



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
ILLINOIS

2021 FOSTER PARENT LAW IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

November 13.2020

Annual Report

PROCESS

SOS Children's Villages Illinois (SOS Illinois) received an "acceptable" rating for our 2020 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. The 2021 plan has been consistently reviewed and updated throughout the year. SOS Illinois serves approximately 67% of our youth in care in one of our three Villages. These Villages consist of a total of 48 agency owned homes, licensed to Foster Parents who are also full-time employees of the agency. Approximately 31% of our youth in care reside with a Community Foster Parent in a licensed or unlicensed traditional, home of relative or specialized foster home. The remainder is placed in an alternate setting such as a group home or residential treatment center. For clarity we refer to both Professional and/or Community Foster Parents throughout our plan.

This year the plan was developed with input from Professional Foster Parents, Child Welfare Staff, and administration. Professional Foster Parents and staff participated in training and discussions of specific areas that were identified as deficiencies in our previous plan. This training included detailed discussion of the Foster Parent Law and our Implementation plan. Administrative and Foster Care/Child Welfare staff members and Professional Foster Parents were mailed electronic copies of the plan in early October of 2020 and requested to review, comment, and make recommendations for changes to the plan. A Licensing Specialist followed up with a phone call to provide them with the opportunity to discuss and provide suggestions for revisions to the plan. Professional Foster Parents and Staff participated by voicing their opinions and made suggestions for changes to the plan. Professional Foster Parents and Staff were also requested to provide comments via electronic mail following the telephone calls. These discussions included but were not limited to the following topics: training, financial reimbursement and placements. Professional Foster Parents, Child Welfare and Administrative staff made comments and recommendations for changes and improvements to the 2021 implementation plan. These recommendations resulted in revisions and additions included in the 2021 plan. The Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan was presented to Foster Parents, Child Welfare and Administrative staff for their review and approval of the plan.

Identified Deficiencies and Suggestions for Improvement from the 2020 Foster Parent Implementation Plan

- Narrative # 4 was identified as a deficiency as needing to clearly address how payment issues are resolved in a timely manner

- Narrative # 3 was identified as a deficiency as needing to make court training available to our foster parents and to provide training prior to asking foster parents to speak at community/organization events

Highlights of the changes made to the 2020 Foster Parent Implementation Plan based on comments

- Narrative # 4 was reviewed and revised for clarity to resolve foster parent's payment issues
- Narrative #3 was reviewed and revised to implement the Foster Parents as Brand Ambassadors Training and Court Preparedness Training in order to prepare them for court and public speaking

Describe how your Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure was developed or reviewed and approved by foster parents, and how foster parents are notified annually that it is available for their use.

The Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure was reviewed and discussed with the Professional Foster Parents at the implementation plan meetings, village meetings, and discussion groups. Professional Foster Parents and staff were asked to give suggestions for any improvements they would like to see made to the procedure. The parents were in agreement with the current procedure. Professional Foster Parents/Community Foster parents are notified annually via electronic mail that they Foster Parent Law Grievance Procedure is available for their use.

Foster Parent Law Grievances

SOS Illinois did not have any Foster Parent Law Grievances filed this year.

List ALL rights narratives that were revised this year

All rights narratives were reviewed and edited for clarity.

Right #1 was revised to include additional information

Right #2 was revised to include additional information

Right #3 was revised to incorporate changes to training priorities & activities.

Right #4 has been revised for clarity and additional information

Right # 7 has been revised for clarity and additional information

2021 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan

SOS Illinois followed the outline provided in Section 340 appendix A for the completion of the 2020 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan Annual Report.

List ALL responsibilities that were revised this year

All responsibility narratives were reviewed and edited for clarity.

Responsibility # 6 has been revised for additional information

Responsibility #10 has been revised with additional information

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Foster Parent Rights

Right 1: Dignity & Respect

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

SOS Children's Villages Illinois (SOS Illinois) staff members are required to treat all Foster Parents with dignity, respect, and consideration at all times through all written and verbal communication and any other contacts. SOS Illinois staff are trained and educated during orientation and ongoing supervision on how to act in a professional manner and treat each Foster Parent with dignity and respect. Foster Parent rights and the Grievance Policy are posted in highly visible locations at the administrative offices. It should be noted that as full-time employees of SOS Illinois, Professional Foster Parents also receive consideration in line with Illinois and Federal labor laws and have the additional support of the SOS Illinois Human Resources and Executive Management Team.

SOS Illinois staff is trained to treat Foster Parents with dignity and respect and acknowledge Foster Parents as professional colleagues and members of the child welfare team. SOS Illinois staff members involve each Professional/Community Foster Parent in the ongoing case work planning for the children and families we service.

SOS Illinois staff has a responsibility and duty to have the upmost respect for Foster Parents. As a part of the fair and unbiased treatment, all SOS Illinois staff is expected to respond to Foster Parents by returning phone calls and replying to email correspondence within 24 hours. Additionally, SOS Illinois staff is expected to be respectful to Foster Parents by monitoring tone during verbal communication and email correspondence. The communication is always professional and clear. Additionally, on call staff is available after hours and is required to return calls within 30 minutes. Furthermore, Professional Foster Parents are provided with cell phones, land lines, and computers with internet to access corporate email accounts which enhances communication. SOS Illinois is in the process of establishing remote email accounts and access for our Community Foster Parents, such that they also will have the ability to directly email other members of the child welfare team to share specific client information and documents without violating confidentiality, as well as to receive agency notifications, training information, etc.

SOS Illinois staff members recognize how important it is to have the involvement of Foster Parents during the initial and ongoing casework planning for the children. Foster Parents participate in the Integrated Assessment process and development of the Service Plan. Their input and feedback is critical to the ongoing review and development of services and interventions.

SOS Illinois provides the Professional Foster Parent with child care to encourage attendance at court hearings. Foster Parents receive information on their right to intervene in court proceedings under the Juvenile Court Act as described during pre-service training. SOS Illinois staff informs Foster Parents about court dates, Administrative Case Reviews and meetings verbally and in writing.

The Director of Program and Services for each respective Village is assigned as the direct supervisor and meets with each individual Professional Foster Parent for monthly scheduled supervision. In an effort to effectively communicate and provide on-going support and supervision, all Foster Parents shall be provided direct supervision on a monthly basis. Directors provide supervision in the home and/or in the office setting, documenting each meeting on the supervision form. Both the Director and the Foster Parent shall sign the document and receive a copy for their notes. The Director encourages Professional Foster Parents to attend trainings, meetings, staffings, court hearings and Administrative Case Reviews and the Professional Foster Parent is specifically asked about their perception and feelings about being treated with dignity and respect by the SOS Illinois staff. The Professional Foster Parent is also able to use supervision to give input regarding their individual needs.

Annually, the SOS Illinois Quality Improvement Department provides Foster Parents with a Foster Parent survey to report on the quality and services being provided by the agency. Results are shared with staff and Foster Parents and recommendations made for training and other areas of practice improvement.

Right 2: Pre-service & Ongoing Training

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.

Orientation and Pre-Service Training

Prior to beginning their service at SOS Illinois, Professional Foster Parents are required to complete the 27-hour PRIDE training through the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS). Upon hire, Professional Foster Parents attend New Hire Orientation which includes:

- An Introduction to SOS Children's Villages
- Human Resources Paperwork, Policies, & Procedures
- An Introduction to Child Development, Child Trauma, and Child Welfare
- Prioritizing Permanency
- An Introduction to Quality Improvement
- CPI's Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training
- American Red Cross Adult & Pediatric CPR/AED/First Aid
- Mandated Reporter Training

SOS Illinois adapted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and temporarily transitioned course delivery from in-person to virtual as possible. Beginning in 2021, SOS Illinois will utilize a primarily virtual onboarding program with the following trainings prioritized for staff, including Professional Foster Parents:

- Active Shooter: Preparation, Warning Signs and Survival
- An Introduction to Quality Improvement
- An Introduction to SOS Children's Villages
- Bloodborne Pathogen Awareness
- Bridging the Language Barrier
- Bullying and Violence in the Workplace
- Business Ethics
- Code of Conduct Awareness
- Communicating Across Cultures
- General Information: Coronavirus and COVID-19
- Global Cybersecurity Basics
- Handling Difficult Conversations Effectively
- Harassment Prevention for Illinois Employees **Nonmanagers only
- HIPAA for Non-Medical Employers
- Illinois Core Practice Model - Overview
- Mandated Reporter Training
- Office Safety
- Prioritizing Permanency
- Social Media Mobile Tech Safety

- Diversity on the Job: The Importance of Diversity and the Changing Workplace
- First Aid: Basic
- Understanding the Impact of Trauma
- Workplace Security Awareness

Additionally, SOS Children’s Villages Illinois created formal live virtual trainings to onboard new Professional Foster Parents and Relief Parents in 2020 in response to the pandemic; these courses are now a core component of Foster Parent onboarding moving forward and will continue to be offered monthly. Trainings are scheduled for two hours and feature one topic each weekday for two weeks as follows:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week One				
It Takes a Village!	Clinical Overview	Introduction to the Foster Parent Handbook	Relationship Building with Your Child Welfare Team	Education, Activities, & Community Resources
Week Two				
Daily Structure	Home Finance, Maintenance, & Administration	Morning & Evening Routines	Licensing Overview	Healthy Discipline

PRIDE & Other DCFS Approved Training

The minimum Standardized Pre-Service Training per DCFS Rule 402 is required for all Professional and licensed Community Foster Parents. These Foster Parents complete 39 hours of pre-service training (including supplemental training) and six hours of educational advocacy training through the Foster Pride Training curriculum. Unlicensed relatives and fictive kin are supported to complete the minimum training hours required via DCFS virtual training.

Foster Parent Mentoring

Prior to becoming a full-time Professional Foster Parent, candidates begin working as Relief Parents, where they complete 48 mentoring hours with a Professional Foster Parent as well as provide respite to current Professional Foster Parents. Due to the pandemic from April, 2020 until further notice, Foster Parents completed a reduced training schedule inclusive of virtual and in person. Professional Foster parents participate in a comprehensive on the job training curriculum with mentor foster parents, and operations staff members. This training provides

hands on experiences for the foster parent to participate in prior to their full- time foster parenting commitment in their own licensed foster home.

Foster Parent Handbook

The Director of Programs and Services, as the direct supervisor of Professional Foster Parents, gives Professional Foster Parents the SOS Illinois Foster Parent Handbook (a comprehensive in-home reference to both Agency and DCFS policies, procedures, forms, and resources) upon hire and coordinates the initial one-on-one trainings related to the Handbook. Child Welfare, Clinical, Finance, and Business Management staff is responsible for key components of the SOS Illinois Foster Parent Handbook. All changes and updates to the SOS Illinois Foster Parent Handbook are announced at monthly Village meetings, and the Foster Parent Handbook is reviewed during home visits and supervision. Foster parents are provided with an electronic copy of any revisions or updates to the Foster Parent Handbook. The Foster Parent is then expected to place the update into their personal Foster Parent Handbook. All updated policies and procedures are accessible to staff members, including professional foster parents via the organizations shared intranet system.

Assessing Training Needs

SOS Children's Villages Illinois conducts an annual Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey to solicit feedback from Professional Foster Parents related to training needs. SOS Children's Villages Illinois also conducts a specific Training Needs Assessment annually. Staff and professional foster parents are provided the opportunities to participate and co-train on topics. These topics are determined based upon the experiences and recommendations of the professional foster parent. Foster parents and staff work collaboratively to present and facilitate these virtual training sessions. Staff persons are encouraged to share their training requests during supervision, licensing compliance visits, and child welfare home visits. This practice helps to ensure that foster parents are participating in mutual assessment of their training needs. This quantitative and qualitative feedback, as well as qualitative feedback shared via virtual Village meetings, Executive Management Team meetings, and directly from Professional Foster Parents, Child Welfare Specialists, Licensing staff, Clinical staff, and program Managers, Supervisors, and Directors, drives the development of annual training plans.

SOS University

All SOS Illinois Professional Foster Parents are required to complete 16 hours of training each year. SOS University is the program through which SOS Illinois offers virtual training to Foster Parents, employees, and community members related to child welfare and caring for vulnerable children. Additionally, Foster Parents and staff are encouraged to attend DCFS and other outside trainings and submit a copy of their training record to Training and Licensing.

SOS Children's Villages Illinois is prioritizing virtual training in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and is focusing efforts in four key areas:

- Onboarding for Professional Foster Parents (see above);
- Creating new training resources to meet the unique needs of caregivers;
- Connecting Foster Parents to existing virtual, remote, & on-demand training resources; and
- Providing virtual and blended learning alternatives for in-person education.

Additionally, we continue to improve administrative practices and bolster staff and foster parent certification as instructors.

Ongoing Training and Development

In 2020 SOS Children's Villages Illinois converted its previously-proposed four-pillar child care training curriculum training curricula and requirements tailored by position and department. Trainings are focused on outcome achievement. We continue to provide Foster Parent and Vitality Cafes in partnership with Be Strong Families to support our caregivers.

Employees, including Professional Foster Parents, at SOS Children's Villages Illinois are able to view and register for upcoming trainings electronically at www.eventzilla.net/user/sosillinois. In addition to viewing the trainings on the on-line event management site, employees will receive monthly training newsletters sharing upcoming on-site trainings, links to relevant external trainings, and resources. Employees also receive e-mail notification when trainings are added, rescheduled, or cancelled. SOS Illinois provides each foster home with a computer. Each Professional Foster Parent's computer is equipped with internet access and the basic software needed to access the DCFS online Virtual Training Center to access further online trainings. Finally, training is an agenda item at each of the monthly Village meetings.

Meeting the Unique Needs of Caregivers during COVID-19

SOS Illinois has prioritized Educational Support Trainings to help Foster Parents support the children in their care and successfully navigate e-learning. Educational Support trainings are asynchronous trainings that allow parents to learn at their own pace and support the children in their care during remote and blended learning. These courses, launched in August 2020, cover five key concepts to equip Foster Parents to help their children both with remote learning in general and with support regarding common core learning standards. Trainings include:

- The Importance of Structure
- Common Core Math
- IEP & 504 Information and Advocacy
- Education Strategies: How Do Children Learn?
- Common Core: An Overview

In addition to connecting Foster Parents to virtual, remote, and on-demand training resources, SOS Children's Villages Illinois plans to create on-demand training materials for Professional Foster Parents with an emphasis on the following topics:

- SOS Children's Villages Illinois:
 - The Village Model: Foster Parent Perspective
 - Self-Care & Personal Wellness as a Foster Parent
 - Effective Relationship Building with Biological Parents
 - Foster Parents as Brand Ambassadors

This training is planned for launch by 4/1/2020. Professional Foster Parents will be required to complete this training prior to speaking on behalf of the organization at community, fundraising, and other organization events.
- Mental & Emotional Health of Children & Families
- SOS Illinois policies & procedures
- Child Welfare Essentials, including:
 - Working with your Child Welfare Team
 - Understanding, Preparing for, & Utilizing Key Staffings & Meetings Effectively
 - Court Preparedness Training for Foster Parents

This training is planned for launch by 4/1/2020. All Professional Foster Parents will be required to complete this course by 6/30/2020.
- Education, Activities, & Community Resources
- Family Management & Support, including:
 - Daily Structure
 - Home Finance, Maintenance, & Administration
 - Healthy Discipline
- 402 Licensing Standards
- Licensing Investigations/Complaints
- Foster Parent Rights & Responsibilities

Connecting Foster Parents to Virtual, Remote, & On-Demand Training Resources

SOS Children's Villages Illinois continues connecting Foster Parents with existing and newly-launched training resources that are available remotely and/or on-demand, including:

- Daily caregiver-focused webinars hosted by Be Strong Families that center around the Protective Factors
- Psychological First Aid: Supporting Yourself and Others during COVID-19 through American Red Cross; and
- The DCFS Virtual Training Center.

SOS Children's Villages Illinois also currently maintains the following library of parent training Foster Parent College DVDs for foster parents to borrow and view:

- Child Safety & Supervision
- Grief & Loss in the Care System
- House Safety
- Children with Autism
- Anger Pie
- The Foster Home Investigation Process
- Culturally Competent Parenting
- Substance-Exposed Infants
- The Impact of Fostering on Birth Children
- The Role of Mandated Child Abuse Reporters
- Anger Outbursts
- Eating Disorders
- Fire Setting
- Sexualized Behaviors
- Lying
- Sleep Problems
- Wetting & Soiling
- Running Away
- Stealing
- Self-Harm
- Positive Parenting 1: Cooperation, Tracking, and Encouragement
- Positive Parenting 2: Setting Limits and Behavior Contracts
- Positive Parenting 3: Time Out, Privilege Removal, and Extra Chores
- Safe Parenting
- RAD – Reactive Attachment Disorder
- ADHD, ADD, & ODD
- Kinship Care
- Working with Birth Parents I: Visitation
- Working with Schools
- Childhood Anxiety Disorders

Virtual & Blended Learning Alternatives

SOS Children's Villages Illinois piloted the Crisis Prevention Institute's *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention* training as a virtual training option as well as begun offering American Red Cross Adult & Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED in a blended format in 2020. These courses will continue to be offered at least quarterly on an ongoing basis.

Training Evaluations

SOS Children's Villages Illinois will continue to administer the Training Needs Assessment at least annually to aid in the development of subsequent training plans. During each training, instructors and facilitators will evaluate participant performance and participation in the training. Additionally, all participants are invited to complete a course evaluation upon completion of the training. These evaluations will be used for performance improvement purposes, including improving the quality and type of training offerings.

Right 3: Contacting Child Placement Agency

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.

All Professional Foster Parents are provided with a SOS Illinois Foster Parent Handbook that includes the names and numbers of all SOS Illinois Administrative Staff. Additionally, the emergency binder includes important phone numbers such as CARES/SASS. There is a program office located at each Village location where the relevant child welfare staff are based. The office is open during business hours 8:30am – 4:30pm Monday thru Friday. Additionally, the emergency binder includes pertinent information about the child including, but not limited to behaviors, medication, visitation, supervision/safety plans, allergies, and emergency resources that relates to law enforcement, medical and mental health within the community.

Professional/Community Foster Parents are provided with a monthly staff listing which they can use to contact staff in the event of an emergency 24 hour/7days a week. Foster Parents have access to the phone numbers of the Child Welfare Specialist, Child Welfare Supervisor, Clinical Director, Director of Program and Services and the Business Manager for their respective locations.

The emergency on-call system is comprised of Child Welfare Specialists, Clinical Staff, Supervisors, Directors and Managers who are able to provide assistance and direction to our Village and Community Foster Parents any time of the day. The Child Welfare Supervisor and Director of Programs and Services are on call 24 hours/7 days a week. Child Welfare Specialists and Clinical Staff are available to assess problematic behavior and help Foster Parents develop plans for efforts in attempting to address the child's behavior. The Clinical Director is available to assist in accessing additional services for children. The emergency on call cell number is located in the Professional Foster Parents emergency binders and provided to Community Foster Parents upon placement. Foster Parents should call the number for the Village where their team is assigned. If a Community Foster Parent is unsure of their Village location, they may contact any of the numbers below:

- Chicago Village 312-388-0266
- Roosevelt Square Village 312-802-2875
- Lockport Village 312-388-0227

All Professional Foster Parents and SOS Illinois staff are provided with agency cell phones. The phone distribution list is updated regularly and distributed to every Professional Foster Parent and all SOS Illinois staff.

Right 4: Financial Reimbursement

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

Professional Foster Parents residing on a Village do not receive board payments as they are salaried employees. They are issued a paycheck every other week in accordance with the agency's payroll schedule. In order to support the needs of the specific children in care with them they receive a monthly home account, which must be budgeted and is subject to reconciliation. Foster parents receive initial and ongoing training in budgeting and the monthly home account reconciliation. (Professional Foster Parents can refer to the Professional Foster Parent Financial Policies and Procedures, p. 5 – Home Account Budgets).

Professional Foster Parents are provided with their Home Account budget by the third working day of the month. Funding for each home account is determined based on the number of children placed in the home and on the special needs of each child. The monthly Home Account is utilized for the purchasing of clothing, food, consumable household items, foster child allowances, recreation and other miscellaneous items. Professional Foster Parents are required to provide receipts for all expenditures as a monthly reconciliation for all purchases made using the home account. The Business Manager at each Village is responsible for providing technical assistance to the professional Foster Parent in the management and reporting of the home account.

SOS Illinois staff informs Professional Foster Parents of payment for additional services such as extracurricular activities and summer camp through Professional Foster Parent meetings and their Child Welfare Specialist/Director. Professional Foster Parents are informed about the procedures to request additional funds. When payment for additional services, such as respite and camp, are warranted outside of the standard Home Account Budget, Professional Foster Parents are able to make a written request for that specific need. The request should be submitted to the Child Welfare Specialist and then forwarded to the Business Manager for review, further processing, and submission for approval. Professional Foster Parents are able to make reasonable special requests on behalf of a child that may not be covered in the Home Account Budget. Non-recurring and special service fee requests include, but are not limited to, camp fees, graduation expenses, sibling visitation, and special medical supplies.

SOS Illinois operates under a specialty contract with DCFS and provides payment to our Professional Foster Parents based upon the type of care provided as outlined by the provisions contained within that contract. Community and Relative foster parents, both licensed and unlicensed are provided payment that is commensurate with the categories of foster care placement criteria.

The SOS Illinois Village Business Manager is available Monday through Friday to address all questions or discrepancies regarding payment problems. If a payment problem cannot be resolved within the same day, Professional Foster Parents with payroll issues get reported to the Director and it will be resolved by Accounting if needed. Payroll discrepancies are corrected by the following payroll. If it is a budget issue, it gets reported to the Business Manager and any corrections necessary will be submitted to Accounting for processing within 24 hours.

Community Foster Parents that has board issues should be reported to Case Management, who would confirm placement during the discrepancy period. At this point, it would then go to Accounting for review if a payment went out or if it was missing from the DCFS payment statement. Accounting would then follow up with DCFS payment unit for any missing payments, within 24 hours, and then if DCFS is involved additional time will be needed to reconcile with them. Accounting is to issue payment immediately once discrepancies are resolved with DCFS. At times it is as simple as a 906 being corrected. Professional Foster Parents should refer to the “Professional Foster Parent Financial Policies & Procedures Home Account Budget pg. 5 for more details”. Professional Foster Parents can directly communicate with any financial team member whenever needed.

Monthly board payments for Community Foster Parents are established by DCFS based on licensing status of the caregiver, and the age and level of care of the child. Payments are for the direct care and needs of the child, including established clothing and allowance amounts, transportation and provision of services. If DCFS approves an increase in the level of care, payment will be increased accordingly to these foster parents.

Board payment checks are mailed to licensed and unlicensed Community Foster Parents following the Agency’s receipt of funds from DCFS, generally the third week of each month. There may be unexpected processing or mail delays and Foster Parents are asked to plan accordingly. If an agency issued check is reported as lost, every effort will be made to reconcile and reissue the check as soon as possible. The Agency anticipates being able to offer electronic funds transfer (direct deposit) to Community Foster Parents in 2018.

SOS Illinois usually mails Community Foster Parents checks in the middle of the month for the previous month of care. Licensed and unlicensed Foster Parents may call for any payment problems relating to payments issued by the agency, Foster Parents may call 312-372-8200 for assistance.

Other payments such as camp, extracurricular activities, school and athletic fees that cannot be waived (library fines and other charges for the loss, misuse, or destruction of school property, purchase of class rings, yearbooks, pictures, diploma covers, etc., optional travel undertaken by a school club or group outside of school hours, admission to school functions such as dances, athletic events, or other social events and optional community service or recreational programs),

supervised visits and reunification support are made upon presentation of receipts or a payment request. Funds may be limited and caregivers are encouraged to enquire whether support is available in advance of making major purchases.

Right 5: Placement of a Child

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

Professional/Community Foster Parents are always encouraged to take part in the planning for their foster children by attending clinical meetings pertaining to the child's history, scheduling pre-placement visits and reviewing the child's service plan. When a Professional Foster Parent has been identified as a potential placement for a child, they are notified by phone or in writing by the Director of Programs and Services, Assistant Director, or by the Child Welfare Supervisor.

In accordance with DCFS Policy Guide 2007.14, as part of the placement process Foster Parents receive all available information on the child's medical, mental health, education, psychological and behavioral history and the DCFS 600-4 form Sharing Information with the Caregiver is completed. The agency also uses the Let Me Tell You About my Child forms to facilitate sharing of information between families of origin, Foster Families and supportive persons such as Relief Parents and respite providers.

SOS Illinois encourages Foster Parents to participate in the development of the child's service plan and visitation plan on an ongoing basis. During home visits the Child Welfare Specialist discusses and reviews the service and visitation plans engaging in a dialogue about child specific interventions, outcomes and goals. Additional formal participation occurs during Child and Family Team Meetings.

Foster Parents are notified about upcoming Child and Family Team Meetings during in person home visits, by email and/or by phone. Whenever possible, dates for the next meeting are established at the end of each Child and Family Team Meeting. As primary caregivers, Foster Parents are part of the professional team and their input regarding visitation is invaluable in the development of the child's case plan. Arrangements are made with Foster Parents regarding the visitation schedule of the child and their Child Welfare Specialist, biological parent, or anyone else with a significant role. SOS Illinois staff and Foster Parents develop a communication plan that involves contacting each other for any pertinent information regarding the child's plan within five (5) business days of a service plan change.

The Agency supports the arrangement of pre-placement visits between the prospective Professional Foster Parent/Community Caregiver and child when circumstances permit. Upon placement, an intake staffing is held with the Foster Parent and all other members of the professional team.

Prior to the ACR, Foster Parents are involved in the review and development of the new service plan. This includes participation in the development of tasks for the Foster Parent and child, evaluation of the previous tasks, and discussion regarding the progress on the permanency goal. All Foster Parents receive a copy of the relevant child specific portion of the service plan.

As a regular job duty Professional Foster Parents also serve as role models and support for the birth/legal parents. This role modeling may be the first opportunity the parent has had to observe and learn effective parenting skills. Professional Foster Parents support activities that will promote the child's rights to relationships with his or her own family and cultural heritage. Community Foster Parents may also provide role modeling and support based on their relationship with the birth/legal parents and comfort level. Foster Parents work closely with their Child Welfare Specialist to identify any special circumstances related to a child's family such as Burgos, Indian Child Welfare Act, Cultural Needs, Special Needs or Accommodations for the child or birth parent.

The Agency provides Foster Parents with a written notice of intent to remove a child, unless there is imminent risk of harm, which requires immediate removal. Foster Parents are provided information on their service appeal rights. The Agency makes every effort to minimize the trauma of the disruption on both the child and foster family and to include Foster Parents in placement planning and decision making that is in the best interest of the child.

Right 6: Fair and Timely Complaint Investigations

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; the right to be provided the opportunity to request and receive mediation or an administrative review of decisions 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.

SOS Illinois Professional Foster Parents and Community foster homes are licensed and monitored by SOS Illinois. All matters regarding foster family home licensing should be directed to the SOS licensing department staff as indicated below.

Gloria Styles, Senior Licensing and Training Specialist
773-783-0500.

During the initial licensing process, prospective Foster Parents are provided information on the licensing investigation process and informed that complaints may come from a variety of sources. One source may be the State Central Register when a Hotline call is made. Others may include a complaint coming as a result of a monitoring visit, Child Welfare Specialist home visit, or reports from other social service or educational professionals. Policies are reviewed verbally at the bi- annual monitoring visits. SOS Illinois offers annual training on the complaint investigation process.

