



THE FOSTER PARENT LAW IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2016

Rights

1. The right to be treated with dignity, respect, and consideration.

LH considers all foster home applicants regardless of socioeconomic status, race, culture, marital/civil union status, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation. Any updates to Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and/or Agency licensing standards, policies or procedures impacting Foster Parents, their homes, and/or the children in their care are shared with Foster Parents by mail and worker follow up.

Foster Parents are professional members of the Lawrence Hall (LH) child welfare team. The program's Performance and Quality Improvement Team (PQI) also strives for Foster Parent representation. Foster parents have the right to be heard through formal and informal communication and may express concerns, disagreements, etc. without judgment. Staff will be available to address and to validate concerns.

Disciplinary action is taken against any staff member who intentionally disregards or disrespects a Foster Parent. If an offense is believed to be unintentional, the staff member is counseled and may receive extra supervision and/or training. The Agency will apologize to the Foster Parent.

LH respects Foster Parent rights to privacy and confidentiality. No personal information will be shared without the consent or knowledge of the Foster Parent outside of the information required for making placement and licensing decisions, and the required information sharing for siblings who are not placed together. Foster Parent preferences regarding age range, gender, and needs of children are considered before a request for placement is made.

LH returns calls within 48 hours with back-up information provided on voicemail, takes into account the Foster Parents' school and/or work schedules when planning visits, meetings, and staffings, and offers training at various times and locations.

All Foster Parents receive a Satisfaction Survey once per year and licensed Foster Parents complete a Quality Assurance Survey during annual licensing visits. Both of these surveys ask questions about dignity and respect. Staff and members of our *FPAC* review the collected information to discuss what changes need to be made and how best to make them. The feedback from the surveys is critical to the agencies ongoing quality improvement efforts. Satisfaction survey results are shared with Foster Parents via bulletin.

2. The right to be provided pre-service and on-going training.

Every potential Foster Parent is referred to the standardized DCFS Foster/Adopt *PRIDE* (Parent's Resource for Information, Development and Education) pre-service training at the time of application. A license is not recommended until verification of successful completion has been presented to the Agency. LH strongly encourages relative caregivers to complete this process. All candidates are invited to an initial orientation/FAQ session co-presented by the Licensing Representatives and Family Support Coordinator, and efforts are made to include a current Foster Parent.

All licensed Foster Parents are required to complete 16 hours of training during the four year licensing cycle toward renewal. Sixty-four (64) hours are required for *Specialized* Foster Homes and 104 for *Treatment Foster Family Homes*. LH offers training specific to Foster Parents, and with the exception of staff or role specific trainings, all Agency trainings are open to all Foster Parents. Morning, afternoon, evening and Saturday sessions are offered by the Agency; training topics, dates, and locations are advertised in our Foster Parent bulletins and more information is available by calling 312-456-6500. Foster Parents may share their e-mail addresses with the agency to receive electronic training notifications.

We also offer additional training to our current and potential *specialized* homes. These trainings are designed to support the level of care provided and around the special needs of the child(ren) in the Foster Parent home. Information and resources for trauma training and child development are available from the program's assigned Clinical Supervisor by calling 773-334-7796. In addition, Trauma Training for Caregivers was introduced in 2012. Adoption Conversion Training is provided by referral to Foster Parents who want to adopt. Educational Advocacy Training is required for all Foster Parents by the time of the first license renewal.

Foster Parents may access the DCFS training website at www.dcfstraining.org to register for in person and on-line trainings and to get an update as to the number of training hours they have completed. Foster Parents need to complete a *Virtual Training Center (VTC)* registration form. Instructions are available on the website or from the LH Licensing Representative. The Foster Parent Training and Development Log is kept in the Foster Parent's licensing file, and the Family Support Coordinator tracks all the trainings completed by the Foster Parent.

Informal training and resources specific to a client's individual needs or presenting issues may be provided to Foster Parents during *Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM)*, clinical staffing, or through one on one interactions with Agency staff.

The Quality Assurance Survey, completed with a licensing representative during *monitoring visits*, allows Foster Parents to assess their individual strengths and areas for improvement. This information helps to plan future training topics. Co-training facilitated by the Vice

President of Foster Care and *FPAC* Chairperson began in February 2007. Foster Parents are welcome to write articles for our Foster Parent bulletin and to provide training to staff and other Foster Parents. Foster Parents should call the Vice President of Foster Care (312-456-6529) or *Family Support Coordinator* (312-456-6553) to express any interest in these areas.

As part of LH quality improvement efforts, Foster Parent Satisfaction Surveys are sent out once per year to all Foster Parents. Foster Parents are asked to “please identify at least one topic you would be interested in or need for Foster Parent training”. Responses to this question are utilized in planning the next year’s training calendar.

3. The right to receive contact information, assistance and access to supportive services.

Foster Parents have access to emergency and supportive services 24 hours a day, seven days per week. When a child is placed in a home, Foster Parents are provided with the *Child Welfare Specialist*, Supervisor, Program Manager, Vice President, and Licensing Representative telephone numbers. In addition to a full program staff contact list, each Foster Parent bulletin also contains:

Agency General Number	312-346-3383
After hours emergency number	773-931-6825
SASS/CARES contact information	800-345-9049
LH Clinical on call number	773-727-1300
Healthworks	800-543-4345
Advocacy Office	800-232-3798
Child Abuse Hotline	800-252-2873
Foster Parent Hotline	800-624-5437
Missing Child Helpline.....	866-503-0184

In the event that a LH Foster Parent has children placed from DCFS or another agency, LH maintains *Child Welfare Specialist* and Supervisor contact information for that agency and coordinates monthly contact with that agency.

LH staff re expected to return phone calls within 48 hours. While 24 hours or less is preferable, responsibilities such as home visits, Court hearings and other case related activities may impact response time. In the event the worker is out of the office for an extended period, he/she will state this on their voicemail along with backup information. If a more immediate response is needed, Foster Parents are encouraged to call the supervisor, Program Manager, or general number (312-346-3383). The afterhours emergency number should be called if there is an emergency when the office is closed. Telephone and in person support is provided as needed and referrals to additional services such as IPS (intensive placement stabilization services), clinical, substance abuse treatment, etc. are made by Agency staff. Staff is trained to respond to emergency situations and have access to the phone numbers of other staff and resources.

4. The right to receive timely financial reimbursement.

Every effort is made to mail board payment checks to licensed Foster Parents on the last business day of the month for the current month of care. There may be unexpected processing or mail delays and Foster Parents are asked to budget accordingly. Licensed Foster Parents may arrange to pick up their check at the program office by calling 312-346-3383 and speaking to the program secretary at least one week in advance of the mailing date. If an agency issued check is reported as lost, 14 days must pass before it will be replaced due to internal accounting procedures. The Agency does not currently offer direct deposit.

