home visits about the child's permanency goals and any upcoming modifications. Since they are an integral piece of the service plan, they will be consulted regarding goal changes on a regular basis. The service plan also addresses any issues regarding visitation and the agency strives to make visitation with birth families convenient for both the child and the foster family.

Staff members work regularly with Foster Parents during three monthly home visits and quarterly team meetings to discuss multi-cultural and spiritual needs. These needs may also be identified during the child's quarterly progress reports. Staff members can provide individual training to the Foster Parents and work with the children to help provide needed resources in regards to multi-cultural and spiritual needs as well.

Information on a child's relationship with his or her birth family is also shared with the Foster Parent and the importance of this relationship is discussed both during the licensing process and during home visits that occur three times a month. Our Children's Homestead respects a child's ties to their birth family and stresses the importance of this to the foster family at all times. Although not required Foster Parents are encouraged to work with the biological family if the goal is reunification. They can do this by assisting in parent/child visits as well as hosting sibling visits in their home. This helps maintain the child's relationship to their own family and heritage.

## Right 6 Investigations

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

Our Children’s Homestead works diligently to comply with the IL DCFS standards regarding investigations of alleged licensing violations. The agency has three Foster Home Licensing Personnel who are responsible for completing investigations. All Licensing Personnel are trained on the importance of performing thorough and fair investigations therefore assuring consistent practices.

When a child abuse or neglect hotline call is made and accepted as a possible legitimate complaint, the agency follows the Department’s policy which states that an IL DCFS DCP Investigator will complete an investigation related to the hotline complaint. A licensing investigation will also be completed by an Our Children’s Homestead Foster Home Licensing Representative and/or Supervisor. The Foster Parent and any household members are expected to make themselves available to the DCP Investigator and the Our Children’s Homestead Licensing Personnel. The investigation begins within two business days of the complaint and the first step is to contact the reporter of the alleged abuse or licensing violations. The next step is an announced or unannounced visit to the foster home.

At the beginning of any licensing investigation of a foster home, the Foster Parent will be informed that they have a right to have an advocate of their choosing present during the investigation interview. This/these person(s) could be an attorney, another Foster Parent, a family member, a friend, etc. If the investigation visit is unannounced, the Foster Parent has the right to postpone or reschedule the interview (for up to four hours) to allow their support persons to be present.

Once the interview process begins, the Foster Parent will be given a copy of the appeals process. All parties to the complaint will be interviewed either via telephone or in person. The Foster Parent will also be sent a certified letter explaining the purpose of the investigation, the allegations, and information on the appeals process. The Licensing Representative will be given a thirty-day time frame to complete the investigation and the Foster Parent will be notified of the results via mail. If a corrective

action plan is recommended, the Licensing Specialist will communicate with the Foster Parent to discuss the plan and to determine if the Foster Parent concurs with the recommendation. If the Foster Parent wishes to appeal the Corrective Action Plan, the Foster Home License will be placed on hold until the appeal and subsequent determination of the appeal have been dually settled. During the period the Foster Parent's license is on hold, no new children can be placed in the home.

If a Foster Parent wishes to appeal the investigation, they may send a letter in writing to the Chief Clinical Officer. The Chief Clinical Officer will schedule an appointment within ten business days of the receipt of this letter and will set the hearing within thirty days. The Chief Clinical Officer will be present for the appeal. If the Foster Parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, he or she may ask for an appeal through the IL DCFS Regional Licensing Department. That telephone number and/or address will be provided by Our Children's Homestead.

Our Children's Homestead staff and our Foster Parents are all mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. Our Children's Homestead places a large emphasis on ensuring that all foster homes provide a safe and nurturing environment for children. A child abuse and neglect hotline call will be made if there is reasonable cause to believe that a child may have been abused or neglected. A licensing investigation will ensure that if there is ever concern about a foster home in violation of licensing standards our agency will attend to the concern. If at any time a Foster Parent is investigated either by an Our Children's Homestead staff person or by the IL Department of Children and Family Services, Our Children's Homestead staff will abide by the Foster Parent law (Public Act 89.19).

It is a goal of Our Children's Homestead to ensure all current and new permanency staff receives training on foster home licensing standards and all licensing staff also pass the licensing exam. This will ensure that all staff are knowledgeable of Foster Parent rights, enabling them to assist Foster Parents with identifying licensing issues and aiding in support when needed.

All Foster Parents and staff receive a copy of the Public Act 89.19 upon licensing. The staff of Our Children's Homestead can review the Act with the Foster Parents at the time of an impending investigation if the Foster Parent wishes. All Foster Parents also read and sign an "Understanding of Foster Home Licensing Investigation" form upon being licensed. In all licensing investigations, the Foster Parents will be handed a copy of *"Foster Parents Rights – Licensing Investigations."* A copy of this document is found in the appendices.

In the event that a situation arises in a foster home which violates Foster Home Licensing Standards, it should be understood that an Our Children's Homestead staff person is required to notify OCH Foster Home Licensing personnel. Our agency, however, will advocate for, and support the Foster Parents during the investigation so all facts can be gathered and a proper conclusion can be made that is in the best interest of the children involved.

During the licensing process, the Foster Parents are advised that they may be involved in an investigative process at some point during their tenure as a Foster Parent. When an investigation does occur, the Foster Parent will be supported by our agency and feel confident in the process. We will work with the Foster Parent until all the facts are gathered and conclusions can be grounded on factual evidence and presented in an unbiased manner.

## Right 7 Additional Information on a Child

**“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.”**

Our Children’s Homestead believes that Foster Parents should receive all available information that can be legally shared with them. At the time of a child’s referral for placement in the foster home, the Foster Parents will be given as much information as possible from Our Children’s Homestead by the treatment team. This information may include any medical, emotional, or behavioral conditions that the child may have, legal status of the child’s case, previous placement information, treatment history, information on the visitation plan for the child and any identified services needed for the child. This information will initially be given via a telephone conference by the intake worker and/or permanency specialist to determine the appropriateness of the placement and then will be handed in writing to the Foster Parent at the time of the placement staffing. The information given will be documented on the Our Children’s Homestead Placement Checklist form. The Permanency Specialist and the Foster Parent both sign the form confirming that the information was shared (see appendix).

Any other information obtained about the child or their birth family that is legally able to be shared will be given to the foster family. This information will be helpful in stabilizing placements and in developing service plans and treatment plans for the child and his or her family. Staff members have all been given a copy of the DCFS rule and procedure, 301.120. A copy of this information shall be kept in the child’s file each time the child is moved to a new placement. The team will discuss the information at the placement staffing to ensure this exchange of information has occurred. The Child Welfare Supervisor must attend the placement staffing to ensure that the exchange of information is taking place during the meeting.

All staff are trained during orientation and the Statewide Foundation Training about the importance of sharing information with Foster Parents and what information can be shared. In addition, all licensed child welfare staff are updated on any new policies and procedures introduced by the IL Department of Child and Family services during

monthly Child Welfare Meetings lead by the Chief Clinical Officer at Our Children's Homestead. During the Permanency Specialist's monthly supervision the Placement Staffing Form and In Home Safety Checklists are reviewed by the Permanency Specialist Supervisor to ensure that any newly obtained information is being passed on to the Foster Parent including any important upcoming dates for court hearings and ACR's. Permanency Specialists also case note all conversations that occur with a Foster Parent regarding the youth in their home and that documentation is also reviewed by the Supervisor.

## Right 8 Child Information Provided Prior to Placement

***“At the time the caseworker places a child with a Foster Parent or prospective adoptive parent or prior to placement of child, whenever possible, the worker shall provide available information necessary for the proper care of the child in writing to the Foster Parent or prospective adoptive parent.”***

Our Children's Homestead has created a Placement Staffing Form that will be used for documenting all information given to the Foster Parent. This form will be used during the intake process and completed at the time of placement. It will also be a working tool. During the life of a case, as information becomes known to the agency, it will be passed on to the foster/adoptive parent and documented on this checklist as required by Policy Guide 2007.14.

