



FOSTER PARENT LAW IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2019

ONE HOPE UNITED

Foster Parent Law Rights and Responsibilities 2019 Implementation Plan

One Hope United has a long history of working closely with Foster Parents who have always been viewed as the backbone of the agency's foster care program. It is through their unwavering efforts day in and day out that the agency is able to care for children and youth and strengthen families. The agency is committed to the professionalization of its foster care program. The staff is committed to working with Foster Parents as essential members of the child and family treatment and service team. We are in support of the State of Illinois Foster Parent Law (PA 89.19) as demonstrated by the provisions in the following implementation plan for 2019.

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Article I FOSTER PARENT LAW RIGHTS

Section 1) Dignity and Respect

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

A) Individual Relationships: We believe all efforts and activities related to the foster care/child welfare delivery system must reflect a mutual respect, dignity and consideration for all members of the child and family team. One Hope United demonstrates this by encouraging all our Foster Parents to take an active role in the life of their youth in care. By viewing our Foster Parents as valuable members of the team, we are able to acknowledge Foster Parents as professional members of the team. Their insight and knowledge of the children in their care and their opinions/observations of biological family members is solicited when appropriate and is valued as it pertains to their interactions and responsibilities as a Foster Parent. Valuing the Foster Parents' commitment and devotion to providing the best possible care for the children is expected of all agency staff. This is demonstrated through timely responses to inquiries, respectful interactions and excellent follow through with any stated issues or concerns.

One Hope United believes it is important that our Foster Parents be involved in case planning activities. Accordingly, they are invited and encouraged to attend all court hearings and administrative case reviews for the children placed in their home. Foster Parents are also invited and encouraged to attend Child and Family Team Meetings whenever possible and appropriate. When it is not appropriate for them to participate in the Child and Family Team Meeting with the biological family, a subsequent meeting is conducted to include the Foster Parents. This gives them the opportunity to influence and contribute to service planning, permanency goals, and placement decisions. When barriers to participation exist, the case manager will provide options that will allow the Foster Parents to be actively involved in planning, such as offering transportation assistance, child care, or phone conferencing. Additionally, case managers and counselors actively engage our Foster Parents in the development of service and treatment plans for the children in their home. The input and recommendations of our Foster Parents are integral to the establishment of a positive, sensitive, and successful service plan.

We believe our Foster Parents are important to the success of service delivery to the youth in care and family. The participation of our Foster Parents in assisting biological parents in the return of their children to their care is essential. It has been proven that Foster Parents provide invaluable feedback to the agency and parents in our effort to improve social connections and in the social and emotional development/competence of the children in their care. We demonstrate that our Foster Parents' role as temporary caregivers is truly respected by encouraging the sharing of information between them and the biological parents; and by introducing them to biological parents so that together

healthy parent/child relationships can be formed. One Hope United believes that relationships are the key to success for Foster Parents, children and families. Our Foster Parents have access to their licensing representative, Case Manager, Case Manager's Supervisor, Director of Programs, Executive Vice President, and Chief Operating Officer with their efforts to resolve any problems or disputes. A directory of all contact numbers is provided upon placement of a child in their home. The contact numbers of all parties are provided to our Foster Parents on a regular basis, as well as when requested. In addition, a Foster Home Placement Agreement is reviewed and signed by the agency and Traditional Foster Parents at the time of placement and by Relative Foster Parents at the time of licensure. This form identifies all involved parties and contact information as well as a description of the amount the Foster Parent will receive for board, allowance and clothing for the youth in care. The agency has an internal Foster Parent grievance procedure in place. The Foster Parent grievance procedure can be located at the bottom of each web page, titled "Grievance Procedures" on the One Hope United website at www.onehopeunited.org and is readily available to use.

B) General Activities: In some regions, the agency has an informal network of Foster Parent Mentors and Support Specialists who provide assistance, information, concrete and moral supports for our Foster Parents. This team facilitates communications between Foster Parents and the agency. Interested Foster Parents should speak to their licensing representative for more information concerning Foster Parent support activities.

The agency recognizes the challenging work the Foster Parents do by arranging events of appreciation for their work during holidays, such as Mother's Day and Father's Day, and hosting annual Foster Parent appreciation events in their honor. Foster Parent recognition events are conducted at each agency location sporadically throughout the year and provide our Foster Parents with an opportunity to network with like-minded individuals, improve social connections, experience fellowship and ultimately feel appreciated by the agency for the important work they do.

C) Soliciting Input From Foster Parents as Co-Change Agents: The following efforts are made across the agency to hear and give consideration to the perspective of Foster Parents and the valuable insight they provide to enhance the overall delivery of child welfare services and services to specific children in their care: Foster Parent Cafes (Strengthening Families); Foster Parent advocates, Foster Parent support meetings, Foster Parent satisfaction surveys, Foster Parent trainings and the Foster Parent Law Committee.

Throughout all regions, Foster Parent input is solicited on an on-going basis: during the licensing process, potential Foster Parents are provided with a copy of the Foster Parent Law so they are aware of their rights and responsibilities and are asked to provide input on an on-going basis. Additionally, Foster Parents are asked to be involved in Child and Family Team Meetings and educational

processes in which they are expected to actively participate in making positive changes in the lives of children in their care. Some areas within One Hope United provide orientation and training events on an as needed basis. Regardless if children are placed in their home currently, Foster Parent input is solicited. One Hope United has several Foster Parents representing the agency on the Foster Parent Statewide Advisory Council. These Foster Parents serve as public relation ambassadors for the agency.

Section 2) Training

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

A) Minimum Standardized Pre-Service Training per DCFS Rule 402/PRIDE or Other DCFS Approved Training: Foster Parents are to participate in training offered either internally or externally to meet DCFS' training standards. All Foster Parents have access to quality, consistent and culturally competent training. Foster Parents are encouraged to participate in certain elements of training to ensure uniformity and consistency in the service delivery system.

All prospective Traditional Foster Parents are provided with 27 hours of pre-service training and with an additional 12 hours of supplemental training. They are required to have 39 hours of training (available as on-line training) before they become licensed foster parents. Relative Foster Parents who pursue licensure are provided with six hours of pre-service training. While PRIDE training to become a traditional Foster Parent is an in-person training, Relative Foster Parent training is completed through standardized video training. In some parts of Northern Region, in-person training can be provided if requested. Licensing staff provide support and education to insure the information is understood at a level needed for competency. At least one Traditional and Relative Foster Parent per home is required to complete six hours of Educational Advocacy training through the Foster PRIDE Curriculum. The agency encourages and supports Educational Advocacy training to occur within 12 months of a child being placed in their home. In-service training is provided in special sessions, support groups and is offered to Foster Parents on an ongoing basis.

CPR training and certification is required for all Foster Parents residing within 200 feet of a body of water on the property where the license is administered. This includes in-ground and above ground pools, hot tubs, ponds and lakes. The licensing staff will monitor the certification and insure that recertification is completed within the appropriate time frame.

The following are the annual requirements for training:

- Traditional and Licensed Relative Foster Parents must complete, four hours per year, for a total of 16 hours within four years for their renewal.

- The license for a Specialized Foster Parent requires 12 additional hours of training beyond the 16 hours required for renewal of a foster home license.
- Unlicensed relative Foster Parents are encouraged to attend internal training and are expected to become licensed Foster Parents through agency licensing departments.

Our Foster Parents are further required to become educational advocates. The required Educational Advocacy training teaches Foster Parents about educational rights of a child who is a youth in care, as well as exploring resources to meet the child's educational needs and techniques to promote a child's educational success.

Additional training that was added to the 2017, 2018, and 2019 training calendars includes:

- The public relations aspect of Foster Parenting with a focus on promoting a positive public perception of this important function and presenting a positive image of the agency.
- Service appeal training to better inform Foster Parents about their options for appealing services through both the OHU internal grievance process and the DCFS process as well.

One Hope United provides a formal orientation process for all newly licensed Foster Parents in all regions. This formal orientation process can be in the form of a one-on-one with the Foster Parents during a scheduled home visit with the licensing representative, or it can be in a formalized setting such as monthly orientation in some regions. During the orientation process, Foster Parents are introduced to the Strengthening Families Protective Factors. These six Protective Factors of Parental Resilience, Social Connections, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, Concrete Support in Times of Need, Social and Emotional Competence of Children, and Healthy Parent Child Relationships are all discussed in detail. A formal orientation checklist or process is followed by the agency staff. One Hope United now has an official PRIDE training site in Chicago, Illinois. This PRIDE training at the agency is open to other Foster Parents from other agencies. PRIDE training in other regions of the state of Illinois is available through a set schedule at a variety of local sites. Training is limited to a set number of seats, based on the training site. It is possible to add training locations if an agency is willing to offer training space to DCFS to utilize.

B) Co-Training Approach (Foster Parents and Staff): Foster Parents are incorporated into the agency's training schedule as co-trainers. Utilizing Foster Parents to facilitate trainings has had a positive impact due to the common parenting and life experiences our Foster Parents share. Additionally, this has enhanced a mentoring/peer relationship between Foster Parents.

The co-training approach has been used throughout the agency on topics such as: Trauma Informed Parenting Training, Early Childhood Development, Mental

Health Issues with Youth in Care, Cultural Diversity, and Cultural Sensitivity. Additionally, training which provided information to the Foster Parent regarding roles and responsibilities of the agency and the Foster Parent has occurred. Through a team approach, staff and Foster Parents are more likely to strengthen families by having a mutual understanding and respect for one another and for the parents and children we are serving.

C) Regular Utilization of Mutual Assessment Tool for Training Needs:

Assessment of training needs is administered by licensing representatives during their scheduled visitation with licensed Foster Parents. During the licensing process and active phase of being licensed, One Hope United staff engages the Foster Parents in discussions about strengths and needs that mutually helps identify training needs that are specific to the Foster Parent and their circumstances. Additionally, assessment occurs during Foster Parent meetings, as well as through Foster Parent satisfaction surveys and Foster Parent Advisory Council. Regular meetings with licensing representatives and supervisors also occur to discuss current needs of Foster Parents in order to revise or add trainings applicable to the needs identified. During Foster Parent meetings, the agency and peer/mentor Foster Parents are available to facilitate discussions that can provide opportunity for mutual assessment of training needs. At times this peer and mentor assessment can be a real 360-degree evaluation for newer Foster Parents, and is described as an opportunity to learn from the “experts”, meaning more experienced Foster Parents who have lived and grown from their past fostering experiences. Training schedules are developed throughout the agency based on suggestions from all members of the team, which includes the Foster Parents. Foster Parents are also encouraged to access the DCFS Virtual Training Center for materials about specific parenting issues. The agency supports and encourages Foster Parents to participate in the Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Council. Foster Parents have opportunities to identify areas of interest based on the needs of the children they are caring for and Foster Parents are notified about trainings that are held outside of the agency through support meetings and through the DCFS Foster Parent newsletter. The agency supports and encourages Foster Parents to contact the agency at any time to discuss specific needs/trainings. Quality assurance calls are made on a monthly basis by supervisors, and Foster Parents are always asked if they have any concerns/issues that need to be formally addressed through training. These calls are random; all Foster Parents are not contacted monthly.

D) Training Commensurate with Type of Care Provided: Foster Parents who work with Specialized Foster Care children are provided with specialized training. The training program is developed to assist the Foster Parent with the specific needs of the children in mind. The License for a Specialized Foster Parent requires 12 additional hours of training beyond the 16 hours required for renewal of a foster home license. Through these hours, the Foster Parent develops the necessary skills to assist these children in their treatment and development. Additionally, specialized training programs are developed on an ongoing basis as new training needs of the Foster Parent are identified. This is done in

collaboration with the licensing department, the therapist and any other service providers involved with the child.

E) Evidence of Ongoing Training Schedule or Calendar: Additionally, DCFS sponsored trainings can be found on the DCFS website: www.state.il.us/dcfs/index.shtml. Local licensing representatives can also be contacted for additional information on training opportunities. Other training opportunities for Foster Parents may be found in the DCFS Foster Parent newsletter, *Illinois Families Now & Forever* that is also mailed to Foster Parents. One Hope United can also offer access to Relias Learning for Foster Parents to utilize this resource for continuing education.

Section 3) Contact With the Agency for Support

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

A) Twenty-Four Hour, Seven-Day Availability of Emergency Support: Every foster home receives a list of resources for support, information, and emergency numbers with after-hours accessibility. Foster Parents are provided information on how to connect to emergency 24-hour access that is available seven days a week. They are informed of the procedures for accessing One Hope United staff after hours, weekends, and on holidays. In some regions, Foster Parents need only call the local office number where an answering service notifies the “on call” staff member who, in turn, contacts the Foster Parent. In other regions, Foster Parents call the local office number where they are directed to contact the “on call” worker directly. In either case, phone calls placed through the emergency “on call” system are reasonably returned within 15-20 minutes by the “on call” worker. Providing concrete support in the time of need to Foster Parents is an expectation of all staff within One Hope United. When this does not occur, agency management should be notified so a quick resolution can be achieved.

In the case of non-emergency situations that occur during regular business hours, Foster Parents are asked to call their case managers directly through the local office phone number. Foster Parents may leave a voicemail for the case manager or at some sites leave a paper message with the receptionist. Either way, the expectation of a case manager is they return phone calls within 24 hours during the work week with the exception of holidays and weekends. If a message is left with the case manager during the weekend or holiday, the case manager will return the call the next business day. If this does not occur on a consistent basis, Foster Parents are asked to speak to their case manager’s supervisor. Foster Parents are also made aware of the chain of command including the local office supervisor, Director of Programs, Executive Vice President, and Chief Operating Officer in the event that a situation warrants such contact.

B) Established Method of Accessing Support Services: The agency also uses formal resources such as Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS), Screening Assessment Support Services (SASS), and general counseling to provide Foster Parent support. Formal resources are invaluable; however, informal support is a necessary component in ensuring that the needs of children and Foster families are met. Toward this end, agency staff are expected to provide this support during home visits, returning phone calls quickly, encouraging Foster Parents to take an active role in caring for children, providing an avenue where Foster Parents can meet with other Foster Parents and responding to Foster Parent concerns with respect and urgency. Collaboration between Foster Parents and providers is essential in facilitating the social and emotional competence of children in the foster care system.