If Foster Parents are unlicensed relatives, DCFS usually mails checks in the middle of the month for the previous month of care. Unlicensed Foster Parents may call the DCFS central payment unit at 800-525-0499 (press 1 for mailing date, 2 for Foster Care/Adoption or *Guardianship* payments). For any payment problems relating to licensed foster parent payments issued by the agency, Foster Parents may call 312-346-3383 for assistance. All LH payment issues are expected to be resolved within two weeks, not to exceed 30 days.

Monthly board payments are established by DCFS based on the licensing status of the Foster Parent, and the age and level of care of the child. Payments are for the direct care and needs of the child, including established clothing and allowance amounts, transportation and provision of services. Upon assessment that a child appears to be in need of an increased level of care, the Agency refers the child for a *Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP)* meeting. If DCFS approves an increase in the level of care, payment will be increased retroactively to the *CIPP* approval or placement date.

Other payments such as camp, extracurricular activities, school and athletic fees that cannot be waived (library fines and other charges for the loss, misuse, or destruction of school property, purchase of class rings, yearbooks, pictures, diploma covers, etc., optional travel undertaken by a school club or group outside of school hours, admission to school functions such as dances, athletic events, or other social events and optional community service or recreational programs), *Respite* care, supervised visits and reunification support are made upon presentation of receipts or a payment request. LH *Child Welfare Specialists* will complete the appropriate documentation and/or check request upon receipt, keeping copies for future reference. LH checks are usually issued within two business days. Payments issued directly by DCFS could take up to 30 days or more. Foster parents will be informed as to when payments are made by LH or DCFS.

Foster Parents are encouraged to use the agency's Disbursement form to track spending of allowance and clothing funds and to assist older youth with keeping track of their money. The form also specifies the DCFS established amounts based on age range, and includes information as to when allowance can be withheld.

5. The right to written information about the plan for the child placed in your home.

At the time of placement, Foster Parents receive a placement/caregiver agreement form and copies of any information that is available. Foster Parents are kept informed in person or by

phone about the *Permanency Goal* of the case and the progress towards the goal. They are also informed of Court dates and proceedings and any changes in the goal if and when they occur. Foster Parents participate in ongoing development and evaluation of the *service plan* through discussions at regular monthly home visits and are notified of scheduled *Administrative Case Reviews (ACR)*. Foster Parents are informed about confidentiality issues regarding the information they receive about a child and/or family and are trained not to use any information in a negative way in their interactions with a child.

Through training, orientation, and *Child Welfare Specialist* consultation, Foster Parents learn about the importance of supporting the child's right to relationships with his/her own family and cultural heritage. Foster Parents learn to encourage and facilitate contact and activities and frame relationships in a positive manner. Visitation plans are developed with input from the Foster Parents to give consideration to their schedules. Foster Parents are encouraged to play an active role in visitation since this helps to promote the true support system needed for child(ren) and their families. Due to the high importance of parent/child contact, biological parents are given until 5pm the day before to confirm, at which time the *Child Welfare Specialist* or *Family Support Specialist* informs the Foster Parent as to whether a visit will take place. Foster Parents should receive a written monthly visitation schedule including times, dates, and who will be transporting/supervising and plan for these visits to take place, with a concurrent back-up plan for these dates in order to be prepared for cancellations. Foster parents are encouraged to voice concerns and report their observations on the status and progress of visits.

Foster Parents are encouraged to attend ACRs, Court dates, and quarterly *Child and Family Team* meetings to participate in the review of services, visitation, and progress of the child(ren) in their care.

6. The right to be provided a fair, timely, and impartial investigation of licensing complaint issues.

A licensing complaint may come from DCFS or private agency staff, a service provider, attorney or school, or be the result of a hotline call. It is a report of a violation of licensing standards or a law, and may include allegations of child abuse or neglect. Licensing complaint information is confidential and the identity of the person making the complaint will not be disclosed.

During investigations the foster home may be placed on "Hold" with the *Placement Clearance Desk* according to DCFS procedure. Children currently in placement may or may not remain in the home dependent on the seriousness of the complaint and whether there is an open investigation for abuse or neglect separate from the licensing complaint. While the Hold is in place, no child(ren) may be placed in the home. The Hold may be lifted at the end of the investigation if the home is found to be in reasonable compliance with licensing standards. The Hold lift request must be submitted by the person(s) who placed the Hold, and Holds may be placed by the Agency or DCFS.

Within two business days of receiving the complaint the LH Licensing Representative will begin an investigation with an unannounced visit to the foster home. The Licensing Representative will interview the Foster Parent, the child if identified as a victim, the reporter, and any witnesses. **Foster Parents may have a person of their choosing present during the investigation and due process as a witness or advocate and may delay their interview up to four hours to have them present.** The Licensing Representative may wait for the advocate to arrive or leave and return. All home visits must be unannounced in accordance with DCFS policy and procedure.

Complaints can only be completed by a DCFS approved Licensing staff. While a *Child Welfare Specialist* may assist with setting up interviews, they are generally not approved for licensing activities.

If a licensing complaint indicates potential risk or safety concerns for children, the Licensing Representative will apply the Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol in order to determine risk or safety concerns. In the case of risk, a child protective plan will be put into place in order to prevent harm to the child/children. In the case of safety concerns, the child or children are removed from the home under *respite* until the safety and viability of the home can be assured.

If a licensing complaint is due to an accepted report of child abuse or neglect, the licensing investigation is conducted, according to procedures, concurrently with the Child Protection Investigation. The Foster Parent is expected to cooperate with all LH and DCFS staff.

The investigation should be completed within 30 days of the complaint, but may be extended another 60 days (in 30 day increments) if needed. The Foster Parent must be informed of any extension in writing.

A determination as to whether there is a licensing violation must be made within 15 days of the completed investigation unless there is a concurrent Child Protection Investigation. In that case, LH must wait to make a determination until the Child Protection Investigation is closed. A certified Licensing Supervisor (Family Support Coordinator) must sign off on the determination.

Within five days of the determination the Foster Parent will be mailed a certified letter outlining the findings. This letter also contains information about the Foster Parent's right and procedure to appeal negative results. The Foster Parent may request a supervisory review within 10 days of the postmark date of the letter. A supervisor review is attended by the Licensing Representative, Family Support Coordinator, and Foster Parent. The Foster Parent may bring a person of their choosing or an attorney.

If the determination is overturned, the complaint is closed. If it is not overturned, or the Foster Parent does not request a supervisor review, a corrective action plan will be developed with the Foster Parents for violations that can be fixed. Specific violations will be listed with what must be done to correct them and a deadline. After the date of the deadline, the Licensing Representative will make an unannounced visit to the home to determine whether

the violations have been corrected. Written confirmation will be provided as to whether violations have been corrected or further action is necessary.