The information that will be provided to the Foster/Pre-adoptive Parent will include:

1. Medical history/information
2. Mental Health history/information
3. Educational history/Information
4. Service Plan (child's/caretaker portion including visitation plan (if applicable))
5. Payment Authorization Form (CFS 906)
6. Supervision Plan (if applicable)
7. SACWIS Placement History (excluding previous placement identifying information)
8. Other Relevant Background Information/Social History (If Applicable)

In addition to the exchange of information at the time of the placement staffing, the Foster Parent will also be asked to review and sign the Our Children's Homestead Foster Parent Agreement which provides the Foster Parent with information regarding the board payment rate for each child placed in their home as well as the level of difficulty of special needs that individual child has.

All available information will be given in writing to the foster/adoptive parent no later than at the time of placement or within 10 days of that time in cases of emergency placements. As new information becomes known to the agency, that information will be passed on to the foster/adoptive parent in writing within 10 days of the permanency workers receipt of it.

Permanency Specialists are held accountable for sharing the information by their Supervisors. Supervisors will utilize the In Home Safety Checklist during monthly supervision with staff to ensure that all necessary and appropriate information regarding a child is being given to the foster/adoptive parent in a timely manner. Staff are trained in all pertinent policies and procedures through monthly Child Welfare Meetings. Any new staff are required to participate in a New Hire Orientation where they are presented with a copy of Policy Guide 2007.14 and all policies and procedures affiliated with Our Children's Homestead and the IL Department of Children and Family Services are discussed.

## Right 9 Notifications on a Child

**“The right to be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings concerning the foster child to actively participate in the case planning and decision-making process regarding the child. This includes Individual Treatment Planning meetings, Administrative Case Reviews, interdisciplinary staffings, and Individual Education 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.”**

All notifications of ACRs, court hearings, staffings and visitation will be communicated to the Foster Parents by the Permanency Specialist or additional members of the service team. The success of a child's placement is greatly enhanced by using the team approach. Foster Parents are asked to participate in the planning for the child, particularly during the quarterly team meetings. During tri-monthly home visits the In Home Safety Checklist is reviewed. Included on the checklist will be all important upcoming dates related to ACR's, court hearings and visits. The Foster Parent sign off on the checklist to ensure all information is correct and has been provided to them. This checklist is then reviewed by the Permanency Specialist Supervisor during Supervision.

During the Placement Staffing Foster Parents are provided with the Placement Staffing Form that includes all individuals on the foster child's service team and the best way to contact them. This encourages open communication with the Foster Parent and the

foster child's therapist, mentor, physician and school.

The Our Children's Homestead Permanency Specialist will invite the Foster Parent to any court hearings and staffings, as well as notify them of any unexpected visits with the child's biological family. A Universal Staff Schedule will be available to Our Children's Homestead Foster Parents. Foster Parents will be able to contact the Our Children's Homestead Receptionist and/or Document Specialist to request the next court date, ACR, and any other scheduled meeting for a child placed in their home. Foster Parents will also receive notification of upcoming court dates, ACR, staffings, and visitation in writing. Permanency Workers will ensure that notifications are received by the Foster Parents. Foster Parents will receive written notification when Individual Education Plan meetings are scheduled at the foster child's school. It is essential the Foster Parent's educational goals for the child are shared with school personnel.

In the event a Foster Parent is not able to attend any meeting/staffing related to the child in their care, the Permanency Specialist for that child will inform the Foster Parent of any outcomes or decisions that occurred. Foster Parents are also informed that they can participate by phone if they are unable to be there in person. This is done to keep our Foster Parents abreast of any decisions made that affects the child in their care as these decisions typically affect the Foster Parent as well. Foster Parents are also requested to put things in writing that they would like to be shared in court if they are unable to attend. Permanency Specialist will also include information provided by the foster parent in their court reports.

## Right 10

### All Necessary Information on a Child and Family

**“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 the making of a permanency plan for the child. Disclosure of 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 children’s family, the child’s family may consent to the disclosure of additional information.”**

The intake worker of the agency is responsible for the initial intake of children into Our Children's Homestead's care. This staff member will ensure that an intake packet is completed which contains pertinent information about the child and his or her family. This packet is then shared with the Permanency Specialist, Permanency Specialist Supervisor, Clinical Supervisor and the Chief Operating Officer to ensure that the staff members have the pertinent information concerning the child being placed in the foster home. All appropriate information should then be shared with the Foster Parent at the

time of the Placement Staffing if it has not previously been communicated with the Foster Parent. This includes the child's medical history, portions of the service plan, educational history, and behavioral or safety plan if applicable. The Permanency Specialist and Foster Parent will then sign the form CFS 600-4 Sharing Information with the Caregiver and send a copy to the GAL.

All information pertaining to a foster child and his or her family is shared by the team with the foster family in light of providing the best and most thorough approach to working with the child. It is understood by Our Children's Homestead staff that all Foster Parents should have the necessary information on a child to make a decision regarding the acceptance of a placement, as well as decisions involving continued placement matters. If additional information pertaining to the safety, health or general welfare is received by this agency, the Foster Parents must be made aware of this information within 48 hours so they can be apprised of any changes that may need to occur involving the children. Respect for the law honoring confidentiality of others is always maintained when providing this information.

## Right 11

### Appropriate Notice on Moving a Child

**“The right to be given reasonable written notice of any change in the child’s case plan, plans to terminate the placement of the child with the Foster Parent, and the reasons for the change or termination in placement. The notice shall be waived only in cases of a court order or when the child is determined to be at imminent risk of harm.”**

If for any reason Our Children's Homestead believes they need to move a child from a given foster home to a more appropriate placement, Our Children's Homestead will give the Foster Parent a 14-day written notice utilizing the The Notice of Decision Form (CFS 151) before such movement is executed (except in cases where abuse or neglect is reported or suspected). When it is deemed necessary to move a foster child to an alternative placement, the Permanency Specialist and Supervisor will ensure that notification is sent via certified mail.

If a Foster Parent wishes to have a child removed from the home, they are also required to give a 14-day notice in writing. Our Children's Homestead works with difficult to place children and it often takes long periods of time to locate an appropriate placement to handle such children. This time period also allows for an enhanced positive transition into a new foster home. When a notice is received by Our Children's Homestead, the treatment team which includes the Foster Parent, Permanency Planning Specialist, Director of Foster Care, Foster Home Licensing Representative, and when necessary, the Chief Clinical Officer will convene for a Placement Disruption Meeting to discuss the reasonable justification for the 14-day notice. If the impending issues can be rectified, a

stabilization plan will be developed to support the child and the Foster Parent. If the Foster Parent still wishes to have the child removed from their home, Our Children's Homestead will find an appropriate home for the child. In the event that Our Children's Homestead believes a particular child is at risk in the placement (risk of hurting themselves or others), an emergency removal will take place immediately. All Foster Parents are made aware of this policy through our Policy and Procedures informational material received.

It is important that the Foster Parents and agency staff come to a decision regarding the placement of a child. If the Foster Parent wishes to dispute the decision to remove a child from their home they will be notified of the DCFS appeal process. The IL Department of Children and Family Services and the Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) for the child are also notified when any placement disruptions occur.

No Foster Parent should feel threatened and/or concerned that a decision regarding placement will be made in a rushed or imprudent manner. Our Foster Parents will be notified of their right to appeal and they are encouraged to be involved in the decision-making process regarding the removal of children from their home. It is out of respect for the Foster Parent that such a certified letter be sent to foster families so that they can make an informed decision regarding an appeals process and/or a meeting to be held with the treatment team before the expiration of that 14-day period.