Finally, Foster Parents are informed of their right to appeal a decision made by the agency regarding the child's receipt of supportive services. As described in the agency's Foster Parent grievance procedure, this appeal process is explained to Foster Parents in their orientation to the agency and is repeated upon placement of any children in the foster home. The grievance form is accessible through the One Hope United website at any time. Additionally, if a Foster Parent requests this information, agency staff are expected to provide this to our Foster Parents immediately.

Section 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.

A) Regular Board Payment: For licensed Foster Parents, reimbursement has been standardized and a calendar is distributed to them annually. Checks are distributed by the 15th of the month for the previous month of service. At orientation, Foster Parents are provided with a schedule of payment that is specific to the age of the child. Additionally, Foster Parents are provided with payment itemization (i.e., clothing, allowance and room and board) upon initial foster placement in the home. All Foster Parents are paid the daily standard room and board and personal allowance consistent with the age of the child as issued by the state. Unlicensed relatives are paid DCFS' standard of need payment and this payment is mailed directly to the Foster Parents by DCFS.

B) Payment for Additional Services: Non-recurring fees and special services fee request procedures are available to Foster Parents through the case management staff. All requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis and resources are allocated based on case dynamics and DCFS policy. When a Foster Parent has a request that falls in this category, they are asked to share it with their case manager. The case manager then discusses the request with the local supervisor and based on case needs, a formal request for resources is or is not made. Non-recurring and special service fee requests include, but are not limited to the following: camp fees, high school graduation expenses, bus transportation to and from school, sibling visitation, exceptional medical visits,

clothing due to growth spurts, and extracurricular school activities. Every effort is made by the agency to assist Foster Parents with these above needs through additional service payments.

Respite care is also provided on a case by case basis and needs to be pre-approved by the licensing representative and the licensing representative supervisor. Vacations, babysitting services and Foster Parent activities that do not include children are appropriate for informal respite care arrangements and will not be funded by the agency. Informal respite will be paid by the “requesting” Foster Parent through a monthly board payment adjustment. Formal respite care agreements, which will be paid by the agency, may be used in the following cases: foster family illness, personal matters such as unforeseen emergencies and to provide therapeutic benefits to the youth in care and/or family. Formal respite care agreements/contracts, may be drafted by agency staff, reviewed and approved by the licensing supervisor, case manager and case manager supervisor and both Foster Parents. The respite provider will be paid by the agency through a check request. Providing concrete support to Foster Parents in their time of need is sometimes a necessary component and is assessed and responded to quickly by agency staff.

C) Timely Assessment and Payment Commensurate with Type of Care

Provided: The type of care provided for children is determined based upon the needs of the child. There is Traditional and Relative Care, Specialized Care and Residential and Group Home Care. For a child to be considered appropriate for Specialized Care, Residential Care or Group Home Care, the team, including the Foster Parent who services the child, makes a determination that the needs of the child cannot be met in Traditional or Relative Care. When this decision is reached, One Hope United refers the case for a Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP). The team makes the recommendation of whether a child is stepped up to this level of care after hearing from all parties, including the Foster Parent and child when appropriate. Children accepted into Specialized Foster Care are evaluated regarding their needs, which includes their social and emotional development among other things and a plan, including payment, is made with the licensed Foster Parents. This “difficulty of care payment” is added to the Foster Parent’s room and board payment, based upon the specific individual needs of the child. Unlicensed relative foster parents with a completed application to become licensed can also qualify to receive the “difficulty of care” payment.

For Traditional Foster Care children, special needs arise from time to time. These special needs are immediately assessed by the case manager, who develops a plan, with their supervisor for meeting these needs. This plan could include a special service fee that will be added to the Foster Parent’s room and board payment or it could involve temporary financial support provided by the agency. The decision to provide this level of support to the Foster Parent must be approved by the Director of Programs and Executive Vice President.

D) Method of Resolving Payment Problems: There is a name and phone number on all payment vouchers to licensed and unlicensed Foster Parents to contact in case there are any payment issues. The Foster Parents contact the agency immediately if there are any payment concerns and the case manager, licensing representative, supervisor, Director of Programs and Executive Vice President may be part of the process to resolve the payment issue and create action plans if necessary. Payment to Foster Parents and any concerns regarding payments are a high priority for the agency. More specifically, problems with Foster Parent board checks will initially be addressed within 48 business hours provided the issue is one that can be resolved at the agency level. Whenever possible, One Hope United will absorb the financial risk of resolving a problem related to Foster Parent reimbursement by paying the Foster Parent while waiting for further response or resolution from DCFS, i.e. we will pay the Foster Parent while awaiting payment or approval from DCFS if the situation is reasonable and appropriate. These issues/concerns are addressed in a timely manner. If the issue cannot be resolved at this level, the chain of command protocols are followed to resolution. Unlicensed Foster Parents can contact the agency when issues arise with their payment from DCFS and agency staff will demonstrate a sense of urgency to assist them in resolving the problem.

Section 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 their home. Inherent in this right is the responsibility to support activities that will promote the child's right to relationships with his or her own family and cultural heritage.

A) Foster Parent Participation in Development of the Child's Service Plan:

All Foster Parents are encouraged and expected to be involved in the development of the child's service plan and thus aware of their youth in care's permanency plan. Foster Parents can offer a great deal of knowledge and expertise during this process regarding parenting, child development and the social and emotional competence of the children in their care. Foster Parents are encouraged to document observations about children's development and adjustment. Some Foster Parents voluntarily keep daily journals which is critical information for service plan development. This information is invaluable when it comes to establishing goals for the Foster Parents and the child in their home. Foster Parents are also included in the Child and Family Team Meetings, as well as, any other meetings or staffing needed based on the case parameters. This is an integral part of the overall team approach utilized by One Hope United. Foster Parents share they feel part of the team and are encouraged to give the case manager feedback during monthly in-home contacts and feel staff takes into consideration Foster Parents' opinions and observations. This relationship is also described in the Foster Parent Agreement, which is signed by Foster Parents, case manager, and supervisor prior to initial placement. If a Foster Parent is unable to be present at any staffing or meeting regarding the child(ren) in their home, the agency ensures that they are provided with copies of all relevant documentation that is generated as a result of a staffing or meeting. As

a rule, the relevant documentation is mailed or hand-delivered to the Foster Parent within three working days after the meeting/staffing originally occurred.

B) Timely Notification of Changes in Service Plan/ Permanency Goal, including Method of Notification: Foster Parents are informed of and invited to all Administrative Case Reviews (ACR) and court hearings. Notification of ACR's is provided in writing by DCFS and also by the case manager who verbally informs Foster Parents of the date of the ACR. Foster Parents are made aware of court hearings through their case manager as well. When there are changes made in the service plan/permanency goal the Foster Parents are notified within a reasonable amount of time through on-going discussions between the case manager and the Foster Parents or at the latest, during the next foster home visit. Notification of these changes is discussed during supervision with staff and is documented in the client file. The agency recognizes that there is a need for immediate notification to Foster Parents in instances when a child is returning home or when changes in visitation occur. This notification will occur within 24 hours. Every attempt will be made to discuss these changes as quickly as possible to ensure that Foster Parents are kept abreast of changes that impact them as caregivers.

Prior to the ACR, Foster Parents are involved in the development of the service plan in regard to their tasks, as well as those of the youth in care. At least 30 days prior to the ACR, the case manager is preparing for the completion of the service plan and is in consultation with the Foster Parents ensuring the agency has the appropriate supporting documentation for the plan. As participants in the development of tasks which are related to the child's overall service plan, Foster Parents are aware of permanency plans and child and Foster Parent assigned tasks. Foster Parents are included in their youth in care's service planning process by actually having tasks related to the child's overall permanency plan goals; thus, each Foster Parent has a written outline of their responsibilities toward achieving their youth in care's permanency goal. The Foster Parents receive a copy of the service plan (excluding information relating to the birth parents). Through their copy of the new service plan, participation in the ACR process and discussions with the case manager, the Foster Parents are provided with a clear understanding of the child's overall care plan. The service plan is also reviewed during Child and Family Team Meetings. Foster Parents are invited to this process and are asked to actively participate. When a Foster Parent chooses not to attend in person, they are provided an opportunity to participate by phone. These avenues are in place to ensure that Foster Parents are heard and that their perspectives on case planning are taken into account.

C) Foster Parent Participation/Input into Visitation/Communication with the Child's Birth Family: Case managers discuss with the Foster Parents the type and frequency of communication the child is expected to have with parents, relatives and siblings. Although Foster Parents retain the right to privacy by choosing to have their phone numbers and addresses remain confidential, they may choose to have this information released to the youth in care's family as

well. Foster Parents are encouraged to take an active role in supporting the reunification of the family. This is partially achieved by the Foster Parents actively participating in the parent/child visitation and contact plan. Foster Parents are encouraged to participate in visitation with the child's family by meeting the parents, by hosting visitation in the foster home (home-like setting), by supervising the visits and also by assisting the parents through modeling appropriate parenting skills. This opportunity to engage with the biological families further supports the Strengthening Families initiative and provides an opportunity to promote connection to the child's heritage. The role of the Foster Parent is respected and valued by the agency and as such, when appropriate, the agency provides opportunities for Foster Parents to help strengthen the parent/child relationship by introducing them to the biological parents and encouraging them to share information regarding the child and the child's rituals and family values. Opportunities like these also help promote parent resilience through mutual respect and support, as well as having Foster Parents demonstrate their expertise in modeling appropriate behaviors for the biological parents. This active participation with the family may not always be welcomed, depending on the case dynamics; however, it is always encouraged by the agency.

Reimbursement to Foster Parents who choose to assist in the reunification of the family is available according to DCFS policy guide 2007.06. As a part of the professional team, the Foster Parents' participation, observations and suggestions are valued and essential as a source of information for case planning and successful outcomes for children and families.

Section 6) Investigation of Alleged Licensing Violations

The right to be provided a fair, timely, and impartial investigation of complaints concerning their 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 administrative review; and, the right to have decisions concerning a licensing corrective action plan specifically explained and tied to the licensing standards violated.

A) Policy Describing the Agency's Investigation of Alleged Violations and Demonstration of how the Agency disseminates that Information to Foster Parents: During the Home Study process with Foster Parents, the agency provides the Foster Parents with information pertaining to the investigative process. This includes a discussion of One Hope United procedures and other ramifications, such as emotional responses to being investigated.

The agency completes a licensing investigation on all foster homes in which a licensing violation complaint or report of child abuse and neglect is made. Any violations being investigated are provided to the Foster Parents, with specific mention of the exact standard alleged to have been violated, with its section

number, so that interpretation of this policy may be sought. This notification is provided in conjunction with a home visit from an agency licensing representative.

A corrective action plan will be implemented when necessary and it may include additional training requirements or other tasks for the Foster Parents. Foster Parents will receive a copy of their corrective action plan. Monitoring and follow-up on the corrective action plan will occur no less than every 90 days and will occur more often, if deemed necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of the children placed. This follow-up is the responsibility of the licensing representative and will occur until there is no need for a corrective action plan, either through satisfactory completion of the corrective action plan or the surrender of the Foster Family Home license. Removal of the child (ren) from the home of the Foster Parents does not necessarily end the need for a corrective action plan. The licensing representative and the Foster Parents will discuss the violation(s) and a specific date for the correction of the violation(s).

One Hope United understands the trauma that Foster Parents experience as a result of an investigative process. We acknowledge that as an agency, we have a dual role of serving as the licensing agent and participating with Foster Parents as a team serving the children and families. The agency explains the investigation process thoroughly and conducts all activities in a professional manner. Should it be determined that the violation is such that the child(ren) in the foster home is/are at imminent risk of harm, the 14-day timeframe is waived and immediate action is taken which may include, but is not limited to, the removal of the child(ren).

First and foremost, the agency's responsibility is for the safety of the children in our care. In cases of a concurrent Department of Child Protection (DCP) investigation, the DCFS protocol will be followed by the agency. An internal investigation is conducted by the licensing unit of One Hope United, concurring with the DCP investigation in cases where a hotline call has been made regarding the abuse/neglect of a child. Compliance with all 402 Standards is investigated by the agency. Unlicensed relative home complaints are conducted in a similar manner as stated above. All licensing investigations conducted by the agency require the approval and signatures of the licensing supervisor and the Director of Programs or Executive Vice President.

B) Person of Foster Parent's Choosing Present During the Investigation:

The Foster Parents are informed that they have the right to have a person of their choosing present during the investigation of a licensing complaint. This is to allow Foster Parents to have concrete support while undergoing an investigation and is to be respected by agency staff. All new Foster Parents sign the agency's "Licensing Investigation Notification Form," which provides information to the Foster Parents about their right to have a witness or an attorney present during the investigation. When an investigation is imminent, Foster Parents are reminded of this right and encouraged to have others present to ensure

emotional support for the Foster Parent. Per DCFS Policy, Foster Parents are given a four-hour time limit in which to choose their support person to ensure no delay occurs regarding the investigation.

C) Specified Time Frames for Investigation as Required by DCFS Rule: The DCFS rule requires an investigation to be completed within 60 days (if there are no priors) and 30 days (if there are priors). The agency's expectation is to conduct the investigation as soon as possible, ideally within 30 days. The time frame of the investigation will depend upon the nature of the licensing violation and whether or not a DCP investigation is occurring concurrently. One Hope United will work with the DCFS Licensing Representative to ensure compliance with DCFS procedures on investigation time frames and activities. Investigations with unlicensed relative homes are expedited in the same fashion.

D) One Hope United – Northern Region: Serving 90% of our foster care population, Northern Region has a policy in place that allows for a cross regional licensing investigation to occur if it is deemed necessary by the licensing supervisor and the Director of Programs. Through this protocol, there can be two representatives from Northern Region conducting the most serious investigations: the local licensing representative and a licensing representative from another licensing unit. This duality allows for greater perspective and objectivity when making decisions about risk, safety and the placement of children. This policy is not warranted in all situations; however, it is available. All licensing investigations conducted by the agency require the approval and signatures of the licensing supervisor and the Director of Programs.

