



Diocese  
of Joliet

**Catholic Charities**  
PROVIDING HELP. CREATING HOPE.

## Implementation Strategies

### The Foster Parent Law

Catholic Charities

Diocese of Joliet

2009



## TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>Abbreviation Key</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>FOSTER PARENTS RIGHTS</b>	
Dignity, Respect & Consideration	4
Training	5
Support Services	7
Financial Reimbursement	10
Placement Information	11
Fair, Timely & Impartial Investigations	14
Information on Care of a Child	16
Notification of Scheduled Meetings	18
Disclosure of Information	19
Written Notice of any Placement Changes	21
Timely Notification of Court Hearings Writ of Mandamus	23
Placement Option for Former Foster Child	24
Appeals Process	25
Hotline Information	26

<b>FOSTER PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	
Communicate with Child's Team	28
Confidentiality	29
Advocate	29
Treatment & Care Children & Birth Families	31
Recognize Strengths & Limitations	32
Support Groups	33
Training Needs	34
Strategize to Avoid Placement Disruptions	35
Minimize Stress	36
Promote Foster Care Positively	37
Know Child Welfare System	38
Mandated Reporter Know Investigation Process	39
Participate in Training	40
Know Appeal Process	41
Maintain Accurate Records	42
Share Information	43
Respect & Maintain Child's Culture	44
Conclusion	45

## **Abbreviation Key**

ACR	Administrative Case Review
APT	Agency Performance Team
CANS	Child Adolescent Needs & Strengths
CARES	Crisis and Referral Entry Service
GAL	Guardian Ad Litem
HIPAA	The Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (Privacy Rule)
IDCFS	Illinois Dept. of Children & Family Service
NASW	National Association of Social Work
OIG	Office of Inspector General
POS	Purchase of Service (Private Agency)
PRIDE	Parents Resource for Information Development & Education
SACY	Sexually abusive children & youth
SASS	Screening Assessment Support Service
SCR	State Central Register
SOC	System of Care
VTC	Virtual Training Center

## Foster Parent's Rights

**The Rights of Foster Parents shall include:**

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

All services are provided without regard to race, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, disability.

The professionalism of Catholic Charities and its ability to provide quality services to children depends on the professionalism of each part of our joint effort. Agency Administration, Supervision, and Case Management are all in partnership with the foster parent as essential resources. All successful partnerships are dependent on mutual recognition of the dignity, respect and consideration for the other partners. It must be the same with our partnership.

Respect means dealing with foster family problems as a priority agency issue. We have brought questions and disagreements to staffings that have included casework staff, foster parents, DCFS and individuals supporting differing points of view. This type of problem solving has been highly successful in bringing everyone involved in the process to a better understanding of all points of view and has taken away the "us against them" attitude. This allows all members involved to cooperatively work together as a team. The use of Child and Family Teams has been a means of addressing problems more rapidly and improving communication regarding issues of concern. This allows foster parent's input which ensures they are part of the team of professionals.

Catholic Charities includes Foster Parents as part of the solution of problems regarding their placements and the children in their home at the earliest possible moment so that there will be no surprises that impinge on our "team" effort to assess, address and solve any problem in regard to a child or within a family that a child has been placed.

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

Catholic Charities offers a monthly orientation that explains the need to complete the following requirements to obtain and maintain a foster care license:

- Complete 27 hours of Foster Care/Adoption PRIDE curriculum.
- Complete 6 hours of training for relative foster care licensing. (This requirement is for both husband and wife in these homes).
- Complete 16 hours of ongoing training every four years (4 hours each year) to have their license renewed.
- Additional training is required for specialized and treatment homes.
- Husband and wife may each attend separate trainings to fulfill these requirements.
- At least one person on the license must complete Educational Advocacy Training in order to renew their license.
- IDCFS and Catholic Charities offer a Lending Library that is available to foster parents. Foster parents will be given the IDCFS Lending Library Catalog at Session 9 of the PRIDE Training with instructions for its use. The lending library is available online on the VTC (virtual training center).
- Catholic Charities also requires all foster parents to complete The Protecting God's Children Training. This is a three hour training that covers the warning signs of child sexual abuse and offers a plan on how to protect children from Child sexual abuse. These training hours can be used towards the 16 hours of required renewal hours to maintain the foster home license.
- Adoption Certification Trainings is required for all Foster Parents who are preparing to adopt. - 9 training hours.
- The agency provides all Foster Parents with First Aid and CPR Training. - 5 training hours.

- Transcultural Parenting Training. - 9 training hours.
- All Orientation agenda's offer valuable and the most current information for foster parents.
- The participants of orientation are offered an open forum to allow them to ask their questions and receive immediate answers. The question/answer sessions are offered on a group or individual basis.
- Participants are able to make a well informed decision following orientation.
- Participants are provided with an evaluation to assess the information provided, note areas of weakness, and suggest ways to improve the orientation process.

Catholic Charities of Joliet has purchased an adequate number of books, video tapes and other materials to allow active foster parents to have the self-study information to meet the current renewal requirement hours. This material is made available to foster parents. A schedule of each active home's renewal needs will be kept in their licensing file to make certain the foster parents are aware of the hours they need to meet licensing renewal standards.

The Agency also offers training hours through the Support Group by having highly qualified speakers present at the meetings. Hourly credit is given for those who attend those sessions.

Licensing Workers keep track of the training hours on DCFS form Foster Parent Training & Development Log. This form is kept in the foster parents file and will be updated by the licensing worker. Our ability to track training hours has been improved with the implementation of a Licensing data base. This working record allows for case workers and supervisors to have easy access to training needs and completions. Additionally, the database allows staff to better assist our foster parents in completing and maintaining their licensing requirements. Foster parents can also monitor their own training hours online on the VTC.

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet hosts Foster/Adopt PRIDE training in accordance with IDCFS standards, and always uses a foster parent as a co-trainer. Training is scheduled according to the geographic needs of the three offices and the needs of those interested in becoming foster parents who have contacted the agency. Discussions of training in the Foster Care Support Group have given our trainers reasons to emphasize some elements of training such as discipline and rule setting in the foster home.

We recognize the need for ongoing trainings for foster parents. It is understandable that in an ever-changing society, the issues and needs of the children in their care are also ever-changing. We take great pride to assist our foster parents in developing the appropriate skills to meet the diverse needs of the unique children they are parenting.

**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 their care.**

We have established a roster of casework staff that will be available at all times during non-working hours to assist foster parents and client families with immediate problems. This roster will afford services in times of emergencies, even if the assigned Case Manager is unavailable.

The rotation roster is entitled "On-Call Schedule" and is supported by 4 staff members for a one week period at a time. The staff consists of two foster care case managers, one to cover each end of our area, one foster care supervisor, and one licensing staff member. Additionally, our foster care Director takes his turn being on-call in place of a supervisor. Foster parents are usually surprised when their return call is made by the Program Director himself at any time of night or any holiday!