It is clearly noted in the Foster Parent law and in the child abuse protection laws that if a child is in imminent danger and needs to be removed immediately from the foster home, the Foster Parents must comply with this decision by Our Children's Homestead to remove the child. This is important so that a sense of stability and permanency can be promoted within the foster care placement.

## Right 12 Court Hearing Notification

**“The right to be notified in a timely and complete manner of all court hearings, including notice of the date and time of the court hearing, the name of the judge or hearing officer hearing the case, the location of the hearing, and 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.”**

All Foster Parents will be notified of the Court hearings by the permanency specialist, through the In Home Safety Checklist which is reviewed tri-monthly with the Foster Parents during home visits. The Foster Parents will be given a copy of the In Home Safety Checklist for their records. Foster Parents will also be notified in writing the date and time of these court dates as soon as the Permanency Specialist becomes aware of

them. Our agency strongly encourages Foster Parents to attend Court hearings so they can adequately help the courts assessment of the best interest of the child(ren) when making important decisions regarding the placement and the treatment planning of children.

Permanency Specialists are held accountable for sharing this information during monthly supervision where the In Home Safety Checklist and client case notes are reviewed.

## Right 13

### Placement Option When Child Re-entering Care

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

The agency follows the IL Department of Children and Family Services policy, which states that previous Foster Parents will be considered for placement if a child re-enters the system within one year of leaving foster care. Our Children’s Homestead works diligently with the Department of Children and Family Services when such children re-enter the system to determine if the previous placement is appropriate. Previous placements are identified by reviewing the child’s case file and accessing the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System. Once previous placements have been identified the Child/Caregiver Matching Tool will be utilized to determine if a previous placement is still the best match for the child. Other factors considered are the current licensing status of a foster home with the agency, capacity of the home, and if the Foster Parent is willing to accept the child back into their home. A staffing will be held amongst the service team that includes the Intake Director, Clinical Director, Chief Clinical Officer and Licensing Supervisor to review the placement options and determine the best possible placement option.

Our Children’s Homestead also places emphasis on keeping siblings together whenever possible and keeping families intact. If a sibling is still in placement or been adopted by a Foster Family that family should be considered the primary placement option for a child coming back into care if it is in the best interest of all involved.

## Right 14

### Timely Access To Appeals

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

All Foster Parents are given a copy of the IL DCFS Service Appeal Process pamphlet in addition to the Our Children’s Homestead Service Appeal document during the Foster Home Licensing Process. If a Foster Parent has an honest difference of opinion with an agency decision or action on their case, they have the right to voice their differences through Our Children’s Homestead’s Service Appeal Process. Internal appeals should be addressed to the direct attention of the Chief Clinical Officer in writing by the Foster Parent. At times, it may also be appropriate for the Chief Executive Officer to be involved in the appeal. A date for an appeal hearing will be scheduled with the Foster Parent within ten days of the agency receiving notice that an appeal has been requested. The date of the appeal decision shall be made no later than thirty days of the receipt of the notice to appeal.

All appeals will be handled in a timely manner.

During the appeal process the agency will continue to maintain a professional relationship with the foster parent. All services to the foster child and foster family will continue to be provided without interruption.

If the Foster Parent is unsatisfied with the outcome of the appeal, he or she may contact the IL DCFS Advocacy Office or formally appeal through the IL DCFS appeals process if appropriate. It is important to the integrity of Our Children’s Homestead’s program that such an appeals process works and that a timely and effective resolution is made.

## Right 15

### Foster Parent Hotline

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

An informational packet about the Foster Parent Hotline and the Office of Inspector General is given to each new Foster Parent during the Foster Home Licensing Process.

In addition to providing this information at the onset of becoming licensed, training is held annually where a portion of the training addresses both the role of the Foster Parent Hotline and the Office of Inspector General.

All Foster Parents are made aware of Section 35.5 of the IL Children and Family Services Act when given a copy of the Foster Parent Law which is attached to the Our Children's Homestead Implementation Plan. The Foster Parent Implementation Plan is presented to Foster Parents each year. New Foster Parents are provided a copy upon being licensed. This is done so that they may review the plan, ask questions and offer suggestions for next year's implementation plan.

By advocating for Foster Parents to be actively involved in the foster care system, it is the belief that Our Children's Homestead will help promote a healthy and positive atmosphere within the child welfare arena. Foster Parents and child welfare workers, will work together to make a difference for the children that we serve.

# **Foster Parent Responsibilities**

**Our Children's Homestead believes that as a member of the professional team, each Foster Parent must adhere to a set of responsibilities in the same manner as staff and all other personnel involved with the care and planning of foster children. While Our Children's Homestead will make sure the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan Rights for each Foster Parent is are honored, each Foster Parent agrees he/she has a professional duty to follow a prescribed set of responsibilities when caring for foster children. Knowing and adhering to these responsibilities will enable Our Children's Homestead staff and Foster Parents alike to deliver quality care to each foster child.**

**What follows are the prescribed set of responsibilities each Our Children's Homestead licensed Foster Parent agrees to follow. A Foster Parent's responsibilities include, but are not limited to the outline which follows.**

## Responsibility 1

### Open Communication

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

The Foster Parents as well as the treatment team have equal access to each other 24 hours a day. Through an on-call system the Foster Parents have access to an experienced staff member and their supervisor 24 hours a day. Treatment staff should also be able to get a hold of a Foster Parent in a timely manner. Foster Parents report to the treatment team any visits, trips, vacations, or any unusual incidents by the next business day or via the emergency system in the event of a crisis or emergency. During the Post PRIDE training required by the agency a section of the curriculum is dedicated to informing Foster Parents about Our Children’s Homestead’s procedures such as how and when to use the emergency on call system.

Foster Parents are expected to communicate with their team so the needs of the child are expressed during in-home visits or via telephone conferences. Foster home visits will occur for each child at least three times a month and will be a minimum of one hour in length. All foster children’s needs will be communicated to the agency through the child, their Foster Parents and/or agency staff. Foster Parents can document any needs and/or behavioral issues that may arise with a particular foster child in their home. During tri-monthly visits the permanency worker allocates a specific amount time to speak with the foster parent regarding issues going on in the home.

During the initial Foster Parent licensing process with Our Children’s Homestead, emphasis is placed on supporting relationships between the foster children and their biological families as well as the other foster and biological children in the family. During this discussion it is emphasized that the treatment team will be informed and made aware of any difficulties that the foster children may have with their biological families. They will also be made aware of any difficulties or special problems that arise between the foster children and the foster families. Just as the treatment team is required and asked to share any and all information regarding the appropriate care of a foster child with the foster family, it is very important that the foster family also respect this open communication and report any and all events, activities or special needs with the treatment staff. Foster Parents will be notified by the child’s service team who they can communicate with regarding each foster child in their home.

## Responsibility 2 Confidentiality

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

During the PRIDE training, the initial licensing process and subsequent Foster Parent meetings, the issue of confidentiality of information concerning foster children and their families is thoroughly reviewed. It is important all Foster Parents and their families are aware that information they receive about a foster child needs to be respected with the highest level of confidentiality so that no foster child can ever be harmed by a purposeful or inadvertent breach of confidentiality. The open communication that is expected between a Foster Parent and the treatment team must take into consideration that the laws and rules of confidentiality of information are very important in the treatment of foster children. Foster Parents are trained to acknowledge that any information given to them about the foster child needs to be held confidential from relatives, friends, neighbors, and even other Foster Parents. This training is provided upon being licensed, is reviewed during the Foster Home Licensing process and is presented during the annual Foster Parent Law Plan and Foster Home Licensing Standards trainings'.