The licensing department shall begin a licensing complaint investigation within two business days after receipt of a complaint and shall complete the investigation within 30 days. Any needed extension (in 30-day increments) shall be requested in accordance with established DCFS policies and procedures. Foster Parents receive verbal and written notice of any complaints being investigated within five (5) business days. They are provided with a letter that outlines the type of investigation, and information regarding the licensing complaint process. If there is a concurrent investigation by the Illinois Department of Child Protection (DCP), then the SOS Illinois complaint investigation occurs concurrently but will conclude following the final DCP determination, which may exceed 30 days. SOS Illinois Foster Parents are notified by the licensing department staff that they have a right to have an advocate or person of their own choosing present during investigation interviews. The licensing staff person shall interview the person making the complaint if known, and any and all others who may have information relevant to the complaint. The licensing staff will review any relevant documentation and conduct one or more unannounced visits to the foster family home during the hours of operation to gather information and evidence relevant to the complaint. SOS Illinois will comply with DCFS procedures on investigation time frames and activities.

SOS Illinois provides Foster Parents with information on the investigative process, including a discussion on the agency's policy regarding allegations of child abuse or neglect. Foster Parents are given information about the grievance process and the DCFS appeals process upon licensure and annually. SOS Illinois provides ongoing support to the Foster Parent during the time of any licensing investigations by ensuring that they are provided with information regarding their rights during the investigation process.

The DCFS appeal procedure is provided upon initial licensure and again at the time of an investigation. SOS Illinois recognizes that Foster Parents may at any time exercise their right to appeal decisions made by agency staff without acts of harassment or retaliation. The DCFS appeal procedure is available for review on the DCFS Website <http://www.state.il.us/dcf/index.shtml>.

All Foster Parents are notified in writing via the DCFS complaint investigation documents of the results of any complaint investigation that is conducted by the licensing department. Foster Parents are provided with clear and detailed explanations of tasks, expectations, and timeframes necessary to demonstrate compliance as a result of license monitoring and enforcement. The licensing department is responsible for ensuring all necessary service referrals are completed as a result of a corrective action plan. Foster parents are also informed of their right to have decisions regarding a licensing corrective action plan explained and connected to the licensing standard violated as well as to request a Supervisory Review.

Right 7: Receiving Additional or Necessary Child Information

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

Child Welfare Specialists are trained to notify Foster Parents of new information as it is learned about the child (ren) placed in the home. Child Welfare Specialists provide Foster Parents with the Sharing Information with the DCFS Caregiver form (CFS 600-4) within 10 days of placement. Foster Parent upon notification of new children coming into care, the Director shall schedule a case sharing information meeting between Foster Parent, referring worker and the new case worker within 30 days of case assignment. The case worker shall schedule a child and family team meeting and subsequent child and family team meetings every 90 days. The Foster Parent should be invited to all child and family team meetings. As information becomes available, the Child Welfare Specialist provides the Foster Parent with current information regarding the children placed in their care. The Child Welfare Specialist is required to review the progress of the case and on-going information with the Foster Parent during all home visits.

When information about a child is not available upon initial placement, the Child Welfare Specialist must meet with the Foster Parent within five (5) working days of placement to provide additional information that is relevant about the child. In accordance with DCFS Policy Guide 2007.14, as part of the placement process, Foster Parents receive all available information on the child's medical, mental health, education, and behavioral history. Foster Parents are informed that they may contact the Child Welfare Specialist at any time to request additional information about the child that does not violate confidentiality rules.

Child Welfare Specialists are required to notify Foster Parents verbally and in writing regarding any changes in the service plan as they relate to the Professional Foster Parent and/or the child placed in their home within five (5) business days of the change. The Child Welfare Specialist is required to uphold with integrity the confidential information regarding the biological parents. The request for a clinical staffing can be made by any member of the team, including the Foster Parent. Child and Family Team Meetings are held quarterly and the Foster Parents are included as part of the team, participating in person or by phone.

Child Welfare Specialists are held accountable for sharing pertinent information with the Foster Parent specific to the care of the child. This is monitored through regular supervision. During monthly individual supervision between Child Welfare Specialists and the Child Welfare Supervisor, child and family cases are discussed and supervisors ensure that necessary information relative to the care of the child is shared by the caseworker with the Foster Parents. Child Welfare Specialists are also responsible and held accountable for disclosing confidential information not pertaining to the care of the child and will be held under review by SOS Illinois Administrative Staff.

SOS Illinois standard practice is that during regular supervision, the Child Welfare Supervisor and Child Welfare Specialist may contact the Foster Parent to discuss the day-to-day critical decisions that are being addressed as a result of a child's behavioral, mental health, medical, educational or permanency challenges or needs. Child Welfare Specialists are required to review the progress of the case and on-going information with the Foster Parent during home visit contacts and daily, familiar supervision.

Right 8: Available and Necessary Information for Care of Child

The foster parent has the right at the time of placement or prior to placement of a child, whenever possible, the worker shall provide available information necessary for the proper care of the child in writing to the foster parent or prospective adoptive parent.

DCFS policy requires that within 10 days of placement, Foster Parents will have signed a Sharing Information with the Caregiver (CFS 600-4) form verifying that the foster caregiver has received all available information to provide the proper care of the child in writing and this document will be forwarded to the child's Guardian ad Litem.

Child Welfare Specialists are held accountable for sharing pertinent information with the foster caregivers. This begins with staff training from the DCFS Foundations for Placement and Permanency workers regarding policies and procedures. SOS Illinois Case Management staff also attends the New Employee Orientation and participates in on-going supervision where they are educated in the expectations and requirements of a SOS Illinois staff person. This includes an education on the importance of confidentiality as well as full disclosure of information. The type of information that is disclosed to the Foster Parent by the worker may be limited due to the constraints of confidentiality. Child Welfare Specialists are also responsible and held accountable for disclosing confidential information not pertaining to the care of the child and will be held under review by SOS Illinois Administrative Staff. However, SOS Illinois Staff will encourage clients to disclose information that may be relevant to the Foster Parent providing for their care and needs, i.e., pregnancy.

SOS Illinois makes every effort to provide Foster Parents and adoptive parents with information on children being placed or adopted. This information includes medical, education, background and any other relevant information. In efforts to keep Foster Parents informed, SOS Illinois staff invites and encourages them to participate in all meetings concerning the children in their care.

Child Welfare Specialists are also held accountable during supervision, and by having their Supervisor present during Child & Family Team Meetings to make sure accurate, up to date information is shared with the Foster Parent. SOS Illinois Child Welfare Specialists are all trained on placement policy and procedure during staff meetings, case manager training, and during supervision conferences. Child Welfare Specialists are also trained on confidentiality during the initial orientation period. Foster Parents are trained on confidentiality during DCFS PRIDE, and during their licensing monitoring visits. Child Welfare Specialists and Professional Foster Parents sign a confidentiality agreement and are held accountable to this agreement. Confidentiality is also included in the agency code of ethics which is reviewed and acknowledged by each employee during orientation. If any Child Welfare Specialist or Professional Foster parent breaks confidentiality they are disciplined accordingly with SOS Illinois policy.

SOS Illinois provides the Professional Foster Parent with child care in effort to encourage attendance at court hearings. Foster Parents receive information on their right to intervene in court proceedings and to seek mandates under the Juvenile Court Act during pre-service training.

Foster Parents are included in their foster child's service planning activities by providing feedback and recommendations regarding the outlined tasks. During regular monthly home visits there should be an exchange of information between the Child Welfare Specialist and Foster Parent as it relates to a child's safety, well-being, and permanency plan.

Foster Parents are informed of all critical decisions that have been made about the child in their care regarding court, case reviews, school visitation, placement and service delivery.

Foster Parents are critical to the success of service delivery and family reunification. The Agency encourages our Foster Parents to play an active role in their child's life, which includes their being an educational advocate. SOS Illinois employs an Education and Activities Coordinator to provide additional educational support to Foster Parents, Child Welfare Specialists, and children.

Right 9: Notification of Meetings and Staffings

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, administrative case reviews, interdisciplinary staffings, and individual educational planning meetings; the right to be informed of decisions made by the courts or the child welfare agency concerning the child; the right to provide input concerning the plan of services for the child and to have that input given full consideration in the same manner as information presented by any other on the team; and the right to communicate with other professionals who work with the foster child within the context of the team, including therapists, physicians, and teachers.

All Foster Parents are notified by SOS Illinois staff of scheduled meetings and staffings (e.g. Juvenile Court Hearings, Administrative Case Reviews, Educational and Service Planning Meetings) concerning the foster child through the Case Management Home Visit Checklist Form implemented by SOS Illinois. Additionally, SOS Illinois Child Welfare Specialists call Foster Parents to ensure they have been notified and encourage them to attend. Furthermore, the SOS Illinois Director of Programs and Services notifies Professional Foster Parents by email of events to which they should attend which includes Court Dates, ACR dates, and Child and Family Team Meetings. Staffings and visits are arranged by the SOS Illinois Child Welfare Specialist and every effort is made to accommodate the Foster Parent's schedule. This information is documented on the SOS Illinois Home Visit Contact forms as well as child and family team meeting forms.

Foster Parents are invited to be a part of and accept trainings conducted by SOS Illinois on case reviews, service plan coordination, court proceedings, etc. to give them a better understanding of the process as well as what to expect. Periodically, trainings are offered to caregivers regarding Court, the Administrative Case Review process, and Educational issues. Educational Advocacy is offered by the Department and foster caregivers are encouraged to attend this training as often as needed. Foster parents must attend this training prior to their first renewal of their foster care license; however, it is strongly suggested that it be completed by the end of the first year of licensure.

Foster Parents are encouraged by SOS Illinois staff to participate in child and family team meetings. At these child and family team meetings the Foster Parent is informed about decisions made by the agency and the courts.

Foster Parents are encouraged to provide input into case planning and progress and to communicate with the biological parents regarding any issues or concerns they may have. SOS Illinois encourages Foster Parents to provide their input on the child's progress as well as their

recommendations for necessary services for the child. The Foster Parent's feedback is integrated into the child and family service plan.

Foster Parents are informed and notified by the Child Welfare Specialist verbally or in writing, within 48 hours of decisions made during meetings, staffings and by the courts when they are unable to be present to receive the information first hand.

Right 10: Providing Timely & Consistent Child Information

The right to be given, in a timely and consistent manner, any information a case worker has regarding the child and the child's family which is pertinent to the care and needs of the child and to the making of a permanency plan for the child. Disclosure of information concerning the child's family shall be limited to that information that is essential for understanding the needs of and providing care to the child in order to protect the rights of the child's family. When a positive relationship exists between the foster parent and the child's family, the child's family may consent to disclosure of additional information.

At the time of intake, SOS Illinois staff discloses all known non-identifying information (e.g. reason for custody, health, school, services) regarding the child's case to their identified Foster Parent. All this information is shared during the initial phone contact or meeting prior to placement to ensure the child's safety, provision of services, and permanency needs. This method of disclosure is conducted at SOS Illinois Intake and is continued throughout by the child's Child Welfare Specialist. Privacy of birth parents' right is respected and maintained to the degree that the safety of the child in care is not compromised.

Sharing of ongoing information pertinent to the well-being and health of the child is encouraged through the participation of all child and family team members and Foster Parents through staffings, phone calls, home visits, and any other meeting relating to the child's case. Moreover, during initial case opening the Foster Parent is welcome to attend the integrated assessment staffing and listen to the child's portion of the assessment. All possible issues are discussed and services are suggested.

Upon placement, the Child Welfare Specialist informs the Foster Parent of any information that is available regarding the child, such as medical history, educational history, the child's portion of the service plan (including visitation arrangements), child's legal status, reasons for placement changes and other relevant background information on the child, which is applicable to their care and needs. Information regarding the child's family is limited to that information essential for understanding the needs of the child and participation in the treatment team. The ways for sharing information includes disclosure of known behavior issues on the Sharing Information with the Caregiver form (CFS 600-4), inclusion of Foster Parents in service plan development and review and ACRs.

SOS Illinois administrative staff is trained at the start of their employment and through regular in- service training regarding Best Practices in the provision of services. As a component of these trainings, Confidentiality is offered outlining the proper information to disclose to Foster Parents, other professionals involved with the case, or third-party individuals. It is the responsibility of SOS Illinois staff to provide Foster Parents with all applicable information relative to the child's case so that the provision of services and care may be addressed

appropriately and accurately. However, SOS Illinois may only disclose information to the Foster Parent that is specific to the child.

Foster Parents are encouraged by the agency staff to participate in child and family team meetings. At these child and family team meetings the Foster Parent and or any worker or service provider can disclose new information regarding the minor. Foster Parents are also encouraged to attend staffings, ACRs, and court hearings to provide input. SOS Illinois knows the input of Foster Parents is a vital part of case and service planning. SOS Illinois makes every effort to include the Foster Parents in case planning development.

When the plan includes reunification with the family of origin, Foster Parents work with the Child Welfare Specialist and when possible, the biological family, to make a thoughtful transition plan for everyone involved, but especially the child. Foster Parents are given assistance on how to help the child prepare for returning home as well as how to manage their own feelings.

Right 11: Written Notice of Changes to Child's Case Plan

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

SOS Illinois believes it is in the best interest of any child in care to carefully consider disrupting a foster placement. Through the Foster Parent, Child Welfare Specialist and Supervisor, Licensing Supervisor, Clinical Director, Director of Program and Services, Assistant Director and other professionals on the team, every possible intervention is utilized to stabilize the foster placement. A plan to move a child becomes necessary only when:

- a) All attempts to stabilize the placement have been unsuccessful
- b) There are identified safety issues
- c) The placement cannot meet the needs of the child even with additional resources
- d) Continuity or permanency for the child is facilitated
- e) Sibling consolidation is possible

SOS Illinois provides Foster Parents with a written notice of removal prior to the execution of a placement change, unless the child is determined to be at imminent risk of harm. Prior to termination of a placement a clinical staffing to which the Foster Parent is invited is held to ensure removal of the child is the most appropriate option. At the time of the written notice, the Foster Parent is also informed in writing of their right to appeal the removal decision.

All notices of removal given by the agency are also submitted to DCFS clinical per the Policy Guide 2003.01 to ensure placement changes are done in an orderly manner. The Notice of Change in Placement form (CFS 151B) is completed by the Child Welfare Specialist. The Agency informs the Foster Parent of the appeal process and provides the DCFS Service Appeals Brochure.

If a child is determined to be at imminent risk it will result in an emergency placement change. The Agency will make every effort to verbally inform the Foster Parent of the reason for the change.

The Agency understands that any disruption in a child's placement whether planned or unplanned is traumatic. It is our expectation that all agency staff and Foster Parents work as a team to minimize the trauma. Child Welfare Specialists are trained during supervision, team meetings, and clinical staffings and through DCFS Learning Collaborative trainings on how to identify early signs of children at risk of disrupting. Child Welfare Specialists are able to observe early signs of potential placement disruption by conducting home visits, school visits, Child and

Family Team Meetings, and attending clinical staffings. Other methods used by Child Welfare Specialists in finding early signs of placement disruption is by reviewing behavior logs, incident reports and by having ongoing communication with the child and Foster Parent.

The Child Welfare Specialist notifies the Foster Parent verbally and in writing within five business days of any changes in the children's case plan. The written Notice of Change of Placement is used and should contain specific reasons for a service change or termination of placement. Foster Parents are notified in writing of the intent to move children from their homes at least 14 days prior to the move, unless there is imminent risk involved.

Furthermore, SOS Illinois adheres to Policy Guide 2003.01 regarding Clinical Review of Notice of Placement Change. In the event that a Professional Foster Parent receives a Notice of Decision by SOS Illinois or if the Professional Foster Parent issues a "14-day notice", the case is immediately referred to Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) services. The purpose of IPS is to provide additional clinical services in an attempt to stabilize the placement. If there is a dispute between the Foster Parent and the agency regarding a Notice of Decision, a clinical review is conducted and will include the participation of DCFS staff, the Foster Parent(s), SOS Illinois Clinical Director, Child Welfare Supervisor, Child Welfare Specialist, and Director of Program and Services when warranted.

Right 12: Notification of Court Hearings

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

SSOS Illinois case management staff notifies the Foster Parent verbally or provides in writing and/or email the date and time of any court hearing, calendar, docket number, name of judge and location. The written notification is a letter that contains all of the necessary information for the Foster Parent to attend the scheduled court hearing. A reminder is provided to the Foster Parent during all home visits by the Child Welfare Specialist.

SOS Illinois provides the Professional Foster Parent with child care in effort to encourage their attendance at court hearings. Foster Parents receive information on their right to intervene in court proceedings under the Juvenile Court Act during pre-service training. SOS Illinois staff informs all Foster Parents about court dates, Administrative Case Reviews and meetings both verbally and in writing.

SOS Illinois Child Welfare Specialists are held accountable for notifying Foster Parents of Juvenile Court hearing information through supervisory conference reminders by their supervisor, and the expectations of communication to foster parent during home visits. Child welfare specialists are required to acknowledge their supervisory conference meetings with their signature. SOS Illinois Child Welfare Specialists are required to maintain updated information of all court dates and court calendar information and are directed to share this information with their Foster Parents during home visits.

Right 13: Placement Options

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

If a former youth in care re-enters the foster care system, SOS Illinois staff works towards placing that child in the home of their last known Foster Parent placement. SOS Illinois staff reviews past placement records that are kept within the agency after closure to identify the child's last known placement. When a child re-enters the system, members of the child and family team (Director of Programs, Child Welfare Supervisor, Licensing Supervisor, Child Welfare Specialist and Clinical Director) will meet to determine if any prior foster home has capacity and can meet the child's current needs along with the needs of other children already in placement. The best interest of all children is considered.

All past placement records and pertinent information are stored within the agency's Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) database system, and SACWIS. Additionally, all closed records are kept in confidential storage within the agency for a minimum of 7 years.

When a child leaves foster care placement Foster Parents are informed that they have a right to be considered as a placement option should the child be returned to care. If the placement is determined to be in the best interest of the child, SOS Illinois will support placement in the previous foster home. If the assessment concludes that the previous foster home is not a good match, the agency will provide the Foster Parent a verbal and/or written reason. Intake of a child returning to care is subject to appropriate notification by DCFS to the agency.

The process that SOS Illinois Child and Family Team uses to determine best interest of the child regarding placement is done through a staffing involving the Foster Parents, Director of Programs, Supervisor, Child Welfare Specialist, Clinical Director and final approval from the Deputy Director of Operations-Case management Support. The placement of the child into their last foster home placement is considered when attachment still exists and the child's placement needs are met. In the event that placement in the previous foster home cannot be established, further relative placements are explored and exhausted before placement with a non-relative is considered.

Foster Parents may write a letter to the agency regarding their wishes as a future placement and/or permanency resource for the child when a child is moved from their home.

Right 14: Access to Placement Appeals Process

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.

SOS Illinois has an internal Foster Parent Grievance/Appeals Procedure, which is provided to Foster Parents upon initial licensure and reviewed as part of the ongoing licensing process. Should a complaint be made, staff provides and reviews the appeal process with Foster Parents again at that time. SOS Illinois Foster Parent Grievance/Appeals Procedure states that there will be no retaliation for filing a grievance or complaint, and that Foster Parents have the right to receive grievance appeal procedures in writing. The grievance procedures will also be provided to the Foster Parents by agency staff at the time of an incident and or any time they are requested.

SOS Illinois Administrative staff informs Foster Parents of the internal appeals process in the event that they are in disagreement of any decision or action made by the agency. Foster Parents are informed of their right to request an emergency hearing with SOS Illinois staff regarding the action or decision made by the agency. SOS Illinois Staff is expected to act in a professional and non-discriminatory manner during the service appeal process. In the event that SOS Illinois staff does not abide by these standards, disciplinary action may be taken.

The DCFS Appeal Process brochure is provided to Foster Parents at time of licensure, at ACRs, when a grievance is made, and/or upon request. The Appeal Process brochure is reviewed with the Foster Parent by the Child Welfare Specialist and/or their licensing representative. At any time, Foster Parents may request assistance from SOS Illinois staff in accessing the appeal process.

Foster Parents are informed on how to access the DCFS Appeals System by their assigned agency representative, Village Director, and available written literature:

Administrative Hearings Unit
Department of Children and Family Services

406 E. Monroe St., Station 15
Springfield, IL 62701
217-782-6655

Additionally, during pre-service training Foster Parents are informed on how to access the Foster Parent hotline, including the telephone number of the Inspector General (1-800-722-9124).

Foster Parents are also provided a list of statewide resources in the DCFS newsletter and by accessing the DCFS website <http://www.state.il.us/dcfs/index.shtml>.

Foster Parents are provided with SOS Illinois newsletters, trainings, as well as having pertinent brochures available at all three Village sites that includes information about internal and external grievances and appeals.

The Agency upholds its responsibility to provide services under a code of ethics. Reports of unethical behavior or misconduct are responded to by the Director of Programs and Services and Chief Operating Officer.

Right 15: Informing of Foster Parent Hotline

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

SOS Illinois staff provides all Foster Parents with brochures of information pertaining to the Foster Parent Hotline and the Office of the Inspector General to register concerns and complaints of any SOS Illinois service provider. These brochures and other information are distributed through Foster Parent orientation, Foster Parent meetings, and SOS Illinois in-service trainings and upon request. The information is also shared at initial placement or licensure. The information is available at all three administrative program offices.

Training is provided to Foster Parents on hotline reporting and the Office of Inspector General (OIG) at least once annually. Additional training on hotline, OIG and maintaining required documentation is provided to the Foster Parents by the assigned Child Welfare Specialist during home visits, by the Licensing Specialist during monitoring visits and to Professional Foster Parents by the Director of Program and Services during supervision.

Upon licensure, Foster Parents are provided with information about the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) Foster Parent hotline (1- 800-722-9124) and are informed that they have a right to express any concerns regarding SOS Illinois employees and or practices that were not able to be resolved through the SOS Illinois internal grievance procedures process. In addition, Foster Parents are provided a list of statewide resources in the DCFS newsletter and by accessing the DCFS website <http://www.state.il.us/dcfs/index.shtml>.

Foster Parents are encouraged to utilize SOS Illinois internal appeals/grievance process prior to contacting the OIG. A copy of the OIG's brochure is posted within the SOS Illinois Administrative Offices.

Training information is also available at each Village in the administrative program offices.

Foster Parent Responsibilities

Responsibility 1: Communication and Sharing Information

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

The unique structure of SOS Illinois allows immediate and frequent contact and communication between Professional Foster Parents and SOS Illinois staff. Communication between Professional Foster Parents and staff is made easy because each foster home is located within walking distance of the SOS Illinois administrative program office at the Chicago, Lockport and Roosevelt Square Villages. SOS Illinois encourages open communication between our Foster Parents, case management staff, and other members of the professional child welfare team.

Foster Parents are trained through Pride/Adopt Pride about what information is necessary to share and what information being shared is confidential. SOS Illinois requires its Child Welfare Specialists to share information about the child through ongoing home visits and during quarterly Child and Family Team Meetings. Foster parents are advised about unusual incidents which include but are not limited to medical and psychiatric emergencies, school suspensions, and hazards discovered at the home, identification or discovery of a ward's pregnancy, and runaway. Foster parents should report any incidents that occur in the home, school, and community.

Professional Foster Parents are provided with an agency cell phone and email address and each foster home is equipped with a computer and landline, which further supports ongoing communication with case management staff. SOS Illinois Child Welfare Specialists visit Professional Foster Parent homes weekly or as outlined in the program plan. Community Foster Parents are visited at least once every 30 days. Foster Parents are required to share information and feedback regarding the child.

Foster Parents are encouraged to attend clinical staffings and to meet at least once quarterly with the child and family team to share information regarding the child's overall progress. The clinical staffings are not only conducted to address areas of need for a child or review a treatment plan, but to assist Foster Parents with recognizing their value and their responsibility with regards to the impact that the sharing of information in a timely manner has on the quality of care that children in care receive.

The Child Welfare Specialist provides verbal, written, and email notifications of court dates, administrative case reviews (ACR), individual educational planning (IEP) meeting, clinical staffing, child and family team meetings, and any other relevant staffings. Foster Parents are also notified of ACRs through written notice from DCFS, and of Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) meetings through written notice from the child's school.

Child Welfare Specialists are trained during supervision, team meetings, and clinical staffings and through SOS Illinois trainings of ways to identify early signs of children at risk of placement disruption. Child Welfare Specialists are able to observe early signs of placement disruption by conducting home visits, school visits, Child and Family Team Meetings, and attending clinical staffings. Other methods used by Child Welfare Specialists in identifying early signs of placement disruption is by reviewing behavior logs, incident reports and by having ongoing communication with the child and Foster Parent.

Responsibility 2: Respect Confidentiality of Information

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

SOS Illinois believes respecting the confidentiality of information involving the child and their family is the responsibility of each member of the child and family team.

SOS Illinois requires Foster Parents to sign a confidentiality statement at the time licensure. Foster Parents are expected to respect confidentiality of the child which means no child specific information is to be discussed outside the parameters of normal case conferencing and training, with the child's mental health provider, and Foster Parent support sessions.

Professional Foster Parents receive training on confidentiality through PRIDE training as well as the Agency's preservice and in-service trainings. The laws and regulations of violating confidentiality policy are continually discussed during Village meetings, licensing monitoring visits, home visits, and supervision with Professional Foster Parents.

In addition, SOS Illinois provides a specific Foster Parent training on confidentiality annually. Copies of the Confidentiality Act are distributed at this training. All Professional Foster Parents are required to sign the Professional Foster Parent Agreement, which informs them of their responsibility as it relates to confidentiality.

Responsibility 3: Advocate for Children

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

The responsibility of advocating for the best interests of a child is a primary role for a Foster Parent. Foster Parents are informed of their responsibility to advocate for their children upon their initial training with PRIDE. This initial training offers the required Educational Advocacy component. SOS Illinois Foster Parents are encouraged to attend ACRs, Juvenile Court, and other related meetings regarding the child to advocate for their child's best interest. Foster parents are consistently reminded during all professional interactions of their responsibility to be good advocates for the children in their care.

Foster Parents demonstrate their advocacy for the children by providing their input and/or feedback during case staffings, child and family team meetings, and clinical staffings and at school meetings including IEPs. Foster Parents are expected to attend as many Court dates and Administrative Case Reviews as possible in efforts to continually foster their advocacy on behalf of the child.

SOS Illinois provides the Professional Foster Parent with child care to encourage and support Foster Parents in their attendance at court hearings. Foster parents that attend juvenile court hearings are able to communicate with court officials and provide information about the needs of the children placed in their homes.

Foster Parents are made aware of the service appeal process through available trainings and the DCFS Service Appeal Brochure provided by SOS Illinois staff during the initial licensing process. Additionally, the service appeal process explained through Foster Parent meetings and other related meetings established by SOS Illinois staff.

Responsibility 4: Respect of Child and Child's Family

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

The initial PRIDE training teaches Foster Parents about the responsibility of treating children in their care and their families with dignity, respect, and consideration. Ongoing training is provided to the Professional Foster Parents in efforts to help them take on the role as birth parent coaches and mentors. Professional Foster Parents host and supervise parent/child visits in the foster home whenever possible and Community Foster Parents are encouraged to do so as well depending on their comfort level.

Professional Foster Parents make the home environment welcoming and inviting to the birth parent by allowing the birth parent to prepare meals for their children, assist with homework, and participate in the development of rewards and consequences for the children through a shared parenting role. During our Foster Parent mentoring and training sessions Professional Foster Parents are given specific training regarding interpersonal relationships, parenting techniques, and working with biological parents. Our case managers are trained to practice and reinforce these principles of respect, dignity, and consideration when they meet with Foster Parents, children, and biological families. Professional Foster parents are expected to build a partnership with birth parents. Foster parents are reminded of the benefits to children when they are able to maintain their family connections with the support of their caregiver. The Child Welfare Specialists monitor how Foster Parents treat children and their families during announced and unannounced home visits, and observation of visitation. These observations include monitoring the interaction to ensure our birth families are treated with dignity and respect. Home visitations are required to occur in the Village homes three times per month and at least once every 30 days in the community. The Child Welfare Specialists use a home visit checklist as a tool to document observations. Upon completion of the home visit checklist, the Child Welfare Supervisor reviews it and provides feedback to the Child Welfare Specialist. Case managers are advised to immediately discuss with Foster Parents any incidents that appear to violate these principles. Supervisors and Village Directors are responsible for ensuring that Foster Parents are referred for training to address any issues.

The Professional Foster Parent Expectations and the Children's Right and Responsibilities outline the expectations of Foster Parents to treat children with dignity, and respect. SOS Illinois staff has a responsibility to monitor the treatment of children and their families by all Foster Parents.

Responsibility 5: Recognizing Foster Parent's Strengths and Limitations

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.

SOS Illinois Administrative Staff provide annual performance reviews, quarterly Agency Staff Meetings, monthly Professional Foster Parent Operations Meetings and monthly individual Professional Foster Parent supervision that acts as tools to assess the general and individual training needs of the Professional Foster Parents. Home visits by the case management team assist in assessing the quality of care provided to the child (ren) by the Foster Parent and identifies training needs of Foster Parents.

SOS Illinois and prospective Foster Parents engage in a mutual assessment process at the time of licensure. Foster Parents are encouraged to inform the agency of ongoing training needs during licensing monitoring visits, discussions with child welfare specialists and program directors, and through the annual Foster Parent Survey. Foster Parents are referred for training to coincide with the needs of the children that they are currently parenting and their own individual support needs and recommendations for specific trainings are submitted to the agency's Quality Improvement and Training Manager. Foster Parent strengths and weaknesses are considered when placing children into a foster home and supports for the Foster Parent are put into place to address any identified needs. Support is also offered through clinical and case management staff, other Foster Parents and via the on-call after-hours numbers.

Foster Parents are encouraged to communicate openly with SOS Illinois Administrative staff when identifying their strengths and limitations when deciding to accept a child into care. SOS Illinois Administrative staff and licensing consider the strengths and limitations in order to appropriately match children in placement. The self-awareness and the ability to self-reflect on fostering experiences are emphasized in pre-service training and occur throughout the fostering experience.

Relief (respite) parents are also utilized to provide additional support in the foster home when a Foster Parent demonstrates or expresses a need for such support. This can include, but is not limited to initial or subsequent placement stabilizations, behavioral concerns, illness, or increased child monitoring needs.

Responsibility 6: Relying on and Connecting with Other Foster Parents

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.

SOS Illinois Foster Parents are encouraged to participate in the monthly agency support groups at each Village (Village Voices) and local support groups offered by affiliate organizations. All new parents receive additional support groups centered around parenting and trauma based youth-in-care. SOS Illinois Lockport Village serves as a host site for the Will County Foster Parent Support group. This group convenes monthly and provides training opportunities, resource information, and support specifically for Foster Parents that reside in the Will County area. Foster parents are also encouraged to participate in Foster Parent conference and training events that are offered throughout the state of Illinois. Foster parents are provided with information on these events via electronic mail and newsletters.

Foster Parents are encouraged to access the following affiliations:

- Strengthening Families Illinois: www.strengtheningfamiliesillinois.org
- Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association: www.ilfapa.org
- National Foster Parent Association: www.nfpaonline.org
- Foster Kids are Our Kids: www.fosterkidsareourkids.org

Responsibility 7: Determining Foster Parent's Training Needs

The responsibility to assess foster parent's ongoing individual training needs and takes action to meet those needs.

Foster Parents are able to express their interest in any training needs to the Child Welfare Specialist, Supervisor, Director, Licensing Representative or Supervisor and/or Human Resources. SOS Illinois's method and tool for assessing general and individual training needs of Foster Parents is done by the Quality Improvement Department through annual surveys. Foster parents are encouraged to participate and agree to facilitate training sessions. Foster parent training events and curriculum are developed based on these survey results. Foster parents are given the opportunity at the end of each training to evaluate the appropriateness of the training and to determine the applied usefulness of the training. These evaluations are also used to assist in determining training topics and offerings. SOS Illinois provides the training in house or refers Foster Parents to an external resource.

SOS Illinois administrative staff provides monthly operations meetings virtually and regularly scheduled individual supervisions in efforts to assess general and individual training needs of the Professional Foster Parents. Regular home visits by the Child Welfare Specialist assist in assessing the quality of care by the Foster Parents and identifies training needs that are submitted to the program director. Foster Parents are also responsible for assessing their own individual training needs to improve their quality of care to children. SOS Illinois provides monthly virtual training, however, external resources are provided for individual training needs when necessary.

Responsibility 8: Developing Strategies to Prevent Placement Disruption

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 preventative strategies fail and placement disruptions occur.

SOS Illinois fully understands that any placement disruption whether planned or unplanned can result in further trauma to a child and foster family. SOS Illinois recognizes that placement disruptions are traumatic for the child and all members of the foster family.

SOS Illinois has a Deputy Director of Operations Clinical Support, and on-site Clinical Director, and full-time clinical staff to support and process with the foster family in the midst of an emergent child crisis. Additionally, Foster Parents have the responsibility to identify early signs of children at risk of disruption. Foster Parents receive training regarding possible disruption through their initial PRIDE training and should utilize learned skills in preventing this occurrence. SOS Illinois staff will encourage and train Foster Parents to seek stabilization services when they detect early signs of disruptions. SOS Illinois staff provides stabilization services when needed and is aware of other resources and trainings offered to prevent disruption. Furthermore, Professional Foster Parents are trained on how to document children's emergent behaviors on the DCFS behavior logs and SOS Illinois Internal Incident Reports. SOS Illinois works with Foster Parents to develop appropriate intervention strategies in an effort to maintain placement. These strategies include referrals for additional therapy, psychiatric services, tutoring, and other supportive services.

SOS Illinois case management staff utilizes external resources, which include Screening Assessment Support Services (SASS), Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) and Intensive Placement Stabilization (IPS) to assist and support Foster Parents. Foster Parents may request a clinical staffing at any time to discuss placement issues.

SOS Illinois on call staff is available for telephone consultation 24-hours 7 days per week to assist Foster Parents during crisis situations. When preventative strategies fail and it is determined that placement change is in the best interest of a child and foster family, SOS Illinois staff provides emotional support and assists with the development of a transition plan to minimize the traumatic impact on the child being moved.

Responsibility 9: Individual Impact of Foster Parenting

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 result from foster parenting.

SOS Illinois works closely with Foster Parents on ways to minimize the amount of stress that may result from Foster Parenting. SOS Illinois provides Professional Foster Parents with a minimum of eight hours of relief (also referred to as respite care) weekly to allow for self-care and personal time. Additionally, Professional Foster Parents never have to worry about child care services to attend trainings; meetings and other work-related responsibilities because SOS Illinois provides care for the children in the absence of the Professional Foster Parent.

SOS University provides trainings on ways to acknowledge recognize and minimize stress. Foster Parents should consider placing their foster home on “voluntary hold” when they have identified themselves as being overwhelmed. SOS Illinois staff assists Foster Parents in deciding whether to place themselves on “voluntary hold” as well as explains the process.

All Foster Parents have 24-hour access to SOS Illinois staff via regular business hours and emergency after hours contacts. Professional Foster Parents may also avail to support from Human Resources and/or the SOS Illinois Employee Assistance program (EAP).

The PRIDE training and the SOS Illinois in-service training provide education on recognizing the signs of stress and the impact of fostering on one’s own immediate family.

SOS Illinois Professional Foster Parents are provided paid vacation, personal and sick leave time. The on-site Clinical Director and full-time clinical staff are available to provide brief individual counseling services for Foster Parents on an as needed basis. The agency provides monthly support groups and encourages networking and mentorship.

Responsibility 10: Positive Promotion of Foster Parenting

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

SOS Illinois provides a monthly calendar of enrichment activities, programs and services that Foster Parents can access for supportive services on behalf of the children in their care. For example, Brookfield Zoo sponsors an annual family membership including complimentary parking. Most activities are open to the community at large and to birth parents. This helps promote the Foster Parenting experience in a positive way. Professional foster parents are regularly offered opportunities to speak about their foster parent experience at various community and organization events.

SOS Illinois continues to work with business partners and community volunteers for tutoring and mentoring services. Other activities that Professional Foster Parents participate in with their children that promote the Professional Foster Parent experience include planning community events such as planning the Community Garden Project, Back to School Picnic, and agency holiday parties. SOS Illinois partnerships with the Swiss hotel and Culinary experiences sponsored by Goya Foods. We celebrate Foster Parent's via celebration of Foster Parent Appreciation Month each year in May. These celebrations include discussions and strategies promoting self-care for foster parents and celebrate the many positive and long-term effects of foster parenting.

Responsibility 11: Rights, Roles, and Responsibilities of Foster Parents & Others

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

The SOS Illinois Professional Foster Parent job description specifies the Professional Foster Parent's roles and responsibilities. It is provided to Professional Foster Parents at the time of hire.

SOS Illinois case management staff ensures that Foster Parents attend SOS University Trainings and DCFS In-Service trainings in order to be informed of these roles, rights and responsibilities. SOS Illinois Child Welfare Specialists and administrative staff discuss the roles of other professional providers involved in the child's life with the Foster Parents on an ongoing basis. Professional Foster Parents serve as co-trainers along with SOS Illinois case management and administrative staff. Formal input is sought from Professional Foster Parents annually via satisfaction surveys for strengthening the programs on the Village.

The Foster Parent's initial introduction to the roles, rights and responsibilities of a Foster Parent and others on the child and family team occurs in PRIDE training. SOS Illinois reinforces this training with our professional foster parents as a part of our foster parent onboarding training curriculum during the licensing department presentation. Foster Parents are provided other training resources including, the DCFS Foster Family Handbook, Fostering Illinois, Foster Parent support group and the SOS Children's Villages Professional Foster Parent Handbook. SOS Illinois staff values the knowledge and training skills that many of our Professional Foster Parents possess as a result of working in the field of social services and education.

Foster Parents participate in quarterly Child and Family Team meetings, semi-annual Administrative Case Reviews (ACR), Integrated Clinical Assessments (IA), Educational Meetings, quarterly Clinical Staffings and Clinical Intervention for Placement Preservation (CIPP) meetings when necessary. Foster Parents are provided a copy of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan and encouraged to provide ongoing feedback.

Professional Foster Parents have a recognized voice within the SOS Illinois Executive Management Team. There is an appointed Professional Foster Parent from each of the three Villages that sits on the Executive Management Team. This group meets monthly and involves all Managers and Directors, the Deputy Directors, and the CEO of SOS Illinois. It is the responsibility of the appointed Professional Foster Parent representative and the Director of Program and Services for each Village to disseminate information and keep communication open with all Professional Foster Parents concerning their voices being recognized.

Responsibility 12: Foster Parent as a Mandated Reporter

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.

Foster Parents are informed of their mandated reporter status during PRIDE training, at the initial orientation with Human Resources and/or during the licensing process. It is at these times that the Foster Parent is provided with the hotline number 1-800-24-ABUSE (1-800-242-2873) to report abuse or neglect. Every Foster Parent signs a form acknowledging they are mandated reporters during the licensing process. A discussion is held with Foster Parents during the initial licensing process, orientation, and onboarding to review with them their obligation and duty to report any observed or information of incidents of abuse or neglect to child. SOS Illinois provides specific training to Foster Parents on an annual basis on the agency policies and procedures and applicable administrative rules and procedures governing investigations of allegations of abuse or neglect by Foster Parents. All Professional Foster parents are provided with an initial review of the agency policies and procedures during their onboarding activities. Foster Parents are part of the professional team and are responsible for assuring that children are safe and free from abuse and neglect.

Foster Parents complete online training on their role as a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act. The certification and verification of completion of this training is maintained as a part of the training records for the foster parent.

Responsibility 13: Training Regarding ACRs, Service Plans, and Court

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

Foster Parents are responsible for continually developing their knowledge of Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs) and court procedures so they are aware of current policy, practice, and procedures. SOS Illinois staff encourages Foster Parents to participate in these proceedings. SOS Illinois staff also encourages Foster Parents to be part of the service planning process and keep Child Welfare Specialists informed regarding the child's progress toward meeting the service plan goals.

Foster Parents receive their initial training on Administrative Case Reviews (ACR), service planning, court processes, and filing or time requirements associated with these proceedings during PRIDE.

During monthly Professional Foster Parent Operations Meetings, home visits, and phone contact, SOS Illinois staff will inform Foster Parents of the importance of participating in ACRs, client service plans, and court processes. Training will be made available to those Foster Parents who request the need to become more informed of these processes.

At the beginning of licensure and at the time a child is placed into their home, SOS Illinois places emphasis on Foster Parents taking an active role in planning for their child's permanency through court hearings, ACRs, etc. SOS Illinois staff encourage that their role in the child's case is crucial in determining permanency for the child and that their input and feedback is valuable. Through written notices, phone contact, and home visits, Foster Parents are informed of their child's next scheduled ACR or court date to ensure their participation.

SOS Illinois also encourages Foster Parents to participate in family team meetings which are held quarterly for each case. At these meetings Foster Parents can become informed and help with treatment and permanency planning. Foster Parent participation is also important as a resource when assessing the child's placement stability, progress and any additional service or intervention needs.

Responsibility 14: Agency Procedure for Foster Parents

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

SOS Illinois supports its Foster Parents in understanding the SOS Illinois and DCFS appeal process through training, support groups and supportive services.

SOS Illinois staff encourages Foster Parents to view the appeal process as a communication tool; a healthy approach to conflict resolution which honors the Foster Parent's rights, the best interest of the child, and ensures other matters important to any decisions are reviewed. Each year, SOS's Quality Improvement Department provides Foster Parents with a Foster Parent survey to report on the quality and service being provided by the agency.

Foster Parents are provided verbal and written information regarding SOS Illinois appeal procedures and the DCFS appeal process. Foster Parents are informed of their rights to voice a concern to the agency without fear of retaliation.

Foster Parents receive an annual copy of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. During the Foster Parent Law Implementation review, Foster Parents are integral members of the process by which the FP Law grievance procedure is reviewed.

Responsibility 15: Maintaining Accurate and Relevant Child Records

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.

SOS Illinois requires Foster Parents to maintain a child record of each child placed in the home. Foster Parents have the responsibility to maintain relevant records regarding the child's history and progress. Training occurs for Professional Foster Parents during orientation to SOS Illinois, through PRIDE classes and monthly supervision. Record keeping expectations and regulations are available in writing as defined by Rule 402, PRIDE and ongoing training in "Records to be Maintained," (Rule 402.26) stresses the importance of accurate documentation. Additionally, the Child Welfare Specialists expectations for upkeep of specific records are explained at the onset of placement. The Licensing Specialist reviews expectations semi-annually at each monitoring visit. SOS Illinois Foster Parent Handbooks are provided to all Foster Parents with identifying sections for the purpose of maintaining records for each child. These handbooks are large binders which are provided specifically for the storage of child records in the foster home.

It is the responsibility of the Foster Parent to maintain accurate and relevant mental health, medical, dental, education and background records regarding the child's history and current progress and to provide the staff with required documentation in a timely manner upon request.

Client folders are checked by the SOS Illinois Director of Program and Services quarterly during the administrative home visit in Village homes. Records maintained by the family shall be kept current and shall be open to inspection by the SOS Illinois Child Welfare Specialist. All persons who have access to the family's records shall respect their confidential nature.

Responsibility 16: Sharing Information with Child Welfare Team

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

Foster Parents are encouraged 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 Parents home.

There is ongoing conversation between Foster Parents and SOS Illinois staff regarding the child's adjustment in the Foster Parent's home. These conversations are documented on an SOS Illinois Home Visit Checklist (signed off by both Foster Parents and Child Welfare Specialist) and documented in SACWIS.

Foster Parents are encouraged to participate in the transition process to help facilitate the adjustment to the new foster family. Professional Foster Parents work closely with many birth parents; their attendance at the reunification staffing is encouraged in an effort to share the child's history and to assist in the development of the treatment plan.

SOS Illinois maintains that placement disruptions and interrupted relationships cause further trauma and impact a child's long-term well-being. It is our protocol that pre-placement and clinical staffing occurs prior to transitioning a child with a subsequent caregiver.

The Child Welfare Specialist and Supervisor are required to ensure that all pertinent records and documentation regarding a child's medical, education, visitation and permanency plan as well as their life book is provided to the subsequent caregiver.

SOS Illinois placement protocol requires that whenever possible, that pre-placement visits and a clinical staffing occurs prior to transitioning a child into the home of a Foster Parent. Both sending and receiving Foster Parents are encouraged to participate in these meetings. Training is offered through Pride and regular in-service trainings.

Responsibility 17: Supporting Child's Cultural Needs

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

SOS Illinois values the unique cultural and ethnic differences of the children and families we serve. During the SOS Illinois orientation and in the PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training, emphasis is placed on the Foster Parent's responsibility to recognize and respect difference in culture. The PRIDE Module #7 Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity provides foster caregivers with training in this area. Case Management staff is trained during New Employee Orientation on the Burgos Consent Decree and the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

Professional Foster Parents are made aware of community trainings and resources addressing cultural competency from Child Welfare Specialists during home visits, Licensing Specialist during monitoring visits and SOS Illinois and DCFS newsletters. SOS Illinois University also provides Foster Parents with Cultural Competency training. A list of available training materials is also on the DCFS website - www.state.il.us/dcf.

Child Welfare Specialist staff encourages Foster Parents to participate in trainings focused on maintaining a child's cultural identity. Initial training with PRIDE provides information on the importance of being receptive to a child's cultural needs, and ongoing training on this area is provided when requested. SOS Illinois staff encourages Foster Parents to become familiar with the Multi Ethnic Placement Act (IEPA/MEPA) standards and Burgos Consent Decree to provide information about the importance of cultural events within their community.

Foster Parents are also responsible for being supportive of the child's relationship with his or her own family and maintaining awareness of their racial and/or cultural identity.

Foster Parents are responsible for adhering to the SOS Illinois and DCFS policies, which stress the rights of the child and biological parents to practice the faith or religion of their choice. SOS Illinois Child Welfare Specialists and Supervisor are available to assist Foster Parents in identifying resources to meet the child's cultural needs and to promote cultural competence.

SOS Illinois recognizes the importance of cultural, religious, ethnic, racial gender, and sexual orientation factors in child care service delivery. Therefore, SOS Illinois is committed to fostering a climate that encourages responsiveness to cultural diversity. Cultural responsiveness

must be nurtured at all levels of SOS Illinois, including policy and decision-making, service delivery, staff development and training, research and in the employee handbook.

Annually, SOS University offers training courses in Cultural Sensitivity. External resources on training regarding cultural sensitivity are made available as necessary.