E) Procedure for Appealing Negative Results/Corrective Action Plans: Through the Home Study process and on a regular basis, Foster Parents are provided with information pertaining to the agency's Foster Parent grievance procedure and the DCFS appeals process. The agency respects the right of Foster Parents to challenge results of corrective action plans and investigations. Every attempt to resolve the Foster Parent's grievance internally is made; however, Foster Parents are made aware of the guidelines and time frames required if they should want to file a service appeal with DCFS. The first step of One Hope United's Foster Parent grievance procedure is for the Foster Parents to discuss their concerns or issues with their case manager or licensing representative, as appropriate. We anticipate that issues or concerns will meet a mutually agreed upon resolution through this initial discussion. In the event that the resolution does not meet the Foster Parent's' expectations, a formal written grievance is requested from the Foster Parent. Out of respect for the Foster Parent needing resolution quickly, a meeting will be held with the supervisor and Director of Programs or Executive Vice President, if applicable, within one week of receiving the written grievance. If a mutually agreed upon resolution is not met at this level, the written formal grievance is then immediately sent to the Executive Vice President. A meeting will be held within two weeks between the Foster Parent and the Executive Vice President. If the Foster Parent continues to feel the issues or concerns are not resolved, the written formal grievance will

then be sent to the Chief Operating Officer with a meeting scheduled within two weeks. The final level of the agency's internal Foster Parent grievance procedure is the Chief Executive Officer.

One Hope United has implemented an anonymous electronic grievance reporting system. Red Flag Reporting gives Foster Parents, as well as clients and staff, the opportunity to file a grievance quickly and efficiently. The link to the new Red Flag Reporting system is now available on the One Hope United website.

Section 7) Additional Information about Children

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

A) Case Manager Training in all Information to be disclosed: All case managers are required to complete the Statewide Foundation Training prior to providing services to clients. Disclosure of required and appropriate information is covered in this training; however, ongoing training is also provided to case managers during the review of new policies and procedures, at monthly team meetings and during individual supervision. Case managers are required to provide Foster Parents with all relevant materials and information which assists the Foster Parent in providing the child with appropriate physical and psychological care while assuring a secure and stable foster home placement. This information is provided to Foster Parents at initial placement or within 10 days of placement and ongoing as pertinent information for the care of the child becomes available.

B) Description of How Case Managers are Held Accountable for Sharing the Information: Case Managers and Foster Parents have a minimum of monthly face-to-face contact, as well as, phone contact in order to assist Foster Parents in keeping abreast of pertinent information regarding the child(ren) in their care. This sharing of information is essential for Foster Parents to be able to care for the child's social and emotional development within the foster home. Case managers are required to document in a case note, conversations held with Foster Parents regarding information shared. These case notes are completed in the DCFS statewide automated child welfare information systems (SACWIS) and reviewed by supervisors. The Continuous Quality Improvement Team provides another layer of oversight and ensures that supervisors are made aware of when children and families are not seen as required by DCFS and agency policy by conducting quarterly peer reviews. Files are randomly selected and reviewed by peers within the agency in which feedback is provided, whether it is strengths or areas of improvement. If files are missing documentation or services are not being followed through on as policy requires, a plan of correction is then submitted within 30 days stating how this will be corrected. The peer review process within One Hope United identifies and eliminates obstacles that may be keeping staff from providing the highest quality service to their clients and documenting their work.

Foster Parents are also trained in the area of what constitutes confidential information, what may be shared and what may not be shared. These guidelines are offered in Foster PRIDE Training, as well as through regular contact with case managers. This is also stipulated within the written Foster Parents' Agreement signed by Foster Parents and case managers.

In some areas, Foster Parents are offered monthly trainings by the agency which range in a variety of clinical topics to assist them with the care of the children. These trainings are documented and apply to the renewal of their Foster Parent license.

Mutual understanding and attention to issues that are raised regarding the care of children placed is regarded as urgent by the agency. Therefore, case managers are expected to discuss questions raised by Foster Parents with their supervisors. Follow-up responses and information are to be provided as soon as possible. If necessary, Child and Family Team Meetings are convened so that a face-to-face solution-focused approach can better lead to a positive outcome. This collaboration facilitates a team approach and ensures that Foster Parents are provided the most up to date information to assist them in caring for the children placed in their home. Child and Family Team Meetings are convened on a quarterly basis per DCFS policy.

Section 8) Information Given About Children at or Prior to Placement

A) Information Case Manager will Provide to Foster Parent: Prior to placement, at the time of placement, or whenever possible, the case manager and/or licensing representative shall provide the Foster Parent or prospective adoptive parent with available information necessary for the proper care of the child in accordance with policy guide 2007.14. This information is critical in supporting the Strengthening Families model of care adopted by the agency. Information pertaining to Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development; Concrete Support in Times of Need; and Healthy Parent-Child Relationships are just a few of the Protective Factors supported by this sharing of information between the Foster Parent and the agency.

This documentation shall be provided in writing, after supervisory review and approval, and should include:

1. Medical history, which includes known medical problems, communicable diseases, information concerning the immunization status of the child, and insurance and medical card information.
2. Educational History of the child, including if applicable, any special educational needs and details of the child's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP) when the child is receiving special education services or 504 Educational Special Needs Plan.

3. A copy of the child's portion of the client service plan including visitation plans with parents and siblings. As the service plan is updated, the Foster Parent will be provided with the most current copy of the child's portion. The case history of the child (including how the child came into care, the child's legal status, the permanency goal for the child, history of the child's previous placements, and reasons for placement changes). Information that cannot be provided is any information that identifies or reveals the location of any previous foster or relative home caregiver.
4. Other relevant background information of the child, including likes or dislikes, any prior criminal history, behavioral issues such as fire setting, perpetration of sexual abuse, destructive behavior and substance abuse habits. The foster parents might also receive a worksheet called "Let me tell you about my Child"

B) Staff are Trained in All Pertinent Policies and Procedures: One Hope United provides ongoing training to case managers on pertinent policies and procedures through monthly team meetings and individual supervision. Additionally, each case manager is provided a copy of Policy Guide 2007.14. For new case managers, policies and procedures regarding confidentiality of information is reviewed and discussed during orientation and a copy of the Foster Parent Law Plan is provided upon hire.

C) Accountability for Sharing Information: The Foster Parent, prospective Adoptive Parent, or other caregiver will sign documentation verifying receipt of the information detailed in Section 8 subsection A within 10 working days after the placement. The child's Guardian ad Litem will also be provided a copy of the information provided to the Foster Parent, prospective Adoptive Parent, or other caregiver. Additionally, periodic review by way of the agency's Continuous Quality Improvement review will confirm information was provided to Foster Parent, prospective Adoptive Parent, or other caregiver within the required time frames. The agency will provide a folder to the Foster Parent that will include the information on the child as required by Policy Guide 2007.14. This folder will provide a means for the Foster Parent to maintain relevant, accurate and consistent information on each child in their care. It should be noted that this folder belongs to the child and therefore, will move with the child whenever a change in placement occurs. Case managers are required to document in a case note the provision of this folder to Foster Parents. This documentation is then reviewed by the supervisor.

D) Emergency Placements: In the case of an emergency placement, the case manager and/or licensing representative shall provide known information verbally prior to placement and ongoing upon placement. As more information becomes available this information will be shared and subsequently provided in writing when appropriate.

Section 9) Notifications - Methodology

The right to be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings concerning the youth in care in order to actively participate in the case planning and decision-making

process regarding the child in their care, including individual service planning meetings, administrative case reviews, interdisciplinary staffings, and individual educational planning meetings; the right to be informed of decisions made by the 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 youth in care within the context of the team, including therapists, physicians, and teachers.

A) Foster Parents are Notified and Encouraged to Participate in All Meetings and Staffings about Foster Children in Their Care: Agency Case Management staff shall notify Foster Parents of Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs), court hearings, Individual Educational Planning (IEP) meetings, Child and Family Team Meetings, and other relevant staffings and encourage Foster Parent attendance. Foster Parents are also notified about Administrative Case Reviews for their youth in care by a written notice sent by DCFS two-to-three weeks before the ACR. Whenever a child has a scheduled Individualized Education Plan (IEP) staffing, the school personnel also notify the Foster Parent in writing of the staffing date. The Foster Parents are primarily notified by the case manager for the child's court date, unless the court has requested the Foster Parent's attendance, in which case they will be notified in writing. The case manager will also provide written or verbal confirmation to the Foster Parents two weeks in advance with the time and date of the ACR, court hearing, IEP and/or other scheduled meetings pertaining to their youth in care.

B) Foster Parents Informed of Decisions Made by Agencies and Courts: Foster Parents shall be informed of and invited to all Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs) and court hearings. As participants in the development of tasks that are related to the child's overall service plan, Foster Parents are made aware of permanency plans as well as child and Foster Parent assigned tasks. Foster Parents are included in the youth in care's service planning process by having input into the tasks related to the child's overall emotional and developmental well-being; thus each Foster Parent has a written outline of their responsibilities toward achieving their youth in care's permanency goal. Prior to the ACR, the Foster Parents receive a copy of the service plan (excluding information relating to the birth parents). If any changes are made to the service plan at the ACR, the Foster Parent receives an updated copy, reflecting those changes. Through this copy of the new service plan, discussions with the case manager and participation in the ACR, Foster Parents are provided with a clear understanding of the child's overall care plan.

When Foster Parents choose not to attend ACRs or court hearings, the case manager ensures that they are informed regarding decisions made. This occurs by the case manager alerting the Foster Parents through a phone call or during monthly contact/visits with the Foster Parent. These conversations will be documented within client contact notes as well in supervision notes. Keeping

Foster Parents informed regarding the outcomes of these processes is essential in their ability to continue to meet the needs of the child in their care and it facilitates a continued team approach of respect and mutual support.

C) Foster Parents are encouraged to Offer Input into Case Planning and Input is Given Full Consideration: The agency values Foster Parent participation in the development of each child's service plan. The agency encourages Foster Parents to take an active role in the life of their, youth in care, acknowledging them as professional members of the team. During monthly foster home visits, staff specifically ask Foster Parents for input about the child(ren) in their care. Foster Parents are asked to keep documentation related to children in their care related to developmental progress and observations of adjustment. One Hope United sees the value of Foster Parents' insight and knowledge being the 24/7 caregiver of the children in their care. Because of this, the input and recommendations of Foster Parents is integral in establishing a positive, sensitive and successful care plan for all participants. Foster parents also have an opportunity to be involved in meetings and share input with other parties such as CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), the Guardian ad Litem for the child, and other Child and Family Team members. Foster Parents are important to the success of service delivery to the youth in care and family. Therefore, the agency respects, listens and considers the viewpoints of Foster Parents during the case planning process.

D) Foster Parents are encouraged to Communicate with All Child Team Members: The agency encourages Foster Parents to play an active role in the life of the youth in care by participating in all facets of the child's life. Foster Parents are important members of each Child and Family Team Meeting. The agency feels strongly that their role/responsibility is connected with other important individuals in the child's life, such as the birth parents, teacher, doctor, therapist, specialist, etc. Through communication with other team members, Foster Parents are able to share vital information and assist in linking the child with appropriate services. This sharing of information about the child enhances the quality of services the child receives in foster care. Foster Parents are also required to become educational advocates. The Educational Advocacy training teaches Foster Parents about the educational rights of a child who is a youth in care, as well as exploring resources to meet the child's educational needs and techniques to promote a child's educational success. Although DCFS policy requires at least one Foster Parent in the home to be trained in Educational Advocacy prior to renewal, the agency strongly encourages Educational Advocacy training to occur within one year of a child's placement. Educational Advocacy is frequently offered immediately after PRIDE training. New Foster Parents are highly encouraged to complete Educational Advocacy training at the earliest possible time. As a trained Educational Advocate, Foster Parents will be empowered to be an active member of the educational team. As the "surrogate parent" they will be prepared to better communicate not only with this team but others in the child's life. Through consistent contact with the case manager, the agency is able to encourage and promote the engagement of the Foster Parent

in the educational process. The agency attends all Educational meetings for the child and strongly encourages the participation of the Foster Parent in this process as well.

Additionally, Foster Parents are encouraged to participate with agency staff and biological parents in establishing visitation schedules to minimize the disruption in the Foster Parent's home environment. This collaboration between the Foster family, biological parents and agency, promotes parental resilience for the Foster and biological family members. It further supports and values healthy parent/child relationships by showing children that their Foster Parents and their biological parents are working together in the best interest of them. This team approach strengthens not only the Foster Family, but the biological family as well.

Section 10) All Necessary Information on Child/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 concerning the child's family shall be limited to that information that is essential for understanding the needs of and providing care to the child in order to protect the rights of the child's family. When a positive relationship exists between the Foster Parents and the child's family, the child's family may consent to disclosure of additional information.

A) A Description of Information Given to Foster Parents at Intake, and a Prescribed Method of Disclosing Information is Utilized: This process is critical in supporting the Strengthening Families Protective Factor: Parent Resilience. This process empowers Foster Parents to work with the child and family of origin to their fullest potential. Case managers are required to provide Foster Parents with all relevant materials and information which assists the Foster Parent in providing the child with appropriate physical and psychological care to assure a secure and stable foster home placement. This information is provided to Foster Parents at initial placement, or within 10 days of placement and ongoing as pertinent information to the care of the child is available. One Hope United will provide a folder to the Foster Parent that will include the information on the child as required by Policy Guide 2007.14. This folder will provide a means for the Foster Parent to maintain relevant, accurate and consistent information on each child in their care which includes the child's medical history, educational history, a copy of the child's portion of the client service plan, including visitation arrangements and other relevant background information of the child. It should be noted that this folder belongs to the child and therefore, will move with the child whenever a change in placement occurs

Ideally, at a minimum upon emergency placement, the Foster Parent will be provided a copy of the 906, the medical card, any educational information, as well as the agency contact information. If the 906, the medical card, any educational information, as well as the agency contact information is not

available at the time of the emergency placement, this will be provided to the Foster Parent no later than the next business day.

B) Ongoing Sharing of Information that is Pertinent to the Health and Well Being of the Child: The agency ensures that case managers and Foster Parents receive training concerning confidential information that can be released, and with whom that information can be shared. This information is outlined in the Agency's Confidentiality Policy. Foster Parents receive this information during their initial Foster Parent training and periodically during ongoing Foster Parent training sessions. All Foster Parents review and sign the One Hope United Foster Parent Confidentiality Agreement at the time of licensing, or at the time of placement for unlicensed relative caregivers. A case manager, with supervisory approval, will release information to a Foster Parent provided all consents are in order. Case managers are required to provide Foster Parents with all relevant materials and information that will assist the Foster Parent in providing the child with appropriate social, emotional and physical care. This information further assists the Agency and the Foster Parent in ensuring that the child receives quality care in a secure and stable foster home placement. Foster Parents receive this information at initial placement or within 10 days of placement and ongoing as pertinent information to the care of the child is available.

Section 11) Child Movement -Replacement

The right to be given reasonable written notice of any change in a 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.

A) 14-day Notice (Not applicable for movements involving imminent risk): When a decision has been made to move a youth in care, the Foster Parent will be given a 14-day written notice, i.e. The Notice of Decision form (CFS 151) and Notice of Change in Placement form (CFS 151-B) completed by the case manager. If further explanation of the decision to move a child is needed, the case manager or supervisor will discuss this with the Foster Parent. Foster Parents are informed of their right to appeal the placement decision and are provided with the steps to file an appeal.

If there is an imminent risk of harm or danger to the child, Foster Parent or other household members, the child will be removed immediately. When initiating the 14 day notice either by the Foster Parent or the agency, the case manager will complete a Placement Request Form and submit to the licensing supervisor or designee a copy of the 14 day notice. A staffing will occur between the case manager, case manager supervisor, licensing team and clinical staff as appropriate.

If a Foster Parent determines that he/she can no longer care for the child in their home, it is expected that the Foster Parent will likewise give One Hope United a

14-day written notice stating the reasons why the child can no longer be cared for in their home, so the agency can find an appropriate home for the child.

B) Notice in Writing:

The Foster Parent will be given a 14-day written notice, i.e. The Notice of Decision form (CFS 151) and Notice of Change in Placement form (CFS 151-B) completed by the case manager.

C) Appeal Information, Including Emergency Review Process (e.g. clinical reviews and hearings), is given to Foster Parent: When imminent risk forces an emergency placement change, agency supervisors will attempt to verbally inform the Foster Parent of the reason for the changes and present instructions to the Foster Parents about how this will occur. Agency staff and Foster Parents shall work as a team to assure a smooth transition for the child whenever a change in placement is necessary. Both verbal and written information is provided to the Foster Parents concerning their right to appeal and the steps to appealing the decision through the process of clinical reviews and hearings.

Section 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 the hearing officer hearing the case, the location of the hearing, and the court docket number of the case; and the right to intervene in court proceedings or to seek mandamus under the Juvenile Court Act of 1987.

A) Method for Notifying Foster Parents of Hearings and Their Right to be Heard: Agency case managers have primary responsibility of notifying Foster Parents of court hearings and court information. Case managers share pertinent court information such as the date, time, calendar, docket, location, and the name of the judge with Foster Parents. Additionally, case managers encourage Foster Parents' participation in the child's life by actively advocating and intervening on behalf of the child. This includes attending and participating in court hearings. Case managers share the court information as they work with the Foster Parents in preparing any court reports and upcoming case recommendations. Foster Parents are provided information on types of court hearings, court roles and court personnel at the beginning of the case. Ongoing training on the court process includes an overview of the Juvenile Court Act with highlights of those sections pertaining to Foster Parents' rights, including the process of seeking a mandate or court order (mandamus).

B) Description of How Case Managers are Held Accountable for Notifying Foster Parents: Supervisors monitor court attendance of case managers, as well as their attendance at ACR's, staffings, and other required meetings. Monitoring occurs through individual supervision and case note approval. When Foster Parents are unable to attend a court hearing, case managers contact Foster Parents via telephone or through the monthly home visit to inform them of

the next court date. This is also documented through a case note in the client file and is reviewed and approved by the supervisor.

Section 13) Placement Option for Children Re-entering Care

The right to be considered as a placement option when a 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 their home.

A) Method for Checking Past Placement Records, When Possible:

When the child achieves permanency, the agency compiles all pertinent information for the child, which includes the Foster Parent's record maintained for the child. This information is placed into the child's record for case closure. The agency maintains the client's closed record until it is sent to the DCFS storage site which is within one year of the date closing.

When notified by the Department that a child will be re-entering foster care, the agency will do the following:

- Obtain the client's closed record;
- Thoroughly assess the client's closed record for previous Foster Parent placements;
- Access Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) or internal agency data base systems to obtain previous placement information;
- An internal staffing will be held to make a placement decision;
- The decision for placement will be made based upon the best interest of the child; and
- The agency would then contact the previous Foster Parents for placement consideration, if appropriate.

The request for re-placement consideration can be made by the Foster Parent(s), child, birth parent(s) and current or previous case manager. In situations where there is an open case, the current case manager will review the child's file to identify previous Foster Parents who may be an appropriate placement option. Secondly, the case manager will also identify any previous Foster Parents from DCFS or another agency that may be a resource and will discuss these possibilities with appropriate staff. In a similar manner, unlicensed relative caregivers are considered. This process is critical in supporting the Strengthening Families Protective Factor, Healthy Parent-Child Relationships. Whenever possible, the agency will replace children where a positive Foster Parent-Child bond has been previously established.

B) Process for Determining Best Interest Regarding Placement Decision:

Upon re-entering foster care, the placing agency will assess the child's current level of functioning, including needs and strengths. The placing agency will then complete the following tasks to assess best interest:

- Case manager will explore the child's previous Foster Parent/relative placement as a placement option.
- Licensing standards and foster home capacity must be considered when placing the child.
- The case manager will utilize the agency Child/Caregiver Matching Tool to determine if a home remains an appropriate match.
- The case manager utilizes the Placement Clearance Checklist, or other tools based on his/her knowledge of the case, to make the best assessment of behalf of the child.
- The case manager should include the licensing representative/Team in the process if the child was once in a licensed home.

Case managers may also request relevant information from other referral sources, if available. Youth in care who are old enough to express their own placement preferences are included in the decision making process. When a possible placement match is made, the case manager will contact the Foster Parent, present appropriate information and establish if the Foster Parent:

- a. Is willing to accept the child again;
- b. Is willing to explore re-placement of the child, and under what conditions and time frame; or,
- c. Is not willing to accept the child again.

In cases in which the case management team concludes a previous Foster Parent would not be a good match, the Foster Parent receives a verbal explanation, which they may request in writing.

Section 14) Timely Access to Service Appeal System

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

A) Documentation that an Internal Appeals System Has Been Established and Description of How it Prohibits Retaliation: The agency recognizes that at times Foster Parents may not agree with decisions made by the agency regarding the youth in care. For the most part, these issues and/or concerns will be worked out between the assigned case manager and the Foster Parent; however, at times, if an issue and/or concern cannot be resolved at this level, an objective review of the facts and issues in the disagreement needs to take place.

Foster Parents should request a meeting with the agency foster care supervisor if they feel the issue cannot be resolved at the case manager level. After a request is made, the supervisor schedules a meeting within one week with the Foster Parent. Foster care licensing representatives may help the Foster Parents in this process upon request and will be seen as supportive in nature. If a review with the supervisor does not resolve the issue, the Foster Parent may request a meeting with the Director of Programs or the Senior Vice President. This meeting

will occur within two weeks. If a resolution is not reached at this level, the request then goes to the Chief Operating Officer and a meeting is held within two weeks. The final level of appeal within the agency is the Chief Executive Officer. This internal appeals process is outlined in the agency Foster Parent Grievance Procedure made available to Foster Parents. The Foster Parent Grievance Procedure is distributed annually to effectively address issues and concerns of One Hope United Foster Parents. This procedure is available upon request at any time. The Foster Parent grievance form can also be located at the bottom of each web page, titled "Grievance Procedures" on the One Hope United website at www.onehopeunited.org. The new Red Flag Reporting system provides an efficient way for Foster Parents to submit grievances. This system is now available via a link on the One Hope United website as of November, 2017. The system provides anonymity for the person filing the grievance, and assurance that it will be directed to the correct OHU staff member.

During this appeals process, the agency ensures that at every level, an objective review of the facts is conducted. Under no circumstances will the agency condone an act of retaliation against the Foster Parent for accessing and utilizing this process.

B) Process for Accessing the External DCFS Appeals System, When Necessary: The agency will make all Foster Parents aware of the existing DCFS appeals process through training, Administrative Case Reviews, information provided by the case manager, licensing representative, and through agency information and literature such as agency newsletters, flyers, and brochures. One Hope United does not tolerate disrespect, harassment or retaliation toward Foster Parents. Concerns about this will be taken very seriously and should be brought to the supervisor's attention immediately. Foster Parents are always encouraged to utilize the agency internal and external DCFS appeals system. However, if Foster Parents believe their concerns have not been adequately addressed through these processes, they are encouraged to contact the DCFS Advocacy Office at 1-800-232-3798.

Section 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 under Section 35.5 of the Children and Family Services Act (20 ILCS 520/1-15).

A) Training /Brochures Available on the Foster Parent Hotline and the Office of Inspector General: Information about the Inspector General Foster Parent hotline, including the telephone number (1-800-722-9124), is provided to Foster Parents in training and also in Foster Parent newsletters. One Hope United also provides information regarding the DCFS Appeals process in a brochure that is distributed annually to Foster Parents. Additionally, a list of

resources throughout the state with phone numbers and addresses of offices and services to assist Foster Parents in navigating the child welfare system has been developed. This information is provided to Foster Parents through agency pamphlets, newsletters and hand-outs during Foster Parent trainings. This further supports providing concrete support in the times of need through the Strengthening Families model.

Article II. FOSTER PARENT LAW RESPONSIBILITIES

Section 1) Open Communication

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

A) Training on Type and Importance: Ideally, the working relationship between Foster Parents and case managers requires mutual respect, trust and support. This includes being able to discuss difficult issues involving the child. Although Foster Parents received formal training through PRIDE, agency staff provides leadership in setting the tone, by promoting and encouraging open lines of communication with Foster Parents.

Foster Parents are encouraged to engage in open communication not only during agency quarterly meetings, but also at court, Administrative Case Reviews and Child and Family Team Meetings. This is in addition to giving their input during monthly home visits with their case managers.

The key to addressing issues involving children in care is to maintain open, respectful communication with Foster Parents, whether in person, by phone or by email. This respectful communication allows the Foster Parents' perspective of the child's needs, strengths and progress to be incorporated at each stage of the child's service planning. Case managers ask for this very important input at every home visit. It is the responsibility of the Foster Parents to keep the case manager informed of any issues or concerns regarding their child in care so they can be adequately addressed. These concerns include school progress, behavioral issues, emotional changes or medical concerns. If changes in services for the child or family are needed, there is an open and honest conversation between the case manager and the Foster Parents to reach the best possible plan for the child.

Foster Parents also keep the case manager informed of the child's personal progress, successes and achievements. Foster Parents will be encouraged to keep a folder for each child, maintaining OHU and DCFS paperwork, consent forms, case management and licensing paperwork, educational, physical, dental, therapy, and other assessments of the child. Promoting and nurturing a child's strengths are an important part of service planning, shared communication and celebration of these events is critical for the child. Focusing on a child's strengths is integral in helping him/her heal from past trauma. If appropriate, children and youth are referred to a trauma trained therapist so that individual needs can be

further addressed. Foster Parents are asked to be part of the team that focuses on the trauma, and are encouraged to increase their understanding of trauma through the ongoing trainings offered by DCFS in person and online.

Foster Parents must immediately report unusual incidents like a runaway, an injury, a school suspension, a pregnancy, a hospitalization or a car accident, etc. Case managers are required to complete an Unusual Incident Report within 24 hours.

Because face-to-face communication between agency staff and Foster Parents is limited, Foster Parents are encouraged to stay in frequent contact with case managers by phone or email between home visits and scheduled meetings. Prompt agency response to Foster Parents' inquiries and concerns by phone is paramount. Agency staff will respond to Foster Parents' calls with a sense of urgency returning them within 24 hours whenever possible. If face-to-face communication is indicated, the agency staff will arrange to meet with the Foster Parent as soon as possible.

Open communication between Foster Parents and their licensing representative is also desired and encouraged. In addition to the discussion of any licensing concerns, Foster Parents should feel free to openly communicate concerns regarding services provided by the agency. The licensing representative can then direct the Foster Parent to the appropriate agency staff member for resolution. Protecting children and strengthening families relies on the shared commitment to this level of trust and communication among the Foster Parents and all agency staff.

There may be times when a child's placement changes and it is beneficial for the previous Foster Parents to share information about a child with the new Foster Parent. Some examples of this are favorite foods, bedtime routine, favorite games, behavior challenges, trauma triggers, etc. In these cases, the agency supports open communication to ensure a smooth transition and the best outcome for the child. Within this professional, respectful framework, Foster Parents may share information about the child among themselves.

The agency strives to provide a trusting environment that encourages open communication. Foster Parents need to feel free to speak and feel they are not going to be "blackballed" for speaking out.

In situations where Foster Parents feel they need more attention and support, the Foster Parent should notify the case manager and/or the supervisor quickly of their needs so frustrations do not build up and create barriers for the child's services and care.

Section 2) Confidentiality

The responsibility to respect the confidentiality of information concerning youth in care and their families and act appropriately within applicable confidentiality laws and regulations.

A) Initial and Ongoing Training on Importance of Confidentiality: Foster Parents receive formal training on child welfare confidentiality initially through their DCFS PRIDE training. On-going trainings provide further explanation and reinforcement on this important topic. The on-going trainings recommended are the digital PRIDE in-service training “Working as a Professional Team Member” and “Managing the Foster Care Experience.” However, as with open communication, it is the responsibility of the agency to set the example of appropriate confidentiality as a legal requirement. Agency staff models appropriate confidentiality regarding children in care and their biological parents. Agency staff communicates the expectation that Foster Parents will observe appropriate confidentiality as well. Agency Foster Parents sign a Foster Parent Agreement at licensure which includes confidentiality expectations. In addition, a new Foster Parent Confidentially Agreement was introduced by the agency in 2011. All Foster Parents sign this detailed agreement outlining the protection of confidential information at the time of licensure. The importance of confidentiality is reviewed every six months with Foster Parents at foster home compliance visits with their licensing representative. Case managers also assist Foster Parents in understanding the importance of confidentiality by discussing and answering questions on how confidentiality applies to schools, doctors, clinics, specialists, teachers, etc. Foster Parents are encouraged to discuss issues or questions regarding confidentiality with their case manager, licensing representative or an agency supervisor.