Foster Parents sign a confidentiality agreement during the licensing process, which specifies that information about a child is confidential. By signing the Client Confidentiality Agreement Foster Parents agree to honor the rights and privacy of any foster child (client). This includes not divulging any information regarding any foster child and their biological and foster family which they may receive and/or observe while working with the children. They know that a client's privacy is protected by law. They understand that breach of confidentiality is a Class A misdemeanor. The information considered confidential includes the following:

- ❖ Any information provided in psychological reports other than diagnosis information
- ❖ Social Security Number
- ❖ The reason the child is in the Foster Care system
- ❖ Child's biological parent information
- ❖ Past and current abuse or neglect history
- ❖ What a Foster Parent can't share on social media

This information needs to be held in the context of clinical and ethical boundaries. The foster child is informed that his or her confidential information is not being shared with members outside of the foster care family, and that his or her dignity and self-respect are honored at all times. This rule applies to all treatment team members as well in that they must adhere to the rules of confidentiality with other professionals, childcare providers, and/or their own relatives. Foster Parents are given the Client Confidentiality

Agreement every four years during a licensing monitoring visit. If Foster Parents have questions/concerns regarding what information can be shared, staff is available to assist them in further understanding the importance of this standard.

## Responsibility 3 Advocating for Children in Care

**“The responsibility to advocate for children in the Foster Parent’s care.”**

It is the responsibility of all foster families to assertively advocate for the children in their care. Our Children’s Homestead will provide training to Foster Parents during monthly team meetings that will provide them with tools to diligently advocate for the foster child in their care. This may include court proceedings, ACR, school staffings, and/or outside contacts such as police or probation officers. It is important for the foster child to feel respected and made a part of the foster family. It is the responsibility of the Foster Parents, as well as the treatment team to always hold the best interest of the child at the forefront of any decision making. Foster Parents are also required to attend an Educational Advocacy class prior to licensure in order to be trained on the educational rights of the children being placed in their homes. Foster Parents are a child’s primary advocate for making sure their educational needs are met and therefore should be the first point of contact for the school. It is important for Foster Parents to be present during home visits completed by the Permanency Specialist in order for the Foster Parents and workers to have open communication about what is occurring in the home and at school.

In addition to being encouraged to be an advocate for a child’s educational needs, Foster Parents are also urged to advocate for a child in a variety of their life domains. This may include all ACR’s, CIPP’s (Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation), Integrated Assessments, court hearings and any conferences held relating to the child(ren) in their care. The Post PRIDE training held by Our Children’s Homestead will clarify the roles the Foster Parent has in all DCFS meetings and court hearings. Permanency workers will explain court proceedings to the Foster Parents and inform them that they will have the opportunity to speak during the hearing. They will also be prepped by the Permanency Worker on what questions may be asked of them by the judge. We acknowledge the Foster Parents can feel overwhelmed appearing in court and being trained on what to expect helps relieve some of the stress and anxiety. Foster Parents are notified in writing when an ACR is scheduled. Permanency workers discuss the upcoming ACR with the Foster Parents during the process of obtaining all required documentation for the file. Foster Parents are provided with the Service Appeal information and filing documentation on an ongoing basis. Foster Parents are required to participate in all treatment plan meetings because it provides them with an opportunity to advocate for the child’s mental health needs. The Foster Parent’s schedules are taken into consideration when scheduling both home visits and treatment

plan meetings and Child and Family Team meetings because their presence is essential.

Our Children's Homestead has a full time Educational Liaison who Foster Parents contact with any educational concerns. The Educational Liaison is an additional support to ensure all children's educational needs are met. Our Children's Homestead is striving toward the goal of NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND.

## Responsibility 4

### Treat Children and Families with Dignity and Respect

**“The responsibility to treat children in the Foster Parent’s care and the children’s families with dignity, respect, and consideration.”**

All Foster Parents and the treatment team have the responsibility to treat all of the children in foster placement with the highest level of dignity, respect, and consideration. If the foster child's cultural, socioeconomic, or racial background does not parallel that of the Foster Parent, it is paramount that the Foster Parent realizes they must respect the foster child's background in those areas. Our Children's Homestead promotes an environment in which Foster Parents are required to take into consideration a child's background and experiences when a child expresses emotional or psychological behaviors. Foster Parent(s) must treat each child with dignity and respect. Our Children's Homestead also promotes an environment in which staff are held to the same standard in these regards. In order to ensure OCH staff are aware of the Foster Parent's and client's rights, all staff are required to attend a training centered on the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan on an annual basis.

Foster Parents may also request resources from agency staff when a child from a different race, ethnicity, religion, or cultural background is placed in their home. They work with the assigned therapist to make sure everyone is treated equally in the home and they are respecting the foster child's right to explore their identity. The agency staff members meet on a monthly basis to discuss individual cases. As mentioned previously, the cultural and spiritual needs of the child are discussed and suggestions to improve cultural and spiritual competency by the Foster Parents are documented. This information is shared and discussed during home visits and Child and Family Team Meetings. Foster Parents are also encouraged to attend the annual training offered by Our Children's Homestead on Cultural Competency as well as the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan.

Our Children's Homestead staff will assess the Foster Parent's interactions with the child during pre-placement visits and ongoing tri-monthly home visits once the child is

placed. The assessments provide feedback of positive actions currently being implemented and offer feedback on improvements that may be needed. In addition, all Our Children's Homestead staff who provide services to the child(ren) in the home are responsible for reporting any unusual or concerning incidents that occur in Foster Homes by completing a Foster Home Visit Incident Report. This is pertinent to providing optimal care to our clients on a daily basis.

As a Foster Parent, you are expected to treat all children placed in your home as a valued household member on a daily basis. Some ways you can accomplish this are by doing the following:

- ❖ Providing the foster child(ren) in your home with the same meals as your biological family has (this does not include foods the child(ren) may be allergic to, religiously prohibited from eating, etc.)
- ❖ Including the child(ren) in your care in family outings and/or family vacations
- ❖ Using respectful language when speaking to or referencing the child(ren) in your care (this also includes the prohibited use of the "silent treatment" for extended periods of time as a punishment)
- ❖ Providing a gift(s) for special occasions such as Birthdays and Christmas
- ❖ Providing equal treatment and consequences for both positive and negative behaviors for all minor household members
- ❖ Encouraging and supporting the child(ren) by providing transportation to and from extra-curricular activities. (this includes sports, art, music etc. to the extent of the child's interest, ability and talents)
- ❖ Utilizing all allocated funds (i.e. Assistance to Youth, clothing allowance, etc.) for such purposes
- ❖ Being respectful of a child's feelings and belongings when they are moving from your home by ensuring they have all possessions as well as adequate moving supplies
- ❖ Providing an open and welcoming environment for the child on a daily basis
- ❖ Encouraging and supporting the goals of a child
- ❖ Being responsible for knowing a child's whereabouts 24 hours a day (this includes reporting the unknown whereabouts of a child in the appropriate timeframes)

## Responsibility 5

### Foster Parent Strengths and Weaknesses

**“The responsibility to recognize the Foster Parent’s own individual and familial strengths and limitations when deciding whether to accept a child into care; to recognize their own support needs, and utilize appropriate supports in providing care for foster children.”**

Foster Parents are asked to review their own strengths and weaknesses, particularly when making a decision about a new placement. If, for example, a foster family would like to have a medically complex child, but they have no training in the specific medical issues of the child, then additional training will be required. Our Children’s Homestead staff will assist Foster Parents in seeking resources on training they will need to provide optimal care to the child.

