



Annual Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan 2025



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Bethany for Children & Families' mission is to keep children safe, to strengthen families, and to build healthy communities.

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FOSTER PARENT LAW

Bethany for Children & Families (hereafter Bethany) provides supervision and guidance to applicant foster parents and/or adoptive parents in Illinois for foster home and/or adoptive home licensing. Foster parent applicants are required to complete 31.5 hours of pre-service training, 15 hours of supplemental training, complete the fingerprinting process in order for the agency to obtain the most recent Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) background results, and provide references, medical clearances, and other supportive documentation outlined by the Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS). Once licensed, Bethany continuously works with the foster parents to ensure they are aware of the services provided to the children in their care. Bethany endorses the rights and responsibilities of foster parents as defined in the Foster Parent Law (Public Act 89.19). The agency views this as an ongoing process which involves the invaluable feedback of foster parents, foster home licensing representatives, and all other direct line foster care staff. Bethany submits the following implementation plan as documentation of its conformity with this law.

Printed copies of the Implementation Plan as well as the Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure are available at any time a foster parent requests one. Additionally, there are mailings twice a year where each foster parent receives the Implementation Plan, and the Grievance Procedure sent to them directly via the United States Postal Service. The Foster Parent Implementation Plan and Grievance Procedure have been added as a resource foster parents may access through the agency's website: www.Bethany-qc.org. Comments or suggestions throughout the year can be made by contacting the Licensing Supervisor or the foster parent's assigned Licensing Representative.

FOSTER PARENT RIGHTS

The Foster Parent Law ensures foster parents are included in a majority of case management activities and seen as professional members of the Case Management Team. The following is Bethany's implementation plan for making sure foster parents' rights are followed.

Dignity and Respect

1. The right to be treated with dignity, respect, and consideration as a professional member of the Child Welfare Team.

Bethany for Children & Families mission is to keep children safe, to strengthen families, and to build healthy communities. To achieve this mission, the agency believes dignity, respect, and consideration are paramount. Case workers are continuously trained in how to respect the rights and dignity of clients, foster parents, and family members. All child welfare staff of the agency are instructed that anything less than the demonstration of full respect for foster parents is not tolerated. Staff may receive this training through the initial training required through the Department of Children & Family Services, new employee orientation at Bethany, job shadowing with experienced caseworkers, as well as during weekly supervision, monthly

unit meetings, and in-service trainings. Any issues concerning dignity, respect, and consideration of foster parents will be addressed during supervision and a solution will be considered.

Caseworkers meet a minimum of once a month with agency foster parents (if a foster child is residing in the home) to discuss the medical, behavioral, emotional, and educational needs of the child. The caseworker also discusses the permanency, safety, and well-being needs of the child. The caseworker also discusses the progress or lack of progress of the child, any program changes, and seeks foster parent response and input into case issues. After a child is initially placed in a home and any subsequent placement changes, the caseworker meets with the family within 72 hours in the foster home to assess how the child and foster parents are doing. If the child is in Specialized Foster Care or an unlicensed relative foster home, then the caseworker meets with the family a minimum of two times per month in the foster home. Additionally, a third visit must occur either within the foster home or in the community for a specialized youth-in-care. If foster parents do not have youth-in-care in their home, they meet with the licensing representative every six months and are provided the opportunity to share recent experiences with the placement process. The licensing representative is also responsible for making sure foster parents are treated with respect. Licensing representatives may do this through talking to the Foster Care Caseworker or their supervisor directly if appropriate, requesting a Child and Family Team Meeting, having an internal staffing amongst coworkers, or discussions with their supervisor during supervision.

Foster parent phone calls to the caseworker are returned in a timely manner, ideally within 24 hours. Foster parents may also contact a caseworker/supervisor through an emergency on-call system, during holidays, weekends, and after hours during the week if necessary. Foster parents are encouraged to use this on call emergency system for only emergencies when the agency is not open. Foster parents can also use email to contact their caseworker as well as the licensing staff. The foster parent and caseworker respect confidentiality by not using the child's name in the email. The foster parent and the caseworker are to use initials during email correspondence. Many questions can be answered quickly through the ability to text back and forth, with only using the child's initials. This has helped the response time and provided a satisfactory resolution to many immediate concerns. However, texting/emailing does not replace the significance of speaking on the phone or in person when either party does not understand what is being expressed to them through written communication.

Bethany uses a team approach in which all foster parents are encouraged to be active participants. The foster care team's input is important in the establishment of court-related objectives and service plan goals. The caseworker notifies the foster parent of meetings that pertain to the foster child. They have been trained to attempt to schedule times when the foster parent can attend. However, there are times when both birth parents and foster parents may have conflicting schedules, and the meeting will then have to occur when the birth parent's schedule allows. Each foster parent is asked to identify any issues or special concerns about a child in order for these issues to be addressed and documented in the client service plan. Any changes made to the service plan pertaining to the child, visitation plan, or

permanency goal are communicated to the foster parent within 48 hours, or sooner, of the change.

Foster parents have shared with Bethany staff that sometimes just having validation on how they feel is the best response a staff member can give them even when a staff member cannot change a decision which was made. Furthermore, foster parents shared that they appreciate when a caseworker acknowledged their questions and even if they cannot tell the foster parents' specific information, being told the caseworker cannot release that information is adequate, instead of being ignored or not given an answer at all. Bethany believes encouraging foster parents through the trials and tribulations of foster care will help reduce burnout. Therefore, staff continue to be trained to be active listeners when working with foster parents.

Newer foster parents inquired this year (2024) to have a specific outline for the chain of command should they ever need it. They have asked who their advocate is should they need assistance. Bethany for Children & Families has developed a document which will be placed in their foster parent binder given to foster parents at the time of initial placement. The chain of command will mirror the grievance procedure chains of command but will be provided in a simplified version for quick reminder should they forget. Foster parents are informed their licensing representative is their advocate and will appropriately advocate on their behalf.

The licensing representative is also responsible for making sure the foster parents are treated with respect. Licensing representatives will ask foster parents to give any feedback on how staff members interact with them. If there are areas of concern with how they are being treated, licensing representatives will reach out to their Licensing Supervisor and/or the caseworker or the caseworker's supervisor to find a way to mitigate the level of disrespect a foster parent is experiencing. Bethany hopes to instill in the staff a level of awareness on how they may be perceived to the clientele staff with whom they work. As a result, staff has been informed about any sensitive information which could be taken in a negative way and should not be written in an email but rather discussed over the phone or in person where the foster parents are able to pick up on non-verbal cues and ask clarifying questions at the time of the discussion. When any staff member is made aware of a foster parent who is not feeling respected, Bethany expects staff to make changes in how they interact with the foster parent if the foster parent's concerns are valid. Supervisors will discuss any areas of concern regarding a worker's interaction with a foster parent during weekly supervision when made known to the supervisor.

In 2017, the DCFS instituted the Normalcy Parenting Policy. Normalcy Parenting empowers the foster parent to make common sense decisions without seeking prior approval or consent from the caseworker or other foster care staff. This policy, along with the chart of decisions that the foster parent is allowed to make, is distributed yearly to all foster parents and is contained in the foster care binder that they receive when a child is placed in their home. "Normalcy: Reasonable and Prudent Parenting," is a 30-minute training on the DCFS training website and is required viewing for all foster parents not previously taken in PRIDE prior to their four-year license renewal. Licensing representatives are continuously reminding foster parents of this policy during in-home monitoring visits, via email, on the phone, or during other in person

interactions. This policy is sent out each time the agency chooses to mail foster parents' pertinent information throughout the year, which is a minimum of two times each year.

Foster parents are provided opportunities to discuss concerns, training needs, and to provide feedback multiple times through the year through caseworker-substitute caregiver visits, semi-annual and annual licensing monitors, and when asked to review and endorse the agency's implementation plan. Discussions with the foster parents also include whether they feel supported, treated fairly, and treated as members of the foster care team. Periodically, Bethany sends out a satisfaction survey to solicit feedback to improve services in order to provide efficient, effective service delivery and achieve the program goals. Each foster parent is encouraged to honestly report how they perceive the agency, and its' staff members are doing and are reminded change cannot occur if they do not honestly report their experiences.

Training

2. The right to be provided standardized pre-service training and appropriate ongoing training to meet mutually assessed needs and improve the foster parent's skills.

Bethany recognizes that all members of the foster care team should have access to quality training and have many opportunities to meet the needs of quality training for foster parents. This is particularly important since the children served may have more complex needs.

The initial training process, PRIDE Pre-Service, is required of all foster parents and is a collaborative effort among potential foster parents, foster home licensing representatives, and the PRIDE Caregiver Training Department. Traditional foster parents will complete 31.5 hours of training and online LGBTQI+ prior to being issued a foster care license. Traditional homes will complete PRIDE Redesign Pre-Service either in a virtual, online, or in-person class. In-person and virtual classes mirror each other with participants attending 16 sessions (including an orientation) and completing LGBTQI+ online. Online PRIDE Redesign Pre-Service participants will complete 31 hours online (including an orientation) and participate in three facilitated discussions. The facilitated discussions are held virtually utilizing the co-trainer model. Participants must complete LGBTQI+ online in addition to the PRIDE Redesign Pre-Service.

Home of Relative (HMR) foster parents and Home of Fictive Kin (HFK) are required to take a condensed version of PRIDE familiarizing them with the foster care system and how trauma impacts children. As of July 2024, the training department has rolled out an updated version of the Home of Relative / Home of Fictive Kin training. It is a total of twelve hours, which can be taken in person or virtually with a trainer. The DVD version of the Home of Relative training will no longer be accepted.