B) Laws and Regulations Available to Foster Parents: Foster Parents are encouraged to expand or refresh their understanding of confidentiality by reviewing printed training materials, attending on-going trainings, and participating in discussions during home visits and meetings. The agency uses the Foster Home Licensing Confidentiality Agreement (OHU-934) which addresses confidentiality in compliance with agency policy and DCFS Rule 431 as well as the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Confidentiality Act. This agreement is given to the Foster Parent during the initial licensing process as well as the renewal process. The licensing representative may review this agreement with Foster Parents if deemed necessary between the renewal processes. Case managers and licensing representatives are available to answer questions regarding the legal ramifications of releasing confidential child welfare information. Agency supervisors are also available to provide on-going education on this topic.

Section 3) Advocating for Children in Care

The responsibility to advocate for children in their care.

A) Educational Advocacy Training Available: Foster Parents participate in advocating for the best interest of the child in their care along with the other members of their child welfare team. Foster Parents are provided with the necessary information and training to be successful with this very important responsibility.

Following the completion of PRIDE training, Foster Parents complete the six hour DCFS Educational Advocacy class. Although the class is required for only one Foster Parent, both Foster Parents (in two-parent homes) are encouraged to attend. While DCFS requires at least one Foster Parent complete Educational Advocacy training as a requirement of the renewal of their foster home license, the agency strongly encourages this training to be completed within one year of a child being placed in their home. Foster Parents are also informed of other community trainings related to educational needs and Individualized Educational Plans as they become available.

Foster Parents are expected to advocate for their youth in care in many areas. The digital PRIDE in-service trainings related to advocacy recommended to Foster Parents are “Foundations for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk,” “Promoting Children’s Personal and Cultural Identity,” “Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families,” and “Responding to Signs and Symptoms of Child Sexual Abuse.” Agency licensing representatives offer to order these trainings whenever agency staff or Foster Parents feel they would be beneficial, or foster parents can access these trainings online at any time.

In conjunction with formal trainings, Foster Parents are given consistent support from One Hope United staff. Case managers are available to counsel Foster Parents on working with school personnel. In some regions, the agency has its own Educational Liaison but at times may request that a DCFS Educational Liaison become involved with children in placement. The liaison is a DCFS employee who is trained on the educational rights of children in care to assist Foster Parents in advocating for their child at school. The case manager or the Educational Liaison will also accompany Foster Parents to Individualized Education Plan meetings and other school meetings. The Foster Parent should inform the child’s case manager of all prescheduled IEP meetings as well as other prescheduled school meetings. In addition, agency staff may utilize the DCFS Educational Liaison to assist the Foster Parent in ensuring the best education possible for their child in care. Information on community educational resources and trainings, service calendars and other tools are provided to Foster Parents on an on-going basis.

B) Court Training Available: Throughout PRIDE training, on-going trainings and Foster Parent support meetings, Foster Parents receive education about the local court systems. Foster Parents are provided with training on how the court system works and how they can navigate through the system to get the services needed for their youth in care. This training is often provided by the case

manager/supervisor during home visits, staffings and Child and Family Team Meetings. In some regions, the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) provides training and support regarding the court process. The agency can also provide mentors to new Foster Parents who are experienced in working with the court system. In addition, case managers and licensing representatives are always available to address questions regarding this complex process. Lastly, court training is part of an annual training calendar.

C) Service Appeal Brochures and Training Available: Foster Parents are provided the DCFS Brochure titled, “The Service Appeal Brochure Process.” This brochure describes the Foster Parent appeal process available to Foster Parents when they disagree with a decision made regarding their youth in care. Case managers and licensing representatives are available to answer questions Foster Parents may have about the appeal process. Additionally, case managers and licensing representatives will help Foster Parents file an appeal if they desire to do so. Information regarding the Service Appeal process is located on the DCFS web site <http://www.state.il.us/dcfs/index.shtml>. Service appeal training is provided annually to all foster parents and includes information on steps foster parents may take within One Hope United and through the DCFS service appeal process.

D) Encouragement to Participate in Staffings, Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs), Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP), Integrated Assessment (IA) activities, Case Conferences and Court Hearings: The informed, advocating voice of the Foster Parent is critical to good case planning. Foster Parents are strongly encouraged to participate in every process related to the child in their care. Foster Parents are notified of important meetings and events involving their child by case managers. These include court hearings, Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP), Child and Family Team Meetings, Integrated Assessments and Administrative Case Reviews (ACR’s). Notification may be verbal or written depending on the type of hearing or review. Case managers will explain any up-coming processes and help prepare the Foster Parent for participation. Additionally, case managers make themselves available for discussion after hearings or reviews being held to explain what transpired. When Foster Parents are unable to attend meetings or hearings regarding the child in their care, the case manager will advise the Foster Parent of the outcome as soon as possible so that the Foster Parent can remain informed.

Section 4) Treating Children & Families with Dignity & Respect

The responsibility to treat children in their care and the children’s families with dignity, respect, and consideration.

A) Initial and Ongoing Training on this Topic: Just as with open communication and confidentiality, treating children in care, as well as their families, with dignity and respect is first communicated by One Hope United staff. Agency staff are expected to model respect and dignity for the child at all times.

This includes, but is not limited to, returning phone calls within 24 hours, planning meetings in accordance with the Foster Parent's schedule and arriving on time for scheduled appointments. When Foster Parents are treated with dignity, respect and consideration, Foster Parents feel part of the treatment team and feel they are an "important" member and in turn treat the child in their care the same way. Respect and dignity may look slightly different from child to child and from age to age. Agency staff is sensitive to these subtle differences. Dignity and respect for the child, as well as the child's family, is taught in PRIDE and reinforced by the licensing representative during the licensing process. Foster Parents are expected to work at understanding biological parents and "meet them where they are." Numerous conversations and activities are used to reinforce this important part of foster parenting before a child is placed. Foster Parents must recognize that the bond between the child and his or her biological parent is to be encouraged and nurtured. This point is reinforced with Foster Families through on-going trainings, agency and peer support groups and during home visits with OHU staff. Both case managers and licensing representative are available for coaching and support on this topic. This is also reinforced by the licensing representative many times during the licensing process. At the time of placement, Foster Parents sign a Foster Parent Agreement reminding them to treat the child in their care as a member of their own family. Reinforcing dignity and respect for children in care continues during Foster Parent support groups, trainings, and in other arenas. The Digital in-service trainings offered on this topic are "Supporting Relationships between Children and Their Families," "Promoting Permanency Outcomes," and "Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity." Additionally, respect and dignity are frequently discussed at home visits. Case Managers complete additional home visits, listen and offer guidance and support to the Foster Parent as on-going training.

B) Monitoring by Staff Charged with Case Management: Courteous, professional and respectful interactions by Foster Parents will be assessed during on-going contact with Foster Parents and the child in their care. Case management, licensing representatives and supervisory staff makes a complete assessment of the foster home, the Foster Parent and his or her relationships with the child and the child's family members. These observations are not limited to visits in the home, but any time agency staff is able to observe the Foster Parent. At times issues may arise. Whether the issue is specific to the Foster Parent/youth in care relationship, the Foster Parent / biological family relationship, or the Foster Parent/agency staff relationship, mutual respect is paramount. When needed, these issues are discussed openly with all parties involved. Every attempt is made to resolve the issue through respect, understanding, listening and education. In addition to the case manager, licensing representative and supervisory input, the agency may refer the Foster Parent to formal training or enlist the assistance of a Foster Parent Mentor. Potential Foster Parents who cannot demonstrate the appropriate respect for youth in care and their families during the licensing process are not licensed by the agency.

Section 5) Foster Parent Strengths & Weaknesses

The responsibility to recognize their 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.

A) Ongoing Mutual Assessment Method: The process of identifying strengths and exploring challenges with the Foster Parent is an ongoing participatory process between the agency and the Foster Parent. When the agency initially meets with potential Foster Parents, families receive "orientation" that includes information about the fostering experience and exploring strengths and needs in order to be successful Foster Parents. Later during PRIDE pre-service training, potential Foster Parents participate in training modules that actively help participants to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. During these training sessions, Foster Parents are asked to consider behaviors that youth in care might present which assesses whether they feel equipped to manage these behaviors. The licensing representative works with the newly licensed family to assess the best age, gender, behaviors and possible special needs that would be a good match for the family. Foster Parents are coached to recognize their own, as well as their family's strengths and limitations when deciding whether or not to accept a child into care. Foster Parents are taught to be realistic, but willing to grow, as caregivers.

The agency continuously engages the Foster Parent through individual conversations and group discussions to identify their ability to accept children into care. Through these interactions Foster Parents build relationship and opportunities for support with not only agency staff but with peer Foster Parents. This sharing of expertise among peers has been a building block for new Foster

Parents to strengthen skills and abilities in order to consider children for placement.

Another tool that is utilized to help Foster Parents identify the best fit for their home is the Agency Matching Survey. This survey includes dozens of behaviors and parenting challenges that are discussed and assessed with the Foster Parent. The completed survey gives the Foster Parent as well as the Agency a better understanding of the type of child that would be the best match for the family. When needed, the Agency provides resources to improve the Foster Parent's skills and help overcome the Foster Parent's challenges before their first placement as well as during their service as a Foster Parent. This self-awareness is an on-going process that is developed and continually reassessed mutually by the agency and each Foster Parent. Case managers use the Child/Caregiver Matching Tool when a child is placed in a home; this tool helps ensure that the child's needs can be met by the Foster family. The Digital in-service trainings recommended are "Managing the Foster Care Experience" and "Working as a Professional Team Member."

The Trauma Informed Parenting Group is a particularly helpful training recommended for their Foster Parents. During this eight-week training Foster Parents learn about the effect of trauma on children and ways to effectively manage challenging behaviors. By participating in this training, Foster Parents can expand their knowledge base and enhance their capacity to provide care for a variety of different children. DCFS will be expanding the use of foster parent cafes to help them enhance their skills and knowledge.

B) Training Based Assessments: Although the strengths and challenging areas of foster families are thoroughly assessed by the agency at every renewal, continual assessment is crucial. Throughout the fostering experience, the agency and the Foster Parent need to recognize when the Foster Parent is experiencing difficulties or needs additional training. Additionally, as a Foster Parent's situation changes, it is important that the agency and the Foster Parent work closely together to assess the situation and develop appropriate actions. This can include recommending additional trainings or recommending relevant reading materials. The agency develops an annual training schedule for the upcoming year based on needs and observations of the current year. Monthly trainings are held sometimes impromptu to meet the needs of Foster Parents who are experiencing particular problems or behaviors that need to be addressed. The Foster Parent may be referred to DCFS trainings, community trainings, the Virtual Training Center or receive one-on-one training by agency staff. The Trauma Informed Parenting Group is a popular training. If there is no child placed in their care, the type of placement for the home may need to be reassessed. In some cases, amending the licensing parameters is indicated. It is important to note that Foster Home visits by the case managers and monitoring visits by licensing representatives assist in monitoring Foster Parents' needs for additional training or support. In some cases, a child's Mental Health Assessment may indicate the benefit of Foster Parents participating in family counseling to better

understand the child's mental health needs to better meet the child's needs. Training credits can be requested with proper documentation from the therapist, indicating topics covered and knowledge gained.

C) Placements Based on Strengths: Through working together with understanding and support, the Foster Parent, case manager and licensing representative can build on the Foster Parent's strengths to make the best placement decisions possible. Foster Parents are encouraged to contact the agency at any time to discuss their training and support needs regarding the children in their care. In many cases, the Foster Parent can decide to accept more challenging children as their confidence, experience and training increases. Through working together in a supportive and non-threatening environment to assess both the Foster Parent's strengths and challenges, the Foster Parent and case manager have an opportunity to develop a plan that will support the Foster Parent in a way that improves the quality of care for the child.

D) Support Needs Addressed: When the case manager or licensing representative notices a change in the way a Foster Parent interacts with a child, it is their responsibility to raise the issue and discuss it openly with the Foster Parent. Foster Parents are required to identify and discuss all of their support needs with the team. Sometimes, the needs go beyond support, training and coaching. In the times of additional need, case managers and licensing representatives provide support to the Foster Parent to ensure that the youth in care continue to receive the best possible care. Placement stabilization services may also be explored if determined appropriate. In some cases, formal or informal respite care may be offered to address stress management needs. Supportive training groups are another avenue where Foster Parents can raise their issues or needs for additional support. The Foster Parent must keep the agency advised of the needs and challenges they are facing with the children in their care. This open communication allows the child, as well as the family as a whole, to receive the best possible support. Agency staff will continuously assess supportive needs through consistent contact and monthly home visits.

Section 6) Affiliations with Foster Parent 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.

A) Internal Support Groups Encouraged, and Information Provided to Foster Parents: Foster Parents are encouraged to participate in both formal and informal Foster Parent associations. One Hope United may facilitate support groups for Foster Parents to improve the quality of care and service to children and families. This is accomplished through Foster Parent Cafes, Foster Parent Advisory Councils and informal meetings with Foster Parents and staff. Information for Foster Parent groups can be communicated to Foster Parents via newsletters, special mailings and case managers during home visits.

B) Affiliations with Foster Parent Associations are Encouraged and Facilitated: Foster Parents have the opportunity to participate in local support groups, such as the Illinois Foster Parent Association Support Groups. Foster Parents are given opportunities to network in the training and support groups, as well as have specific trainings presented on select topics. Through these groups, Foster Parents have access to other, more experienced Foster Parents and are able to use others' expertise to advocate within the system.