The Licensing Representative discusses foster family strengths and weaknesses during several sessions of the licensing process. At the end of the Post Pride training held by the agency Foster Parents will complete a Caregiver Placement Consideration Survey in order to identify the behaviors of a child they are comfortable working with and behaviors they would need more training on prior to placement. During a placement decision, the Foster Parent is able to have a meeting with the team prior to the placement to discuss the child’s needs and how the child’s treatment needs will be appropriately addressed by the family. They are also given information on services that the child will need or participate in. The Foster Parent is then able to make an informed decision concerning a placement and the agency is able to determine if the Foster Parent is prepared for a particular child with specific needs. Once the placement of a child takes place, the agency focuses on “front-end” services. These services support a child and Foster Parent during the initial stages of placement and provide support for the family. During family therapy an ongoing assessment is completed by the therapist in order for the Foster Family to identify both strengths and weaknesses. If the family identifies weaknesses, services can be put into place by the agency to support the family. The service team and the Foster Home Licensing Representative will assist in these matters.

Staff and Foster Parents work together to identify areas in which the Foster Parent may need more training or support. This collaboration will provide the Foster Parents with consistent feedback on the strengths and weaknesses that are identified by the Our Children’s Homestead team members who are working with the Foster Parent and the children placed in that particular home. Training suggestions will be related to the specific needs of the children placed in the Foster Parent’s home. In addition to training needs, the team will identify any additional supports the Foster Parent may be able to utilize. The evaluation will take place every six months during the Individual Treatment

Plan Meetings as well as during the Licensing Monitoring visits.

Foster Parents are also provided the opportunity to identify areas of training needs and interests through an annual Foster Parent Training Survey and are encouraged to contact their Foster Home Licensing Representative to discuss their training needs. During the semi-annual Foster Home Licensing Monitoring Visits, all Foster Parents are solicited to share with their Foster Home Licensing Representative any questions or dilemmas related to the care of children in their home. The questions or dilemmas presented may need to be formally addressed through training.

## **Responsibility 6**

### **Affiliations with other Foster Parents Associations**

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

As a means of ongoing support and advocacy for Foster families, each of our Foster Parents are made aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other Foster Parents, or Foster Parent associations within the community in which they live.

Participation in Foster Parent associations can help Foster Parents to be aware of current trends in foster care, the changes in the laws pertaining to foster care and other issues that pertain to foster care within Illinois. Our Children’s Homestead strongly advocates on behalf of foster families that would like to become active members of a Foster Parent’s association. The direct involvement of foster families within Foster Parent associations and/or political arenas is important so that the needs of foster families are being heard, and continuous change is being made to respond to the many complex issues with foster care.

Our Children’s Homestead provides a monthly Foster Parent support group that is facilitated by the Clinical Supervisor. This groups provides foster parents with an opportunity to get together in order to support and learn from each other.

## Responsibility 7

### Assess Own Needs/Training to Meet Needs

**“The responsibility to assess the Foster Parent’s ongoing individual training needs as well as take action to meet those needs”**

It is important all foster families receive the proper training and access to appropriate community resources to effectively meet the needs of their foster children. Our Children’s Homestead will attempt to meet the training needs of the Foster Parent so an appropriate placement can be made and/or stabilization of a current placement at risk of disruption can be sustained. A Caregiver Placement Consideration Survey is completed at the time of licensure during Post PRIDE training which can be utilized to help the Foster Parent and staff identify behaviors the Foster Parent would like or need more training on. Our Children’s Homestead provides ongoing training through monthly Foster Parent trainings. It is expected that all Foster Parents complete 4 credit hour of training per quarter. This will ensure all Foster Parents’ have the necessary 64 credit hours of training by the Foster Parents’ license renewal date. Written requests for tuition reimbursement for specific seminars should be submitted to the CEO for consideration. When completing trainings, the trainings should focus on improving Foster Parents’ knowledge base in relation to a child presently placed in the home.

Foster Parents will be evaluated twice yearly to determine if they are in need of any additional training or services to work with the children placed in their home. These evaluations will be held on regular six month intervals, coinciding with their licensing monitoring visits as well as during the Individual Treatment Plan Meetings. However, they can also be requested by any team member.

## Responsibility 8

### Placement Stabilization Strategies

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

During the child intake process, a child’s previous placements will be reviewed and reasons for disruptions will be evaluated by clinical staff through the “Placement Disruption Risk Assessment”. Results and prevention strategies will be discussed with the foster family and child’s team and implemented for the specific needs of the child

upon placement. This assessment will be kept on file so it can be easily accessed by the child's team. If a child's placement should disrupt, this assessment is re-administered by clinical staff to maintain an updated, accurate assessment.

Each time a child is placed in a foster home, Our Children's Homestead staff will review the Placement Disruption Risk Assessment. Our Children's Homestead staff work closely with all foster families to develop and assist in implementing specific clinical strategies that will help prevent children from being disrupted in their current placement and recognize the impact of placement disruptions on other foster family members. All Foster Parents have the responsibility to provide emotional support for their foster children to ensure a placement can be successful. It is the responsibility of the foster family and the Our Children's Homestead team to identify specific behavioral strategies that they will employ when working with a foster child. These strategies will be specific to the child and addressed and clearly defined in the semi-annual individual treatment plan meetings and quarterly child and family team meetings. The treatment team's role is to make sure behavioral intervention techniques are within the context of the law, and within the context of appropriate clinical and ethical guidelines. The Clinical Coordinator or Supervisor is able to work directly with the child's treatment team to discuss placement stabilization strategies and techniques to ensure that the child's placement remains stable and intact. In addition to our Clinical Coordinator and Clinical Supervisors; there are also Master's Level clinicians. These staff members can be directly accessed by Foster Parents and staff in the event that a child's behavior has placed them at a high risk for placement disruption.

A foster family's rules and expectations should be flexible enough to accommodate the many complex and diverse issues involved with foster children. It is the responsibility of the foster family and the treatment team to work together in identifying the appropriate rules and expectations that will work with a particular child so placement stabilization can be achieved.

Through ongoing training, three monthly caseworker visits, regular contact with a child's therapist, semi-annual Individual Treatment Plan Meetings (ITP) and quarterly child and family team meetings, Our Children's Homestead will provide foster families with placement stabilization strategies that will allow the foster families to feel empowered and confident in their approach to working with foster care children. These strategies and resources, once in place, will help to stabilize the placement.

Our Children's Homestead has a Placement Disruption Prevention procedure to ensure stability for the children in our care as well as to provide support to our Foster Parents. When a placement is determined to be at risk by any Team Member (including Foster Parents), a Placement Disruption Prevention Family Support Team Meeting is convened within 72 hours of the report. During this meeting, the Family Support Team meets in the home to discuss the issues that are factors in the potential disruption. The Team devises a plan to mitigate the disruption and a clinical staff member provides a follow-up phone call to the home to monitor the progress of the plan. If the placement remains at risk after the call, another Placement Disruption Prevention Family Support

Team Meeting is convened to reassess the plan.

Foster families must have in place appropriate emotional support for their own children as well as for their foster children in the event that a crisis and/or emergency occur. It is the belief of Our Children's Homestead that emotional support be given to all of our Foster Parents. This support is offered through home visits, ongoing training and increased therapy. A Permanency Worker is available to all Foster Parents 24 hours a day. Our Children's Homestead also has Emergency Foster Parents who are on call to provide respite 24 hours a day. Our Children's Homestead recognizes the mental and emotional toll that foster parenting puts on our Foster Parents. Providing our Foster Parents with respite is vital in allowing our Foster Parents time to re-energize and re-focus in order to continue to meet the needs of the children in their care.