Serious violations or failure to correct violation(s) may result in LH seeking to revoke or refuse to renew the foster home license and/or the removal of children from the placement. LH will send a letter to the Foster Parent describing the planned enforcement action. This letter informs the Foster Parent about the nature of the licensing violations and about the possibility of requesting an informal review through the DCFS Division of Licensure and Certification. If the Foster Parent chooses to request an informal review, the DCFS official will set a date and the agency will be represented by the Licensing Representative and the Family Support Coordinator.

Foster Parents have the right to be provided the opportunity to request and receive mediation and/or an administrative review of decisions which affect licensing parameters; and the right to have decisions concerning a licensing corrective plan specifically explained and tied to the licensing standards violation.

Allegations and Investigations are discussed at length during orientations and monitoring visits. Licensing Representatives attend all DCFS trainings to remain current on procedure.

7. The right to receive additional or necessary information that is important for the care of the child.

Child Welfare Specialists review case progress during home visits and by telephone, including results of court hearings and/or *Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs)* not attended by the Foster Parents. The Home Visit Form outlines 10 discussion items through a checklist. They are: School/Education/Daycare, Medical/Dental, Court/ACR/Service plan/Permanency, Visitation, Counseling/Mentoring/Tutoring, Behavior, Developmental Progress/Life Skills, Religious/Cultural and Extracurricular Activities, Clothing/Allowance and Curfew Violations. Foster Parents and clients 12 and over are requested to sign the form which is then placed in the client file.

Child Welfare Specialists are required to submit these forms as well as complete case entries. They are held accountable through regular supervision to ensure that monthly visits and sharing of information are taking place. Foster Parents are invited to participate in child specific *staffings* at the agency and may be provided information about the child at any time during placement.

Child Welfare Specialists receive ongoing training and review of DCFS and LH policies and procedures in regards to all information that is to be disclosed to and reviewed with Foster Parents.

8. The right to be given information concerning a child from the Department at or prior to placement.

In accordance with DCFS and LH policy and procedures when a child is being placed with a Foster Parent, the *Child Welfare Specialist* must provide available information in writing for the proper care of the child. This includes:

- Medical history, immunization status, and medical card information
- Educational history, special education needs, and *IFSP/IEP* if applicable
- A copy of the child's portion of the *service plan*, visitation arrangements, case history and legal status, and placement history
- Relevant background information including criminal background, behavior issues, likes and dislikes

When this information is not immediately available, the *Child Welfare Specialist* will report it verbally as soon as it is known, and provide written follow up. The *Child Welfare Specialist* will obtain the Foster Parent's signature confirming that the required information has been shared within 10 working days of placement utilizing the DCFS form 600-4 Sharing Information With the Caregiver and the client binder.

Trainings to reinforce compliance and discuss changes to policies and procedures are scheduled for Staff and Foster Parents as needed. The importance of sharing new information as soon as possible is stressed. Any new information obtained by the agency is documented on the home visit form during monthly visits. The only exception is if the information is confidential.

Supervisors review the home visit forms as a way of confirming that information was shared. The home visit form requires *Child Welfare Specialists* to fill in upcoming Court/*ACR* dates and prompts *Child Welfare Specialists* to write in any information learned by the agency since the last home visit. Supervisors are to hold *Child Welfare Specialists* accountable in monthly supervision and via review of all documentation.

9. The right to be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings in order to actively participate in the case planning and decision making process regarding the child in your care.

LH Foster Parents are informed of all individual service planning *staffings*, *Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs)*, interdisciplinary *staffings*, *individualized education planning meetings (IEP)*, and other meetings about a child in their care by phone, in person, or in writing. Foster Parents are encouraged to attend as to provide valuable input for placement stabilization, adjustment, service needs and training. Scheduling of all meetings that are in the agency's control must consider the Foster Parents' schedule.

Child Welfare Specialists fill in Court date and *ACR* information on the Home Visit Documentation form reviewed during regular monthly home visits. The Foster Parent is asked for his/her questions, comments and concerns. In the event the Foster Parent is unable to attend the meeting the *Child Welfare Specialist* can report the Foster Parent's point of

view. Foster Parents are given a copy of the *service plan* and asked to sign the signature page of the plan.

If Foster Parents are unable to attend a meeting, the *Child Welfare Specialist* will attempt to include them via conference call when possible. If not, they will inform them of any decisions made by the court or the agency within two working days. Foster Parents are encouraged to keep in close communication with any professionals providing services to a child in their care including therapists, doctors, and teachers. It is important to advocate for the child as well as learn how best to assist the child. Foster Parents have first hand information about a child placed in their care. Any input from Foster Parents is given full consideration as a member of the treatment team.

10. The right to be provided with any information available regarding the child and the child's family which is important for the care and needs of the child and permanency planning for the child.

Either before placement or as soon as it is learned, the agency will share with the Foster Parent information such as the following:

- Basic personal data about the child(ren)
- Why the case came into the system
- Placement history
- *Permanency Goal*
- Location of biological parents, siblings and/or significant others
- Visitation plans
- Educational history, status, and needs
- Special medical or behavioral needs
- Potential risks
- Services needed
- Religious information
- Other information needed for the best possible understanding and care of the child
- 906 placement form and medical card

Child Welfare Specialists provide updated or additional information during regular telephone calls, in person contacts and by mail. Any information that is important to the health and well-being of the child will be shared on an ongoing basis. Foster Parents are told if information they are asking for cannot be shared because it is unknown, confidential or protected. Disclosure of information concerning a child's family shall be limited to that information which is essential for understanding the needs of and providing care to the child in order to protect the rights of the child's family. When a positive relationship exists between the Foster Parents and the child's family, the child's family may consent to disclosure of additional information. In 2013 the agency reintroduced client binders using the DCFS "Sharing Information With the Caregiver" form as a checklist. Foster Parents are encouraged to maintain this binder with any and all documents they receive in regards to the child in their care.

11. The right to be given notification of placement changes or termination.

LH will provide Foster Parents with a 14 day written notice if there is a plan or need to end the placement of a child. A child may be removed without notice only in the event of a Court Order or safety issue/imminent risk. The written notice will state the reason for the decision and the effective date. It will also include the information regarding the Foster Parent's right to request a clinical review or appeal a decision. LH will explain the time frame that must be met and assist Foster Parents with necessary paperwork (if requested) in the event they decide to file an appeal.

Foster Parents have the right to appeal a change in the child's placement except for placements with the biological parent or siblings, placements for purposes of adoption as ordered by the Court, or return to the person with whom the child lived prior to coming into substitute care (reunification). Foster Parents may be able to delay a move by requesting an emergency review or filing an appeal within 10 days of receiving the written notice of intent. Written requests for a service appeal are sent to:

Administrative Hearings Unit
Department of Children and Family Services
406 E. Monroe Street
Springfield, IL 62701

12. The right to be notified of all court hearings.

Child Welfare Specialists inform Foster Parents about Court dates during regular home visits, by phone and/or by mail. They are held accountable for this communication through supervisory review of the Home Visit Documentation form, which includes an area to fill in Court date information (a carbonless copy is left with the Foster Parent). Foster Parents are encouraged to attend Court dates. They are provided with date, time, judge and location information and informed of their right to be heard and intervene in proceedings or to seek *mandamus* and to receive documentation. The court docket number will be provided if needed.