The agency offers foster care case managers and the licensing staff a small stipend to encourage regular participation of the on-call system. Foster parent feedback of our on-call system has been quite favorable. Foster parents have stated that it is comforting to know that help is just a phone call away if needed.

An after hours on-call worker is available through the after-hours phone numbers that are given to each foster parent. Foster parents are provided with an agency after hours, on-call refrigerator magnet with the phone number boldly imprinted. All calls to the after-hours number should be answered within 20 minutes. The after-hours emergency on-call phone number is 708-237-6021.

The foster parent implementation law committee met again this year to work on changes of the laws. Staff attending the foster care support group passed out copies of the 2008 Law to be reviewed and discussed by all present. Feedback was received on a one-to-one basis between foster parents and agency staff. This differing method helped to get more people involved and provided an alternative to the conference room setting. Some foster parents came to the office and discussed the Law with their own licensing representative. Other licensing staff discussed it with foster parents during the compliance visits in the home. Agency staff met and presented all received information as well as their own thoughts and ideas. Also contributing to the revisions besides foster care, adoption, licensing and maternity staff, were the Program Director and staff from Children's services Quality Assurance. We found using creativity in obtaining input in various ways has been beneficial to the overall success of the project.

In 2008, the team opted to bring back a previous agency practice that included all office sites having an after hours voice mail message that provided the on-call phone number. This practice had been done away with when the new improved magnets were purchased. However, the team decided that this reference source was needed in the event of an emergency that occurs when the foster parent is away from home. Most of the foster parents on the law committee stated that they have their office site phone number

memorized and in a crisis that was the only number to come to mind. The agency agreed with this request and has maintained the practice.

Staff have been reminded to give all foster parents the 24 hour on-call number at each monthly visit so that the foster parents are reminded of where they could obtain help in the event of an emergency. Refrigerator magnets are distributed by every Case Manager to the foster parents on their caseload. We have found that these magnets make it easy to find the emergency numbers in times of stress or crisis. The magnets will also be made available at the support group meetings, available at local offices and upon request.

We aim to respond quickly to foster families having problems and have been able to access other sources of help such as CARES/SASS or placement stabilization. The foster parents are provided with the CARES/SASS 24-hour phone number 1-800-345-9049. CARES is the new SASS and is a system in place to determine if the crisis is a psychiatric emergency or a placement stabilization situation. Once a determination has been completed, the foster parents would then be referred to CARES/SASS or SOC for services. CARES/SASS is used for psychiatric emergencies and SOC if for placement stabilization and supportive services.

Foster parents are provided with the Case Managers phone number and office location with every placement. Casework staff are provided with cellular phones by the agency with the expectation of contacting a staff member during working hours, and when staff are out in the field. Agency receptionists and other staff members have access to staff cell phone numbers to reach them in cases of urgent matters that need attention.

Of course there are times when workers can not access communication (e.g. during court, no service in buildings, etc). During situations such as these, it is expected that the Case Managers supervisor or another staff member could be accessible within a reasonable time frame.

This year, still in the works is a newly formed Foster Parent & Adoptive Parent Advisory Board. Once an active practice of this agency, the advisory board had dwindled as foster homes changed and parents came & went. The law committee has chosen to reinstate the advisory board. Immediate tasks identified were, implementing the new & improved foster parent newsletter, reporting on safety in transporting issues including car seat installation & similar safety practices, monitoring the ongoing public recall of baby/children items, and provide respite care information. The agency is fully supportive of the foster parent advisory board.

A list of resources is available to foster families with information about medical, dental, and other providers who accept the issued medical card. Foster parents are included early on in the case planning by communicating with Case Managers and the integrated assessment team about medical services for wards through the Healthworks program. Healthworks nurses provide the agency with a regularly updated list of providers who are Healthworks approved and accept the medical card. The caseworkers then communicate with foster parents about available service providers when discussing the needs of the child. The committee implemented a plan to have the resource information packets available at support group meetings, the local office, and upon request.

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

Catholic Charities of Joliet has a fiscal department that has automated all payment functions in a method that is extremely effective. There has been a revision within the agency by creating a direct link between the foster care payment needs and the agency fiscal department. The placement payment, and other expense payments, are reviewed and reconciled at the end of each month by a staff member from fiscal and from children's services. This linkage has improved our quality of services. All requests for non-recurring expenses are made by the assigned Case Manager and are then authorized by the Division Director. All of these expenses are paid in a timely manner. The agency aims

to assist foster parents in the needs of the children whenever reasonable and possible. There continues to be almost no complaints of late or missing payments. Payments for changing levels of reimbursement (commonly referred to as the "foster care board rate") are modified immediately and the new pay rate sent out with the next check. Staff are trained to be especially vigilant to avoid payment errors because of the hardship these errors can cause to families caring for children. Staff has also been trained to "bring up the line" all instances in which funds are needed but cannot be issued by this agency under our existing program plan. In these cases other resources are sought.

Our high standard of responding to payment issues continues. We are using the Northern Region IDCFS stipulations regarding the payment of respite funds. This choice has made the question of respite far clearer to foster parents and agency staff alike.

The Division Director makes all final decisions on the granting of requested respite. We have always tried to be understanding as to why foster parents need some time away from the children in their care and try to be sensitive to the pressures these caretakers are under and their need for some breathing room.

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

Foster Parents are to attend all Administrative Case Reviews (ACR), court, school, and other staffings as it may relate to the child in their care. Our staff members encourage foster parents attendance and participation in the preparation of the service plan and visitation plan as they are seen as part of the professional team. Also, with the approval of the biological parents, foster parents are integral part of the quarterly Child & Family Team Meeting. The agency views foster parents as one of our most important stakeholders.

Catholic Charities has developed a training model that will assure that Case Managers make a consistent effort to utilize the foster parents in developing all service and case planning for the children in their homes. Since foster parents have the most knowledge of children in their care, they are the authorities on what children needs are in relation to services. Using foster parent experience with the child, is a strong source of information in planning for the needs and strengths these children.

Foster parents and Case Mangers work together as a team to develop within the first 35 days of placement, a plan for all children in foster care. The Case Manager sees that the foster parent receives the child portion of the service plan (497) which addresses any needs that the child may have. Foster parents are also provided their portion of the plan that addresses the department and agencies expectation of the foster parent. Every six months, the foster parents are notified by IDCFS field office of upcoming case reviews. Catholic Charities workers are required to meet with foster parents monthly to discuss children's behavior. Fourteen days prior to upcoming case review, the workers are to complete, with the input of foster parents and minor (age appropriated), a new case plan for upcoming case review purposes. Foster parents are encouraged to take part of this process and to also have input into the scheduling of visitation and the process of how parents can best communicate with the minor.

Changes in the service plan, permanency goals, or treatment services for the children will be explained verbally to the foster parents by the Case Manager. The Foster Care Supervisors are available to give more information when questions arise about changes in case direction.

The agency has implemented the use of a new DCFS tool which by means of assessments aids in the understanding of the foster parent and their abilities in providing care for the child in their home. The CANS assessment tool is completed by the foster care case manager every six months. The forthcoming information is used to develop tasks based on strengths as well as needs.