For children who may have exceptional needs, the agency often provides additional supports to the family, such as mentoring or specific staff members that work as advocates for that particular child. If a foster family feels they need additional support for the foster child beyond what Our Children's Homestead is able to provide, they may request a Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meeting through DCFS. This meeting will then be scheduled by DCFS for the entire team to come together to address presenting issues affecting the stabilization of the child in the foster home in order to create a plan to best support the child moving forward. System of Care Services will be represented at the meeting to provide suggestions for possible trainings or supports that they can offer to the foster family and child.

## Responsibility 9 Stress Management

**“The responsibility to know the impact Foster Parenting has on individuals and family relationships; and the responsibility to endeavor to minimize, as much as possible, any stress that results from Foster Parenting.”**

Foster Parenting is a stressful profession, and stressful situations need to be appropriately assessed and adequately dealt with by the foster families. Foster Parents need to appropriately assess and tend to the stress levels within the home, so the foster children within their placement can feel cared for and nurtured.

The Licensing Representative discusses the potential of stress with Foster Parents during the foster home licensing process. If training or another method to relieve stress is needed, an Our Children's Homestead staff member is available to discuss various methods that can be implemented with the Foster Parent. A referral can also be made by the agency for additional therapeutic services for the Foster Parent. Several Our Children's Homestead Foster Parents have used these methods to take care of family relationships, personal situations, etc. In addition, Our Children's Homestead Education

Academy provides an annual training on appropriate methods for stress management. Foster Parent Support Groups are held monthly in order for Foster Parents to discuss problems and concerns with other Foster Parents on a confidential level and receive support from each other.

If at any time Our Children's Homestead recognizes or is informed that a foster family is experiencing a high level of stress, supportive services are available. Therapists assigned to the home can assess stress levels and discuss with the Foster Parents ways they can take care of themselves. This can include temporary respite for the child, placing the foster home on an internal voluntary hold (with the Foster Parent's consent), or short term counseling from the clinical staff. Our Children's Homestead has a list of Foster Parents who are willing and available to provide short term respite for any Foster Parent who is need. Mentors assigned to the foster children in the home provide Foster Parents with opportunities to take time for themselves by taking the foster child on excursions outside of the home.

If a Foster Parent feels they are no longer able to take additional children into their home, or have no children placed in their care and have decided they no longer wish to care for children, a Voluntary Hold can be requested by contacting their Foster Home Licensing Representative. A Voluntary Hold is a status that a Foster Parent can place on their Foster Home License to halt the placement of children in their home. A Foster Parent can place their license on a Voluntary Hold Status until their Foster Home License renewal period arrives. At that time, the Foster Parent will be asked if they would like to maintain their Foster Home License.

## Responsibility 10

### Promotion of Foster Parenting

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

Our Children's Homestead sponsors a number of events each year that both honor our families and promote Foster Parenting. We have an annual celebration that recognizes the importance of having Foster Parents and acknowledges Foster Parents who have gone above and beyond during the past year. Our Children's Homestead's LEAP program hosts quarterly family events where foster families can gather and socialize. Prospective Foster Parents are always invited and can talk with current families about the rewards and benefits of Foster Parenting. Our Children's Homestead sends out a quarterly newsletter spotlighting Foster Parents and providing information on upcoming events and trainings in the area. The agency also sends cards to the Foster Families for upcoming holidays including Christmas, Mother's Day and Father's Day recognizing the are important members of the Our Children's Homestead Family. During Foster

Parent Appreciation Month Our Children's Homestead recognizes each of our Foster Parents by hand delivering personalized Thank You cards and flowers. The thank you cards were specific to the services that each Foster Parent provides to the youth placed in their home.

Our Children's Homestead has an ongoing recruitment plan that involves the training and utilization of present Foster Parents to assist in the recruitment of new Foster Parents.

## Responsibility 11

### Awareness of the Responsibilities of the Child Welfare Team

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

During PRIDE training Foster Parents are informed of the individual roles and responsibilities of all service team members including OCH staff, the child's biological family and contracted providers. Licensing Representatives also review these roles further during the licensing process and ongoing monitoring visits.

Our Children's Homestead holds a Post PRIDE training where Foster Parents are introduced to different members of the service team and their roles and responsibilities are presented and discussed. Post PRIDE training is co-led by a current licensed Our Children's Homestead Foster Parent.

During the initial placement of a child, it is important that the role and responsibility of each team member is defined. There will be an initial placement staffing with all members in attendance whenever a child moves to a new home. Per DCFS policy, Child and Family Team Meetings are held quarterly and all team members discuss the progress towards the child's permanency goal. Foster Parent participation is crucial because they are the main caretaker for the foster child. All team members including the Foster Parents have input into the plan and work together to help keep the child safe and stable.

Foster Parents have many responsibilities in caring for children in the home. However, there are major responsibilities Foster Parents have which include:

- ❖ Transportation of children to and from all psychiatric, medical, dental, clinical, substance abuse treatment, extra-curricular activities, community resources, educational resources and L.E.A.P. activities.

- ❖ Advocating for the child(ren) in all educational, legal, medical, social and financial aspects of the child's life
- ❖ Attendance (in-person) at each semi-annual Individual Treatment Plan (ITP) Meeting held in the OCH Office (At both the Naperville and Rockford locations)

Foster Parent input is important in determining the needs of the agency as well as any necessary changes. During monthly Foster Parent support groups the Foster Parent have an opportunity to discuss their needs as well as suggestions for improvement with the Clinical Director who reports back the information gathered to the management team. Individual feedback is also requested from the Foster Parents regarding updates to the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan and utilized to update the plan each year. Foster Parents also have an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings during monthly visits with their Licensing Representative and tri-monthly visits with the Permanency Specialists.

## Responsibility 12

### Mandated Reporter Responsibility

**“The responsibility to know and, as necessary, fulfill the Foster Parent’s responsibility to serve as a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act; and the responsibility to know the child welfare agency’s policy regarding allegations that Foster Parents have committed child abuse or neglect and applicable administrative rules and procedures governing investigations of those allegations.”**

If a Foster Parent suspects that child abuse or neglect has occurred involving a child in their home or any other child, they must report the suspected abuse or neglect to the Child Abuse and Neglect hotline. During the licensing process, Foster Parents are asked to read, review and sign an Understanding of Mandated Reporter Status form and be provided with the phone number for the Child Abuse Hotline. The Licensing Representative will train the Foster Parent on their responsibility as a mandated reporter. This policy will be reviewed at the bi-annual Licensing Monitoring Visit if deemed necessary. Foster Parents will also receive training during Post PRIDE that will help Foster Parents understand what is considered emotional and physical abuse.

Foster Parents will also be informed of the responsibility to report any suspected sexual, physical or emotional abuse of a child during the licensing process and throughout a child's placement. Foster Parents are also required to sign and comply with any supervision plans for children who have been identified as having inappropriate sexual

behaviors to state that they understand and will adhere to the supervision plan; Foster Parents are given copies of these plans. The supervision plans are reviewed quarterly with the Foster Parent.

Our Children's Homestead licensing staff provide an annual training addressing the Mandated Reporter Policy and investigations against foster homes. Foster Parents are trained on the rules and regulations that govern foster home investigations. They are also educated in reference to what would occur in the event they are the subject of a Foster Home Licensing Investigation.