During the COVID 19 pandemic (March 2020), all foster parent training classes offered through the DCFS were converted to virtual classes. Starting in July 2022, in-person classes were scheduled and held by request. Starting in July 2023, additional in-person classes are being held throughout the state. Currently, most families prefer virtual classes to in-person classes. All of

the DCFS PRIDE training classes utilize the dual-trainer model, one being a foster/adoptive parent and the other employed in child welfare. Bethany encourages either virtual or in-person training for both pre-service and in-service to allow for the interaction of trainers with lived experience. Participants have the option of on-demand/online training which, while acceptable for in-service, is discouraged for pre-service training. Bethany believes that the information gained from the interaction of trainers (asking questions and hearing additional information from other participants asking questions) is a valuable resource.

The DCFS introduced the Learning Development Center (LDC) in July 2023. The new training system allows families to self-register for in-service training (with the exception of Adoption/Guardianship Readiness). Families have struggled with the new LDC system. To help with this, Bethany held a training for families to review and sign up for the new system during one of the monthly support/training meetings. The new LDC system allows foster families to view in-service classes when they want rather than waiting for a licensing worker to visit them and self-register for classes, they think will benefit them and fit their schedule. LDC also has a section reserved for the DCFS-approved third-party vendor training classes. This section offers many trainings that are subject-specific for foster parents.

Since January 2000, foster parents have been the educational advocates for the youth-in-care in their homes. Educational Advocacy covers the rights and responsibilities of special education and is required by the DCFS. One foster parent from each home must complete Educational Advocacy prior to renewing their license in four years. However, it is highly recommended that the class be taken within the first six months of the license and both foster parents complete the training in a two-parent home.

Bethany recognizes the importance of foster parents receiving appropriate training and support. In August 2014, Bethany contracted with a certified trainer to provide monthly training for foster parents. These **two-hour in-person** monthly support/training meetings continue today to expand foster parents' knowledge of the PRIDE competencies. The licensing workers, trainer, and group work on a tentative yearly schedule with topics the group would like to explore. There is an emphasis on working with children who have experienced trauma and giving foster parents tools to adequately care for them in their home by incorporating different, but relevant, topics each month. When the training is cancelled for any reason, foster parents will be given notice as soon as possible. They will then be notified if it is rescheduled for a different date. When foster parents expressed childcare was a barrier to attending training, Bethany responded by having agency staff watch the children on site as a way for foster parents to have the ability to attend. Also, Bethany offers dinner for the foster parents and youth present at the time of the training.

Virtual training has proven to be impersonal and not always able to meet the needs that some youth-in-care requires as well as in-person training does. Bethany did offer training during the COVID 19 pandemic, but attendance was low and often non-existent. Bethany returned to in-person monthly support/training meetings in June 2021. These regularly scheduled monthly meetings allow for foster parents to exchange resources and assist foster parents in developing

a support network that allows foster parents a place to discuss some of the sensitive issues of being a foster parent in a confidential setting. Providing childcare has been critical since many foster parents had expressed this was a barrier to attending training.

Bethany has struggled to find affordable Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training and/or find time available for the training and the space to accommodate the CPR training on site at Bethany. As a result, Bethany will consider reimbursing a foster parent, who has a waterway on their property, if they take the training off site. Reimbursement will be determined on an individual basis. Families need to submit a receipt and certification to be reimbursed.

Bethany held the following **in-person** trainings:

- “Drugs and Internet Safety for our Youth-in-care,” November 2023;
- “Youth Care Overview,” January 2024;
- “Paperwork, Important Meetings, and Deadlines,” February 2024;
- “Trauma and Foster Care,” March 2024;
- “Human Trafficking,” April 2024;
- “Foster Parent Self Care and Relaxation Techniques,” May 2024
- “Positive Psychology,” June 2024
- “Foster Parent De-escalation Techniques and Review of the Implementation Plan,” July 2024
- “Vocational School Opportunities and Review of the Implementation Plan,” August 2024
- “Train Safety and Review of the Implementation Plan and Grievance Procedure,” September 2024
- “Resiliency and Childhood Stress,” October 2024
- “Safety and Security,” November 2024

The co-trainer model has been used and will continue to be used in the future. Most of the monthly training sessions have involved a guest speaker who collaborates with the Bethany trainer to provide accurate and appropriate information about the training topics. A co-trainer has been beneficial by giving more specific and accurate information to foster parents. It also allows the foster parents to ask the co-trainer questions and share their experiences. A Youth Care supervisor spoke at the Youth Care Overview training, a caseworker from Family Resources spoke at the Human Trafficking training, therapist, Brandon Kutmas, presented at the Positive Psychology training, a Moline Police Officer, Nate Hoover, spoke at the Foster Parent De-escalation Techniques training and also at the training on drugs and internet safety, two teachers from the high school (one a Bethany foster parent) spoke at the Vocational School Opportunities training, and a Bethany foster parent presented at the Resiliency and Childhood Stress training.

There are many opportunities for the team to review ongoing training opportunities as they relate to the specialized needs of the children in the foster family’s home. Foster parents and the licensing representative meet during the announced and unannounced monitoring visit and caseworkers meet with families during the monthly foster parent visit. During monitoring visits,

the licensing representative discusses required training for license renewal with the foster parents and opportunities for additional training including:

- Utilizing the LDC to review upcoming training classes;
- Leaving families with handouts on accessing the new system;
- Looking at the DCFS LDC Third Party Vendor training opportunities;
- Checking out their local library to access resources;
- Seeing what topics other foster parent support groups ask for (both in-person and virtual); and
- Accessing additional opportunities through specialists such as a therapist.

In addition, when Bethany receives information about community or outside training classes, licensing representatives will email all families who have consented to mass emails from the agency to allow foster parents the ability to attend on their own if they choose.

Contact with the Agency

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

Bethany understands the importance of having a caseworker available at all times to address issues a foster parent may have during their 24-hour care of children. During normal business hours, the child's specific caseworker can be contacted by office phone, the caseworker's cell phone, and via email. If their caseworker is unavailable, foster parents can reach out to their caseworker's supervisor should they need an immediate response which cannot wait. During times when a caseworker goes on vacation, takes a medical leave of absence, has military duty, etc., foster parents will be informed of who they can contact in their caseworker's absence. A temporary caseworker will be assigned to address any situation which may occur in their regular caseworker's absence for an extended period of time off.

In addition, foster parents can obtain support after hours in case of emergency by utilizing the on-call system. The agency has a 24-hour on-call system in order to be available in this capacity. This system is managed by rotating staff responsible for emergencies on a weekly basis. This number is provided in writing in the foster care binder and is also on the automated voicemail system for the agency during non-business hours. Caseworkers remind foster parents during home visits about the on-call system and provide business cards with the on-call number, given out at the time a child is placed. The on call after hours phone numbers currently are: **309.235.5876 or 309.797.7700, select option 2.**

Each Bethany foster home receives a list of resources for support and information in the child's foster care binder. The list includes telephone numbers for the Inspector General, Advocacy Office, the Foster Parent Hotline, DCFS's Emergency Medical Consents, and the Crisis and

Referral Entry Services (CARES) line. Also listed in the binder are the names and telephone numbers of the caseworker's supervisor, the Guardian ad Litem, and the Child Abuse Reporting Hotline.

Bethany caseworkers also review with the foster parents the many resources available in the community to meet a child's needs. The foster parents are encouraged to participate in additional support services for the child, such as Birth to Three, Head Start, Child Care Resource & Referral, Robert Young Mental Health Center, and Wraparound services. Foster parents are also explained the Therapeutic Recreational Program offered through Bethany. If the child could benefit from this program, foster parents are explained the requirements for a child to be able to engage in this service. A list of commonly used referral sources is provided in the foster care binder that comes with each child in placement. Foster care staff strive to deliver the binder to the foster parents who accept a child at the time of the child's placement. There are times when this binder is not readily available and able to be delivered to the foster parent at the time of initial placement. Foster care staff will ensure foster parents have the binder supplied to them as soon as possible once a child is placed in their home.

Timely Financial Reimbursement

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

Another way that Bethany shows foster parents the dignity and respect they deserve is by reimbursing them in a timely manner for the professional services they provide.

Bethany provides case management services for youth-in-care in two levels of foster care: Traditional and Specialized Foster Care. Foster parents are reimbursed according to the foster care program in which the child is served. Foster parents who are licensed relatives or traditional are paid directly by Bethany's Business Office. As of July 1, 2021, unlicensed relatives are also paid by Bethany. All foster parents are also able to collect additional reimbursement for non-recurring expenses such as clothing, camp fees, activity fees, and educational expenses on an individual basis. Foster parents are informed of the process to receive additional reimbursements by their caseworker and reviewed by the supervisor. Bethany always wants to minimize any financial hardships a foster parent may experience; however, financial compensation is not always guaranteed for items a foster family may need.

The majority of youth-in-care are in a standard level of care. However, if a foster child has significant behavioral, emotional, physical, or educational issues, Bethany will schedule a Clinical Intervention to Preserve Placement (CIPP) with the DCFS. At that time, the child's needs are discussed and the CIPP team decides whether the child meets the criteria for his/her level of care to increase from Traditional to Specialized Foster Care. If an increase in the level of care is approved, the board payment for the child increases. The Bethany caseworker will notify the Business Office of this change. Once the DCFS sends approval to Bethany's Business Office, the foster parent is reimbursed accordingly.