The following are some Foster Parent Associations:

- Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association:
Gladys Boyd, President
boydgladys@sbcglobal.net
PO Box 729
Mundelein, IL 60060
<http://www.ilfapa.org>
- National Foster Parent Association:
<http://www.nfpaonline.org>
1-800-557-5238
Irene Clements, Executive Director
Pflugerville, TX
512-775-9781
iclements@nfpaonline.org
Info@NFPAonline.org
- Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
Mark McDaniel, Council Chair
http://www.state.il.us/DCFS/library/com_communications_statefpadv.shtml

- Regional Foster Care Advisory Council
 - Cook South DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council
Mercedes Ball at 773-371-6142
Meets 3rd Tuesday of the month at 10 a.m.
DCFS Office, 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago
 - Central Region- Charleston Area Foster Care Advisory Council
Call Central Region Foster Parent Help Line for schedule
866-368-5204
 - Northern DCFS Regional Foster Care Advisory Council
Mercedes Ball at 773-371-6142
Meets 1st Thursday of the month at 6 p.m.
DCFS Office, 8 E. Galena, Aurora

- DCFS Cook South Suburban Support Group
Adrienne Taylor at 708-210-3578
Meets 4th Thursday of odd numbered months at 9 a.m. to Noon
DCFS Office, 15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey

- Adoption Support Line
866-538-8892 or 312-808-5250

- Beststrongfosterparents.com
 - Connects Foster Parents with each other and with resources to build the protective factors in their families.
Includes a Video Library and Foster Parents Forum

Section 7) Foster Parent Training Needs

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

- A) Method and Tool for Assessing General Training Needs of Foster Parents:** Case managers work collaboratively with the licensing representatives in actively engaging Foster Parents during home visits in identifying both strengths and needs in their skills as a Foster Parent. Foster Parents are encouraged to contact the agency at any time to explore or identify their training desires to strengthen their skills as Foster Parents. They are also given opportunities to request training materials during case manager monthly visits and licensing representative home visits. The agency places priority on providing training that Foster Parents have requested. Additionally, Foster Parents may participate as co-trainers for other Foster Parents when they have a strength in a particular area. Foster Parents can also attend in-service trainings offered through DCFS and utilize the DCFS Virtual Training Center. Notification of community training opportunities are routinely mailed or e-mailed to Foster Parents. If a training need is identified by the Foster Parent or agency staff, case management and licensing will collaborate to ensure that this

- training request is supported and provided. The following are the annual requirements for training:
- Traditional and Licensed Relative = 4 hours per year; and
 - Specialized = 7 hours per year

B) Process for Providing for Identified Needs: As previously stated Foster Parents are expected to continually reassess their strengths, abilities and skills as part of the child welfare team. The licensing representatives and case managers also monitor and assist in skill identification with the Foster Parents during their visits and interactions. If it appears that the Foster Parent is struggling, the case manager or licensing representative can recommend trainings for identified skill development of Foster Parents. The agency strives to provide trainings based upon the needs of the children, Foster Parents and the trends in the field. The agency notifies the Foster Parents of the training dates and may help coordinate daycare during the training events in an effort to support and improve their attendance.

Section 8) Strategies to Prevent Placement Disruptions

The responsibility to develop and assist in implementing strategies to prevent placement disruptions, recognizing the traumatic impact of placement disruptions on a youth in care and all members of the foster family; and to provide emotional support for the children and members of the foster family if preventative strategies fail and placement disruption occur.

A) Method of Early Identification of Children at Risk of Disrupting or Creating Disruption in the Family: Before children are placed in a foster home, the licensing representative works with the foster family to determine both the strengths and the challenges of the Foster Parents. The agency utilizes the Child/Caregiver Matching Tool and the Matching Survey as part of this process. Thorough assessment and good matching significantly reduce placement disruptions. In addition, the Trauma Informed Parenting Group and the following in-service trainings are recommended: “Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet the Development Needs of Children at Risk,” “Addressing the Developmental Issues Related to Sexuality,” “Responding to Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Abuse,” and “Managing the Foster Care Experience.”

Early identification of placement issues and needs of the youth in care and foster family is crucial. Foster Parents are encouraged to contact the agency whenever they are feeling stressed about any issues pertaining to the child in their care. During scheduled case manager and licensing representative foster home visits, Foster Parents are expected to share when they are feeling stressed. Case managers and licensing representatives are expected to share and address observations with Foster Parents that might indicate that the system is stressed in some way.

Agency staff initially utilizes internal resources to support the foster family and child, such as holding a staffing with the Foster Parents to listen and discuss issues identified. During this staffing the case manager and Foster Parent can brainstorm ways that the agency can help reduce the stress. This may occur through services such as respite or therapies to help target specific behavior. Additionally, licensing representatives and supervisors are used as resources to provide more support to the foster family. As stated above, respite care, counseling and mentor support is available and encouraged by the agency.

Agency staff work diligently to secure supportive services, which may alleviate placement disruption and help maintain a healthy Foster Parent/youth in care relationship. The following are some of the external resources the agency utilizes in resolving the challenges faced by Foster Parents and children: SASS (Screening Assessment Support Services) and IPS (Intensive Placement Stabilization). SASS is accessed through a call to the crisis intervention hotline by the case manager in cases of crisis. IPS services can be accessed when the case manager makes a referral to the IPS provider directly by completing a referral form and faxing it to the IPS provider. The IPS staff then convenes a Child and Family Team Meeting, completes the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths assessment and develops an Individual Plan of Care. Once the assessment is completed, services will be planned that may include clinical treatment, as well as any of a variety of ancillary services that the youth in care and foster family may need. This can include services such as tutoring or mentoring. IPS may also incorporate a treatment model, TARGET (Trauma Affect Regulation Guide for Education and Therapy), into services for youth.

These services, in conjunction with support from agency staff, help to strengthen the family by valuing and supporting the Foster Parent.

To be successful, both the staff and Foster Parent need to agree to work toward placement stability and facilitating the social and emotional development of the child. Additionally, clinical staffing procedures are in place to identify issues and put preventive measures in place if a need is identified.

B) Support for Foster Children and Family Members if Preventive Strategies

Fail: After all attempts to stabilize the placement have been implemented, the Foster Parent and agency work together to help them to come to the best decision for the child and for the foster family. When placement stabilization services are unsuccessful, Foster Parents are asked to provide a written 14-day notice of their decision. During this time, the agency and Foster Parent continue to work together to ensure that a transitional plan is in place for the child and foster family. Agency staff will help the Foster Parents provide emotional support to the youth in care. It is important for both the case manager and Foster Parent to be present when talking to a child about a move to a new placement. Following the discussion, agency staff can further explain the decision made by the Foster Parents to the youth in care and answer any questions. The agency staff and Foster Parents will work together to make the placement change for the

child as smooth as possible. Depending on the circumstances, this may occur through pre-placement visits to the new home, open communication between Foster Parents, and if appropriate, having the child maintain a relationship with the previous Foster Parent. This will be done immediately after the Foster Parent issues the 14-day notice of removal. This will allow the child to be acclimated into the home over a series of visits. It is important to note that when a placement disrupts, many times the disruption is not only traumatic for the youth in care, but for the foster family as well. The agency provides emotional support for the foster family during the transition by openly discussing the situation and feelings involved.

C) Training in Purpose and Availability of Stabilization Services through System of Care: Foster Parents are provided education about the purpose of Intensive Placement Stabilization (placement stabilization) along with instructions on the local Intensive Placement Stabilization and the office telephone number. In many regions, this information is shared during PRIDE training. Once children are placed in a foster home, case managers, supervisors and licensing staff provide ongoing information about the services and the availability to support the foster family to stabilize placements in their home. Intensive Placement Stabilization services are meant to be proactive services to avoid placement crisis, so agency staff remind foster families of this resource before a crisis occurs using the agency's 24 hour on-call emergency response system. It is then the on-call worker's responsibility to ensure that the child and Foster Parent are connected with the appropriate service. Depending on the nature of the crisis, the on-call worker will recommend contacting SASS and/or IPS.

Section 9) Acknowledge/Minimize Stress

The responsibility to be conscious of the impact that Foster Parenting has on individuals and family relationships; and to endeavor to minimize, as much as possible, any stress that results from Foster Parenting.

A) Training/Methods to Recognize and Minimize Stress Factors: The agency is committed to promoting healthy parent-child relationships and will ensure that Foster Parents are offered the tools they need to successfully parent their youth in care. It is important for agency staff to work professionally and openly with the Foster Parents during initial pre-service and ongoing in-service sessions so that Foster Parents are fully aware of the impact of fostering upon themselves and their own immediate family. Licensing staff are active in helping Foster Parents understand their own stressors and those of their family members and youth in care. Foster Parents are encouraged to openly communicate with agency staff in order to fully avail themselves of services offered by the agency to prevent Foster Parent burn out. This has been designed to help the Foster Parents develop social connections and enables the agency to offer concrete support in times of need. In some locations, One Hope United offers stress management training for Foster Parents on an annual basis. Additionally, Foster Parents are informed of the DCFS virtual training website for additional resources and training. They are informed about these resources during PRIDE, at initial licensing and each

licensing monitoring visit. Agency staff is also responsible for observing Foster Parents and household members on a regular basis for signs of stress and are responsible for recommending available resources and making appropriate referrals. Open communication between the agency and Foster Parents remains vital to identifying and minimizing stress factors in the home.

B) Respite Available: The agency utilizes formal and informal respite care networks in an effort to offer concrete support in times of need. The respite care networks are designed so that the agency and Foster Parents are able to offer help and promote parent resilience and support to other Foster Parents in times of stress, crisis and/or emergency. Formal and informal respite care is available to all agency Foster Parents. If respite is needed, the Foster Parents are to inform either their case manager or licensing representative of their need. When a Foster Parent requests respite care, the agency staff contacts other licensed Foster Parents in order to secure a respite resource for the child(ren). Together all parties will decide whether the respite request qualifies for informal or formal respite. Informal respite care may be used for any situation that may arise for the family. Vacations, babysitting services and Foster Parent activities that do not include children are appropriate for informal respite care arrangements and will not be funded by the agency. Formal respite care agreements, which will be paid by the agency, may be used in the following cases: foster family illness, personal matters such as unforeseen emergencies and to provide therapeutic benefits to the youth in care and/or family. Foster Parents are highly encouraged to use respite services in times of crisis, or when the stress of caring for their child(ren) becomes too great. Special consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis when providing respite care for children identified as specialized. A minimum of 15 hours per month is available to all Specialized Foster Parents and children. A respite plan will be developed within 30 days of placement and reviewed at least every six months. It is the responsibility of the agency and the Foster Parent to establish a respite plan based on the child's needs as well as the family's needs. The respite provider shall be trained and knowledgeable about the youth's individual care needs, diagnosis and treatment/behavior plan. The respite provider should at a minimum have a relationship with the child. A meeting with the Case Manager can be arranged to give the respite care provider the necessary knowledge of the child's needs, diagnosis and treatment/behavior plan.

C) "Voluntary Hold" Methods Explained and Understood: Foster Parents can report to the agency that they can no longer take any additional children or that they do not want to have children placed with them at all. This is achieved through requesting that a Voluntary Hold be placed on the home by the family. During the time the family has the Voluntary Hold placed on the home the family does not have biannual monitoring visits, but is expected to maintain licensing standards in the home. Foster Parents can request that a "Voluntary Hold" be lifted at any time. It must be noted that the Foster Parents may exercise this option until the renewal of their license. At that point, the Foster Parents are asked if they are interested in continuing their licensure with the agency and a

mutual decision is agreed upon. The family may choose to return to Non Active Status through a Voluntary Hold again after the renewal is completed.

D) Counseling and Other Supports Available: The agency offers ongoing support and training groups to encourage Foster Parent networking. We also match experienced Foster Parents as mentors with new Foster Parents. We educate Foster Parents on available community resources. Stress management training is also made available to Foster Parents in some locations. When appropriate, the agency will make a referral to Intensive Placement Stabilization for additional support and services for the Foster Parent and youth in care. When a placement is unstable, IPS provides the Foster Parent and youth in care with individual counseling, family counseling, and crisis intervention services. These services are provided as a means to reinforce healthy parent/child relationships and strengthen the overall familial system.

Section 10) Promote Foster Parenting Positively

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

A) Foster Parents are Informed of Events/Activities that Acknowledge and Support Foster Parents and Participation is Encouraged: Foster Parents are strongly encouraged to participate in ongoing in-service training sessions offered such as Foster Parent Advisory Councils, and other meetings hosted by the agency. Foster Parents are informed of these opportunities through emails or written correspondence from their licensing representative. Foster Parents have suggested having seasoned licensed Foster Parents to attend PRIDE to answer questions and share their experiences. Attendance at agency Foster Parent events for families is also strongly encouraged. Annually, the agency has a Foster Parent appreciation event and other family events. Foster Parents are also encouraged to assist the agency with foster home recruitment efforts. The agency provides a finder's fee of \$250 to Foster Parents who recruit other Foster Parents that successfully complete the licensure process and foster a child residing in their home for a minimum of six months. If interested in assisting with foster home recruitment offers, Foster Parents can contact their local licensing office – please see Appendix C for contact information.

B) Training in the Public Relations Aspect of Foster Parenting is Made Available: The agency strengthens the community image of foster care by being actively involved with media resources. Several Foster Parents have been positively highlighted in news articles and television interviews in past years. We have a local positive process that highlights Foster Parents of the year and have had several agency Foster Parents highlighted in this selection process.

Annual training in the public relations aspect of foster parenting is provided to all foster parents with the goal of strengthening their understanding of their work as ambassadors for children, families and One Hope United. This training also

includes how to effectively advocate for children. Foster Parents are strongly encouraged and supported by the agency to advocate for the children in various arenas, such as court, schools, medical, developmental, and mental health, for the healthy development of the child placed in their home.

Section 11) Roles, Rights & Responsibilities of 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.

A) Training and Co-Training with Staff is Required: During the PRIDE Training, Foster Parents are informed of the roles of each “team member,” such as the birth family, Department of Child Protection (DCP) worker, foster care licensing staff, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) case manager, etc. Additionally, the licensing representative reviews with the Foster Parent the roles of each team member during licensing orientation and during the six month foster home licensing monitoring visit and answers any questions the Foster Parent may have.

The training on each individual's role within the child's life is an ongoing process with the Foster Parents. Foster Parents are encouraged to complete the updated training modules on the DCFS virtual training website. The role of the foster child's birth family is a very important element in the care of each foster child. Foster Parents are informed on an individual child basis how the birth family will play a role in the child's life and how they can support this relationship, strengthen parenting skills and improve parent/child relationships. This is also reinforced in quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM). Foster Parents are encouraged to be positive role models not only for the foster child in their care but also for the birth family. Foster Parents are expected to carefully maintain the confidentiality of the birth family.

As an agency, we encourage the staff to attend and participate in the Foster Parent trainings held within the year. We see this as an opportunity for both the Foster Parents and staff to exchange ideas, learn together and develop skills through a team approach. The co-training approach has been used throughout the agency on topics such as: Trauma Informed Parenting Training, Early Childhood Development, and Mental Health Issues with Foster Children, Cultural Diversity and Cultural Sensitivity.

As new staff is hired into the foster care program of the agency, supervisors are responsible for orienting the new staff to the rights and responsibilities of Foster Parents and roles of the entire team. Annually, the agency trains staff on the rights and responsibilities outlined in the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. During the annual training and at orientation, staff is provided with a copy of the current Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan.

B) Regular Meetings with Other Team Members are Held and Encouraged:

Hands-on training is offered by inviting Foster Parents to community and agency staffings with other agency and community personnel (i.e., therapist, teacher, psychologist, etc.) who are involved with the youth in care. The Foster Parent's input is critical to ensuring effective and successful planning for the child and assists with nurturing the social and emotional competence of the child. Foster Parents are invited and strongly encouraged to attend family meetings whenever possible and appropriate. The case manager schedules all Child and Family Team Meetings and staffings at mutually agreed upon times to ensure the availability of all team members, including Foster Parents whose input is invaluable to the team. When it is not appropriate for them to participate in the family meeting with the biological family, a subsequent family meeting is conducted to include the Foster Parents. Phone conferences may also be used as a means to include the Foster Parents and other community-based team members in their meetings when they are unable to attend in person. This participation provides the Foster Parent an opportunity to influence and contribute to the decisions about service plans, visitation, permanency goals and placement while also ensuring that the Foster Parent has a voice regarding the child in their care.

Additionally, case managers and counselors actively engage Foster Parents in the development of service and treatment plans for the children in their home. Ongoing and frequent communication between the Agency and Foster Parents is expected. Foster Parents are encouraged to contact their case manager with any issues or concerns that develop and case managers are expected to address the concerns in a timely manner. Case managers are responsible for reaching out to Foster Parents on a regular basis through phone and home visit contact. Agency case management staff will notify Foster Parents of Administrative Case Reviews (ACR), court hearings, Individual Educational Planning (IEP) meetings, Family Meetings, and other relevant staffings and will encourage and attempt to remove any barriers that prevent Foster Parent attendance at such meetings. Removing barriers may include providing transportation, connecting Foster Parents servicing the same case or providing conference call availability for meetings. Foster Parents are given the Child Specific section of the service plan for the child(ren) in their care. If there are Foster Parent goals within the Service Plan, that portion of the plan will also be given to the Foster Parent(s) after the Foster Parent(s) and case manager collaborate to develop the goals.

C) Foster Parents have a Recognized Voice within the Agency's

Management Organization: Licensed Foster Parents and relative caregivers are provided a copy of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan on an annual basis and they are encouraged through a letter from the agency, to provide feedback on the plan. The Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan is also available for viewing on the agency website. The agency has organized a Foster Parent Law Committee which is comprised of Foster Parent representatives from each of the agency foster care programs along with One Hope United staff. This committee works collaboratively and meets several times per year to review,

revise, and develop a new Implementation Plan on an annual basis. The committee also periodically reviews the annual goals to ensure ongoing development and compliance with the plan. All Foster Parents are provided a feedback form, along with the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan and they are encouraged to provide feedback to be included in future revisions. The feedback from this committee and from feedback forms is incorporated into the final draft that is approved by the Foster Parent Law Committee. The revised Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan is provided annually to Foster Parents and agency foster care personnel. Foster Parents and staff sign off on the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan Agreement to verify receipt of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan.

The following are additional agency supported opportunities for Foster Parents to have a voice in the agency:

- 1) *Support Groups and Monthly Meetings*- This allows a comfortable environment to share experiences and similar issues and concerns with fellow Foster Parents.
- 2) *Monthly Case Manager Visits*- This gives Foster Parents a chance to sit down with their case manager in their home environment to share concerns they have with the children in their care and/or agency concerns. The case manager ensures that the issues and concerns will be discussed and addressed with their supervisors and follow-up will occur. This supports open communication and builds upon the relationship between the case manager, Foster Parent and the agency.
- 3) *Licensing Representative Visits*- The licensing representative acts as an advocate for the Foster Parent and provides the Foster Parent with an opportunity to express feedback. The licensing representative ensures the feedback is brought back to the agency and follow-up occurs as needed.
- 4) *Annual Foster Parent Satisfaction Surveys*- This survey tool gives the Foster Parent an opportunity to anonymously provide feedback to the agency. The agency reviews the feedback and develops action plans to address feedback when needed.
- 5) *Quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings*- Foster Parents are valued members of the team. During this process the Foster Parent is able to share positive progress and provide updates of the child in their care. Additionally, this process allows for open communication for all parties involved in the case (Foster Parent, case manager, biological parent, and service providers). Biological parents are encouraged to view the Foster Parent as a fundamental part of the team and to work collaboratively in the best interest of their child. Additional family meetings can occur on an as needed basis.
- 6) *Advisory Councils*- This gives the Foster Parent the opportunity to share experiences as well as engage in activities that support other Foster Parents.

7) *On-Going Trainings-* Foster Parents have a voice in regards to what trainings they feel would be beneficial to them. In response to Foster Parent's requests for building their knowledge base for the children in their care, the agency has provided such trainings to address the Foster Parent's needs. The agency also provides appropriate trainings based on the individual Foster Parent's needs.

As Foster Parents are a valued resource to children and families, issues that are raised by Foster Parents are addressed in a timely manner by appropriate agency management. Concerns should be raised to the case manager. If concerns are not resolved, the supervisor should be contacted. If after speaking with the supervisor, the concerns have not been resolved, the Foster Parent should contact the Director of Programs and then the Senior Vice President and finally the Chief Operating Officer. The issues raised are addressed through appropriate protocols established by the agency as concerns raised may require different responses from the agency.

Leadership is available at all One Hope United sites which provide Foster Parents many informal opportunities to share successes and challenges in person with them. Agency Leadership encourages and respects these informal interactions with Foster Parents.

Section 12) Mandated Reporter Responsibility

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

A) Training, Initial and Ongoing, Including on Mandated Reporting

Responsibilities: All licensed Foster Parents receive training in their role as Mandated Reporters as part of either the pre-service orientation or PRIDE training. Annually, this is incorporated and reviewed during Foster Parent Training sessions, which includes specific examples of reportable and non-reportable incidents. All Foster Parents have access to this ongoing training and are encouraged to attend or share concerns or questions with agency staff. It is important that Foster Parents are informed about monthly meetings, support groups and that online training or refresher exercises can be developed to assist them with making more informed decisions about mandated reporting.

Upon initial licensing, each Foster Parent receives the DCFS Manual of Mandated Reporting. The licensing representative explains and clarifies the Foster Parent mandated reporter responsibilities at that time. Additionally, during the licensing renewal interval, Foster Parents receive a DCFS Mandated Reporter brochure as a reminder of their responsibilities as mandated reporters. Relative Foster Parents receive the DCFS Manual of Mandated Reporting from

the case manager upon placement of a child in their home, as well as from the licensing representative at the initiation of the licensing process. Once licensed and at the renewal interval, the relative Foster Parent receives the DCFS Mandated Reporter brochure as a reminder of their responsibilities as mandated reporters. Foster Parents utilize the DCFS Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-25-ABUSE) in cases of suspected child abuse and /or neglect. This is done in conjunction and consultation with the agency to provide concrete support to the foster family reporting the abuse/neglect. Additionally, as part of pre-service preparation and ongoing training at regular intervals, Foster Parents are provided with information on the responsibilities of a Foster Parent and regular updates of licensing standards for foster homes and placement regulations for youth in care.

B) Written Foster Parent Acknowledgment/Contract: Upon initial licensing of a home, a placement of a child in a relative foster home and at the licensing renewal interval, all Foster Parents will be asked to sign a document that describes their role as a mandated reporter. The signature on this document acknowledges the Foster Parents' understanding of their responsibility in this area. Licensing and case managers are available to answer all questions regarding this form and its contents.

C) Training Involving Allegations Against Foster Parents and the Applicable Rules and Regulations, which Govern the Investigation of the Allegations: In orientation training with licensed Foster Parents, the agency provides the Foster Parents with information pertaining to the investigative process, including allegations of abuse or neglect that may be filed against the Foster Parent. This includes a discussion of the agency procedures and other possible ramifications, such as the Foster Parent's emotional responses to being investigated.

The agency completes a licensing investigation, in a timely, and confidential manner on all foster homes in which a licensing violation complaint or report of child abuse and neglect is made against a Foster Parent. Any violations being investigated are provided to the Foster Parents, with specific mention of the exact licensing standard alleged to have been violated, along with its section number, so that interpretation of this policy may be sought. This notification is in conjunction with a home visit from an agency licensing representative. Should the violation be substantiated, the licensing representative and the Foster Parent agree upon a specific date for correction of the violation(s). This may include offering trainings or information related to the investigation in order to increase the Foster Parents knowledge and offer opportunities to connect with other Foster Parents in the community. The agency understands the emotional trauma Foster Parents experience as a result of an investigative process. We acknowledge that as an agency we have a dual role of serving as the monitoring agent and participating with Foster Parents as a team serving the children and families. The agency explains the investigation process to the Foster Parent and conducts all activities in a professional manner. Should it be determined that the violation is such that the child(ren) in the foster home is/are at imminent risk of

harm, the notification is waived and immediate action is taken which includes removal of the children. The agency's first responsibility is always for the safety of the children in our care. For unlicensed relative homes, complaints are handled in a similar manner as stated above. Allegations of child abuse and neglect reported to the DCFS Child Abuse Hotline are investigated by the Department of Child Protection (DCP) and a concurrent investigation is conducted by the agency.

Section 13) Administrative Case Reviews and Court Hearings

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

A) Training on the Importance of Participating: On-going training efforts regarding the Foster Parents' participation in administrative case reviews, client service plans and the court process is encouraged during Foster Parent meetings, home visits and during regular contact with Foster Parents. Case managers and licensing representatives actively reinforce the importance of Foster Parents' input on the services provided for the children in their care and the agency fully supports and encourages this participation. Training in this area takes the form of formal and informal training as stated above. The agency also provides information and support to Foster Parents to be a positive participant and partner in the ACR process, court meetings and hearings. Participation can also be via phone conference. The agency acknowledges that the Foster Parent is an intricate part of the foster care process, offering support both emotionally and physically to the children that they care for.

B) Emphasis on Foster Parents Taking an Active Role in Planning for Permanency Goal through Court Hearings, Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs), Integrated Assessments, etc.: The agency is committed to providing Foster Parents training regarding: shared parenting, Administrative Case Reviews (ACR), client service plans, court processes, and their participation in the Integrated Assessment process. Initial training takes place at the time of Foster Parent pre-service training. Ongoing information is provided to Foster Parents in relation to actual events such as scheduled ACR's and court hearings. Staff ensures Foster Parents are aware of the processes including the dates and times and encourage their participation. In-service training is offered through Foster Parent support groups and Foster Parent Advisory Councils and also takes place individually as issues/questions arise. The agency is committed to ensuring that Foster Parents have the knowledge and understanding of the impact they can have on these processes. The information they can provide is invaluable as it relates to the children and families being served.

Section 14) Appeals Systems

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

A) Awareness of Agency’s Internal Appeals Systems and its Utilization: The agency provides Foster Parents both verbal and written instructions regarding their rights and about the procedures for filing an internal grievance through the Foster Parent Grievance Procedure. The agency will have grievance forms readily available to distribute to Foster Parents. One Hope United now provides foster parents, youth in care and their families the opportunity to submit grievances through an electronic grievance process – Red Flag Reporting. This new system offers a streamlined anonymous way to have grievances directed to the right person in a timely manner. Agency case managers are expected to review procedures in detail with Foster Parents so that they are clear in terms of timelines for decisions, as well as their rights within the grievance process. Foster Parents are encouraged to work first with agency staff to resolve any issues through the internal grievance process. However, Foster Parents are also provided with information on how to file an appeal through the DCFS system. Both the internal grievance process and the external appeal process are provided to Foster Parents and reviewed periodically through agency staff and Foster Parent contact. The grievance form is always available to Foster Parents in the office reception areas and on the agency website at www.onehopeunited.org or by calling the DCFS Advocacy Office at 1-800-232-3798 in Illinois or 1-217-524-2029 outside of Illinois

B) Rights of Foster Parents Spelled Out: Both the OHU Grievance Procedure and the DCFS Appeal Brochure state that the Foster Parent has a right to voice his/her concerns to the agency and DCFS and that they have a right to file a grievance/appeal at any time without fear of retaliation. Additionally, the Foster Parents are given a copy of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan during initial licensing, every year thereafter and as revisions are made to the Implementation Plan. The plan describes the process in detail and Foster Parents are provided opportunities through various avenues to ask questions or address concerns regarding these procedures.

Section 15) Accurate & Complete Records

The responsibility to know and understand the importance of maintaining accurate and relevant records regarding the child’s history and progress; and to be aware of and follow the procedures and regulations of the child welfare agency with which they are licensed or affiliated.

A) Training is Provided on the Importance of Maintaining Accurate and Complete Records: All Foster Parents (licensed and unlicensed) are provided a placement packet (folder) that should include, if applicable, documents regarding the child’s medical experiences, school reports/educational history/IEP, incidents (behavior issues, medical issues, etc.), a copy of the child’s portion of the client service plan including visitation plans with parents and siblings, the case history of the child (including how the child came into care, the child’s legal status, the permanency goal for the child, history of the child’s previous placements, and reasons for placement changes), and other relevant background information of

the child, including likes or dislikes, any prior criminal history, behavioral issues such as fire setting, perpetration of sexual abuse, destructive behavior and substance abuse habits. If this is an initial or emergency placement, the worker will provide any known information to the Foster Parent as it becomes available.

The importance of maintaining a current placement packet is discussed with the Foster Parent during visits by the agency case manager. The placement packet is also reviewed during annual licensing visits. In cases of missing and incomplete records, the case manager helps the Foster Parent obtain and complete the records. Documentation is updated and included in the placement packet on an ongoing basis. If a child is placed in another home, the Foster Parent will give this placement packet along with the health passport/medical card to the case manager. The case manager will then pass it along to the new Foster Parent, prospective adoptive parent or caregiver. Appropriate, current and accurate documentation will be maintained in the record.

B) Regulations/Expectations are Available in Writing: The agency has developed orientation materials which include what the agency expects for the Foster Parents to maintain for each youth in care. This includes the following: life books, medical evaluations, medication logs, dental exams, behavior logs, school report cards, Individualized Education Plans, allowance records, Healthworks passport, medical card and clothing receipt inventory. Materials distributed to Foster Parents during PRIDE training inform Foster Parents of the importance of maintaining accurate and current records on all youth in care. The materials distributed during PRIDE are consistent with the agency policy. The maintenance of the child's records is reinforced during initial and six-month compliance reviews with Foster Parents and during monthly home visits by case managers.

C) Agency Provides Folder, Notebook, or Case Record for the Actual Storage/Transportation of Foster Parent Records: The agency provides Foster Parents with the folder and materials to help organize the child's placement packet. It is the case manager's responsibility to periodically review the child's placement packet. At the re-placement of the child, it is the case manager's responsibility to obtain the child's placement packet and deliver the placement packet to the new Foster Parent or the biological parent. The agency believes in the value of each youth in care having a comprehensive and thorough placement packet that provides history for the Foster Parents, biological parents and their children.

Section 16) Communication with Subsequent Caregiver

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

A) Training on this Expectation is offered: The subsequent caregiver should be well informed about the youth who is placed in their home. The Foster Parent provides written or verbal information on the child's adjustment in their home to

the child welfare team. This information is made available to the subsequent caregivers by the child welfare team, where feasible. An agency case manager will inquire about the child's adjustment to the foster home and offer assistance when needed. Additionally, information, counseling, and training about loss and grief in relation to placement disruptions are provided to the Foster Parents. In the Agency's support groups, this topic is frequently addressed and supportive interventions are suggested.

One Hope United strongly supports the practice of developing and maintaining "life books" for each foster child. The life book provides a way to capture childhood memories and experiences. Foster Parents play a critical role in developing and maintaining the foster child's life book. Foster Parents are expected to maintain a life book for younger children and support older children's collection of memories. The Agency provides the life book when each new child is placed. Licensing, case manager, and therapy staff may periodically view the life book and discuss the contents of the life book with the foster child. Foster Parents are encouraged to actively work on the book with the child and may request photographs from the case manager to help create the life book. This is a useful tool to engage the child in a meaningful discussion. The life book becomes the property of the child and will accompany the child home or to the next placement. Training on Life Books is incorporated in the agency's training schedule and discussed during home visits with Foster Parents.

Section 17) Cultural Sensitivity

The responsibility to provide care and services that are respectful of and responsive to the child's cultural needs and are supportive of the relationship between the child and his/her own family; 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 to take action to address these issues. (20 ILCS 520/1-20)

A) Training Encouraged and Made Available, Both Initial and Ongoing:

During the agency Foster Parent orientation and training, emphasis is placed upon the Foster Parent's cultural sensitivity to the youth in care's background and experience. Foster Parents are also required to attend pre-service training, which deals with the promotion of a child's personal and cultural identity. In particular, the agency's spiritual development policy emphasizes respect for the family's residual right to determine the spiritual development and religious instruction of their child(ren). Foster Parents are responsible for following the agency policy on spirituality and biological parent's spiritual choice, and engaging in ongoing discussion during staffings and quarterly CFTM. At the time of placement, agency staff will partner with the Foster Parent to identify the needs and to ensure resources are provided to the Foster Parent. Staff assists by suggesting relevant materials to the Foster Parent and sharing their research. Foster Parents are expected to encourage the development of the child's culture of origin. Case managers and other agency staff working with a family are continually assessing to determine needs and assist with locating resources that

would benefit and support a family and the children in placement. Training in the area of Cultural Sensitivity and Cultural Competence is included in the annual Foster Parent trainings.

B) Internal and External Resources Made Accessible or Available:

Additionally, Foster Parents are educated in DCFS PRIDE training sessions and through regular contact with their case manager. When an area of need is identified, the Foster Parent may also contact their licensing representative to inquire about available trainings, either in the community or through DCFS. The DCFS Lending Library is also recommended to Foster Parents as a resource for them to access additional reading materials on training subjects. Our Foster Parent Advisory Councils are committed to assigning mentors specific to the child's culture to support cultural sensitivity.

Article III. Developing and Monitoring the Plan: Agency Foster Parents and Direct Service Staff Involvement.

A) The Foster Parent Law Committee, which is comprised of both Foster Parents and agency staff, is charged with revising the Implementation Plan on an annual basis and also ensuring the ongoing implementation of the plan.

B) The process of developing an annual plan occurs throughout the year with numerous contacts with Foster Parents. To provide input, Foster Parents are encouraged to attend support groups and training to address areas of need in Foster Parenting and work on plans of resolution. An annual consumer survey is sent to all Foster Parents to encourage feedback and the feedback is used to strengthen families and our programs. Input is also encouraged through contacts with case management staff, licensing resource staff, supervisors, and agency management. Our goal is to obtain more valuable feedback by having the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan on the agency's Internet site. To locate the plan, go to the agency's website at www.onehopeunited.org. You will then click on "Results", click on "Placement", click on "Foster Care" and then click on "Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan". Foster Parents are always encouraged to share ideas directly with agency staff and management. Upon a Foster Parent's request, the agency will provide a hard copy of the plan.

Appendix A

Glossary of Terms

Child Abuse/Neglect Tracking System (CANTS)

The DCFS computer system tracks unfounded and indicated reports of neglect and abuse. Indicated reports remain on file for a time period of five to fifty years, depending upon the indicated allegation(s).

Child and Family Team Meetings (CFTM)

Child and family teams consist of family members, friends, service providers, and community volunteers who are interested in providing support to local families. These teams may develop a wrap plan for the child and family.

Child Protection Investigator (CPI)

DCFS staff who are charged with investigating reports of abuse and neglect.

Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP)

Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) is a facilitator-guided, team decision-making process to improve placement preservation and increase placement stability. A CIPP staffing is conducted to determine the array and intensity of services needed for a child or youth whose current placement is threatened with disruption or whose care cannot be provided for in his/her current placement. A CIPP staffing is also conducted to determine the array and intensity of services needed for a child or youth whose placement has disrupted.

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

A CASA worker is a community volunteer who has attended the required CASA training and advocates on behalf of the child. CASA workers have access to the child's case record file and the juvenile court file. They have the authority to meet face to face with biological parents, Foster Parents, children and workers in order to glean information needed to make recommendations to the court. Juvenile Court Judges determine if a CASA worker should be appointed to juvenile cases.

DCFS Administrative Case Reviews (ACR)

DCFS Administrative Case Reviews are scheduled by DCFS and held at the following case junctures: 90 days after case opening, six months after case opening, and every six months thereafter that the child remains in foster care. Usually the reviews are held at the DCFS Field Office closest to the biological parents' home. These reviews are for the purpose of going over the client service plan; looking at the case objectives and seeing if the necessary services are being provided; reviewing parent progress; discussing the child with regard to their foster care placement adjustment, school, and medical care; and overseeing progress toward the child's permanency goal.

DCFS Advocacy Office for Children and Families

Formerly known as the DCFS Ombudsman's Office, this office seeks to provide help in resolving concerns or complaints regarding services provided by DCFS and POS agencies. The toll-free phone number is 1-800-232-3798.

DCFS Guardianship Administrator

The DCFS Guardianship Administrator serves as the legal guardian for children under DCFS care. Some DCFS Field Office staff are designated as authorized agents for the Guardianship Administrator and can sign for some types of consents for youth in care.

DCFS State Central Registry (SCR Hotline)

The State Central Registry is the statewide hotline that receives the initial reports of abuse and/or neglect. Their toll free number is 1-800-252-2873.

Division of Child Protection (DCP)

This is the division of DCFS that investigates reports of abuse and neglect.

Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)

The Guardian Ad Litem is a court appointed officer or agent of the court whose responsibility is to protect the best interest of the child and represent the child in Juvenile Court. They are invited to the DCFS Administrative Case Reviews. A copy of the client service plan is provided to them.

Individualized Education Plan/Program (IEP)

Individualized Education Plan/Program (IEP) is the document prepared by the public school district pursuant to 23 Ill. Adm. Code 226 which identifies the specific special education services, class placement, and related services that will be provided to a child. The IEP also includes education goals, and service frequency, quantity and duration. The services delineated in the child's IEP are based on the results of the multidisciplinary conferences conducted by the child's public school district.

Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)

The Individual Family Service Plan is a written plan for a child ages zero to three who is receiving special educational services. It is similar to an IEP, but is designed to only serve children that are ages zero to three.

Integrated Assessment (IA)

The Integrated Assessment is a comprehensive clinical understanding of the child from the moment he/she enters into care. The Integrated Assessment is completed by the collaboration of both DCFS staff and private agency staff. The biological parents, Foster Parents, youth in care, schools and community resources participate in interviews that ultimately create the assessment. The Integrated Assessment is then utilized to build the service plan for the family. The Integrated Assessment is updated every six months.

Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS)

The Intensive Placement Stabilization network is designed to provide short-term services, interventions and support to children and youth with emotional and/or behavioral problems who are identified as being at risk of placement disruption. Although IPS interventions are initially planned to run for six-month intervals, the length of the intervention may be shorter or longer depending on the needs of the individual child.

Law Enforcement Agencies Data System (LEADS)

The Law Enforcement Agencies Data System is used to access information on criminal backgrounds of individuals. There is a protocol in place that prohibits access to the system for any reason other than those specifically allowed by DCFS rule and procedure.

Local Area Networks (LANS)

The State of Illinois has 62 Child and Adolescent LANs whose purpose is the prevention of children entering foster care by providing community services to local families who need help. LAN members are volunteers from Illinois governmental departments, schools, community agencies, churches, businesses, and local organizations who have an interest in supporting families. All children and families (community children and youth in care) are eligible to receive services through the LAN. Youth in care may receive services in order to help maintain their current placement and prevent having to move to more restrictive settings. For more information you may contact the Foster Parent LAN Liaison by calling 1-800-871-8400 or visiting the LAN web site at www.systemofcareillinois.com.

Mandamus

An order issued by a circuit court, ordering a public official, body or lower court to perform a specified duty.

Mandated Reporter

Mandated reporters are those people who are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect. All Foster Parents, licensed or unlicensed, are mandated reporters for ONLY those youth placed in their care. However, as a concerned citizen, Foster Parents may report any suspected child abuse or neglect of any child; they are just not required legally to do so.

One Hope United (OHU)

Child Welfare and Human Service Private Agency.

Purchase of Service (POS)

DCFS contracts with private child welfare agencies, such as One Hope United, to serve DCFS clients. Private child welfare agencies that contract with DCFS are referred to as POS agencies.

Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS)

A DCFS statewide electronic record for all DCFS clients.

Screening, Assessment, and Support Services (SASS)

DCFS contracts with SASS to provide mental health screenings, assessments, and support services for those youth in care that appear to be ready to harm themselves or others. If necessary, they arrange for them to be hospitalized for inpatient psychiatric treatment.

Strengthening Families Initiative

Strengthening Families is an initiative that involves child welfare and early childhood centers who work with families to build protective factors around children in order to reduce abuse and neglect.

The six protective factors include the following:

1. Enhance Parental Resilience;
2. Develop Social Connections;
3. Build Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development;
4. Offer Concrete Support in Times of Need;
5. Foster Social and Emotional Competence of Children;
6. Promote Healthy Parent-Child Relationship.

It is a strength based model which allows families to build upon their strengths to keep families healthy and children safe.

Appendix B

Forms Mentioned in the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan

Acknowledgement of Policy Prohibiting Corporal Punishment (One Hope United Form)

This form is signed by every newly licensed Foster Parent acknowledging that they understand that the use of corporal punishment on children who are cared for by One Hope United is prohibited and not tolerated by the agency.

Child/Caregiver Matching Tool (CFS 2017/DCFS Form)

The Child/Caregiver Matching Tool is completed prior to a child being placed in a foster home. This is one of the agency's tools for matching children with Foster Families.

Foster Home Licensing Confidentiality Agreement (OHU-934)

The Foster Home Licensing Confidentiality Agreement is provided to Foster Parents to ensure privacy practices related to the children being placed in their home are respected. Agency Foster Parents are asked to initial and sign this document as record of their understanding and agreement, of their responsibility in protecting the confidentiality of youth in care who are in the care of the Department of Children and Family Services and One Hope United. This form is reviewed with Foster Parents during the initial licensing process as well as during the renewal licensing process.

Foster Family/Child Matching Survey (Agency Form)

This form is completed by the Foster Parents upon initial licensing. The form provides a means by which the Foster Parents can inform the agency of children's traits/behaviors that they feel they can or cannot accept and/or handle. This is one of the agency's tools for matching children with Foster Families.

Foster Home Placement Agreement (Agency Form)

Foster Home Placement Agreement is reviewed and signed by the agency and Traditional Foster Parents at the time of placement and by Relative Foster Parents at the time of licensure. This form identifies all involved parties and contact information as well as a description of the amount the Foster Parent will receive for board, allowance and clothing for the youth in care.

Foster Parent Confidentiality Agreement (Agency Form)

The Foster Parent Confidentiality Agreement is signed by both newly licensed and current Foster Parents. The form ensures that privacy practices related to the children being placed in the home are respected and agreed upon by the Foster Parent(s) and the agency.

Foster Parent Grievance Form (Agency Form)

One Hope United provides a formal process for Foster Parents to file a grievance. Foster Parents are to complete the electronic form via www.RedFlagReporting.com or the Foster Parent Grievance form when their issue or concern remains unresolved after speaking with their case manager or licensing representative. The Foster Parent Grievance Procedure contains instructions for the Foster Parents on how to file the grievance. The Foster Parent Grievance Form can be located at the bottom of each page on the One Hope United website at www.onehopeunited.org.

Foster Parent Law and Implementation Plan Agreement (Agency Form)

This form is signed by newly licensed and current Foster Parents to acknowledge that they have received a copy of the current Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan for One Hope United.

Licensing Investigation Notification Form (Agency Form)

The purpose of this form is to inform the Foster Parent of their right to have a witness or an attorney or a support person; such as a pastor, friend, relative, etc., present during a licensing investigation.

Notice of Decision Form (CFS 151) and Change in Placement Form (CFS 151-F) (DCFS Form)

When an agency decision has been made to remove a child from their foster home, the case manager completes the above forms and provides them to the Foster Parent. The Notice of Change of Placement form provides the Foster Parent with the following: the date of the move; the reasons the decision was made for the change of placement; the Foster Parents right to request a Clinical Placement Review and how to contact the Clinical Placement Review Team.

DCFS forms can be located at:

http://www.state.il.us/dcfs/library/com_communications_forms.shtml

Appendix C

One Hope United Foster Care Locations:

Central Region:

One Hope United
701 Monroe
Charleston, IL 61920
217-345-6554

Northern Region:

One Hope United
707 E. 47th Street
Chicago, IL 60653
312-949-5500

One Hope United
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