Speakers and other presenters are present at agency foster parent meetings to share with foster parents information regarding the cultural heritage of the children in their care and how as foster parent they can assist the children in their homes to develop pride in that heritage. Catholic Charities has trainings with foster parents regarding methods of supporting children's positive picture of their birth family while they are still in foster care. We also have our staff attend training on confidentiality.

Children's Services staff have benefited along with all other agency staff from the agency's diversity training. Greater knowledge of cultural issues have aided individual staff members in their interactions with both the families we service and the foster parents who also service these families. Staff are encouraged to discuss with the foster parents the reaction children have to contact with their birth parents. We are able to observe the interaction of children and their parents at supervised visitations but foster parents are encouraged to make workers aware of the children's behavior (good or bad) following visitation. This information aids us in reporting to the court and planning future visitation.

Foster Parent's input in regards to the child in their care is important to this agency. We realize that many foster parents have knowledge of certain dietary, behavioral, medical, etc. information of the child in their care that should be made known for visits. The case worker will encourage a positive relationship between all parties to share such information. When good communication is not possible, the case worker will make certain to uphold the foster parent concerns during visitations.

At the request of several of our foster parents, this agency held a mandatory training on 7/13/09 for all agency case aides that transport foster children and/or supervise parent/sibling visitations. As suggested by our foster parents, the trainings were aimed at improving safety skills of transportation, especially, fastening a child properly in car restraint seats. The training also focused on maintaining professional boundaries, being timely when picking up and returning a child from a visit, making

courtesy calls when running behind schedule, and adhering to the foster parent instructions when feeding children. We aim to create a cohesive relationship between the foster parents and the agency aides they work with.

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

Foster Parents are told when a licensing representative receives a report of a licensing violation. The licensing worker will initiate an investigation of a violation of IDCFS rules and/or the Child Care Act. The Licensing Representative will gather evidence of the violation or directly observe the violation during an on-site visit. The Licensing Representative will notify the provider in writing of the substantiated violations. Any substantiated violations which are able to be corrected immediately are addressed and the foster parent is given the option to have a Supervisory Review of the decision.

The Licensing Representative can develop a corrective plan with the provider, and have the provider correct the violations, except when the violation is of a serious nature. Licensing investigations are to be completed within 30 days, except when the approval of the Licensing Supervisor gives the plan deadline of up to 60 days. The corrective plan will cite each violation, state what will be done to correct each violation, a statement that the Licensing Representative will make unannounced monitoring visits, and a statement that it is the Department's expectation that violations will be corrected and remain corrected.

A letter will be sent by the Licensing Representative to the provider regarding the failure to correct one or

more of the licensing violations. The provider will be notified of their right to request an informal review when it has been deemed that they have failed to correct violations.

During the investigation process the provider is allowed to have a person of their choosing observe the investigation. The provider is told that they have 4 hours to have that person in their home to observe the investigation process.

All Licensing Workers have received training in licensing investigation protocols. We also want to make an effort to train all foster parents, new and experienced, in the way licensing complaints are dealt with so they will be aware of the protocol in case of future violation complaints. The licensing investigation process is a topic covered in the PRIDE Training. Foster parents are given an opportunity to ask questions about the process

Foster parents are assured that violation investigations will be done with complete fairness, confidentiality and sensitivity. Licensing violation investigations should be initiated within two days after being received and completed in the most expeditious manner possible.

All licensing workers have had in-house training on violations from the Licensing Supervisor. Also, IDCFS has developed its skills by doing the few violation complaints we've had under careful supervision. Our licensing staff has been able to complete any licensing complaints without difficulty and within IDCFS deadlines.

If the investigation is not regarding allegations of great danger to a child(ren), our licensing staff will work with the family to help correct the violation. We will make an unannounced home visit to verify that the violation is remedied. If there continues to be a problem our staff will explore issuing a conditional license which can be used to eventually fully re-license the home.

The agency recognizes the foster parent's rights to appeal negative results or corrective action plans.

Catholic Charities Staff are trained and continuously updated on all policies and procedures regarding appeals and/or grievances. All staff at Catholic Charities will be trained during orientation on agency policy regarding rights/responsibilities and grievance procedures and be able to clearly explain these items to the client; a description of the training received and date of training will be documented in the employee personnel file. The basic summary of rights and responsibilities will be available in both English and Spanish; if needed an interpreter will be sought to assist clients whose dominant language is other than English or Spanish. Special arrangements will also be made for clients who are visually or hearing impaired and request assistance in filing a grievance. It is agency policy that any worker who withholds essential information from a foster parent who is accepting a child in their home would be brought up on disciplinary actions by Children's Services Director. (Right 7.5).

Because the agency must prove that the foster parents are violating the terms of their license before it can be revoked, this agency will bring any license revocations to the Division Director's attention. After a decision to continue to have a licensing revocation by this agency, we would move the situation to a IDCFS Hearing Officer. That Hearing Officer would bring his/her decision to the IDCFS Director whose decision regarding a revocation is final.

**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.**

To assure the equality of partnership in servicing children, all information that will aid the foster parent in his/her efforts to service the child/children in his/her care is to be given to the foster parent. This is an essential agency responsibility. Questions regarding the confidentiality of materials are discussed with our APT or IDCFS legal representative.

Supervisors were briefed by the Director of the Catholic Charities counseling department on procedures on giving information to foster parents on psychologicals.

Supervisors meet regularly with IDCFS Agency Performance Team staff in each of our offices to obtain new and updated information that foster parents should be receiving when they accept a child in their home. A checklist is then prepared so that every item of information on that checklist is supplied to the foster parents. The checklist is then turned in to the Supervisor who will check to see that all pertinent information has been given to the foster parents.

Staff members who work on placements with foster parents understand that all issues such as whether a child has a protective/safety plan in place, has serious behavior problems, has a serious health issue etc. is clearly specified to the foster parents prior to placement. (Right 8). Catholic Charities also completes the child matching tool on all potential placements before making a determination of a good match.

Foster parents have stated that Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet Children's Services has been forthcoming in our description to children we refer to their homes. The licensing staff are trained to never leave pertinent information unstated when we call a foster parent in an effort to place children in their home.

It is agency policy that any worker who withholds essential information from a foster parent who is accepting a child in their home would be very possibly brought up on disciplinary actions by Children's Services Director.

The Division Director is a member of a taskforce that has been called together by the office of the IDCFS Inspector General in which topics like the rules of confidentiality regarding disclosures of information on HIV status are discussed and from which a more evolved written explanation will be developed. Trainings with ethical topics and OIG input are made available to all staff on a continuous basis. The Director of Children's Service mandates all staff attendance.

8. The right to be notified of scheduled meeting and staffings concerning the foster child in order to actively participate in the case planning and decision making process regarding the child in their care, including individual service planning meetings, administrative case reviews, interdisciplinary staffings, and individual educational planning meetings; the right to be informed of decisions made by the courts or the agency concerning the child; the right to have their input on the plan of services for a child 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.

IDCFS notifies foster parents as well as the other interested parties of ACR's. Catholic Charities staff also reminds the foster parents by phone or in person of the ACR date. As an integral component of the child welfare team, the foster parent probably has more knowledge than any other component of the foster child's life and their progress. This knowledge must be incorporated in the planning process to insure that a full picture of the child's needs are being addressed. The accumulated knowledge from the ACR about this child must also go back to the foster parents so that they can put it to use in their daily work with the child.

We try to include the foster parent in every case activity such as Administrative Case Review, court hearings, school meetings, as well as Child and Family Team Meetings. Foster parents are invited to be a part of the child and family team meeting at the beginning of every case and throughout the life of the case. Foster Parents are encouraged to fully express their opinions about the course of the cases' progress. Case Managers want all interested parties, including birth parents and a foster parent at ACR's to allow the greatest amount of data about the situation at the ACR team's disposal.

Caseworkers will communicate with the foster parents on a regular basis about any significant events that are approaching in the child's case, as well as any changes in

the legal status of the child as it relates to court hearings and changes in permanency goals. Foster parents who are unable to attend ACR's, court hearings or other case events will be informed of any new actions at or before the monthly home visit. Additionally, licensing representatives encourage foster parents to maintain a cohesive relationship with their foster care case manager.

Catholic Charities and IDCFS has increased the amount of staffings that are available; including IDCFS Clinical Staffing, Family Meetings, Child and Family Team meetings, CAYIT meetings and SOC meetings. This gives the agency staff and foster parents a better opportunity to exchange information and develop more cohesive planning strategies for children in care. Caseworkers will give consideration to the location of the meetings when planning. Foster parents can communicate any transportation issues that would be a barrier to the attendance and participation in the staffing. Caseworkers will work with foster parents in regards to assisting with transportation. No one should miss an opportunity to contribute regarding a child's future because they are having transportation issues. Foster parents are encouraged to contact the agency with any questions or concerns that they have while serving the children in care. An open line of communication is established in the beginning to facilitate the flow of information between the foster parent and the agency.

New this year, is the Foster Parent Implementation Law 2009, presentation to each of the three foster care site locations team meeting. This will be done in December, 2009, to assure that the foster care staff as well as our licensing staff and foster parents, receive the same knowledge held in the context of these pages. All staff will be asked to sign an acceptance and understanding of the Foster Parent Law agreement.

**9. 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 care and needs of the child and to the making of a permanency plan for the child. Disclosure of information concerning a child's family shall be limited to that information which is essential for understanding the needs of and providing**

**care to the children 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.**

Staff is encouraged to share essential information while not infringing in any way on the privacy of the birth family. All offices have been given copies of the NASW and Catholic Charities USA code of ethics as a starting point in considering the question of "disclosure vs. privacy". This agency provided an open forum training with all staff and a DCFS attorney with the regional council. It was a legal question/answer opportunity that brought forth much information. Additionally, staff are trained to know that client information may not be used for any other purpose without a Release of Information statement signed by the client. Exceptions to confidentiality include: 1) information released to others outside the agency permitted due to auditing, contracting, licensing, or accrediting personnel; 2) mandated reporting of a person presenting a danger to self or others. All client records will be kept confidential and will be used only for purposes directly related to providing service to the client. (Right 8).

Training with foster parents at workshops or support group meetings are held in order to make foster parents aware of the issue of privacy for birth families and the how their support will be able to positively effect the improved functioning of the foster child's family of origin.

Staff is encouraged to build working arrangements between foster parents and the child's birth family. If the child's family will support the efforts of the foster family to bring stability to the child's life in placement, an eventual return home of the child can be very much expedited. Often children who see a harmonious relationship between their caretakers and their birth family have less anxiety while in placement. Our staff is responsible for keeping the foster parents aware of events in the birth family while not disclosing information that may be of a confidential.

Staff have the difficulty of developing a working relationship between a foster family and a child's birth parents to smooth the eventual return home of the child to the birth parents. Case Managers have been trained on how to conduct a successful child and family team meeting. During these team meetings the foster parents and birth parents are encouraged to share information about the child. It is during these meetings that a relationship with foster parents and birth parents develop and hopefully carries on through out the life of the case. In situations where conflict does arise, we use our staff therapists who are not specifically involved in the case as an intermediary.

We have worked with our in-house and contracted therapists about HIPAA regarding the disclosure of information that they can share with Children's Services staff which can then be shared with foster parents. All of our in-house and contracted therapists are HIPPA compliant.

This agency practices the HIPPA privacy rule, which protect the privacy of individually identifiable health information, and the confidentiality provisions of the Patient Safety Rule. The patient/client safety rule protects identifiable information being used to analyze patient/client safety events and improve patient/client safety.

Foster Parent's input in regards to the child in their care is important to this agency. We realize that many foster parents have knowledge of certain dietary, behavioral, medical, etc. information of the child in their care that should be made known for visits. The case worker will encourage a positive relationship between all parties to share such information. When good communication is not possible, the case worker will make certain to uphold the foster parent concerns during visitations.

**10. The right to be given reasonable written notice of any change in a child's case plan or of the plans to terminate the placement of the child with the foster parent and of the reasons for the change or termination in placement. Such notice should only be waived in cases of a court order**

**or when the child is determined to be an imminent risk of harm.**

Unless there is a court order mandating removal of a child or there is perceived danger to the foster child, Catholic Charities of Joliet will give a minimum 14-day notice in writing of our intention to remove a child from a foster home and have a face-to-face meeting with the foster parents regarding the removal. At the face to face meeting it is Agency policy to give the foster parents materials on their right to appeal the decision and a description of the appeal process.

We have developed a protocol on replacements that call for a staffing which includes the Licensing Department and Division Director at which time all aspects of the replacement, including notification are examined. Foster parents can also be invited to attend these meetings at which time they will be provided information on the agencies decision and also given time to explain their side of the situation in a team setting. After this meeting, then a final decision is made and the foster parents are notified if the decision for removal stands and are once again reminded that they have a right to appeal the decision.

We not only fully disclose the Department appeal process but also let the foster parents know about their right to meet with the agency's Children's Services Director to work through the problem along with the official Department policy. The foster parent is given the rights to appeal pamphlet, which describes the time frames and the appeal process. This also includes the emergency review process, mediations, and fair hearings when children are removed due to imminent risk concerns. We have also tried to make it clear to foster parents that they have the right, which will be fully supported to meet with the Agency Director of Programs and the Agency Executive Director, if they are not satisfied with the decisions made on the Children's Services Division level.

**11. The right to be notified in a timely and complete manner of all court hearing including the date and time of the court hearing, the name of the judge, or the hearing**

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

Catholic Charities of Joliet Case Managers notify all foster parents of date, place, time, and court room of court actions by either telephone or at the time of a home visit. There is also a discussion of our planned recommendations to the court. A letter is also mailed to the foster parents to remind them of this information.

Supervisors are now using the weekly court call notifications from each Juvenile Court to keep a roster of all foster families and birth families that must be notified of upcoming court hearings and procedures.

The notification of court dates is one of the measures Case Managers are rated on in their yearly Performance Development Records.

Caseworkers are aware of the Foster Parents Rights & Responsibilities in Juvenile Court:

Right: To notification of all upcoming court dates

Right: To request to be heard in court

Right: To intervene to request that the child be placed in your home.

Right: To file a writ of mandamus.

Responsibility: To testify voluntarily or in response to a subpoena.

Responsibility: To contact the child's GAL, if you receive a subpoena for the child to appear in court.

Responsibility: To sign a court waiver if you can not or do not wish to appear in court.

Responsibility: To support your foster child who must appear or testify in court.

It is agency policy that any worker who withholds essential information from a foster parent who is accepting a child in their home will be brought up on disciplinary actions by Children's Services Director. (Right 8).

**12. The right to be considered as a placement option when a foster child who was formerly placed with the foster parents is to be reentered in foster care when such placement would be consistent with the best interest of the child and other children in the home.**

Catholic Charities of Joliet Children's Services Division continues to review and staff each placement we make. In doing this, the Supervisor and Case Manager committee review past case records with the Licensing Department when it is appropriate to determine the best interest of placement for the child being considered. Our database is checked for past case activity before the committee meets to assure that all past information is available to each committee member. Placement decisions are made using past knowledge and our best evaluation of the child's needs and the foster parent's ability to meet these needs.

If advisable we will always prefer to place children in a familiar setting and resume a loving environment for the child.

We use a complete placement choice protocol that includes the IDCFS checklist on placing children in foster home situations to allow us to consider past placements. We continue to use this protocol, which is closely connected to our use of IEPA. Our process utilizing carefully organized placement meetings has been very effective.

Placement meetings for children coming back into care or children in need of a new foster placement are held monthly or more often as needed. These meetings include the Licensing Supervisor, Licensing Representative, the foster care case managers and foster care supervisor. These meetings use agency data that assure past placements are an important factor in making re-placements. There are strong cohesive efforts between licensing and foster care staff.

**13. The right to have timely access to the existing appeals process with the child placement agency. The assertion of the right to appeal will be free from acts of harassment, and retaliation by any other party when exercising the right to appeal.**

The appeals process is covered and emphasized in our Foster Parent Handbook. Appeals brochures are distributed at orientation and further discussed during the initial licensing visit, or subsequent compliance visit for existing placements to simply inform the foster parent the process is in place and can be used by the foster parent if the need arises.

Catholic Charities of Joliet has an internal grievance process that makes formal appeals almost unnecessary. This process is explained in a brochure given to all foster parents. The appeals brochure is also available by request from any of the Catholic Charities Diocese of Joliet offices.

We continue to ask the Foster Parent Support Group to reexamine the appeal process at one of the monthly meetings during the year. More importantly, we continue to get more foster parent feedback as to whether they believe the appeal process is adequate in regards to accessibility and responsiveness. Teaching at the Foster Parent Support Group and information by letter to all foster parents instructs them of the manner to access the IDCFS appeals system when the agency internal system fails to bring about the satisfactory result in a contentious situation.

The internal method continues to be that an appeal can be brought to the area Supervisor when a question cannot be settled in negotiations with the Case Manager or other staff person. If the foster parent cannot be satisfied by the Supervisor's decision, the matter will be brought to the attention of the Director of Children's Services. If there continues to be a problem, the issue is taken to the agency (Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet) Director of Programs and after that if questions still have not been settled to the foster parent's satisfaction, the issue will go to agency Executive Director. Only after that time would the issue be brought to IDCFS arbitration. If this step should become necessary, the agency will assist the foster parent in accessing the external DCFS appeals system. This agency prohibits staff from retaliation of appeals by informing them that any such behaviors will be

met with disciplinary action up to and including employment dismissal.

We are informing our foster parents that "This grievance process is to be used by foster parents only for the grieving of alleged violations of the Foster Parent Law that are not covered by an already existing grievance or appeal process. e.g., it cannot be used to address issues that are covered by the service appeal process, the appeal process for indicated cases of child abuse/neglect, the process for appealing investigation findings or license revocations, etc."

Case managers have been trained about the appeals procedure and are aware of what immediate steps to take for involvement of the case manager supervisor.

**14. 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.**

Information on reaching the Inspector General is given during PRIDE Training and in the orientation packet given to prospective foster parents at orientation sessions and sent to active foster parents. This information will also be given at our Foster Parent Support groups as part of their regular information sharing.

Agency staff understand and adhere to the foster parent right to be informed of the Hotline number 1-800-25-ABUSE. And, all of the rights accorded to foster parents concerning reports of misconduct by POS employees, service providers, or contractors, confidential handling of those reports and investigation by the Inspector General.

We give all PRIDE trainees the required brochures on the Foster Parent Hotline and the Office of the Inspector General. This subject is brought up when we have our Office of the Inspector General training for all staff. Staff is better trained to bring this material to the foster parents they work with in the context of their mutual efforts to support children and families.

## Foster Parent Responsibilities:

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

Catholic Charities starts emphasizing the importance of good, open communication from the initial inquiry phone call, orientation and PRIDE training from foster parent to all other team members. Foster parents are told when they bring information to Catholic Charities Children's Services Division the agency staff will act in the best interest of the child in accordance with that information. This is the best way to ensure that the exchange of information is free and given with hope of improving the child's living situation.

The Transcultural parenting training offered periodically through the agency licensing department offers a wealth of communicating skills. Foster parents are trained to fully understand new methods of communication when interacting with a diverse culture.

Catholic Charities of Joliet has made the addition of foster parents to case staffings that pertain to the behavior, planning for, and difficulties with children in their care. For foster parents to feel like part of the team, they must be able to participate by being at staffings and they must be willing to communicate their needs and ideas. This communication will have a significant impact on the information regarding the child.

Regularly held Child and Family team meetings are an excellent source of information sharing and promoting positive communication between all interested parties during all phases of a case. Our foster parents have stated that just the fact that the biological parents agree to the foster parent's inclusion in the team meeting means a lot to them. This gesture alone speaks volumes of the open communication efforts.

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

Foster parents receive initial confidentially training during PRIDE. Confidentiality is an important part of foster parent responsibility and is part of the Licensing Standards Section 402.24. Semi-annually Catholic Charities will provide foster parents with training on this information during our Support Group Meetings and in our monthly newsletter. Catholic Charities will also remind foster parents during the training that confidentiality is covered in their Foster Family Handbook, Section 8.

Any questions regarding confidentiality should be addressed by phone or in writing to the Licensing Supervisor or the Children's Service Program Manager. All such inquiries will be answered within 5 working days and will be researched with legal, IDCFS personnel and other experts if the question causes a problem to our support staff.

The agency supports our foster parent's in their responsibility to respect the confidentiality of information concerning children and their families and act appropriately within applicable confidentiality laws and regulations.

**3. The responsibility to advocate for children in their care.**

Foster Parents are responsible to seek services required by children in their care such as medical, dental, vision, therapeutic, educational, etc. There must be a joint effort with the Case Manager, court personnel such as the GAL, educators and other interested parties to obtain these services. All foster parents are encouraged to take Educational Advocacy Training as soon as possible. During the foster parents 6 month and annual compliance visits the licensing worker emphasizes the importance of completing Education Advocacy Training.

This agency supports the belief that the foster parent who is acting "parent" to the child in their care, is the ideally informed person to accompany the child to important appointments. In order to fully understand and therefore implement change for the issues at hand, we believe the foster parent is the best person to attend all mental health, counseling, and psychological/psychiatric appointments with the child in their care. Having open communication between foster parent and therapist is the key to the child's recovery or improvement. Foster parents need to be aware of the well being of their child.

A Catholic Charities Foster Care Child Welfare Specialist has been appointed the position of Education Liaison and has been trained by IDCFS. She is a strong voice in advocating for foster children and is teaching foster parents how to advocate for the educational needs of children in their care. This person is doing an excellent job and represents our children in schools, with the local Boards of Education and with individual teacher and guidance personnel. **The agency Education Liaison is Cheryl Jones, who can be reached at (815) 724-1229.**

Case Managers are making the question of advocacy a topic of discussion in their monthly visits. Case Managers make notations in their progress notes as to the foster parents' understanding of advocacy as an important part of their caretaker role.

The Foster Parent's Support Group meetings are used to provide additional legal training and information about the court system. An attorney comes to the support group once a year to help train the foster parents. Foster parents are reminded that their Foster Parent Handbook, Section 3 is an excellent source of information on the court system.

This agency makes Educational Advocacy Training available for all foster parents. This training provides good information in assisting the foster parents in advocating for their child's education. Additionally, foster parents are made aware of their responsibility to advocate for the child if they receive a subpoena to testify in court. Advocating for the child will help to reduce the stress and fear when in court.

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

By encouraging all of our staff to treat foster parents with consideration, dignity and respect, Catholic Charities of Joliet conveys a message to our foster parents to use the same practice with the children in their home and the child/children's birth parents. We have developed an attitude that promotes the best treatment of children and their birth parents by demonstrating this treatment to foster parents. It has been stressed to the supervisors the importance of monitoring the staff and ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and respect. If at any time this is not being done it should be brought to the attention of the director immediately.

The initial training regarding children and their families begins during our Orientation training. We are fortunate to have our Orientation Training done by Catholic Charities staff. Our training emphasizes the need to demonstrate concern and respect to the wards we service and the importance of respecting the children's extended birth families. This agency supports DCFS PRIDE training with a certified PRIDE on staff.

By inviting foster parents to attend the Child and Family Team Meetings and other agency staffings, we hope that they will become more familiar with the situation that brought the child or children into foster care and, therefore, develop a greater empathy for the birth family.

We will continue to emphasize the need for additional and ongoing work with caretakers regarding respect for the children in our homes.

Supervisors are asking for Case Managers to include statements in the contact notes from their monthly visits on the degree of dignity and respect being demonstrated in foster homes. They have been asked to notify the Supervisor of any problem in this area.

Agency training on cultural diversity has made staff more aware of how to monitor issues of respect for people other than one's own ethnic group and how to look at their own conscious and unconscious attitudes about people from backgrounds that are different. The program continues to tackle the difficult problem of differences in opportunity for dissimilar racial groups.

**5. The responsibility to recognize their individual and familial strengths and limitations when deciding whether to accept a child into care, recognize their own support needs, and utilize appropriate supports in providing care for foster children.**

Case managers are asked to express their experiences with foster parents in order to facilitate decisions on placement matters. Greater and more open communication between agency staff and foster parents has led to better realization of the strengths and weakness in foster parent homes. This real exchange of information has led to support of caretakers, their continued growth, and better homes for the children we serve.

When considering placement options, use of the agency matching tool in conjunction with IEPA material gives the staff information which helps to avoid those placements that may quickly become problematic. Also, DCFS requires placement in the same educational district whenever possible.

Catholic Charities of Joliet has a Counseling Department that can be used by foster parents either through a referral from their Case Manager or by contacting their Case Manager's Supervisor. This Counseling Department will aid foster parents in evaluating their strengths and weaknesses and aid them in making decisions regarding a choice of services available or placement decisions.

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

Catholic Charities of Joliet encourages foster parents to take part in our foster parent groups, which will bring them into contact with other foster parents. At our PRIDE Training all foster parents are given a roster of resources, which can be used to meet other people having the same experiences and sometimes similar problems. These contacts allow the sharing of information between active foster parents. We also encourage our foster parent team members to join state and other foster care associations.

Our Joliet Foster Parent Support Group has given us a way to reach and involve more foster parents in the team building process. This is only a beginning as to what has to be done. Also, our foster parents utilize the In-service Training Modules.

We continue to use our more experienced licensing workers, the licensing supervisor and the children's service program manager to be available by phone, or in serious situations, face-to-face contact to give advice and to support less experienced foster families at times of indecision or confusion on the part of the newer caretakers.

A strong and supportive group of foster parents has developed out of our Foster Parent Support Group. These parents attend all of our functions, including the summer picnic and the annual Christmas parties. They are a tremendous support to each other, even to the child care they supply to each other at times of need and illness. Children's Services hopes to support this group feeling among more experienced and newer foster parents to allow this mutual support to grow. This process continues to grow as more experienced foster parents develop a helping and proprietary role in supporting new and troubled agency foster families at time of stress. The Children's Services monthly newsletter to foster parents is another means of bringing information to our foster families and hopefully, aiding them in forming a closely knit foster family community.

Newly added this year, is an Adoptive Parents Recognition Dinner to be held on 11/29/09. This dinner is to honor all of the foster parents who have adopted from this agency and show them our true appreciation.

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

Our PRIDE Training makes the responsibility clear that while this agency has an obligation to provide necessary training and support to our licensed foster parents, all foster parents are aware of their own obligation to seek training to meet their family needs as foster parents. Our foster parent groups will allow foster parents with individual needs to evaluate their present urgencies and determine where they can go for help to improve their situations. Our Case Managers will also be given ongoing training to aid caretakers to evaluate their needs.

The development of a newly reformed foster parent advisory board has added to their agenda the task of gathering information and resources on respite care. Our agency supports the foster parents in obtaining respite for the children in their care. Oftentimes, the foster parents have a plan in mind before they even approach their worker. The foster parents appear to be each other's greatest support system.

Staff members are continually receiving training from their Supervisors on how to discover and evaluate placement difficulties on the cases they are visiting each month.

**8. The responsibility to develop and assist in the implementation of strategies to prevent placement disruptions recognizing the traumatic impact of placement disruptions on a foster child and all members of the foster family and to provide emotional support for the foster children and members of the foster family should preventative strategies fail and placement disruption occur.**

Catholic Charities of Joliet has a Placement Disruption Procedure. Case Managers must be aware of those placement situations in which a placement may be heading into a troubled period and may need stabilization. Those identified cases are immediately referred to a placement meeting. A team of child welfare professionals assess the situation and make recommendations for stabilization. Immediate referrals are made to SOC and CAYIT (Child and Youth Investment team). The foster parent who is experiencing difficulty is incorporated into this entire process. A close sharing of information between the foster parents and the Case Manager will allow us to try to prevent a disruption far earlier than if this information sharing does not take place. The Case Manager will work with IDCFS and other counseling or emergency service sources to aid the foster parents and will advocate for them to receive other appropriate services that they believe they need.

Additional training has been done to have our Case Managers encourage foster parents to detect problems as early as possible. We will also have representatives of placement stabilization organizations meet with foster parents at Support Meetings and other gatherings to encourage early intervention initiated by the foster parents, which will hopefully preclude the need for late actions to prevent disruptions that could have been avoided if we had acted as a unified team more quickly.

Case Managers make the monthly home visit an opportunity for foster parents to discuss problems they may be having without the foster parents' disclosure being seen as a failure on their part. We hope that the honest and accepting exchange of placement information, even information that discloses problems will allow both involved parts of the childcare team: the foster parents and the Case Manager to seek a solution for early placement problems.

The key to placement disruption prevention is getting the help that the foster parents need in to the home as quickly as possible to allow intervention before the situation develops into a crisis. The use of our placement

consultant will continue to make this early intervention strategy successful.

PRIDE classes emphasize the importance of using agency and other resources to be aware of challenging situations. We have also trained staff in all three of our offices regarding the use of Systems of Care (SOC) which will be used to intervene in placements which are "going down hill" by either casework intervention or by obtaining items that could change the dynamics of the placement. Utilizing respite care has proven to be a reliable placement stabilizer.

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

The open exchange of information that we expect between the Case Manager and the foster parents is essential to recognizing stress by all members of our team. PRIDE Training emphasizes the importance of foster parents knowing when stress is a developing problem. The importance of knowing that at times of stress that steps must be taken to deal with these strong feelings before these feeling become destructive to the placement.

We encourage the foster family to seek relief, including the use of respite, rather than have stressful feelings damage the placement, the foster child or the foster family. We ask foster parents to notify us of tensions rather than hold them inside. This agency makes it very clear the efforts we make to improve the family situation will be treated with absolute confidentiality and will not harm the family's reputation with our agency.

Case Managers offer respite, counseling, and other support services and availability to foster families. We also have staff prepared to discuss putting the foster care license voluntary on hold for families who are experiencing stress or problems in their homes. We hope that staff, both case management and supervisory, can eliminate stressful situations by encouraging foster parents to seek out support and communicate with all agency staff.

We have made the respite process, including the payments rates, very clear to our Supervisors and Case Managers. They can then make the process clear to the foster parents who will need the service. Catholic Charities follows local IDCFS offices way of providing respite so all foster parents will be following the same rules and receiving the same services from either private or public agency.

Staff have had sufficient System of Care training to allow them to make the necessary referrals to give foster parents the aid they need at times of stress along with the use of Children's Services in-house and contracted therapists.

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

The Catholic Charities of Joliet takes part in and sponsors a number of events over the year to demonstrate to our foster parents and the community served by the diocese our belief in the rewards of foster parenting. We have a Christmas party, summer picnic, and take part in national Foster Care month. These activities often develop good local press and other media attention.

The Support Group holds a summer picnic for all Catholic Charities licensed homes. The picnic continues to be a highly attended event that all enjoy. The annual Foster Children's Christmas party is offered again this year. Christmas gifts are provided for our foster children and also to the all children residing in the foster home who attend.

The prospective development of our restructuring Foster Parent Advisory Board is another source of accomplishment to all of our foster parents. We are looking forward to see what the new team will bring to the table. A previous activity was family camping which brought about good camaraderie.

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

We encourage foster care staff to attend the Foster Parent Support Groups and Advisory Board Meetings. The staff members become faces the foster parents can recognize and relate to when they have communication with the agency. We continue to make available a roster sheet for all foster parents that will show staff relationships and the appropriate supervisor in each office.

Including foster parents in child and family team meetings has allowed our staff to get to know foster parents as vital persons with ideas about the future of our children and along with the staff, the persons best suited to solve problems and have the children reach the highest level of potential possible.

The PRIDE trainers offer training to the case management staff with foster parents acting as adjunct teachers.

The agency Licensing Team attend ongoing DCFS trainings to stay up on current practices. They most recently attended a licensing compliance and investigations training that proved to be very informative. A member from the licensing staff then attend the Monthly foster care supervisory meeting to keep the entire staff updated on current practice & policy. On 10/02/09 a mandatory all children service staff training was held by the Licensing program to inform all of foster care on the most current and updated practices.

Trainings offered in specialized topics such as dealing with aggressive behaviors, sexual abuse issues behavior and the court process will be opened to interested foster parents as well as agency staff.

We have gathered what we hope to be more committed group of Foster Parents to form the Foster Parent Advisory Board and will work with them to assure that Children's Services' demands do not infringe on their lives in a way that costs them time away from their foster children or their families. We hope to find a way that these individuals from each of our offices will be able to share their concerns and their expertise without their service becoming a hardship to them.

**12. The responsibility to know and, as necessary, to fulfill their responsibilities to serve as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse/neglect under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act; and to know the child welfare agency's policy regarding allegations that foster parents have committed child abuse or neglect and applicable Administrative Rule and Procedures governing investigations of such allegations.**

Catholic Charities of Joliet Case Managers are expected to inform their client families of behaviors that may lead to allegations of child abuse/neglect being called in against them to the SCR (State Central Registry). Case Managers also remind foster families of their responsibility to call the SCR/hotline 1-800-25-ABUSE when they observe possible abuse/neglect of a child/children as required by their mandated reporter status. PRIDE Training begins the teaching of the responsibilities of being a mandated reporter and those actions that could lead to a report being called in on any foster parent. Our Foster Parents support group will continue this educational process. We will use our groups to instruct foster parents about the Rules and Procedures governing investigations of SCR reports.

Annually foster parents will receive training at a support group meeting regarding the need to prepare a signed safety plan with the agency when a SACY (Sexually Abusive Children and Youth) child is in their home and that this plan must include school and other non-home venues. Ongoing training regarding the mandated reporter responsibility will continue to be part of the Foster

Parent Support Group meetings and will be presented again in the foster parent monthly newsletter

All of our foster parents sign a written agreement, Confirmation of Mandated Reporter, when they are in PRIDE Training. The licensing worker also discuss in relation to how investigations of allegations of abuse or neglect will be handled when brought against foster parents and the degree of burden of proof required to substantiate these allegations.

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

Catholic Charities stresses the importance of foster parents attending ACR's, court sessions, and other planning meetings. Case Managers will work with foster parents as part of our regular home visits to help demystify the planning, court and ACR processes. We want our foster parents to actively participate not just observe. We want them to be knowledgeable partners in these activities. We want those who are closest to the child/children to be actively involved in the planning process.

The Foster Parent Support Group gives foster parents a good picture of the court process. We have been successful in having foster parents master the concept of service plans. Because we always encourage foster parents to be at ACR's, many foster parents have become active participants in the ACR process.

There are constant reminders in the monthly newsletter given to foster parents about the importance of their role in taking part in ACRs and Court Hearings to be an initiator of case planning for the benefit of the child.

In our monthly Foster Parent Hand Book various aspects of the Administrative Case Review Process are clarified.

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

We distribute the Catholic Charities of Joliet appeals brochure that states this agency's way of dealing with disagreements and conflicts. If a foster parent has tried but failed to resolve their issues and you believe a formal investigation is required you can contact the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). Brochures on the IDCFS appeal process are available during Orientation Training and prior to licensure, to give foster parents an early understanding of the appeal process. This brochure will be in both English and Spanish. We hope to aid foster parents understanding of the appeals process rather than expect them to master this material on their own. The appeals process should not be seen as a threat by their worker or this agency but rather as a systematic way of assuring both the foster parent's rights and the care of foster children.

We will continue to use our Foster Parent Support Group to instruct on both the internal agency processes for dealing with disputes as well as the IDCFS appeal process. This instruction will be given by our foster parent support person and will, therefore, come from a foster parent perspective.

The agency has a separate appeal brochure for foster parents that will be different from the appeals brochure given to other agency clients.

We have begun discussing the appeal process at Child and Family Team meetings to alert foster parents and everyone else involved of how they can go up the line in this agency to use our internal appeals process. Participants are instructed to go through the line Supervisor, the Division Director before their issue will be brought to the agency Director of Programs. If no resolution is forthcoming, the matter will be brought to the agency Executive Director who will make a final decision. This entire process will take no more than 15 days and can be expedited when a quicker decision is necessary.

Catholic Charities staff have been retrained in the appeal process so they are more readily able to explain the process to foster parents.

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

The Catholic Charities Foster Children's folder has been completely revamped. The directions to the foster families are clearer on what should be maintained in the folder, a calendar along with "Notes From Foster Family" is included for note keeping, a Life Book has also been added to the folder and it expands wider to allow more room for the necessary items.

Our Case Managers are trained to inform all foster parents that it is expected that every foster parent will bring us medical information using the Health Works Health Passport to allow us to maintain medical, dental and other health information. But more importantly, this agency wants as much personal and developmental information as possible regarding our children in placement to assure that we can gauge the progress of their development. Our case record is kept up to date with as much factual and anecdotal information as we can obtain about each child. However, we also expect the foster parents to maintain a "Life Book" which will allow the child to have a "living history" as he or she gets older and not only trace their development but also, if possible, their cultural and ethnic heritage, milestones in their life, and their personal journey.

PRIDE Training describes the use of the "Life Book" and gives ideas for its initiation and its continuance throughout the placement of each child in a foster home.

Our agency is implementing an in-service day in which foster parents can work on their foster child's life book with other foster parents along with guidance from a consultant.

Caseworkers provide foster families with logs for tracking a child's medication use and behaviors. This proves to be an asset to the family as well as providing much needed personal information about the child. Oftentimes, the logs become pertinent to the child's physician or therapist.

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

We do quarterly reviews of our case records to determine the compliance of information so we will be able to give appropriate information, much of it from the foster parents, to future or subsequent caretakers. At the same time, our Case Managers review the "Life Book" for each child. This ensures information will be available for another caretaker and includes a full "scrapbook" of facts and feelings about a child they are going to take into their home.

We facilitate free exchange of information to the new childcare person when a child returns to his/her birth parents or another foster care home. From the time of Orientation Training and the initiation of a placement through the end of a placement, our staff will encourage the collection and sharing of information about a child when the child leaves that home.

**17. The responsibility to provide care and services, which are respectful of and responsive to the child's cultural needs and are supportive of the relationship between the child and his/her own family; 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 take action to address these issues.**

Catholic Charities emphasis the cultural sensitivity areas in our PRIDE Training and provide cultural

sensitivity for our staff. One of our PRIDE trainers is also a Transcultural Parenting Trainer.

We included cultural diversity training in our list of Foster Parent Support Group offerings. One of our the most popular trainings at our Foster Parent Support Group has been the instruction of Caucasian foster parents fostering African-American children regarding the care and grooming of the child's hair.

Information and experiences garnered from past diversity programs offered through Catholic Charities has provided staff members more knowledge and sensitivity to the lives and cultures of people from other racial and ethnic backgrounds. This has enhanced our means of working effectively with the wide-range of clients we serve.

Catholic Charities has been far more effective in understanding the ways to better serve the children in our care since the ethnic composition of our staff began to more substantially mirror the population we work with in each of our communities. Our staff has learned from people who have different backgrounds and experiences and have become better practitioners from this experience. Foster parents will also be better served in working with a more diverse staff and a staff who are more sensitive to cultural differences. We believe one person's increased knowledge helps the entire child care team. Better informed Case Managers result in better informed foster parents. We have a substantial number of books, video tapes, etc which we use in our re-licensing and other on-going training that teach many aspects of cultural sensitivity and respect for the ward's family of origin. These books and tapes are readily available and we encourage their use by Foster Parents.

Catholic Charities has a staff member who is qualified to train *Transcultural Parenting Training*. Classes are offered a couple of times a year or as requested. Foster parents are continually made aware of numerous in-service trainings offered by DCFS. Such trainings include child trauma, discipline methods, working with teens, effective communication, etc.

## Conclusion -

A group effort was made by a variety of people officially known as the Foster Parent Implementation Law Committee. We had a nice mixture of Foster Parents, the Director of Children Services, Licensing Workers, Foster Care Workers & Supervisors, and Quality Assurance Staff. Thanks to everyone who participated in this group effort!

The Foster Parent Implementation Law Committee included Gina Auld, Judi Enix, Dena Knutson, Jill Pawlinski, Harry Wildfeuer, Kathy Fox, Chris Daum, Kelly Kennedy-Skole, Cheryl Jones, Wendy Barnoski, Evita Henry, Janelle Hamilton, and Linda Fox.

Previous deficiencies that were identified by our foster parents are the need for foster care case workers to have the same understanding of the implementation law as they have. Licensing representatives are foster parents biggest support as they work so closely with one another. The foster care case workers also have to work close with the biological family and can sometimes get lost between the two. Our agency aims to equip the workers with the skills to create a cohesive effort amongst all parties for the best interest of the child. Therefore, to address this concern, all foster care workers will receive a copy of the implementation law to read. Then they will be required to sign an acceptance and understanding agreement.

The committee is proud in the accomplishment of making the 2008 Implementation Law available on the Catholic Charities website. Again, this year, the 2009 Law will be on our agency website at [www.cc-doj.org](http://www.cc-doj.org). This is gratifying to be able to support an environmental benefit while making the law easily accessible to anyone at any time. The Foster Parent Implementation Law remains Green!