Bethany's goal is to reimburse foster parents promptly and accurately. Three business days is the normal turn-around time after the first of the month for the board payment to be issued. Bethany was informed this year at a training, Youth Care, the insurance provider for all children in foster care, has programs to pay for mileage to and from appointments. There are other incentive programs foster parents may use through the child's insurance provider. Bethany staff members have supplied foster parents with documents explaining how to submit mileage to Youth Care to be reimbursed. This is the current format being utilized at Bethany for foster parents who want to receive mileage reimbursement.

Reimbursement requests for other approved expenses, such as respite, camp, tutoring, etc. that are submitted by Tuesday of a business week, holidays excluded, will be paid on the 10th and the 25th of the month. If a foster parent is receiving a special feed, it is sent with their monthly board check.

When a caseworker completes a CFS 906 Placement/Payment Authorization Form for a child, a copy is sent to the Business Office within 24 hours. If the Business Office receives verification from the DCFS that the foster home can be paid for that time period, the payment is made. The Program Supervisor reviews the current billing each month prior to monthly board runs to ensure accuracy. If payment problems or delays arise and the foster parents are unable to resolve the issue with the caseworker, they may contact the caseworker's supervisor, who will consult the agency Business Office. If they are unable to resolve the issue at this supervisory level, they may call the agency's Illinois Director of Child Welfare and Placement Services, or they may file a grievance. Foster parents receive information concerning Bethany's grievance procedure during the licensing process and with the yearly implementation plan. Additionally, at the time of placement of each child in an agency foster home, a copy of the agency's grievance procedure is in the foster care binder provided to the foster parents.

Bethany offers two different ways to be reimbursed. Foster parents can choose to receive a paper check which they are mailed each month, or they can set up direct deposit and receive it directly into their bank account. Foster parents are informed of the option of direct deposit at the time a child is placed in their home. If they choose direct deposit, foster parents are given the paperwork to complete from either their caseworker or licensing worker, along with the email address for the accounting department, in order to initiate the start of being paid through direct deposit.

Placement Planning

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

Upon initial placement of a child in a home, foster parents are given what is called a "906-1" form. A 906-1 form is a **written** document stating the child is officially placed with the foster parents at the address listed on the form through the Department of Children and Family Services. This form allows foster parents to get the child enrolled in school or day care.

It is the standard operating procedure in Rock Island, Mercer, and Henry counties to form and conduct Child and Family Team meetings for youth-in-care. At the 14th day and the 40th day of a child being in foster care, a Child and Family Team meeting is held to review why a child has come in to care, what issues need to be resolved, and any current barriers impeding the child returning home. The foster parents are invited to be a member of this team and to participate with the other members of the treatment team, including family members, and the child (if appropriate) in the development of goals for the case.

Biological parents must consent to foster parents attending their portion of the Child and Family Team Meeting. If they are uncomfortable with a foster parent being present, the foster parent may be asked to leave the room during the discussion regarding the biological parents' service plan and progress or lack of progress. Foster parents are encouraged to give an update on what they observe with the child's adjustment, progress, and development since the child has been living in their home. On occasion, it may be unsafe or inappropriate to conduct a Child and Family Team Meeting with both foster and biological parents present. In these instances, both foster and biological parents are allowed separate Child and Family Team Meetings. The ongoing Child and Family Team meetings are required quarterly to continue to monitor the case's progress and obtain information from the team which can be put into writing via service plans or court reports.

Through ongoing collaboration with foster parents, Bethany allows foster parents to receive the child's portion of the service plan as soon as it is developed. Any revisions or updates are provided to foster parents in a timely manner. Information provided in the written service plan includes all known information on medical, psychological, and behavioral needs; educational history; visitation plan; case history; child's legal status; permanency goal of the child; and any previous placements and reasons for change in placement.

Further, it is the practice of Bethany caseworkers to discuss the rating of the client service plan and the content of the new service plan with the foster parent prior to the Administrative Case Review (ACR). With this procedure, the foster parents' input can be obtained before the ACR.

In addition, Bethany foster parents are also trained and provided information on the opportunity to participate in the Family Reunification Support Special Service Fee program. This encourages foster parents to be involved with biological parents in the process of reunification. The incentive/reimbursement for foster parents is for the work they do mentoring and role-modeling to better prepare biological parents for their children returning home.

The foster parents are consulted in regard to the visitation schedule that is set between the caseworker and birthparent. A youth-in-care's school schedule, extracurricular activities, additional services, and the foster family's schedules are always considered in determining the best day and time for visitation. There may be times when a visit must interfere in any of the above-listed activities. However, Bethany's staff understand the importance of children being able to participate in other activities alongside their peers, creating normalcy for a child in foster care. Therefore, the agency will attempt to limit interruptions during a child's extracurricular activities. In return, the foster parent will keep the caseworker informed of any changes in his/her schedule that affects visitation. All relatives are assessed in regard to their ability to supervise parent/child visits. When this is approved by the agency, the relative foster parent and biological parent can coordinate a visitation plan that is more open regarding days and times as long as it remains safe to do so.

Investigations

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

Since July 2009, Bethany's licensing representatives have been responsible for logging, investigating, and resolving all complaints on the agency's foster homes and reporting the outcomes to the DCFS. The licensing staff members follow Procedure 383 to conduct stand alone or concurrent investigations when there has been a licensing complaint or child abuse investigation. Foster parents receive notice of this through the CFS 596-29 form, the Right to Have an Advocate Present, which is presented to them at the time of this worker's in-home visit prior to the investigation being discussed. Foster parents have the choice to either request an advocate or they will waive their right to have an advocate present before signing the form. If a foster parent wishes to have an advocate present, licensing staff must allow at least four hours before returning to the foster home with the advocate present.

While there is a licensing investigation, licensing workers will respond either immediately if the situation warrants it, or within two days of the complaint. Licensing workers are required to show up unannounced at any time of the day/night during the investigation.

In the case of a concurrent investigation, the DCFS investigator also provides the foster parents with a written statement of all their rights and asks if they have a clear understanding of those rights. Bethany licensing staff is permitted and encouraged to attend the initial home visit with the investigator. Foster parents are informed that the DCP investigation should not take longer than 30 days from first receiving the report, and if a longer amount of time is required, they are notified in writing regarding the need for an additional 30 days. Foster parents are notified of the DCFS licensing decision within five days of determination in a certified letter. They are also informed that they have a right to appeal against the decision.

While there is a licensing investigation, the foster parents are first notified by the licensing worker that there is a concern regarding the non-compliance with a licensing standard, what the standard is, and to what it pertains. The source of the complaint is not disclosed if concerns were raised by someone other than the licensing staff. The foster parents are provided with detailed accounts of which licensing standards have been violated. Further, they are instructed in a Corrective Plan as to how to meet the standard, the timeframe for completion, and who is responsible for specific duties in order to meet the standard. Most violations can be corrected within 30 days. If extra time is needed to complete the corrections, two additional 30-day extensions can be granted. If the licenser or Program Supervisor determines that a Protective Plan should be put in place, the foster home is notified of the details of the plan, including who the plan covers and who can be present with the foster child. During the Protective Plan, the home is monitored by licensing staff on an unannounced basis. The Protective Plan is dismissed upon completion of the licensing investigation and when any compliance issues are corrected.

Foster parents can appeal licensing violations by requesting a Supervisory Review with the Bethany Licensing Supervisor. A letter is mailed to the foster parents indicating that they must request a Supervisory Review in writing, and that it must be mailed, emailed, or faxed within ten days from the postmark of the letter. Foster parents have the right to request an Informal Review for a failed Corrective Plan with the DCFS Licensing Supervisor. A letter is mailed to the foster parent indicating that they must request an Informal Review in writing, and that it must be mailed, emailed, or faxed within ten days from the postmark of the letter.

Additional Information on the Child

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

At the time the caseworker places a child with foster parents, the worker must provide available information known at that time either verbally or by written documentation necessary for the proper care of the child. This procedure is further mandated by the development of the Sharing Information with the Caregiver, CFS 600-4, which is a checklist for caseworkers to go through with foster parents to show that information has been provided. If the written items are not available at the time of placement, the caseworker has **ten days** to provide the information in writing. The foster parent signs the CFS 600-4 acknowledging that he/she has

received the information. A copy is forwarded to the Guardian ad Litem and to the Program Supervisor.

At the Program Supervisor's discretion and with signed consent of the parents, the foster parents may be invited to the initial family meeting that will occur no later than 45 days after the child's placement, in order to share information among all participants; review the initial and comprehensive assessments; discuss and prepare the initial service plan; and determine the permanency goal.

Prior to inviting foster parents to the initial family meeting and all subsequent Child and Family Team meetings, the caseworker must consider the statutory requirement that protects foster parents' names, addresses, and telephone numbers from disclosure. Such information regarding the foster parent may not be disclosed to the child's parents at the initial Child and Family Team meeting.

Child and Family Team Meetings should be held quarterly to address any additional information the agency has been made aware of and to discuss the strengths, areas or improvement, adjustment, etc. of the child in the foster home. Bethany strives to ensure staff and foster parents remain in communication with one another to service the children and both biological and foster parents as well. When there are communication breakdowns, Bethany supervisors or the Division Director will assess the situation and look to find ways to mitigate future incidents of miscommunication during regular supervision.