## Responsibility 13

### Administrative Case Reviews (ACR)

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

An Our Children's Homestead staff person will attend all Administrative Case Reviews (ACR), client service plan meetings and court proceedings. An Administrative Case Review is a review of a child's permanency planning and is open to the participation of the Foster Parent of the child. If a Foster Parent is unable to attend in person then either a call in number will be provided or the Permanency Specialist will document any concerns that the Foster Parent would like to be shared during the review. The review is facilitated by an Administrative Case Reviewer who is not responsible for the case management of, or delivery of services to either the child or the parents who are the subject of the review. The Administrative Case Review is also open to the participation of other professionals involved in assessing or treating the child or any legal representative of the child. The caseworker notifies the Foster Parent of the next Administrative Case Review (ACR) during one of their three monthly in home visits. Foster Parents will be encouraged by staff to attend each of these events. Our Children's Homestead offers a Post PRIDE training where staff members will review with Foster Parents ACR and court procedures. Foster Parents will be trained on their roles and expectations. In order to act in the best interest of the children, we must address these proceedings with as much information and background data as possible, and approach each of the goal setting measures with as much knowledge and input from various members of the child welfare team. Every Foster Parent should be a part of developing the actual service plan and be provided a copy of the service plan.

## Responsibility 14 Appeal Procedure

**“The responsibility to know the child welfare agency’s appeal procedure for Foster Parents and the rights of Foster Parents under the procedure.”**

Each Foster Parent is given a copy of the Our Children’s Homestead Policy and Procedures as they relate to Foster Homes and are encouraged to review the Appeal Procedure. The Appeal Procedures outline and explain the different types of appeals that may be filed.

If a foster parent would like to address a foster home licensing matter, they are to follow the established DCFS procedure in order to appeal licensing decisions. This information can be requested from the licensing staff at Our Children’s Homestead or is available in the DCFS Foster Parent Manual.

Foster families also need to be aware of the appeal procedure for ACR/Service Plan, and court proceedings. The ACR reviewer will provide an appeal pamphlet at the end of the review if participants do not agree with the ACR results. Foster Parents need to work directly with the treatment staff of Our Children’s Homestead. Foster Parents are provided with information on how to appeal a “Notice of Intent to Move” decision if they receive one from the agency.

Annually, Our Children’s Homestead holds a meeting where the Foster Parent Law is discussed and Foster Parents are encouraged to join the Implementation Law Plan Committee. Copies of the agency Implementation Plan and grievance policy will also be distributed at that time.

## Responsibility 15 Record Keeping

**“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.”**

At the time of placement, Our Children’s Homestead will provide the Foster Parent with a folder to store all records for the child. This folder will be reviewed by the Permanency worker at the tri-monthly home visit.

Upon the Foster Parent’s receipt of the folder, it is the responsibility of the Foster Parent to maintain accurate and relevant psychological, medical, dental, educational and background records regarding the child’s history and current progress. The Foster

Parent must provide staff with required documentation in a timely manner.

Prior to licensure, the licensing worker will train the Foster Parent on the importance of record keeping for any child placed in their home. Ongoing training on the importance of keeping these records for ACRs, court proceedings, and/or any other decision making is provided by the Our Children's Homestead staff, through the Foster Parent Forum, and through quarterly team meetings and three monthly home visits. It is imperative to maintain records regarding a child's history and progress as it is important for the treatment staff in making any clinical decisions and/or living arrangements for the child's future.

Foster Parents are asked to keep records of medications taken by the child and this information is required to be recorded on medication logs that are provided by the agency. Foster Parents will be instructed on how to complete medication logs by the Permanency Specialist anytime a medication is prescribed for a foster child in their home. The Permanency Specialist will review the medication logs on a monthly basis to ensure that medication is being given appropriately and consistently. Foster Parents are also asked to fill out morning reports on the children placed in their home to accurately depict what is happening in their home and how a child is adapting to their home.

Regulations and expectations for record keeping are also included in the Foster Parent informational material. Foster Parents must sign a statement stating that they have read this and understand the requirements stated in the informational material. At the time of initial placement Foster Parents are provided with a Placement Staffing form that includes the dates of the foster child's last medical, dental and vision appointments.

Foster Parents are also asked to keep all pertinent record information regarding their licensure. The licensing staff of Our Children's Homestead will periodically conduct home visits and/or conduct subsequent follow up with licensing studies that will require the appropriate documentation and record keeping to be available at the time of the home visit.

## Responsibility 16 Sharing of Information

**“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.”**

It is the responsibility of foster care team members to share information about how the foster child adjusted during the initial placement phase. It is important to note that cultural, racial, and socioeconomic background information may be helpful in terms of stabilizing a particular placement. Sharing of clinical information regarding a child's

behavior is also important in making future placement decisions if the need arises. CFS 600-4 Sharing Information with Caregiver is reviewed at the initial placement and subsequent staffings. Foster Parents will be trained during the licensing process on the importance of sharing information about a child with other caregivers. The Permanency Specialist will also discuss this with the Foster Parents during the three monthly foster home visits.

## Responsibility 17 Cultural Issues

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

A child’s cultural identity and/or racial or cultural background should be respected at all times. Our Children’s Homestead follows federal mandates related to the Interethnic Placement Act (IEPA), Burgos Consent Decree, and the Indian Child Welfare Act. Our Children’s Homestead believes that the cultural, racial and socio-economic background of all children should be respected with the highest level of dignity and consideration. During an initial placement staffing it is discussed if there is anything the child needs either culturally and/or spiritually. Foster families need to respect the religious, cultural and/or social-economic background of a child as well as access community resources when necessary. Our Children’s Homestead staff may recommend that a child attend particular community resource centers that provide a specific cultural program. All foster families have the responsibility of providing care and services that are respectful of and responsive to the child’s cultural needs, as well as being supportive of the relationship between the child and his/her own biological family. All Foster Parents are required to attend a Diversity Training offered by Our Children’s Homestead within their first four years of being licensed. This training not only focuses on cultural and racial diversity but also promotes awareness of the LGBTQ community.

As mentioned previously, the agency reviews the cultural and spiritual needs of a child placed in a foster home on a quarterly basis through the child’s quarterly progress report. This is to ensure that the cultural and spiritual needs of the child are being met in the foster home. If it appears these needs are not being met, staff members have the opportunity to offer suggestions and ideas to the Foster Parents. The foster child can be referred to Our Children’s Homestead’s LEAP program in order to be matched with a community service provider that can meet their needs and interests.

## Glossary of Terms

This section contains selected definitions of terms appearing in Department policy documents. Where the same term is defined differently in documents, multiple definitions appears under the label. Where the term is defined substantially the same in multiple documents, multiple documents are indicated at the end of the definition. Users are advised to refer to the complete document(s) to verify which definition is applicable to their interests.

### Abused Child

**"Abused Child" means a child whose parent or immediate family member, or any person responsible for the child's welfare, or any individual residing in the same home as the child, or a paramour of the child's parent:**

**Inflicts, causes to be inflicted, or allows to be inflicted upon such child physical or mental injury, by other than accidental means, which causes death, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function.**

### Administrative case review

**"Administrative case review" means a review of permanency planning open to the participation of the parents of the child, conducted by a panel of appropriate persons at least one of whom is not responsible for the case management of, or the delivery of services to, either the child or the parents who are the subjects of the review pursuant to Section 475 of the Social Security Act (42 USCA 675). The administrative case review is also open to the participation of other professionals involved in assessing or treating the child, any legal representative of the parent or child, and the foster parents as specified in Section 316.60 (Administrative Case Reviews) of 89 Ill. Adm. Code 316 (Case Reviews, Court Hearings and Permanency Hearings). (R 301, 315, 316)**

### Appeal process

**"Appeal process" means the prehearing conference and formal administrative hearing. (R 336)**

### Authorized agent

**"Authorized agent" means Department staff who have been appointed and authorized by the Director to officially act in the place of the Guardianship Administrator to authorize and consent to matters concerning children for whom the Department has legal responsibility.(R 325)**

### Caregiver

**"Caregiver" means the child's parents, guardian, custodian or relative with whom the child lives and who has primary responsibility for the care and supervision of the child.**

**"Caregiver" means persons designated by the Department of Children and Family Services to be responsible for the day-to-day care of children and youth for whom the Department is legally responsible. This includes foster parents, relative caregivers, and administrators of group homes, child care institutions, and child welfare agencies. (R 331)**