Our yearly Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey allows Foster Parents to rate the effectiveness of LH communications regarding court and other important dates. Negative feedback is addressed via staff training.

13. The right to be considered as a placement option if a previous foster child reenters foster care.

If a child reenters Foster Care LH makes every effort to identify the previous placement using available agency and DCFS data systems and files. Once identified, LH works with the Foster Parent(s), licensing, DCFS and any other involved parties to assess whether the placement is available, if the Foster Parent is interested and willing, and if returning the child is in their best interest. Placement Clearance must be approved and consideration of the best interest of any other children in the home and the capacity of the caregiver must be given.

14. The right to have access to the appeals process.

Foster Parents are encouraged to follow through when they have a concern, unmet need, or are dissatisfied. Foster Parents should appeal to the supervisor of the staff person in question and may contact the Program Manager, Vice President of Foster Care), and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of LH. A telephone list identifying each Foster Care staff member's supervisor and telephone number is included in every Foster Parent bulletin.

The identified supervisor will follow up immediately and at monthly intervals to ensure that the Foster Parent is being treated fairly. The supervisor will also follow up with the identified staff person to ensure that there is no conflict of interest or questionable service delivery. Cases may be reassigned if necessary. Per Agency Policy and Procedure all harassment and retaliation is strictly prohibited. If a Foster Parent believes they are experiencing harassment or retaliation they may appeal to the Vice President of Foster Care, , the CEO and/or the DCFS *Agency Performance Team* at 312-793-4358, or the DCFS Advocacy Office at 800-232-3798.

Foster Parents may also file a written service appeal. The DCFS brochure "The Service Appeal Process" is available at the agency and must accompany any "Notice of Decision" to Foster Parents. If requested Foster Parents will be given help with filing an appeal.

15. The right to be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline and to report misconduct by LH or DCFS employees, service providers, or contractors, confidential handling of those reports, and investigation by the Inspector General.

A Contact List including staff and administrative phone numbers, as well as phone numbers for the DCFS Advocacy Office (800-232-3798), *SASS/CARES* hotline (800-345-9049), **Foster Parent Hotline** (800-624-5437) and the LH Foster Parent Support Line (773-717-0504) is included with every Foster Parent bulletin. These resources are discussed during Foster Parent orientation and training.

LH provides contact information for our *Agency Performance Monitor* (312-808-5039) upon request and has brochures available for the *Office of the Inspector General* (800-722-9124).

Foster Parents should immediately report any and all misconduct of staff to their direct supervisor. Misconduct of service providers, contractors, or attorneys should be reported to the Vice President of Foster Care so that appropriate action can be taken. All reports will be handled confidentially and Foster Parents are protected from retaliation due to any such report.

Foster Parents also have the following Responsibilities:

16. The responsibility to share information with other members of the child welfare team.

LH trains Foster Parents on the information that must be shared with the *Child Welfare Specialist*/agency during *PRIDE* training, LH Foster Parent orientation and training meetings. During monthly home visits and regular telephone contact, Foster Parents are responsible for sharing general information with their *Child Welfare Specialist* such as medical updates, results from eye and hearing exams, grades from school, and any behavior problems. Foster Parents are responsible for communicating critical incidents immediately by contacting their *Child Welfare Specialist* or calling the agency at 312-346-3383. If the incident occurs outside normal business hours (M-F 9am-5pm) Foster Parents should call the emergency phone (773) 931-6825. Emergency calls should be responded to within one hour. Critical Incidents include (but are not limited to):

- a. Any abuse or neglect of the child
- b. Any injury, including small cuts, scratches, bumps and bruises (“little accidents”)
- c. Runaway or missing child*
- d. Possession of a weapon*
- e. Alcohol or drug use
- f. Physically or sexually aggressive behaviors
- g. Pregnant or parenting youth
- h. Suicide threat or attempt*
- i. Destruction of property
- j. Emergency medical attention/hospitalization*
- k. Medication issues
- l. School suspensions/expulsion
- m. Criminal arrest or conviction of child or Foster Parent
- n. Curfew violation

* Emergency action should always be taken by calling 911 before contacting the agency.

17. The responsibility to respect confidentiality.

DCFS licensing standards state that “all personal or identifying information concerning a foster child, including but not limited to, his background, his family, and the identity and

location of all other persons or families with whom he has been, or will be placed, shall be treated as confidential by all persons involved with the child”. LH advises Foster Parents that information about the child in care or their birth families cannot be shared with relatives, friends, neighbors, or other parents, including other Foster Parents, or any person in the media. This information is shared with the Foster Parent to help care for and understand the child in their care and breaching confidentiality violates clients’ rights and trust.

Foster Parents may discuss their foster child with any professional staff identified by LH such as school teachers/social workers, medical providers, assigned therapists/counselors, contracted mentors, and approved *respite* providers. The agency will ensure that appropriate consents for release of information are in place.

Foster Parents should never introduce the child in public settings as their “foster” child. Outside of DCFS, LH and Court, school teachers, doctors, and service providers are the only ones who need to know the child is a foster child. Foster Parents are not to contact or respond to the media regarding a child in their care. If contacted by a reporter the Foster Parent must decline to comment and refer the caller to the agency’s Chief Executive Officer at 773-769-3500. The agency will provide additional support and direction to the Foster Parent in these situations.

Foster Parents are not to post pictures or information about any foster child’s birth family, their previous foster family, or their future foster family in newspapers or other printed publication, nor on any blogs, websites, email or social networking sites (for example MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) nor should they provide any other information that could identify a child in their care as a foster child as these actions violate confidentiality. Per DCFS Administrative Procedure, Caregivers and youth in their care should be able to benefit from the positive aspects of social media and mobile technology while still maintaining confidentiality. For example, a caregiver can post on social media about a specific accomplishment of a youth in the caregiver’s home/placement as long as the caregiver does not specifically identify that child as a youth in the care of DCFS or LH. The same applies to photos and videos. While email is an accepted form of communication between a Foster Parent and agency staff, full names and identifying information cannot be used as the internet is not secure. Client initials are acceptable. Text messages should be limited and may not include client or case specific information or details.

While it is recognized that positive relationships may be formed between Foster Parents and staff, an employee who has left the agency may not maintain information about or professional contact with a client. Any unwelcome contact received from a former employee of the agency should be reported immediately to the Human Resources Department at 773-769-3500. While participating in trainings, groups or events, Foster Parents may talk in general but cannot give any specific information about the child in their care.

If a Foster Parent is not sure if something is confidential, they should ask the assigned worker or supervisor. The DCFS *Foster Family Handbook* is also a good resource.

In addition to initial training, confidentiality training is offered by the agency and DCFS. Specific information about laws and regulations is covered and written materials are available to foster parents at this training and at any time by request. At the time of licensing, Foster Parents are asked to sign the Client Confidentiality Agreement. During *monitoring visits*, the Licensing Representative reviews the Confidentiality Standard on the Licensing Monitoring Record.

18. The responsibility to advocate for children in your care.

Foster Parents are required to complete training as an Educational Advocate. This enables them to better meet the educational needs of all children in their care. Training is provided through DCFS (6 hours), as well as annual LH trainings offered at the beginning of the school year. Important information is published in our Foster Parent bulletins to assist Foster Parents with educational advocacy, and *Child Welfare Specialists* and supervisors will provide assistance as needed.

Juvenile court training is provided during pre-service and on-going training. Foster Parents may request an agency provided tour/orientation to the juvenile court facility by calling 312-456-6529. Foster Parents are encouraged to attend hearings and exercise their right to be heard, as well as to maintain contact with the child's attorney/*Guardian ad Litem (GAL)*. Service appeal is explained during the Foster Parent orientation and at the time of critical decisions, which are communicated in writing. Service appeal brochures are always available from the agency.

Foster Parents are informed about all *staffings* including *Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs)*, *Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP)* meetings, *Integrated Assessment (IA)* activities, case conferences and Court hearings for children in their care. Foster Parents are always welcome and encouraged to participate. If a Foster Parent is unable to participate in person, conference calls may be arranged with the exception of Court.

19. The responsibility to treat children in your care and their families with dignity, respect, and consideration.

Foster Parents learn, during pre-service and ongoing training, about the possible effects of their own behavior on children in their care. Foster Parents are reminded about the importance of treating children and their families with dignity and respect through training and conversations beginning with the initial inquiry.

LH *Child Welfare Specialists* and Supervisors are expected to observe Foster Parent treatment of children physically and verbally during monthly home visits and other contacts. Any observation or perception of indignity, disrespect or lack of consideration will be discussed immediately with the Foster Parent. If necessary, the LH Licensing Representative will be consulted and corrective action will be taken if there is a violation of licensing

standards. A child may be removed from the home if necessary in accordance with established protocol (see number 11 of this document).

If a Foster Parent decides that they no longer wish to care for a child, they are to give a written notice of this decision to the Agency. Foster Parents should not threaten the child with removal from the home, or insist on a specific removal date based on the commonly referred to “14 day notice”. The Foster Parent is encouraged to work with the Agency on a plan to transition the child to the next placement with as little disruption as possible if there is no chance of maintaining the placement through stabilization efforts. In recognition of the importance of a child’s education, a Foster Parent should consider allowing a school aged child to remain in the home for the duration of the school semester or year to reduce a loss of academic progress. The agency requests at least 30 days to ensure an adequate transition. Exceptions may be made for safety reasons, family emergencies, or other considerations. Should Foster Parents decide to change their mind or rescind their notice for removal, they have the responsibility do so in writing and to request a staffing be held as soon as possible to determine additional supports and services that may prevent a future request for removal.

At no time may a Foster Parent cancel or prevent LH approved family telephone contact, sibling visits or parent/child visits as punishment for the child or due to unforeseen inconvenience. Parent/child and sibling visits are a legal right. LH will make every effort to confirm scheduled visits by 5pm the day before and to avoid “last minute” notifications, but Foster Parents should not assume that a visit is cancelled until they receive this information from the *Family Support Specialist* or *Child Welfare Specialist*.

20. The responsibility to recognize your own individual and familial strengths and weaknesses in providing care for foster children.

Foster Parents must provide specific information regarding the number, age range, and gender of children that they are willing to foster. This information is kept updated on the LH foster home availability list submitted to DCFS. LH matches children who are moving due to placement disruption and *specialized* children with homes based on the child’s presenting issues and a family’s ability to provide the necessary level of intervention and services. LH also may discuss with Foster Parents where the needs are in terms of profiles of current youth who need placement in foster homes in hopes that Foster Parents might be willing to consider expanding their profile of preferred placements of children.

Foster/Adopt *PRIDE* pre-service training provides exercises in self-awareness. Intake and licensing workers are trained to help families consider their present make-up, strengths, weaknesses, and resources. Mutual decisions about a placement and how well it might work for a specific child or children are made based on all of the available information, including the DCFS Child-Caregiver Matching Tool, and Foster Parents are given the opportunity to accept or reject a placement.

The LH Foster Parent orientation is an important element of assessment as Foster Parents discuss various aspects of their family’s functioning with child welfare professionals and/or other Foster Parents. Foster Parents are asked to think about the impact of possible future

changes in their family (marriage, separation, divorce, births, etc.) on foster parenting and foster children that may be placed in their home. Foster Parents may also participate in support groups offered by LH, DCFS, or other organizations.

If there is a need, Foster Parents will be directed to training possibilities and/or resources for support. The licensing Quality Assurance Survey includes a self-assessment by Foster Parents on their perceived strengths and weaknesses and is completed with the Licensing Representative during *monitoring visits*. This information is used confidentially by the Vice President of Foster Care to develop future Foster Parent trainings.

Foster Parents are made aware of counseling, mentoring, IPS (intensive placement stabilization services), and other services available to them offered by the agency and within their community. Information is provided by *Child Welfare Specialists*, supervisors, and often through the Foster Parent bulletin.

21. The responsibility to be aware of the benefits of involvement with other Foster Parents and Foster Parent associations.

LH is a member of the National Foster Parent Association – Foster Parents may join by calling 800-557-5238 or on the internet www.nfpainc.org. Foster Parents may also join the Illinois Foster/Adoptive Parent Association on the internet www.ilfapa.org. Both websites provide resources and links for Foster Parents at no charge. LH will assist Foster Parents without internet access. LH is also a partner in *Strengthening Families Illinois*. Foster Parents may benefit from both virtual and in person networking as a source of support and information.

Foster Parents are encouraged to participate in DCFS meetings and events. Information is available through DCFS publications and website, and the LH Foster Parent bulletin.

Foster Parents are welcome to attend existing or to start their own support groups and the agency will gladly link families with similar concerns and needs.

22. The responsibility to assess your ongoing individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.

All licensed Foster Parents are required to complete 16 hours of training during the 4 year licensing cycle toward renewal. Sixty-four (64) hours are required for *Specialized Foster Homes* and 104 for *Treatment Foster Family Homes*.

LH offers Foster Parent meetings/trainings as well as inviting Foster Parents to agency-wide trainings such as Gang Awareness, Tax Preparation, Domestic Violence, and Cultural Diversity. Registration information is provided in the Foster Parent bulletin, and the Agency's Director of Training can be reached at 312-456-6500. Ongoing First Aid and CPR

certification is also available. Mornings, afternoon, evening and Saturday sessions are offered by the Agency.

Child Welfare Specialists, Supervisors, Licensing Representatives, Therapists or other professionals in contact with Foster Parents may suggest specific training for Foster Parents. During semi-annual compliance visits, licensed Foster Parents are specifically asked, “My areas for improvement as a foster parent are:” The agency will make necessary referrals and/or connection to resources (for example, to meet special medical needs, Foster Parents may receive training in a hospital).

LH Foster Parents are encouraged to read the LH Foster Parent bulletin as well as DCFS publications to learn about trainings and resources that are available. Foster Parents should make every effort to honestly assess themselves; to co-train on areas of strength, and develop in areas of weakness. LH may recommend Foster Parent training specific to the needs of a child in placement or pending referral. LH encourages Foster Parents to attend meetings and trainings offered by agencies that are located in the Foster Parent’s community, as well as regional, statewide, and national events. Foster Parents may share their e-mail addresses with the agency to receive electronic training notifications.

Foster Parents may access the DCFS training website at www.dcfstraining.org to register for on-line and in-person trainings and to get an update as to the number of training hours they have completed. Foster Parents need to complete a *Virtual Training Center (VTC)* registration form. Instructions are available on the website or from the LH Licensing Representative. LH will provide support and assistance as requested. The Foster Parent Training and Development Log is kept in the Foster Parent’s licensing file, and the Family Support Coordinator tracks all the trainings completed by the Foster Parent.

23. The responsibility to help prevent placement disruptions and to provide emotional support.

Placement changes and disruptions can be traumatic for the child in care as well as foster family members. Starting early in the placement Foster Parents are encouraged to talk honestly and express themselves with the assigned *Child Welfare Specialist* and/or supervisor about any problems or concerns related to a child in placement. This can be done in person or by telephone. If it appears that a placement is at risk of disruption, the agency will make every effort to provide supportive services to the Foster Parent which may include stabilization services through IPS (intensive placement stabilization services). *Staffings* may be held in the foster home or at the agency and will include the *Child Welfare Specialist* as well as the supervisor and others needed to discuss issues in the foster home. Behavioral contracts will be established if appropriate. Training on stabilization services is provided to foster parents. Foster Parents should not wait until they are to the point of requesting removal to bring up concerns for the first time.

Respite care is provided for *specialized* foster children with an approved *Respite* plan. *Respite* is available for home of relative and traditional Foster Parents if temporary removal

of a child appears necessary and/or if Foster Parents have a family emergency or other event that may interfere with their ability to care for the child for a short period of time. Respite is a planned service in cooperation with the agency while babysitting is on an as needed basis as determined by the Foster Parent. DCFS and the Agency do not pay babysitting fees. *Respite* plans are assessed on a case by case basis, and payment to *respite* caregivers will not exceed the daily rate paid to the Foster Parent. If a placement cannot be maintained by such interventions and needs to be terminated, counseling is available to members of the foster family as well as to the foster child(ren). Foster Parents should offer emotional support to a child grieving separations from previous caregivers, and may seek additional assistance from the agency.

Foster Parents are expected to use the DCFS Behavior Report form and discuss ongoing and unusual behaviors during regular monthly home visits. *Child Welfare Specialists* should review documentation regarding the child as well as observe the child in different settings and ask about concerns and offer support during monthly visits in order to identify early signs of a child at risk of disrupting. Foster Parents should contact their *Child Welfare Specialist*, supervisor, or the Program Manager by telephone if serious problems occur.

24. The responsibility to know the impact Foster Parenting has on individuals and family relationships, and minimize stress.

Foster Parents are encouraged to share information that might impact the foster child(ren) in their care with their Licensing Representative or *Child Welfare Specialist*. This information not only includes the foster child's well being and functioning, but also concerns regarding the Foster Parents or others in the home that might require some level of assistance. Foster Parents are invited to agency trainings on stress management and are welcome to consult with LH clinical staff. *Respite* care may be requested for temporary relief, but should be arranged with someone the child knows if possible.

Foster Parents may place themselves on "inactive status" by contacting their Licensing Representative if they are feeling they should not be accepting children into their homes for placement. This has no impact on the Foster Parent's licensing status assuming the decision is not connected to licensing violations or a corrective action plan. Foster Parents on inactive status are not subject to routine *monitoring* visits. The agency will not place children in the home until there is agreement that Foster Parents are ready for placement and a *monitoring visit* is completed and the home is in full compliance with licensing standards. Foster Parents may also elect to make themselves available as temporary or *Respite* placements to support other families.

Confidential clinical support services to foster families are available through LH and Foster Parents are invited to participate in designated agency trainings on stress management and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI).

25. The responsibility to know the rewards and benefits that come from Foster Parenting and promote the experience in a positive way.

LH encourages Foster Parents to read the Foster Parent bulletin. The bulletin advertises events and activities including training opportunities, Foster Parent meetings, Agency and DCFS events, and community activities. Once per year the Agency hosts an employee recognition event where awards are distributed for years of service milestones, as well as recognition for those Foster Parents who have achieved permanency through adoption or guardianship. Once per year the Agency hosts an employee recognition event where awards are distributed for years of service milestones, as well as recognition for those Foster Parents who have achieved permanency through adoption or guardianship. All Foster Parents are encouraged to participate in the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan Process, Foster Parent recruitment efforts as well as Foster Parent orientation. Foster Parents may become members of various associations and are encouraged to attend seminars, conferences and other events supporting and promoting foster care. During the LH Foster Parent orientation, training is provided on positive public relations through example and agency representation, and “word of mouth” recruiting is encouraged. The Vice President of Foster Care and/or Family Support Coordinator personally follow up with all prospective Foster Parents referred by current Foster Parents.

26. The responsibility to know the role, rights, and responsibilities of Foster Parents, other professionals in the child welfare system, the child, and the child’s own family.

LH informs Foster Parents about the roles, rights, and responsibilities of the various players in the child welfare system through orientation, pre-service, and ongoing training, as well as information provided by case management staff. These players include *Child Welfare Specialists*, supervisors, therapists, DCFS institutions and authorities, and the various staff at Juvenile Court. Foster Parents are invited and encouraged to attend ACRs, Court hearings, CIPP meetings, *Child and Family Team* meetings and other case related activities.

In their role as primary caregivers, Foster Parents are generally expected to meet the day to day needs of children in their care. This includes, but is not limited to, transportation for parent/child and sibling visits, health and wellness appointments, school attendance, extracurricular activities, mental health (therapy and psychiatrist) appointments, and childcare arrangements.

Foster Parents have a voice via the LH *FPAC*, whose chairperson communicates directly with the Vice President of Foster Care.

The Foster Parent orientation is designed to provide Foster Parents with a child welfare professional’s and/or experienced Foster Parent’s perspective of the fostering process early on. Mutual expectations and perceptions are clarified and a sense of team and respectful communication is established.

Case management staff members are invited to regular Foster Parent meetings and training. Various professionals (such as DCFS Healthworks) are often invited to do presentations at these meetings.

Most agency trainings are open to Foster Parents as members of the child welfare team. Experienced Foster Parents are invited to participate and provide information to new Foster Parents via the orientation process. Foster Parents are also asked to volunteer to co-train and/or host training in their home. Foster Parents may ask questions of the *Child Welfare Specialist*, supervisor, Program Manager, and Vice President of Foster Care at any time by contacting the agency at 312-346-3383.

27. The responsibility to serve as Mandated Reporters, to know LH policy regarding allegations that Foster Parents have committed child abuse or neglect, and applicable Administrative Rule and Procedures governing investigations.

LH Foster Parents learn about their responsibilities as *Mandated Reporters* of suspected child abuse/neglect under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting act during pre-service, orientation and ongoing training. Online training is available at <https://mr.dcfstraining.org>. During the licensing and renewal process, applicants sign the “Acknowledgement of *Mandated Reporter* Status”. Foster Parents are to call the child abuse hotline at 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873) if they are aware of any child, in or out of their care, as a victim of abuse or neglect.

If a hotline call is made against a LH Foster Parent, LH will begin to address the allegations as soon as aware of the report. If there is evidence that abuse has taken place (marks, bruises and/or injuries requiring medical attention) or the foster parent has admitted to abuse, the child(ren) will be removed from the home immediately to ensure their physical safety. If there are no marks, bruises or other injuries the agency may leave the child(ren) in the placement under a safety or supervision plan. In this event the Foster Parent can expect an increase in announced and unannounced home visits. There will also be a licensing investigation (see section 6 of this document for more information on investigations). If the licensing investigation determines that licensing rules have been violated, a corrective plan will be put in place and the Foster Parent will most likely be required to attend training and/or participate in counseling specific to the issue. Any time there is a Child Protection or Licensing Complaint investigation the Foster Home will be placed on Hold with the *Placement Clearance Desk* and no additional children will be placed. The hold will remain on the home until the investigation is complete and/or the corrective action plan is complete.

28. The responsibility to know and receive training regarding Administrative Case Reviews, client service plans, and court processes.

LH invites Foster Parents to take an active role in permanency planning through Court hearings, *Integrated Assessments*, *staffings* and other case related meetings. They should follow up with the *Child Welfare Specialist* as to results of any of these activities.

Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs) are conducted by DCFS every 6 months. Prior to an *ACR*, *Child Welfare Specialists* are required to review the *service plan* with the Foster Parents, provide the date and time of the review, assist with transportation if necessary and encourage the Foster Parents to attend. If Foster Parents cannot attend in person, they are encouraged to seek participation via conference call. Date and time information is included on the Home Visit Form along with the next Court date. Training is available during the year, and experts are invited to present and stress the importance of Foster Parent participation.

29. The responsibility to know LH' appeal procedure for Foster Parents and their rights under the procedure.

Foster Parents may bring any concern to their *Child Welfare Specialist's* attention. If they feel that the concern has not been addressed or they are not satisfied with the resolution, they can appeal it to the supervisor's attention. Foster Parents have the right to appeal up the chain of command to the Program Manager, Vice President of Foster Care, the Chief Executive Officer, and the Board of Trustees. Additionally, they may contact the DCFS Advocacy office (800-232-3798) and/or the agency's DCFS Performance Monitor (312-808-5039). Agency staff must provide contact information for any of the above upon request and any effort to withhold contact information should be reported for disciplinary action. Foster Parents may file a grievance on any issue addressed in this plan by using the attached process and form.

In order to avoid any conflict of interest situations, Foster Parents or supervisors have the right to seek assistance from DCFS staff and other advocates. Written instructions regarding the appeals process are available to all Foster Parents. (Appeals are also referenced under section 14 of this document).

30. The responsibility to know and understand the importance of maintaining accurate and relevant records regarding the child.

Through pre-service, the Foster Parent orientation, training, and *Child Welfare Specialist* consultation, LH Foster Parents learn about the importance of documentation and record keeping. A written checklist of records is available, and a child binder for collecting relevant records is given to Foster Parents within 30 days of placement. Foster Parents are encouraged to keep school photos and other significant mementos of the child's history in this binder to be passed on to the next caregiver and/or maintained for the child. *Child Welfare Specialists* offer ongoing assistance regarding the upkeep of Foster Parent's records during home visits.

During monthly home visits, *Child Welfare Specialists* collect medical, dental, vision, hearing, immunization records, behavioral chart/report form, and medication forms as applicable and document such in case notes, and on the Home Visit Form. Foster Parents are advised that unannounced home visits may be made at any time by case management and licensing staff in accordance with DCFS policy and procedure, and that all records must be

available for review upon request. Licensing Representatives discuss this standard with Foster Parents during *monitoring visits*.

31. The responsibility to share information through the child welfare team regarding the child's adjustment with the next caregiver.

LH tries to have a true team approach. Whether a child is returning home to a parent or is being placed with another Foster Parent or relative, the agency uses the DCFS "Let Me Tell You About My Child" forms to collect information to pass on to the next caregiver. Information sharing is also made possible by the *Child Welfare Specialist* using three way telephone calls and/or in person meetings between previous and next caregivers. This is to ensure appropriateness of information shared and respect for confidentiality. Training on this issue is offered as part of pre-service, confidentiality training, and as needed.

32. The responsibility to provide care and services which are respectful of and responsive to the child's cultural needs and are supportive of the relationship between the child and his/her own family.

Cultural diversity and sensitivity training, including training on LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning) issues is part of the agency's ongoing training program and available to all staff and Foster Parents. LH has Clinical program staff available for consultation, and a Diversity committee.

If cultural issues in the care of a child are identified, LH -will make efforts to connect Foster Parents and children to internal/external resources and community activities. In order to maintain cultural identity Foster Parents are encouraged to learn about the child's favorite foods, entertainment preferences, holidays, festivals, and celebrations, and to engage the biological parent when possible to learn more, especially when the race or culture of the foster family differs from that of the child.

Glossary

Administrative Case Review (ACR): a formal review of the service plan and progress facilitated by a DCFS case reviewer. The ACR is open to the participation of other professionals helping to assess or treat the child, any legal representative of the parent or child, and the foster parents. Biological parents must be invited.

Agency Performance Team/Monitor (APT): DCFS staff assigned to monitor private agencies such as LH to ensure that services are provided in accordance with best practice and contract expectations. Our current monitor is Marie Boyd-Skinner 312-808-5039, supervisor Karen Harrington 312-808-5076.

Child and Family Team: a group of persons who are committed to the family and child and are helping them move toward positive changes. Members of the team usually include the foster parent; the child (of appropriate age); family members; concerned persons from the community (i.e., juvenile justice, education); the licensing worker; the *Child Welfare Specialist*/supervisor; service providers; the child's parents, and the child's guardian ad litem (GAL).

Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP): a multidisciplinary team involving DCFS staff, others who have relevant information about the child or youth such as foster parents, and professionals who are needed for decision-making. Youth that are 12 years of age and older are expected to participate in the CIPP staffing unless it is decided inappropriate. The CIPP establishes a detailed action plan which may include additional services to be provided and whether a child will be stepped up or transitioned to another level of care. Every effort must be made to stabilize and maintain current placement.

Child Welfare Specialist (CWS): Also known as a caseworker or case manager, the staff person specifically assigned to the child and family case. A CWS has completed licensure requirements to provide child welfare services in the state of Illinois.

Family Support Coordinator: The staff person in the role of Licensing Supervisor; supervises Licensing Representatives and Family Support Specialists.

Family Support Specialist: Also known as a case aide, the staff person assigned to provide transportation, supervision, mentoring and/or respite to children and families and other assistance as needed to the assigned CWS.

Foster Family Handbook: Handbook prepared by DCFS to provide important information to Foster Parents. Foster Parents may obtain the most recent version by contacting their assigned licensing representative or caseworker.

Guardian ad Litem (GAL): an attorney appointed by the judge on the case to represent the best interests of the child. A GAL may be from the Office of the Public Guardian, or may be an attorney in private practice. GALs are required to visit their clients.

Guardianship: a child welfare project that offers a financial subsidy to relative care or licensed foster home caregivers who prefer to take on private legal guardianship of children rather than adoption. This has now been titled KinGap effective 11/1/2009.

Individualized Education Plan/Program (IEP): a document completed by the public school district which show the special education services, class placement, and related services needed for a child. The IEP also includes education goals, and service frequency, quantity and duration. The services described in the child's IEP are from the multidisciplinary conferences held by the public school district.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP): a written working document to facilitate the provisions of Early Intervention (EI) services. The IFSP is created by the family, an inter-disciplinary team, the core EI agency, and the *Child Welfare Specialist* (service coordinator). The EI agency is responsible for watching over the IFSP implementation.

Integrated Assessment: a complete assessment of the child(ren), biological parents, and Foster Parents that outlines history, current functioning and service needs. Foster Parents are required to participate in interviews with the assigned *Child Welfare Specialist* and/or a clinical screener.

Mandamus: a writ issued by a superior court ordering a public official or body or a lower court to perform a specified duty. It is normally for the grey areas of the law where actions are not clearly specified. It can be requested for many different reasons with seeking justice as the reason for the request.

Mandated Reporter: a person who has reasonable cause to believe that a child known to them may be abused or neglected and is required to report this. All Foster Parents and LH staff are mandated reporters.

Monitoring Visit: a visit that can occur announced or unannounced and at any time during the day or night by the Licensing Representative to a licensed foster home. Visits shall occur semi-annually and annually to assure continuing compliance. Assessment will be made through observations and discussions with foster parents. A full home inspection should be expected.

Office of the Inspector General (OIG): the Office of Inspector General for DCFS started in June 1993 to reform and strengthen the child welfare system. The mandate of the OIG is to investigate misconduct and violations of rules, procedures or laws by DCFS and agency employees, foster parents, service providers and contractors. The Inspector General reports to the Director of DCFS and the Governor. Although the OIG is an office within DCFS, its work, staff and budget are independent of the Department.

Permanency Goal: the wanted result of intervention and service, which goes along with the health, safety, well-being, and best interests of the child. A permanent legal status is usually a part of the permanency goal. Permanency goals include Return Home, Termination of Parental Rights, Adoption, Guardianship and Independence.

Placement Clearance Desk: the DCFS unit that checks criminal background and child abuse/neglect history of foster home household members as well as verifying the capacity and good standing of the license. Placement clearance must be obtained within 24 hours of any child being placed in a foster home, whether licensed or unlicensed.

PRIDE: Parent's Resource for Information, Development and Education – standardized DCFS training program.

Respite Foster Care: a planned, approved, temporary (less than 30 days) placement arrangement for foster children to give the normal full-time caregivers a rest from care-giving responsibilities or in the event of emergency.

SASS/CARES:

Screening, Assessment and Support Services (SASS): a DCFS contracted program that gives screening and support services to a child who is at risk of psychiatric hospitalization. The SASS provider receives referrals, conducts pre-admission face-to-face psychiatric hospital screenings, and provides deflection services, as appropriate, on a 365-day per year, 24-hour per day, no decline basis. A SASS provider may refer a child/youth for IPS services (through the assigned worker) when the current placement is at risk of disruption.

Both SASS and IPS providers may be involved at the same time with a child or youth and his/her caregiver. If both SASS and IPS providers are involved, the IPS provider is responsible for giving primary help.

Crisis and Referral Entry Service (CARES): staff who decide case eligibility and refer the child or youth for the crisis intervention services that they need.

Service Plan: a written plan that outlines the Court ordered permanency goal, objectives and tasks, and evaluation of progress.

Specialized Care: a level of care provided to a child who has developmental, emotional, behavioral, or medical needs requiring additional interventions from the foster parent.

Staffings: in person meetings that result in an assessment of service needs and progress, the development or change of a client service plan, and/or the discussion and resolution of a specific problem, crisis, or event.

Strengthening Families Illinois: a statewide collaboration among more than 40 partner organizations working to build six Protective Factors to keep families strong. www.strengtheningfamiliesillinois.org

Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS): An IPS provider's primary responsibility is to deliver, organize and/or coordinate short term (6 months) services and interventions to stabilize a placement. IPS services should be requested as soon as the assigned worker or caregiver determines that the placement is at risk of disrupting and can be requested directly by the caregiver with the support of the case management team if needed.

Treatment Foster Family Home (TFFH): an intensive foster family based treatment program designed to support children who may be discharged from psychiatric hospitalization, or children otherwise at risk of placement in an institutional setting. LH has the first such program in Illinois.

Virtual Training Center (VTC): a web-based application managed by the DCFS Office of Training. www.dcfstraining.org

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Phone Numbers –Quick Reference Guide

After Hours Emergency Number – 773-931-6825
Agency Performance Team – 312-808-5039
Chief Executive Officer, LH – 773-769-3500
Child Abuse Hotline – 800-25-ABUSE or 800-252-2873
Clinical On Call Number – 773-727-1300
Clinical Supervisor – 773-769-3500
DCFS Administrative Hearings Unit – 217-782-6655
DCFS Advocacy Office – 800-232-3798
DCFS Payment Unit – 800-525-0499
Foster Parent Hotline – 800-624-5437
Healthworks – 800-543-4345
LH General Number – 312-346-3383, Fax 312-346-6547
Missing Child Helpline – 866-503-0184
National Foster Parent Association (NFPA) – 800-557-5238
Office of the Inspector General (OIG) – 800-722-9124
SASS/CARES – 800-345-9049
Training, LH – 773-769-3500 x7245
Vice President of Foster Care – 312-456-6529