Caseworkers review on a monthly basis (or more frequently if necessary) concerns about the child with the foster parents. If changes are made concerning the care or needs of the child, the service plan is revised and reviewed with the child (if age appropriate), foster parents, and the biological parents. The agency requires any changes made to areas of the service plan that concern the child be provided to the foster parent verbally within 48 hours. Any additional information regarding the child is given to the foster parents verbally and in writing during monthly home visits, or more often as needed. This information pertains to the child's educational, physical, emotional, and mental health issues. The Program Supervisor ensures during monthly supervision that the caseworker is sharing all necessary information about the child with the foster parents.

The inclusion of foster parents in the Child and Family Team process facilitates the timely exchange of information, and they are a key component of the team. Bethany staff, through the DCFS, are trained upon new employment and during foundations training concerning the issues of confidentiality and the guidelines regarding the dissemination of information about children.

Written Information Regarding a Child

8. The right to be give information concerning a child: i) from the Department as required under subsection u of Section 5 of the Children and Family Services Act; and ii) from a child welfare agency as required under subsection (c-5) of Section 7.4 of the Child Care Act of 1969.

At the time the caseworker places a child with a foster parent or prospective adoptive parent, or prior to placement of the child, whenever possible, the worker must provide available information in writing about the child necessary for the proper care of the child to the foster parent or prospective adoptive parent.

Bethany will provide the following information to the caregiver:

- The medical history of the child including known medical problems or communicable diseases, information concerning immunization status of the child, and insurance and medical card information.
- The educational history of the child, including any special educational needs and details of the child's individualized educational plan (IEP) and Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP) when the child is receiving special education services or 504 Special Educational Needs Plan, if applicable;
- A copy of the child's portion of the client service plan including any visitation arrangements and all amendments or revisions; case history of the child, including how the child came into care; the child's legal status; the permanency goal for the child; a history of the child's previous placements; and reasons for placement changes, excluding information the identifies or reveals the location of any previous foster or relative home caregiver; and
- Other relevant background information of the child, including any prior criminal history; and information about any behavior problems including fire setting, perpetration of sexual abuse, destructive behavior, and substance abuse habits; and likes and dislikes, etc.

Bethany's Program Supervisor reviews and must provide approval before providing any information to the foster parents or prospective adoptive parents.

In the case of emergency placement, Bethany provides any known information about the child verbally and informs the foster parents with the Sharing Information with the Caregiver, CFS 600-4, that this and any other information is provided in a written format **within ten days**. When advanced placement is known, the CFS 600-4, which outlines the content of information, is completed in its entirety and will accompany all the required documents. The caseworker is required to obtain a signed verification of receipt of the information described in subsection CFS 600-4 and for youth-in-care a copy of the information to the child's Guardian ad Litem. This will be completed within ten working days after placement with the foster parents, adoptive parent, or other caregivers. A copy of this form can be found in the foster parent binder that is provided at the time of initial placement or **within ten business days**. The casework staff has been trained to provide this form and ongoing implementation will be reinforced during weekly

supervision. In addition, at this time, the Program Supervisor will monitor the caseworker's compliance with the policies and procedures by reviewing the notations of monthly foster home visits and Child and Family Team meetings.

Licensing staff asks foster parents if they have all the necessary information, they need for a child in their home during licensing monitors, emails, and phone calls, and if they do not, licensing staff follow up with the caseworker and the Program Supervisor.

Notifications on a Child

9. The right to be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings concerning the foster child in order to actively participate in the case planning and decision-making process regarding the child, including individual service planning meetings, ACRs, interdisciplinary staffings, and IEP meetings; the right to be informed of decisions made by the courts or the child welfare agency concerning the child; the right to provide input concerning the plan of services for the child and to have that input given full consideration in the same manner as information presented by any other professional on the team; and the right to communicate with other professionals who work with the foster child within the context of the team, including therapists, physicians, and teachers.

In order for foster parents to be notified in a timely manner, Bethany's assigned caseworker is responsible for sending either a written notification or an in-person notification of the dates of all court hearings, staffings, Child and Family Team meetings, CIPP and ACRs to foster parents within 48 hours of receiving this information. Caseworkers are also instructed to contact the foster parents in person or by telephone to notify them of changes to the service plan or visitation plan that impacts the children in their care. The Program Supervisor ensures that the caseworkers are notifying foster parents of Court, ACRs, and all other meetings either in-person or through an email (child's name is not used, initials only) or letter by speaking with the caseworker during weekly supervision.

Based on the fundamentals of good social work practice and due to requirements of the Council on Accreditation and Federal Review Outcomes, Illinois has established a thorough and complete process to capture assessment data throughout the life of the case, known as the Illinois Model of Integrated Assessment. During the assessment process, the caseworker and the clinical screener interview foster parents regarding the child's educational, physical health, and mental health needs. This provides a framework for the development of a comprehensive service plan and all subsequent service plans thereafter.

Additionally, foster parents are strongly encouraged to attend all meetings where scheduling is done on site. At the ACR, all upcoming or proposed dates are written and disseminated. Foster parents have a right to attend court hearings, at which the judges in Rock Island, Mercer, and Henry counties schedule time for the next hearing date. At the court hearing, foster parents can be introduced to the Guardian ad Litem and may share their availability for an appointment to discuss the child in their care with the child's attorney.

Previously, foster parents were allowed to be present in the courtroom for the entire court hearing. However, in August 2024, the Rock Island County court system informed agencies servicing this county there would be a change in how the court system conducts court hearings moving forward. The Juvenile Court Act was referenced stating, "Pursuant to the Juvenile Court Act, foster parents have a "right to and shall be given adequate notice at all stages of any hearing or proceeding under this Act, and the "right to be heard by the court." The motivation for changing the way court hearings were conducted was a result of there being issues with privacy from having foster parents present during the entire juvenile court proceedings. The new court policy allows foster parents to attend court, gives them the opportunity to make a statement if they wish to do so, and then foster parents will be asked to leave the courtroom before the court hearing proceeds any further. This policy was in effect immediately and Bethany for Children & Families has learned this practice is being done in other counties as well.

If a foster parent is not able to attend a meeting outside of the foster home, the caseworker will explore having the foster parent call into the meeting, if possible. If the foster parent cannot attend in person or call and the meeting cannot be rescheduled, the caseworker will gather the information in advance from the foster parent to present at the meeting about the child.

When a foster parent is not able to attend a meeting, court, or other event, the caseworker notifies the foster parent within 24 hours either via email or by phone of the specifics of the meeting.

Foster parents are encouraged to take the children in their care to medical and dental appointments, as well as to psychological/counseling appointments. Foster parents hear first-hand the information concerning the physical and mental health of the child in their care. They can also provide the most accurate report of a child's daily activities and behaviors. Any information provided to or by the physician should be given to the caseworker following the appointment.

Bethany's caseworkers have adhered to the procedures of providing a **written 14-day notice** if movement of a child in care is necessary or a plan of movement is being developed from the child's current foster home. This allows the foster parent and children adequate closure when appropriate and gives the foster parents time to appeal the decision of moving the child if they choose to. Immediate removal of a child and the reasons for this removal will be documented on the form given to foster parents when safety concerns trump the appeal process. In these instances, children will move at the time the foster parent is given notice of change of placement documentation.

Necessary Information on a Child and Family

- 10. The right to be given, in a timely and consistent manner, any information a caseworker has regarding the child and the child's family which is pertinent to the case and the needs of the child and to the making of a permanency plan for the child. Disclosure of information concerning the child's family is 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.**

Foster parents are made aware of the agency's policy and the DCFS policy regarding confidentiality and the Release of Information. Foster parents sign an agreement form acknowledging that they have read and understand the required confidentiality surrounding the DCFS youth-in-care. This signed form is placed in their licensing file for licensed providers or in the case file for unlicensed relatives. At times, the birth parent may agree to sign a Release of Information to the foster parent allowing for additional information to be shared.

At the time of placement, foster parents are provided with any known medial, emotional, and developmental needs of the child. Within 45 days of placement, an Integrated Assessment is completed which assesses the child's needs and gathers additional information about the birth family. Information is given to the foster parents on an ongoing basis during phone calls, home visits, ACRs, and Child and Family Team meetings, within the guidelines of confidentiality.

Caseworkers discuss with foster parents the permanency plan for the child and keep foster parents informed of changes to that plan through regular communication. ACRs and Permanency Review Hearings are crucial times when the permanency plan for the child is discussed. Bethany strives to give the foster parents an opportunity to comment on the service plan prior to the ACR, especially in times when a foster parent cannot attend the ACR.

Information provided to the foster family must be non-identifying with regards to the birth family. When there is an adoption or guardianship goal, the Affidavit of Information Disclosure for Adoption/Guardianship form, 470-H, outlines the information which must be provided to the foster family at the time they are deciding to adopt or provide guardianship for a child. The Program Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate information is shared with the foster family.

Notification for Moving a Child

11. 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 parents, and the reasons for the change or termination in placement. The notice will be waived only in cases of a court order or when the child is determined to be at imminent risk of harm.

Bethany follows Illinois Administrative Rule and Procedure when requesting a change in placement. Foster parents are given the required 14-day notice on form CFS-151-B, Notice of Change of Placement, that outlines their right to appeal, unless timely notice cannot be given based on imminent risk of harm. If the foster parent disagrees with the decision to change the child's placement, he/she may request a clinical review of the decision within three working days upon receipt of the CFS-151-B. Form CFS-151-B outlines how to request a clinical review and the time constraints associated with the clinical review. Once DCFS receives the request for a clinical placement review, the Department must convene a clinical placement review within five working days of receiving the request. Once the Department receives the request, they will request specific materials from the worker and involved parties will be notified to attend the review. If appealed, the child remains in the same placement until a decision is rendered. Bethany staff participates in all mediation or fair hearings. If there is a court order to change the child's placement or in cases of imminent risk to the safety of the child, the notice will be sent the same day as the action being taken. At no time are the foster parents subjected to retaliation or harassment if they choose to appeal an agency decision.

The procedure for responding to the necessity for an unplanned move of foster children is as follows:

- The caseworker assesses the immediate need of the child needing replacement.
- The caseworker confers with the current foster parents.
- The caseworker consults with the Agency Performance Monitoring and Executor (APME) contact at the DCFS.
- In collaboration with the foster parent, the DCFS monitor, the APT contact, and any other service provider involved, a determination for a plan of action to be taken is developed that is in the best interest of the child.
- Once a plan of action has been agreed upon and approved by the guardian, it is implemented by the private agency caseworker.
- A Status Alert is sent notifying the appropriate Juvenile Court.

Note: If the need to re-place the child is immediate, emergency placements will be contacted and an appropriate placement chosen with the approval of the guardian. Once the child has been placed in the emergency placement, the process for responding to the unplanned movement from a foster home is implemented.

Caseworkers are trained to identify the risk of disruption. It is the goal of Bethany to maintain a child in his/her foster care placement. Placement changes are minimized, if at all possible. Bethany caseworkers are trained to identify the signs of a possible placement disruption through assessment training at Foundations Training. Ongoing training is provided through Bethany at unit meetings, during supervision, and through educational information provided by the Program Supervisor. The caseworker, during meetings, home visits, and phone calls with the foster parents, assesses the stability of the placement. Risks of disruption are also assessed during parent/child visits, and contact with collaterals, such as the school and mental health providers. If issues arise, the caseworker and the supervisor determine what the child and foster parents, including the foster parent's biological or adopted children, need in order to stabilize the placement. Typically, Bethany licensing staff, the Bethany therapist, and other team members are involved in trying to stabilize the placement.

When a foster parent requests a child to be moved from their home, they will provide the agency with written documentation stating why they want the child to be moved. Bethany requires a 14-day notice from the foster parent in order to allow the agency to locate an appropriate foster home for the child. Bethany believes moving children in a quick manner can result in further trauma to the child and disrupted placements due to not adequately assessing the best options/homes for the children needing to be moved. If there are immediate safety concerns for any other child or children also residing in the home or to the youth-in-care themselves, the 14-day notice can be waived.

Court Hearing Notification

12. The right to be notified in a timely and complete manner of all court hearings, including notice of the date and time of the court hearing, the name of the judge or hearing officer handling the case, the location of the hearing, the court docket number of the case, and the right to intervene in court proceedings or to seek Mandamus under the revised Juvenile Court Act of 1987.

In Bethany's service area, the first court hearing after protective custody is taken may not be known by the agency. The foster parents are informed by the Division of Child Protection staff (the investigator) of the next hearing. After the case has been assigned to Bethany, the caseworker informs the foster parents of all scheduled hearing dates and times in writing or in-person. The Program Supervisor ensures that caseworkers are notifying foster parents of the court hearing either in person or through an email (child's name is not used, initials only) or letter by speaking with the caseworker during weekly supervision. In Rock Island, Mercer, and Henry counties, the court provides this information immediately following the initial hearing. Caseworkers complete an appointment card with the next hearing, date, time, and location and give this to the foster parents after the hearing.

Bethany staff will encourage foster parents to attend court hearings. Bethany staff will inform foster parents when certain court hearings may be continued allowing them to decide if they should take the time off of work to attend the next upcoming hearings or not.

Foster parents have the right and responsibility to understand the rules and procedures that govern them, as well as the law that guides the procedures under the Juvenile Court Act. Upon their request for a copy of the Juvenile Court Act, workers will provide foster parents with a copy and discuss any questions they may have concerning the document. Foster parents are informed during their PRIDE training of their right to attend all court hearings, their right to seek Mandamus, as well as their right to hire an attorney to file a motion on their behalf if they choose, with the understanding they may not receive the decision they want despite filing a motion.

Rights When Children Return to Care

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

When a child is returned to foster care or has been stepped down from a higher level of care, Bethany staff reviews records and checks with the Placement Clearance Desk to see if the child may be re-placed in his/her former foster home. Illinois Administrative Rule and Procedure dictates that, if at all possible, siblings should be placed together unless contraindicated in their service plan. Primary consideration is given to placing with other siblings who are in foster placement or choosing a new home where a sibling group can be placed together. This may change placement options for the child.

If the home is licensed with another agency, staff of that agency are asked about re-placement of the child in that home. If approved for re-placement, the foster parents are contacted and asked about the acceptance of the child back into their home. It is Bethany's policy to do all in its power to accept the case of a child previously served who is now returning into care when possible. For those children who are placed in residential care and are now ready to return to the community, Bethany participates in the Child and Family Team process that reviews all previous placements and examines if any of these placements are current options for the child's return.

Right to Appeal

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

Foster parents are informed of the appeal process during PRIDE training and receive ongoing information from the State of Illinois concerning foster parent rights. Bethany's foster parents have direct access to their worker's immediate supervisor, as well as the Division Director of Child Welfare & Placement Services, and the CEO of the agency. At the time of initial licensure

and annually thereafter, foster parents sign an acknowledgment form showing that they have received Bethany's Grievance Procedure and that they understand what rights they have upon signing the form.

The Grievance Procedure is also included when sending out the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan at least twice a year. Foster parents are asked to sign the Grievance Procedure if they agree with it, or to provide input if they would like to see changes. In-person meetings were held in July 2024 and September 2024 to review the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan and the Grievance Procedure. Foster parents who attended concluded that the Grievance Procedure was acceptable, and no changes were indicated. The foster parents' rights statement from Bethany has been revised to include more specific mention of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan.

In addition, foster parents also have access to the Bethany licensing representative to receive clarification concerning the licensing standards. The foster parents can utilize the Agency Statement for Client Rights to address any grievances they have during the licensing process and throughout their licensure with Bethany. The agency licensing representative also informs the foster parents of their right to appeal any decision during the twice-annual mandatory licensing visit.

At no time will the foster parents be harassed or retaliated against for exercising their right to appeal a decision made by the agency. When a grievance has been filed by a foster parent, the content of the grievance is only shared with the caseworker, licensing representative/foster parent law liaison, and the appropriate agency management staff. The foster parent will be granted the same level of confidentiality during this time that is provided to the birth family.

Bethany's foster parents and caseworkers are familiarized with Part 337, the Service Appeal Process, which applies to children, parents, and foster parents. It is distributed at each ACR. The Administrative Case Reviewer describes the process and purpose of the service appeal. It is usually used to resolve discrepancies in the case. The foster parents have **45 days** to file a service appeal in regard to an investigation; case plan issue; decision to reduce, suspend, or terminate services; and a change in service goals, frequency or length of visitation, or change of placement of a child.

Foster parents can use service appeals to address payment issues services such as medical, educational, and psychological services, or placement changes unrelated to a return to birth parents.

All parties have the right to file a service appeal **within 45 days**. The caseworker has an obligation to assist clients or foster parents with the service appeal. However, the caseworker is not required to agree with the foster parents' decision to file a service appeal. Bethany gives a State of Illinois Service Appeal Information Procedure brochure to each foster home in the foster care record binder that comes with each foster child placed in their home.

Foster Parent Hotline

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

Prospective foster parents receive this information during PRIDE training. Bethany, in addition, has developed a Foster Parent Binder for foster parents that contains this information. This information has also been disseminated to the foster parents in mailings from the Springfield office of the DCFS. Bethany staff shares with foster parents the differences between the foster parent hotline and the advocacy office. They are given contact information for how to access these resources. Foster parents are told, "The advocacy office provides help or information for foster parents, workers, parents, and the public in understanding/verifying the DCFS rule, policy, and procedure, obtaining services for children in foster care, adoption, or subsidized guardianship homes, understanding what can be appealed through the DCFS Service Appeal System or in filing service appeals with the DCFS, including emergency appeals, and parental inquiries/referrals." Foster parents are explained the foster parent hotline (Office of the Inspector General) is to be utilized when/if foster parents need to report any misconduct, illegal, or unethical acts or behavior by the DCFS or private agency staff or others providing service to children in care and/or foster families.

The number for the **Foster Parent Hotline is 1-800-722-9124**, the **Advocacy Office number is 1-800-232-3798**, and the **Inspector General's number is 1-800-722-9124** (*the Inspector General's number and the Foster Parent Hotline are the same phone number*).

FOSTER PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

As a part of the foster care team, Bethany makes every effort to support foster parents in knowing and adhering to a set of responsibilities in the same manner as caseworker staff. When each foster parent and team member follows the set of responsibilities outlined by the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan, the children and families have consistent care.

Communication

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

Caseworkers are required by the DCFS Rules and Procedure to be aware of any changes concerning the children on their caseload. When workers meet with foster parents monthly (at a minimum) and review the foster home medication administration and behavioral and allowance logs, information is exchanged on how the child acts at home, in the community, and in school. The foster parents may convene verbally, and in writing on the monthly form, issues

and/or resources that are needed by the child in their care. Foster parents are expected to attend ACRs to share opinions concerning the child's service plan and may attend court hearings. Foster parents may be requested to excuse themselves at the request of the biological family during discussions that do not concern the foster child. Foster parents are expected under the Permanency Initiative to be available to meet with the Guardian ad Litem at least annually concerning the child in their care.

In cooperation with the HealthWorks of Illinois Program, caseworkers and foster parents will work collaboratively to gather ongoing medical information and treatment recommendations to ensure that the child is compliant with required medical documentation and services. HealthWorks compiles acute care visit summaries, dental care history, medical history, immunization records, well-child visits, vision, and hearing evaluations. This is an essential tool for the caseworkers.

Foster parents understand it is their responsibility to inform the child's caseworker **immediately** of any medical, mental health, educational, behavioral, elopement (running away), substance abuse, gang involvement, suicidal thoughts/attempts, and any other unusual concerns at the time these situations are occurring. Caseworkers will remind foster parents of this at the time of placement and throughout the life of the case. If it is after hours, a weekend, or a holiday, the foster parent will be reminded to utilize the on-call phone system to ensure the agency has been made aware of the significant concerns/needs of the child. Bethany staff will provide foster parents with the runaway protocol for any youth who has exhibited running away behaviors. It will be the foster parents' responsibility to follow through with the protocol listed and again immediately notify the agency.

Caseworkers will be available to assist should a foster parent need help navigating the running away protocol. If a child returns to the foster home after being on run, the foster parents will immediately notify the agency and the law enforcement which had been called regarding the youth. Foster parents understand they are not allowed to assist a youth when he or she has been on run without notifying the agency regarding the whereabouts of the child.

Confidentiality

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

The PRIDE training discusses confidentiality. All foster parents receive a Bethany Foster Care Record when a child is placed in their home. This handbook discusses confidentiality. The Foster Care Binder they are given should be kept in a place confidential where any visitors who may be present in the foster family's home are unable to have access to the information inside. Unlicensed relatives sign the CFS 458, "Relative Caregiver Placement Agreement," at the time of placement. This document states the caregiver will not discuss confidential information about the child or the birth parents with an unauthorized person. Licensed foster homes sign

the Bethany Foster Family Home Licensing Agreement at the time of licensure. They agree to abide by the Licensing Standards, Section 402.24, stating that all information concerning the child, their family, and background is to be kept confidential and can only be shared with the caseworker and those authorized by the caseworker.

Bethany licensing staff reviews and expects that foster parents follow the DCFS policy regarding confidentiality. Foster parents are encouraged to seek clarification from the caseworker if there are questions, such as what can be revealed to a teacher or childcare provider. If the caseworker is unable to assist, the issue is referred to the Program Supervisor. If an answer requires further clarification, the agency's Division Director of Child Welfare & Placement Services is consulted and/or the DCFS regional counsel may be contacted.

Advocating for Children

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

Bethany's foster parents are encouraged to work closely with individuals who are working with the foster child in their home, e.g., Bethany staff, SASS, Guardian ad Litem, Crisis Intervention staff, etc. Foster parents are strongly encouraged to be involved in medical, dental, and psychological appointments that a child in their home may have. Foster parents with children who are receiving any of the above services are the best advocate for them since they witness the day-to-day behaviors of a child. Furthermore, should the child need to remain in the foster home when a return home goal is not possible, the foster parent has been a part of all services leading up to the goal change. This consistent involvement ensures the foster parent knows how to adequately care for the child past adoption.

An expectation set forth in the Responsibilities of Foster Parents is that at least one foster parent completes the Educational Advocacy training within the first four years of licensure. Bethany believes this course is best taken prior to the fourth year of fostering as it will educate foster parents on how to work with the school system for youth with special education needs. Bethany will encourage foster parents to take this course before the requirement. The DCFS and Bethany believe that the individuals who know the child are the best educational advocates. Therefore, while a child is in care, foster parents should be the child's educational advocates, attending parent-teacher conferences and IEP/IFSP meetings.

Bethany foster parents are expected to meet monthly with the child's caseworker to discuss any concerns/progress in order for the worker to assist the foster parents in meeting the child's needs. It is also part of the Permanency Initiative that foster parents are available to meet with the Guardian ad Litem a minimum of annually concerning the child in their care. Foster parents are encouraged by the casework staff to participate in the child's court hearings, ACRs, and Child and Family Team meetings concerning the child. Foster parents are also supported in their decision to write a letter directly to the judge if they choose. Bethany staff will remind foster parents there are no guarantees the Judge will respond in the way the foster parent hopes he or she should if they choose to submit a letter to the Judge.

All foster parents are informed of the service appeal process and are given a pamphlet of this process at each ACR by the ACR reviewer. If they are unable to attend an ACR, they will receive the pamphlet along with their portion of the service plan from their assigned caseworker. Bethany caseworkers are available to assist the foster parent in the filing of a service appeal and also have literature about the appeal process that can assist the foster parent.

Respect

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

Foster parents receive PRIDE training which introduces them to different aspects of being foster parents such as grief and loss issues, working with birth parents, working with the Illinois Juvenile Court System, and the impact that being a youth-in-care has on a child, his/her birth family, the foster parents, and his/her families. Foster parents also discuss with their licensing representative the standards that set the expectations that a foster child will be treated equitably and with respect. Caseworkers and the licensing representative monitor that foster families are treating biological families with dignity and respect during home visits, Child and Family Team meetings, and annual and semi-annual licensing monitors. Caseworkers continually reinforce with foster parents the need to respect the child's ties to his/her biological family and support the permanency goal of the child. Bethany staff recognizes the importance of a child's biological connections with his/her family and will stress the importance to foster parents to adhere to the standard of not speaking negatively about biological family members. The DCFS has a training, "Keeping Children Connected to Their Brothers and Sisters," which is mandatory for foster parents to take. It is a short online training. This information is sent to all foster homes, and the licensing representative will ensure that the training is completed.

In February 2014, the DCSF instituted a policy that every youth-in-care needs to have a Lifebook. A Lifebook is a scrapbook used to record and maintain life milestones, photographs, and mementos. The Lifebook should remain with the child and should be updated regularly. During the first **45 days** after the initial placement, the caseworker should discuss the Lifebook with the birth family, the child, and the foster family. The caseworker should provide the necessary supplies to start the Lifebook and should supply additional supplies as needed on an ongoing basis. The caseworker is required to document discussions about the Lifebook in a contact note. The Program Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the Lifebook is being done and should document the Lifebook utilization in quarterly supervision notes.

The DCFS has a training program titled, "Trauma Informed Care." This training attempts to show what trauma is for a child in foster care and the mental health effects trauma has. Many traumas a child experiences are unable to be seen. Foster parents who can participate in this training will be provided insight in many areas that can cause frustration when caring for a traumatized child. Understanding the backgrounds and challenges the children and their families or origin were experiencing assists foster parenting in having respectful and supportive interactions with both of them.

Foster parents will be held responsible for ensuring they are approaching children in a trauma-informed manner. When foster parents demonstrate difficulty in this area, caseworkers and assigned licensing workers will come alongside the foster parent to present trauma-informed material to the foster parent. Verbal abuse, derogatory threats, or comments regarding a child and his/her family will be subject to a licensing enforcement (investigation) being conducted. Children with trauma-informed histories have triggers and sensitivities formed out of the abuse/neglect they previously experienced in their biological family. Foster parents are responsible for being mindful of how their interactions with a child can be either helpful or harmful. Foster parents will agree to remain diligent in minimizing maltreatment of any kind while the child is in his/her care. Agency staff will provide different techniques foster parents can use when working with behaviors the youth in their home may exhibit.

It is expected that all efforts and activities related to the foster child and child welfare delivery system be completed in such a way that all members of the team, especially the child and the family, are treated with mutual respect, dignity, and consideration. The caseworker discusses the process of concurrent planning in order to support and assist the decision-making process of the foster parents. This process has become more formalized and routine with the development of the Child and Family Teams. In this forum, all parties involved in the case are invited to come together monthly to discuss the needed cares and services for the children in placement and for the expedient pursuit of the case permanency goal.

Identify Strengths and Needs

5. The responsibility to recognize the foster parent's own individual and familial strengths and limitations when deciding whether to accept a child into care; and the responsibility to recognize the foster parent's own support needs and utilize appropriate supports in providing care for foster children.

As a placement agency, Bethany tries to match the needs of the child with the strengths of its licensed foster parents. Through the home study process at the initial licensure, the family is asked about any particular strengths and child rearing practices that they believe will enhance their abilities to provide foster care services. The licensing representative also completes an assessment of the family's skills through references and home visits to make sure that the potential foster parents are realistic in their expectations and their abilities. In addition, the Child Caregiver Matching Tool can also be used to ascertain how the child's needs can be met by a particular family, and the family is encouraged to develop a list of questions to ask when they are called about placements. The family is continuously supported in making decisions on children who will fit in their home and family prior to accepting a child.

Beginning with the licensing process and continuing on to the caseworker and foster parent relationship, foster parents of Bethany are encouraged to explore and acknowledge their own strengths, supports, and areas in need of improvement. Self-awareness is viewed and presented to foster parents as a dynamic process that must be developed and constantly reassessed. Foster parents are encouraged to ask for specific training they may need to support

a youth in their care. Caseworkers continually assess the placement needs of the child and meet with the foster parents a minimum of monthly to discuss the needs of the child, as well as the needs of the foster parents. The caseworker's feedback provides insight to the licensing representative regarding the ability to parent with different ages and behaviors. The licensing representative uses the information to update the monthly (or as needed) Foster Parent Vacancy List, which Bethany staff uses to match children to foster families.

The licensing representative also meets twice a year and during the renewal visit with the foster parents to discuss placement history and experiences that may have changed their preferences for placements. The licensing worker discusses the family's support system during these visits to ensure that people and groups they previously identified are still able to provide support in time of need. Foster parents are encouraged by Bethany staff to develop supportive relationships with the fellow participants in their PRIDE training and to attend monthly trainings at Bethany. This serves as an ongoing support and potential respite provider when needed should they choose to build relationships with other foster parents attending the training. Bethany provides foster parents with lists of community support that they can utilize on an ongoing basis.

Foster Parent Relationships

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

During PRIDE training, foster parents are informed of their options in terms of various types of support groups and encouraged to participate. Bethany licensing staff will speak with foster parents during the licensing process and during annual and semi-annual monitoring visits about support groups and foster care affiliations. Presently, Rock Island County and Henry County have a support group which foster parents are able to utilize for support. Prior to the COVID 19 pandemic, the Foster Care Alliance hosted several recruitment/visibility events. Foster parents have participated in these events and have formed valuable connections. Unfortunately, the Foster Care Alliance is no longer operating. However, Bethany continues to try to engage with other professionals at other agencies to provide resources, support, and an overall positive experience to all foster parents. The goal is to help any foster family regardless of what agency a foster parent is licensed with through communication and sharing ideas which will boost morale and help everyone working in the field including staff and foster parents. Emails and mailings are sent to foster parents about support groups and foster care affiliations. Furthermore, Bethany and support groups have Facebook pages where important information is posted.

Bethany also shares with its foster parents the benefits of attending training so they can meet other individuals involved in providing service to foster children. The monthly training, held at Bethany, provides a forum for foster parents to connect and communicate. Bethany could host virtual training if necessary but continues to believe in person training is best.

Training

7. The responsibility to assess the foster parents' ongoing individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.

Foster parents are informed in PRIDE training that they must complete **16 hours** of training prior to licensing renewal at four years. For foster parents who have **specialized youth**, they are required to obtain **64 hours** to renew in four years. Any foster parent with an expanded capacity will be expected to obtain **9 additional hours of training per year while the expanded capacity is in place**. Educational Advocacy must be taken by at least one foster parent prior to renewal. Bethany's licensing staff informs foster parents of their training requirements at annual and semi-annual monitors. The caseworker meets with the foster parents at least once a month and interacts with them at meetings, court, and ACRs. Conversations are held with the foster parents' training needs in mind. Bethany licensing staff meets with the foster parents at annual and semi-annual monitors and discussions are held about specific training needs. At times, the child's counselor or teacher may recommend training for a foster parent.

Foster parents with any waterway located on their property or within their home, are required to obtain CPR training. In the past, Bethany has had the opportunity to provide any foster parent with a waterway the CPR training at no extra cost to them. This option is available only for those with a waterway and only when the agency is fiscally able to accommodate the cost of the training. The foster parent is ultimately responsible for finding CPR training and obtaining the certification to remain in compliance with licensing standards.

Foster parents are encouraged by their licensor to avail themselves of community sponsored training which may be offered in Illinois and Iowa in order sharpen their skills, as well as to meet the minimum requirements of the licensing standards. Each licensed foster home has been provided with a training account through LDC, which has replaced the Virtual Training Center as of July 2023. This is found on the DCFS website, which has trainings listed by area or type. Foster parents are given documentation on how to create an LDC account. These instructions also describe how to navigate the site to register for the training offered through the LDC. Foster parents are now allowed to register for any training they wish to take with the exception of the initial PRIDE Pre-Service and/or the Adoption/Guardianship training (which requires a licensing worker to register the family). This account will allow foster parents to track their own training hours, register for training, and complete online training when convenient for them.

Foster parents are highly encouraged to attend the monthly training courses at Bethany. Bethany licensing staff and caseworkers make every attempt to locate specific training and attempt to reduce any identified barriers for attendance. For example, Bethany staff have transported a foster parent to the training when transportation was a barrier.

Minimizing Placement Disruptions

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

The agency uses the Child Caregiver Matching Tool to determine the appropriateness of placements in order to lessen the chances of disruption. Bethany caseworkers strive to have a close relationship with those they work with, and that ease of communication has prevented potential disruptions in the past. The licensing staff is also informed by the caseworker if they sense a potential for disruption of a child's placement. At these times, licensing staff can be seen as unbiased participants and listen to the stress or frustration the foster parent is experiencing.

Bethany staff are trained in the resources available to assist in stabilizing a placement. One available resource is the Intensive Placement Stabilization Program (IPS), formally known as the System of Care program, which provides more intensive services and support to children and foster parents in order to prevent placement disruptions. The foster parent, the caseworker, or other providers identify the need for this service. Caseworkers are trained in the IPS program and are encouraged to refer youth-in-care who need this service. Furthermore, the supervisor and the licensing representative make referrals for youth in need of this service to stabilize the placements. The caseworker makes the referral for the service, which is provided by the Center for Youth and Family Solutions. Additionally, foster parents may access counseling with their child through Bethany in order to better understand the dynamics surrounding the possible disruption.

Foster parents are encouraged to use their support systems in times of stress. During the home study process, the foster parents are asked to identify supports that they already have in place who will continue to assist them in their role as foster parents. This support system can include family members, friends, clergy, caseworkers, licensing staff, co-workers, and many others. The agency also makes sure that foster parents remember to ensure confidentiality when discussing events in the home with others.

Another way foster parents can prevent placement disruptions is by utilizing respite services for youth-in-care. Respite services are available to foster parents for a variety of situations, including stress and/or crisis, illness or surgery in the foster family, and medical/educational training for foster parents to improve their ability to care for the youth in their care. Traditional foster parents of youth-in-care are eligible for a minimum of one day of respite per month. A minimum of two days per month of respite services must be available to all specialized youth and their foster parents. Unlicensed relative foster homes are not eligible for respite; however, Bethany is flexible regarding foster parents' need for respite and will accommodate all foster parents to the best of the agency's ability and resources.

Bethany will make every effort to locate appropriate respite in a timely manner for foster parents who request it. It is recommended that foster parents should give at least **two weeks' notice** prior to the time respite is going to be needed. Efforts should be made to provide respite care in the foster family home and to utilize an individual who is familiar with the child. This could include a close family friend of the foster parent, a relative for the foster parent, or a childcare provider who the foster parent utilizes for day care. All of these individuals would be subject to a CANTS/LEADS check and the final approval of the agency. If the foster family cannot identify someone, the agency will locate a licensed foster home to provide respite services.

If disruption is not preventable, the foster parents share with staff the challenges they had and give a good assessment of what type of home would best care for the child. Foster parents provide this information since they have gotten to know the child well, but it is at the agency's discretion to make the final decision where a child is placed. In the event of a disruption, the licensing staff conducts a follow-up visit after the child has left the home to discuss the reasons for the move and the perceived needs that the foster parents may have with future placements. This alleviates much of the stress incurred from moving a child from the home and allows foster parents to process the frustration the foster parents experienced. The Program Supervisor also reviews with the licenser the feedback from the foster parent as to what was working or not with this particular placement.

Stressors

9. The responsibility to know the impact foster parenting has on individuals and family relationships; and the responsibility to endeavor to minimize, as much as possible, any stress that results from foster parenting.

Foster parents are trained to recognize signs of stress during PRIDE training and other signs that would warn of a possible placement disruption. Training module eight of the DCFS training curriculum also addresses the signs of stress and how foster parenting affects the family. Additional trainings are available through DVDs, online trainings, and the DCFS approved websites. Foster parents are informed of training through emails, letters, and during annual and semi-annual monitoring visits. Foster parents are also notified of the availability of support groups. Support and training are also provided at the monthly training courses at Bethany.

All support to Bethany's foster parents is provided in a respectful and confidential manner. Foster parents are encouraged to use healthy outlets to reduce stress including respite if necessary. Respite services are available to foster parents for a variety of situations, including stress and/or crisis, illness or surgery in the foster family, and medical/educational training for foster parents to improve their ability to care for the youth in their care. The need for respite is assessed by the caseworker and the foster parent. At times, other service providers may recommend respite for the foster family. Traditional foster parents of youth-in-care are eligible for a minimum of one day of respite per month. A minimum of two days per month of respite

services must be available to all specialized youth and their foster parents. Unlicensed relative foster homes are not eligible for respite; however, Bethany is flexible regarding foster parents' need for respite and will accommodate all foster parents to the best of the agency's ability and resources. Bethany will make every effort to locate appropriate respite in a timely manner for foster parents who request it.

Foster parents are able to place themselves on a voluntary hold and to not take placements if they wish to do so. Foster parents may formally do this with their licensing representative through the Central Office of Licensing. They can also informally notify their licensing representative in writing or verbally communicate they do not wish to take placements for a specific time.

Rewards of Foster Parenting

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

Bethany encourages its foster parents at every opportunity to assist program staff in promoting the public image of foster care and to participate in the recruitment of prospective foster parents. Bethany believes foster parents speaking directly to others about their own positive experiences with fostering leads to greater recruitment success than any other means. Foster parents are encouraged to send appropriate people they may know or be aware of to the agency when they are ready to pursue licensure. Bethany's foster parents generally do an excellent job in doing so and are a consistent source of new homes for the agency.

Bethany strives to promote a greater public support and recognition of foster parenting through various activities, such as Shopping for Siblings in December 2024; the Foster Parent Appreciation Dinner through Foster Hope in May 2024; a kayak event hosted by Bethany foster parents in July 2024; Foster Hope Adoption Celebration picnic in October 2024; Bethany's participation in the Moline Centre's Holiday Hop November 2024; Raising Hope's Angel Tree Program in November/December 2024; and Bethany's Annual Community Celebration held in November 2024. Bethany also participated in the annual Jordan Rahn Run in August 2024, which benefits all local foster care agencies and families. At the Jordan Rahn Run, Bethany was able to have a booth sharing information with the community about the agency.

Bethany has participated in several recruitment events this past year in 2024 including foster parent involvement. These events include handing out candy this year at two separate Easter egg hunts in Moline and East Moline, IL; handing out freezer pops and Bethany promotional items at a 4th of July celebration in East Moline, IL; and passing out candy at a Trunk or Treat in Moline, IL.

In July 2024, Bethany celebrated 125 years of servicing the community and hosted an event free to the public with food and child friendly activities. Many foster families attended this

event. Foster parents are also informed of the agency's Community Celebration, now in its 21st year. At this event, a foster family and adoptive family is awarded the titles of "Foster or Adoptive Family of the Year." This event provides an opportunity for community members to learn about these families and the jobs they do. This event also recognizes a community organization for all the support they have given throughout the year to Bethany under the "Community Champion" award. The event is publicized in local social media platforms. This past year in 2024 new categories have been added to the ceremony including "Educator of the Year," "Robert Muskeyvalley Hope Through Housing," "Outstanding Youth," "Mental Health Matters," and "Volunteer of the Year." In May 2024 the agency provided a cake and the opportunity to win a raffle basket at our monthly training, to honor foster parents for Foster Parent Appreciation month. The topic of "Taking Care of Yourself- Why Self-Care is so Important" was selected to emphasize to foster parents the importance of taking care of yourself in order to be able to effectively care for the youth in their care.

Foster families are regularly encouraged to speak about foster parenting positively. Bethany recognizes the biggest recruitment effort is through the word of mouth of other foster parents currently fostering children in their home. Bethany regularly speaks to local churches, rotary clubs, banks, and other establishments and groups about the foster care program, and the rewards of fostering.

Understanding Various Roles

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

Bethany's foster parents are introduced to these various roles in the PRIDE training. Information is disseminated through the licenser's regular communication with foster parents. Changes in licensing standards are discussed during monitoring visits that are scheduled twice annually. Licensing standards are mailed to licensed foster parents yearly. Foster parents are notified of training provided by the agency, and they are encouraged to attend. Foster parents are also encouraged to attend training held in the community. Community members and agency staff are provided with information on trainings sponsored by Bethany through mailings, website postings, and the agency lobby information board. The agency encourages the caseworkers and their supervisors to attend appropriate training and to not only meet the foster families, but also to hear the stories of what foster parents deal with in their homes. In addition, the caseworker discusses with the foster parents any changes in the DCFS Administrative Rules and Procedure that would affect the way they provide for the child in their care.

In addition, as cited previously within this document, the advent of Child and Family Team meetings have fostered better and regular communication among all of the members of the Child Welfare Team. Foster parents can participate in these meetings and be identified as a valuable team member and be introduced to the DCFS and agency personnel.

Bethany's foster parents have direct and regular access to a member of the Management Team of the agency. The Division Director and the Program Supervisor for Bethany's Foster Care program are very visible and usually at least one of them attends almost all court hearings, ACRs, and Child and Team meetings. The regularity of this communication between foster parents and program management allows for prompt resolution to administrative or policy concerns that arise within the agency's foster care programs.

Mandated Reporter Role

12. The responsibility to know, and as necessary, fulfill the foster parent's responsibility to serve as a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act; and the responsibility to know the child welfare agency's policy regarding allegations that foster parents have committed child abuse or neglect and applicable administrative rules and procedures governing investigations of those allegations.

During PRIDE training, foster parents are informed of their status as mandated reporters and given the DCFS hotline number to report abuse/neglect. Bethany's foster parents sign an acknowledgment stating that they are mandated reporters under the law. The acknowledgment is placed in the licensing file. Upcoming training is noted and disseminated for the foster parents concerning mandated reporting. When a foster parent is unsure if something should be reported or how to make a report, Bethany staff will be available to guide the foster parent through the process of determining if it needs to be reported and making the call if needed.

Further, Bethany offers bi-monthly all-staff modules. As needed, agency caseworkers are retrained in the responsibilities of mandated reporting. Training also allows for the inclusion of agency foster parents, if they so wish to attend. Bethany licensing staff also talks to the foster parents during annual and semi-annual monitoring visits about the DCFS Mandatory Abuse training through the LDC online. The number to make a hotline report is: **1-800-25-ABUSE or 1-800-252-2873**).

Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs)

13. The responsibility to know and receive training regarding the purpose of Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs), client plans, and court processes, as well as any filing or time requirements associated with those proceedings; and the responsibility to actively participate in the foster parents' designated role in these proceedings.

The purpose of ACRs, client service plans, and the court process is covered in PRIDE training. Foster parents receive clarification of these services as required on an individual basis by the agency caseworker or licenser. They are encouraged and invited to participate in all ACRs, provide input on the client service plan, and attend court hearings. The information form assists in keeping the agency's foster parents informed about upcoming ACRs and court sessions.

Bethany works with foster parents throughout the time a youth-in-care is in their home to understand the parameters of a case, the timeliness involved, and the roles that they play in each of these. When appropriate training is offered by agencies in the area, foster parents are invited to attend to be trained in the specific procedures of ACRs, service plans, and Juvenile Court.

Appeal Procedure

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

Foster parents are highly encouraged by licensing staff to familiarize themselves with the appeal process of the DCFS and Bethany, and they sign an acknowledgment of the Grievance Procedure form that is placed in their licensing files. Foster parents are given a list outlining the appeal process and the appropriate person to contact. Foster parents are encouraged by their caseworkers to contact the foster care Program Supervisor with concerns. In addition, all agencies foster parents are given a brochure at each ACR (or by the worker if unable to attend) that describes in detail the DCFS appeal process and their rights under this appellate system.

The Grievance Process is to be used by foster parents for grieving alleged violations of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan that are not already covered by an already existing grievance or appeal process. For example, it cannot be used to address issues that are covered by the service appeal process, the appeal process for indicated causes of child abuse/neglect, the process for appealing licensing investigation findings or license revocations, etc.

Maintenance of Records

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

This process, as well as the importance of accurate documentation and record maintenance, is addressed in PRIDE training. The adherence of maintaining documentation and record maintenance is stressed within the context of ongoing interactions with the agency's caseworker and the licensing representative. The licensing representative monitors the records bi-annually (if a youth-in-care is present in the home). At the time of the foster child's placement in the home, the foster parent is given a foster care binder for each child. The binder contains medication logs, behavior logs, important telephone numbers, names of service providers involved with the child, medical information, and a breakdown of the foster parent reimbursement, including a place to store receipts for clothing purchases and the youth-in-care's allowance.

The foster parent is informed by the caseworker and the licensing representative that this binder needs to follow the child to any subsequent placements. It is also a way to document expenses and reasons for deducting amounts from a child's allowance. The procedures of the agency in regard to the reimbursement, obtaining travel permission, and providing medications are outlined in the binder. As stated before, this binder should be kept in a confidential place outside of view from any visitors the foster family may have in their home.

Providing Information with Subsequent Caregivers

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

The agency ensures that foster parents keep required records relevant to a child in their care by checking these for completeness at a minimum, at monthly home visits. The licensing representative also checks the required records during monitoring visits and ensures that the foster parent does not have any questions about the information which must be maintained. Upon placement of the child, the foster parents are given a folder in which to keep medical information, clothing receipts, etc. The information in these records is made available to any subsequent caregivers, including Lifebook's, which must be maintained for all children in foster care.

The advent and utilization of the Child and Family Teams facilitate the exchange of information concerning the child's adjustment and progress in the foster home. Child and Family Team members may also invite former foster parents to team meetings in order to address issues such as continuity of care. This inclusion of former foster parents is done only if those safeguarding confidentiality grant permission.

Showing Respect to a Child's Culture

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

Foster parents receive this information in their PRIDE training. In addition, Bethany's Training Committee provides regular training on sensitivity to and awareness of cultural differences. If the DCFS foster parent module trainings are offered on the topic of cultural diversity, Bethany encourages their parents to attend and participate in trainings on cultural diversity.

Foster parents work with the foster care staff, the biological parents, and/or community resources regarding multi-cultural issues as needed to further address this issue. A myriad of training is offered to foster parents and the general community. The topics of these training

courses include ethnic hair and skin care, as well as self-esteem issues and the importance of developing racial and/or ethnic identity.

The DCFS has mandated a new training course for foster homes and staff regarding working with the LGBTQI+ community. The training is available through the On-Demand Training site of the LDC. Bethany licensing staff is making all homes aware of this training and that it is mandatory before licensure of new homes. Additionally, all existing homes are being notified in person during monitor visits or through phone calls. Bethany staff has already completed this training through LDC and have been credited accordingly.