### Case management services

**"Case management services" means services that include the assessment and identification of client needs, the identification of available resources to meet client needs, the development of an individualized service plan, the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of services for each client, and advocacy for a client to assure that services and resources are accessible and provided. (R 410)**

### Case record or record

**"Case record or record" means the record maintained for a family service case, a child service case, or a payment/monitoring-only case, which may include the child abuse/neglect (CA/N) investigative file. The term "case record" applies to records maintained by the Department or a purchase of service agency responsible for case management regardless of whether the services were provided directly by Department staff or purchased from a private provider. The confidentiality of case record information and access to such information may differ, depending on the type of information sought. (R 431)**

### Client service plan

**"Client service plan" means a written plan on a form prescribed by the Department that guides all participants in the plan of intervention toward the permanency goals for the children. (R 315)**

### Confidential

**"Confidential" means certain records which are exempt from disclosure. These records are defined under Part 431 (89 Ill. Adm. Code 431), Confidentiality of Personal Information of Persons Served by the Department. (R 775)**

### Corrective plan

**"Corrective plan" means a written plan approved by the Department's regional licensing administrator which identifies deficiencies in a child care facility's operations and which allows the facility a maximum of six months to correct the identified deficiencies and come into reasonable compliance with all applicable licensing standards. (R 401)**

### Educational advocacy training

**"Educational advocacy training" means the 6-hour training that prepares foster parents to effectively advocate for the special educational needs of the children in their care by providing information on children's educational rights and foster parents' responsibility to protect those rights. (R 402)**

### Family Meeting

**"Family Meeting" means a multi-disciplinary staffing intended to engage the family in the planning process. Issues addressed at family meetings include child protective service plans, parental progress, and critical decision-making. In cases involving substance affected families, the family meeting also addresses how the parent's alcohol and other drug abuse, treatment, and recovery affect the safety and well-being of the children. (PG 99.13)**

### Foster care payment

**"Foster care payment" means the amount paid by the Department for a child's room, board, clothing, and personal allowance in a licensed foster family home. (R 301)**

### Indicated Report

**"Indicated Report" means any report of child abuse or neglect made to the Department for which it is determined, after an investigation, that credible evidence of the alleged abuse or neglect exists. (R 300)**

### Individualized Education Plan/Program (IEP)

**"Individualized Education Plan/Program (IEP)" means the document prepared by the local school district, as a result of a Multi-disciplinary Conference, that identifies the specific special education services that will be provided to the child. The IEP also includes education goals, services, frequency, quantity and duration. IEP is further defined in 23 Ill. Adm. Code 226 (Special Education). (R 315)**

### Investigation

**"Investigation" means an information gathering and assessment process initiated and conducted by the Department in order to determine compliance with Department rules and procedures or with federal, State, and local laws. (R 411, 383)**

**"Investigation" means an examination of employee conduct, security systems, and contractor conduct to assure compliance with State, federal and Departmental rules and regulations. A Department investigation is not intended to focus on criminality or prepare cases for prosecution, but rather to obtain sufficient documentation to assure the Director of the appropriateness of Department and service provider employee conduct and the safeguarding of Department assets. (R 434)**

### License violation

**"License violation" means a violation of the Department of Children and Family Services licensing standards that results in a corrective action plan or jeopardizes the health, safety and welfare of a child. (R 378)**

### Permanency goal

**"Permanency goal" means the desired outcome of intervention and service, which is determined to be consistent with the health, safety, well-being, and best interests of the child. A permanent legal status is usually a component of the permanency goal. (R 301, 302, 315, 316)**

### Reasonable Cause to Believe

**What reasonable people, in similar circumstances, would conclude from such things as the nature of the injury (ies) to the child, statement and demeanor of the parents or the child, or conditions of the home.**

### Respite foster care

**"Respite foster care" means temporary (not to exceed 30 days), full-time care in a licensed foster family home, group home, or child care institution, or in a license exempt relative home, when such temporary, full-time care is provided to foster children. Respite foster care is provided to foster children in order to give the full time caregivers a rest from caregiving responsibilities. (R 402)**

### Service plan

**"Service plan" means a written plan on a form prescribed by the Department in the plan toward the permanency goal for the children required by 42 USC 675(5), 325 ILCS 5/8.2, and 89 Ill. Adm. Code 315 (Permanency Planning). (R 301, 302, 316)**

### Specialized care

**"Specialized care" means care provided to a child who has developmental, emotional, behavioral, or medical needs and who has been determined to require specialized care. The need for specialized care shall be redetermined once every six months. (R 402)**

### Staffings

**"Staffings" means conferences involving Regional Conveners which result in an assessment of needs, the development or modification of a client service plan, the identification of a case manager and the monitoring or review of a plan for all severely multi-problem youth served by the Initiative. (R 311)**

### Substantiated complaint

**"Substantiated complaint" means a violation of Department of Children and Family Services licensing standards or the Child Care Act which has been substantiated through a licensing complaint investigation. (R 378)**

### System of Care

**A placement stabilization program for wards of the state whose foster placements are in jeopardy of a disruption.**

### Unfounded report

**"Unfounded report" means any report of child abuse or neglect for which it is determined, after an investigation, which no credible evidence of the alleged abuse or neglect exists. (R 300,431)**

### Unusual incident

**"Unusual incident", as used in Part 331, means an occurrence or event beyond the customary operations, routines or relationships in the Department, a child care facility or other entity that is licensed or regulated by the Department of Children and Family Services or that provides services for the Department pursuant to a grant, contract or purchase of service agreement. Unusual incidents may involve children and youth, employees, Foster Parents or relative caregivers. Unusual incidents may also involve damage to property, allegations of criminal activity, misconduct, or other occurrences affecting the operations of the Department or a child care facility. Any incident that could have media impact may be an unusual incident. Unusual incidents are further enumerated in Sections 331.30, 331.40 and 331.50. (R 331)**

### Visitation

**"Visitation", as used in Part 301, means face-to-face contact between parents and their children who are in substitute care or among siblings who are placed apart from one another. (R 301)**





List the right(s) you feel have been violated and a brief explanation of circumstances (please feel free to attach additional paper if necessary):

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Foster Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Grievance Filed \_\_\_\_\_

Grievance Process Steps

1. Within five (5) business days of receiving the formal grievance, the Director of Continuous Quality Improvement will contact the foster parent to acknowledge receipt of the grievance and obtain any additional information.
2. Within fourteen (14) days of acknowledging receipt of the grievance, the Grievance Committee will be assembled to gather specific information as it relates to the foster parent grievance. The grievant foster parent is allowed and encouraged to bring a person(s) who is of support to them to the Grievance Committee Meeting. The meeting can be conducted in person or via teleconference, whichever is convenient for the foster parent.
3. The committee will review and discuss information from both the foster parent and the staff member(s) named in the grievance.
4. Within 10 (ten) business days after the Grievance Committee convenes, the foster parent will be notified via certified letter correspondence as to the resolution of the grievance.





OUR CHILDREN'S  
**HOMESTEAD**  
ONE CHILD • ONE DREAM™

2017 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan  
Foster Parent Endorsement Verification

I have received, read, reviewed and endorse this copy of the 2017 Our Children's Homestead Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. I comprehend and consent to abide by the provisions enclosed in this document.

For future reference, I will ensure I always keep the current copy of the Plan I am given by my Foster Home Licensing Representative. Our Children's Homestead revises and distributes this Plan annually and encourages all Foster Parent's to become involved with the development of this Plan as well. If you would like to assist in the development of the 2017 Plan, please formally declare your interest by checking the box below:

Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to contribute to the development of the 2018 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan.