

**Implementation Plan for  
Foster Parent Law (Public Act 89.19)  
Arden Shore Child and Family Services  
2010**

**THE RIGHTS OF FOSTER PARENTS SHALL INCLUDE:**

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

At Arden Shore, no one team member is any more important than another as every team member must be looked upon with respect, dignity and a sense of professionalism, regardless of their respective area of expertise. Foster parents are a major part of the multi-disciplinary professional team, which provides an array of services to the children involved with the child welfare system. Foster parents have expertise through their foster parenting experience, along with education, vocational, and life experiences. They must be respected, listened to and given the status of any other professionals in the service team. Foster parents are invited to attend court, family meetings, administrative case reviews, and school meetings as well as other meetings related to case planning *such as the quarterly Child & Family Team meeting*. The inclusion of foster parents in these meetings and events allows foster parents to give input, and to be heard as active members of the child welfare team. Besides being involved in the case planning and other meetings for the child(ren), foster parents are encouraged to participate in and given information about local area groups and meetings that they can attend to interact with other foster parents. They are encouraged to be a part of the Northern Region Foster Parent Advisory Board. In addition to being included as a member of the child welfare team, all communication with foster parents, both written and verbal, is to comply with this standard. Arden Shore involves foster parents in the evaluation of service provision through surveys sent to foster care providers as a means of feedback and relaying concerns in order to improve service provision. They also were an integral part of the Council on Accreditation review. Five years ago, Arden Shore created the "Foster Parent of the Year Award" that is given annually to a foster parent at the agency's Annual Meeting. This award recognizes the commitment and excellence the foster parent has demonstrated to their role in the child welfare arena.

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

All members of the team are afforded access to consistent and quality training. All members of the team are encouraged to participate in training to ensure uniformity and consistency in the service delivery system. This includes PRIDE training. All relative foster parents who apply for licensure for children complete the 6-hour Relative Caregiver Training. All traditional foster parents are required to complete the 30-hour Foster/Adopt Pride Training. Pride Training is also available in Spanish and we have had families take advantage of this. *All licensed foster parents need to complete 16 clock hours of approved training during the period between each licensure period. All foster parents were offered First Aid/CPR training.*

Relative foster parents who are not licensed often are reluctant to participate in structured training sessions. When our efforts to convince them to attend training sessions fail, the foster care specialists provide informal individual training during their monthly visits with the foster family. The Pride Training can also be offered to families via video tapes/DVD format where there exist difficulties with regard to transportation, child care, or conflicts in work schedules.

All foster parents are expected to attend training for educational advocates and to be an integral part of the child's educational planning. Arden Shore, through the Licensing worker, Foster Care Supervisor and input from the caseworkers will provide updated information on and maintain a list of local area trainings and share with the foster parent through the caseworker or in a direct mailing. . The foster parents can be referred to the appropriate training at any participating college, other schools or the center closest to their home or schedule that will meet their work, home or childcare needs. Licensed foster parents also receive in the mail from the state, "Fostering Illinois", which is a booklet published every 2-3 months that also includes training information. Arden Shore also publishes a quarterly newsletter that provides training opportunities.

Arden Shore assures those new as well as seasoned foster parents, plus staff receive ongoing training at their level of need, understanding, skill level and prior training history. Arden Shore assesses the foster parents' needs for ongoing training with the level of care needed for their respective foster children. . *Foster parents were asked for their input at the FP Implementation meeting about possible training topics. The foster parents sent a clear message to the agency for the need and desire to have a Foster Parent Support/Educational group. The agency plans to have at least 4 meetings in 2010. At each meeting, foster parents will have the opportunity to suggest training topics. These meetings will also offer foster parents an opportunity to share their experiences and give each other support.*

Arden Shore caseworkers provide ongoing training to foster parents including, but not limited to, the following: behavior management techniques, alternative disciplinary techniques, court procedures, and administrative case reviews. Specialized training is provided as needed. Arden Shore solicits feedback from foster parents to identify training needs. If caseworkers identify training needs for a foster parent, they discuss the need with the foster parent and work together to find trainings that will address the need. This includes providing one-on-one training or securing local resources. Arden Shore caseworkers work with foster parents to make sure transportation to training sessions is available. In addition, foster parents are referred to DCFS adoption training when a foster parent is interested in adoption. This training educates foster parents regarding the impact adoption will have on their relationship with a foster child and provides general preparation for the adoption process.

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

Arden Shore provides to each current and new foster parent an updated list of phone numbers and emergency pagers, for 24-hour crisis response to emergencies. When contacted, Arden Shore caseworkers assist foster parents in making contact with any agency

or office that can provide relevant information, assistance, and or support services. Caseworkers and the foster parent determine if it is more appropriate for the foster parent or caseworker to make such contact. The agreed to plan is then implemented. Offices which are contacted when appropriate include: Ombudsman Office, Medical Consent, Foster Parent Law Advisory Council, Board of Education, SASS, SACY, Inspector General, Department of Public Aid, Department of Rehabilitation Services, and Office of Mental Health of the Department of Human Services, schools, hospitals, counseling agencies, public health organizations etc.

The caseworker is the foster parent's first line of contact regarding assistance in locating special services or supports if the child is exhibiting special needs at any given time. Caseworkers not only have knowledge of local resources but also have access to the agency's referral process. The process of having foster parents work with the caseworker as a team allows for the use of each team members skills and knowledge to arrange for the best service provision possible.

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

Payment is made commensurate with the levels of care provided by the foster parents according to the contract. Payments to all licensed foster parents are distributed no later than the twenty-fifth of the month by the agency. Foster parents are instructed to contact their worker if there is a delay in their payment or if they have any questions regarding their payments. The caseworker discusses the issue with his/her supervisor and the Finance Department and arranges for the correction of, or explanation of, the issue within 10 business working days. For unlicensed relative foster parents who are paid by the state, Arden Shore caseworker will encourage the foster parent to contact the DCFS Payment Unit at 1-800-525-0499; option #2; between 8:30 am-4:30 pm to address payment problems. The Foster Care Supervisor will assist the foster parent as needed. . Foster parents are informed of additional monies (i.e. fees for camp, school trips etc.) for children in their care and how such monies can be requested.

It is the policy of Arden Shore that under no circumstances, should regular board payments, nor payments for respite care, camp, "extracurricular" activities such as special athletics training, and musical training, and the like be withheld for any reason.

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

When a child is placed into a foster home, Arden Shore caseworkers give as much information to the foster parent as possible. This includes background information and information about the permanency goal for the child. Foster parents are also provided clear and comprehensive child's portions of service plans as soon as such documentation is completed. This includes changes, deletions, and/or additions to the plan. Foster parents receive a copy of the completed service plan at the ACR or it is mailed/given to them if they do not attend. Foster parents are invited to give input regarding the child's plan and are asked

for such information by the caseworker before the ACR so it may be included in the written plan. Foster parents are always encouraged to participate in the ACR. The information contains as much of the following as possible:

- a. information on physiological/biological/medical backgrounds, needs and treatment histories of children
- b. information on behavioral backgrounds, needs and psychosocial histories of children
- c. information regarding prior and current educational backgrounds and needs of children
- d. information regarding types of prior placements which may be significant to the child's current and future needs, and previous services received by the children
- e. information on confidentiality and agency policy

Once the Arden Shore caseworker explains the parameters of what the visiting plan needs to have included, the foster parent helps develop and implement the visiting plan (DCFS Visiting Plan CFS 497PartII-A) and makes sure visits are recorded on a visiting record or sibling visit forms (DCFS Visiting Record Form). This allows the foster parent to be included in the decisions of the visitation plan and helps to reinforce the expectation of the foster parents' participation in the facilitation of the visiting plan.

Any changes in the case plan or decisions affecting the child's placement are discussed with the foster parents and their input is sought.–Arden Shore also encourages foster parents to attend the permanency hearing to stay informed of the permanency goal for the child. If for any reason the foster parent cannot attend, Arden Shore caseworkers would discuss any changes in the goal and explain any possible outcomes of that goal.

Foster parents are expected to understand their foster children's cultural heritage, teach the children about their heritage and help them to practice the traditions of their culture. As many of our foster placements are relative homes, the foster parent's often share the same cultural heritage as the children. Arden Shore follows the regulations under MEPA/IEPA in making placement decisions.

Arden Shore also follows the rule of the Burgos Consent Decree and attempts to place any Spanish speaking or bilingual child in a bilingual home with a bilingual foster care specialist. Arden Shore makes every effort to assure that children receive the communication and activities necessary to continue their identification with their cultural heritage and language. As many of our foster children are Latino, Arden Shore makes every effort to recruit and license bilingual foster homes and to employ bilingual foster care workers. The bilingual foster care specialist may also facilitate our providing other services such as a Spanish speaking mentor or therapist to enable the child to continue to use their Spanish as much as possible and to facilitate the highest level of communication with the child and the biological family.

Arden Shore currently has a DCFS contract designed to provide services for children in any DCFS or POS foster home or residential placement at no cost to enable the child and family to have language and culturally sensitive services in place. These services may include case management, therapy, or translation. This Burgos contract is designed to assist agencies when they do not have a bilingual staff to be able to provide Burgos services in Spanish for

any child or family to enable children to maintain their language and be able to continue communicating with their biological and extended family.

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

At the beginning of the licensing process, the foster parents are given information on how complaints against their license are handled. This information includes the agency policy and procedure and appropriate names of the individuals foster parents can contact for assistance (see attached). Upon notification of a licensing complaint, Arden Shore's Licensing worker is notified and coordinates the investigation process to ensure that the investigation is completed in a fair and timely manner.

The licensing worker initiates the investigation within 2 working days of notification of complaint. The licensing worker speaks with the caseworker and supervisor and reviews the caseworker's/foster parent's file to determine if the violation has been on-going or is an isolated incident. The licensing worker then talks to the foster parent(s) and arranges to visit the home as soon as possible. Foster parent's are advised of their right to have any advocate of their choice present for support and assistance with the process.

The licensing worker interviews the foster parent(s) and those involved during the home visit and the violation being investigated by the licensing worker will be given to the foster parent in writing, with specific mention of the standard and its section number alleged to have been violated. During the home visit, foster parents are also advised of the specific time frames of the investigation. Once the foster parent(s) and those involved are interviewed, the licensing worker collects all documentation/related evidence, if necessary. Once all documentation is reviewed and interviews are completed, the licensing worker and the supervisor meet to discuss the situation and make any recommendations including corrective action plan and/or any enforcement action needed. The supervisor must approve the decision and the foster parent(s) is/are notified and are provided with written notification of licensing corrective action plans, if necessary. Any corrective action plan is explained to the foster parent. This explanation includes the identification of the licensing standard violated and how the corrective action steps are tied to the violation. Foster parents also have the right to receive mediation and/or administrative review of decisions that affect licensing parameters. Upon the conclusion of the investigation, the complainant and the licensee receive documentation of the investigation, should they choose to have one. Foster parents are also provided with their rights to appeal the decision. The Licensing worker will provide a copy of the investigation and a corrective action plan, if needed, to the Director of Quality Improvement and the Director of Clinical Operations.

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

The caseworker assigned to the case meets with the foster parents and discusses any concerns, questions or issues related to the child's history, experiences, and care which will and can impact the home of the caretaker. Workers share any relevant information as it is obtained. Participation in court hearings, administrative case reviews, and other meetings is strongly encouraged, so that the foster parent is able to gain as much information as possible at the time it is disseminated and so that the foster parent may provide important information as to the child's current adjustment in the foster home. When foster parents are unable to attend court hearings, administrative case reviews, staffings, etc. the worker brings their comments and concerns to the meeting and also shares information and recommendations from the hearing or meeting with the foster parents afterwards.

All pertinent information about a child is shared with foster parents unless this information affects the confidentiality rights of another family member. The worker then explains to the foster parent the confidentiality standard that applies to the situation and why the sharing of the requested information is prohibited. All staff receive training about information that can be disclosed and not disclosed due to confidentiality reasons.

The foster care supervisor will discuss during supervision and will review worker's case notes to be sure that information is being shared appropriately. When indicated, the supervisor of the workers completes follow up with the foster parents to ensure that workers are giving the appropriate and necessary information so that the foster parents may adequately care for the child.

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

Arden Shore foster care staff are all trained either at the time of hire and or at least yearly in the procedures for assuring that foster parents or prospective adoptive parents have necessary information about the child(ren) at the time of placement. This information shall include:

- the child's medical history including immunization status, known medical problems or communicable diseases, and insurance and medical card information
- the child's educational history including any special educational needs and details of the child's individualized educational plan (IEP), Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP) when the child is receiving special educational services or 504 Educational Special Needs Plan, if applicable
- a copy of the child's portion of the client service plan including visitation arrangements, case history of the child, how the child came into care, legal status, permanency goal, history of the child's previous placement and reasons for placement changes. Information identifying or revealing the location of any previous foster or relative home caregiver will be redacted.

- Other relevant background information of the child including any prior criminal history, behavior problems including fire setting, perpetration of sexual abuse, destructive behavior and substance abuse habits and like and dislikes.
- The child's cultural and ethnic background especially related to any language or communication needs. Children whose family speaks Spanish will be placed in a bilingual home with a bilingual foster care specialist whenever possible.

In addition, whenever possible the caseworker will provide with the foster parent or adoptive parent with a written summary of the above information prior to placement. In an emergency placement, the worker shall provide known information verbally as it becomes available and subsequently provide this information in writing. .

Supervisory review and approval is required prior to providing any information to the foster parent or the prospective adoptive parents. The foster care supervisor as part of on-going case supervision will make sure that this information was given to the foster parents or adoptive parents and this is documented in the file as well as in supervisory case notes.

**9. The right to be notified of scheduled meetings and staffings concerning the foster child in order to actively participate in the case planning and decision-making process regarding the child, including individual service planning meetings, 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 a child, and to have that input given full consideration in the same manner as information presented by any other professional on the team; and the right to communicate with other professionals who work with the foster child within the context of the team, including therapists, physicians and teachers.**

The caseworker is responsible for notifying the foster parent of all staffings and meetings regarding the child.. Foster parents are encouraged to attend all such meetings so that they can be involved as an active member of the child welfare team. Foster parents are given information regarding involved professionals on the case and encouraged to speak with them when necessary. . Foster parents are notified by telephone and may be offered transportation if necessary. Foster parents are notified of ACRs through the normal notification process, (ACR cycle). Foster parents are also immediately informed of any change in the date for ACR's, court hearings, etc. by telephone. As foster parents may be notified of a school staffing prior to the caseworker, foster parents are asked to notify their worker as soon as they have been informed of any such meetings.

The worker will train the foster parents in the ACR process and court dates, importance of their attendance, the participants and what to expect at these various appointments. Foster parents are informed during foster home visits or by a phone call ng of the upcoming appointment. Foster parents also receive written notification of ACR's directly from DCFS. The foster parent receives a copy of the visiting plan and a copy of the visiting record and sibling visiting forms. Any changes in the case plan or decisions affecting the child's placement are discussed with the foster parents and their input is sought.

If foster parents are unable to attend court hearings, ACRs etc., the caseworker encourages them to participate by giving feedback to the caseworker before the meeting which is

presented to the team during the meeting. After the meeting or hearing, the caseworker informs them of the details and content of the meeting or hearing and any decisions, changes, or recommendations affecting the child and future services. The foster parent is viewed as an integral part of the team and their attendance and input is highly valued. When appropriate the foster parents are given a copy of the written feedback from the ACR reviewer whether they attend the review or not. The foster care supervisor also makes sure that all foster care specialists are notifying foster parents of all relevant meetings and encouraging their attendance.

This is done through supervision discussions. Arden Shore caseworkers also help facilitate communication between the foster parents and the child welfare team when necessary. Facilitating communication includes translating service plans, letters, etc. into Spanish for biological and foster parents, translating the content of meetings and the results of meetings for families who do not speak English, and advocating for the cultural and ethnic differences for families from other cultures at court, meetings and ACR's.

- 10. The right to be given, in a timely and consistent manner, any information a caseworker has regarding the child and the child's family which is pertinent to the 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 child's family, the child's family may consent to disclosure of additional information.**

As stated, earlier all relevant and required information is provided to foster parents when a child is placed and when subsequent information is made available. The confidentiality of the child's family is respected and protected by limiting the sharing of information regarding the child's family to information that is needed to ensure the child is appropriately cared for. Arden Shore workers explain applicable confidentiality rules and the reasons for them to foster parents when information is requested regarding a child's family that can not be shared. The confidentiality of a birth parent's rights will be respected as long as the safety and well being of the child is not compromised by doing so.

- 11. The right to be given reasonable written notice of any change in a child's case plan, plans to terminate the placement of the child with the foster parent, and the reasons for the change or termination of 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.**

All foster parents are notified verbally as well as in writing of any decision in regards to placement especially if there appears to be a concern in regards to continuing placement. Whenever there is concern about a child's safety or need to remove him/her from a placement this is discussed in a supervisory session and/or agency staffing and documented in a critical decision casenote . Arden Shore follows the Department's policy regarding Notice of Decision, prior to the removal of a child. Exceptions to this policy are only to be made if the child is assessed to be at imminent risk. Arden Shore views the foster parent as an integral part of the child welfare team. Therefore, Arden Shore discusses any concerns that arise in regards to the care of children in any given foster home with the foster parent.

Arden Shore also discusses with the foster parent any allegations that may arise during the care of the children. The only exception would be, if the Department of Child Protection has requested no discussion while an investigation is in process.

Arden Shore believes that all lines of communication must be open to best care for all children in the system. Foster parents are notified and given information about their right to appeal any such decision including decisions made in the emergency review process and court hearings. Foster parents are also given assistance with the process if necessary.

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

The foster parents are given verbal and may receive written notice of upcoming court hearings including the necessary information such as the date, time, name of the judge, location of the hearing and the docket number. Workers also follow up with reminder phone calls prior to the actual hearing. The foster care supervisor assures that all foster care specialists are notifying foster parents of court hearings and encouraging their attendance. This is done by both discussion in supervision as well as review of case notes. Arden Shore staff ensures that foster parents know that the Lake County Juvenile Court welcomes and encourages foster parents to participate in the court hearings. Foster care specialists explain the foster parent's role and rights and responsibilities in court as described in the Foster Parent Handbook. If foster parents are unable to come to court their participation can take the form of communication through the caseworker, communication through the CASA worker or the GAL, letters to the court, or any other form of appropriate communication. Arden Shore's foster care staff inform each foster parent that each foster child has a guardian ad litem that is their own lawyer in court. This lawyer is also available to the foster parents in communicating to the court and worker what is the best interest of the child. Arden Shore encourages the foster parent to contact this guardian regularly. The supervisor is required to sign court reports for the caseworker and hence, is aware of all court dates. During supervision with the individual caseworker, the supervisor discusses court dates to ensure that the foster parents are being notified appropriately.

**13. 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.**

With the implementation of SACWIS, (State Automated Child Welfare Information System) it is much easier to obtain immediate information about prior placements about any child. The current foster care intake rotation system already takes into account prior involvement with an agency when determining agency assignment. Arden Shore maintains a database that includes such information as placements and corresponding foster parents. Upon the notification of a child who is re-entering the foster care system, Arden Shore checks the data base and investigates if the previous placement is a viable option and in the best interest of the child. Arden Shore makes every effort to maintain continuity for foster children so we

would try to place a child in a previous placement as long as this was in the best interest for the child and others in the foster home.

A multi-disciplinary team approach is used to determine best interest for the child. Many areas are considered when determining the best interest of the child including but not limited to previous bonding, whether the placement is an option for permanent placement, long term plans for the child, behavioral issues, child's needs, etc.

**14. The right to have timely access to the child's 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.**

All foster parents are notified of the supervisor's name and telephone number at the time of case assignment. Caseworkers are trained to inform their client's, foster parents and other professionals to notify their supervisor of any concerns about their job performance, decision-making and case management. Clients and foster parents are able to file a grievance, which must be addressed within two working days.

If the grievance is also with the supervisor of the foster care unit, Director of Case Management and/or the Director of Clinical Services will handle the grievance. If the Foster Parent Grievance is not able to be resolved at this level, the President/CEO will be responsible for handling the grievance process. The foster parent is informed of the service appeal process and will receive documentation regarding the service appeal process (Rule and Procedure 337). Licensed foster parents is also trained on the appeal process in Foster Pride Training. Under no circumstance will harassment or retaliation of a foster parent be permitted or condoned as a part of an appeal process. Behaviors such as these will be addressed by the immediate supervisor or Director, with appropriate corrective actions.

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

The number of the Foster Parent hotline is listed on CFS 1050-66, the informational brochure on the Office of the Inspector General. This document is distributed to foster parents at trainings and is provided to all foster parents when they are informed of the appeal process and grievance process.

**FOSTER PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES SHALL INCLUDE:**

**16(1). The responsibility to openly communicate and share information about the child with other members of the child welfare team.**

The child welfare team is defined as the caseworker, foster parent, school, court personnel, other professionals, (i.e., therapist, mentors, and respite care providers). Other members that can be included are other relatives and others with significant relationships to the child and family. Caseworkers are taught to focus on teaching open communication. Foster parents are also taught this in Foster Pride Training. It is the expectation that all foster parents will interact and contribute to the child welfare team.

Foster parents will be available to meet with their child's caseworker, therapist, and other professionals on the child welfare team on a regular basis or as needed. Caseworkers are expected to teach foster parents the importance and responsibility of sharing honest information. Foster parents are expected to share honest information with the caseworker about their foster child's progress in school, therapy, and with their visits with their parents. This includes the clear expectation that foster parents notify their caseworkers about unusual incidents and emergencies that either involve or may impact the child or the home in which the child lives. Part of the responsibility in openly communicating and sharing information about the child includes being an active member of the child welfare team in court and during the administrative case review process. Foster parents must realize that they are integral members of the team and that their input about the child is most valuable when making decisions about the child's future, whether it be in court, during permanency planning, or during the course of making routine care plans.

**17(2). The responsibility to respect the confidentiality of information concerning foster children and their families and act appropriately within applicable confidentiality laws and regulations.**

Foster parents will respect the child and family's rights to confidentiality and privacy. Foster Pride Training addresses the issue of confidentiality and it is the expectation of Arden Shore foster care staff to regularly review this with the foster parents. In addition to Foster Pride Training, Arden Shore foster care specialists provide on-going individual training during their regular visits with foster parents. This individualized training provided by the foster care specialists is especially important for relative families who have not participated in Pride training. This training includes a focus on confidentiality issues to help foster parents clarify the confidentiality laws and regulations and understand the action that these laws and regulations require. Arden Shore adheres to the confidentiality regulations described in the Child Care Act. In addition, all client information is protected in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA).

Foster parents are responsible for maintaining the integrity of their professional role in the child welfare team by ensuring each foster child's involvement with DCFS and the juvenile court remains confidential. Foster parents are encouraged to request additional training or clarification if necessary to assist them in understanding the great need for confidentiality of our children and their families. In addition, the need for confidentiality is reviewed with the foster parents on an ongoing basis by the caseworker. Each foster parent is encouraged to discuss with their caseworker situations in which they may need assistance in ensuring the confidentiality of their foster children (such as school, doctor visits, etc.) Arden Shore staff model respect for confidentiality and expect the same from foster parents.

**18(3). The responsibility to advocate for children in the foster parent's care.**

In order to advocate for the children in their care foster parents are encouraged to participate in the ACR, court hearings, community support groups and meetings, and foster care network. Foster parents are also encouraged to attend trainings and recognize child welfare issues that may impact the child/children in their care. The caseworker and foster parent will continue to evaluate their need for information and training, and seek out how these needs

can be met. It is important that foster parents are actively involved in all aspects of their foster child's life, including psychiatric appointments, school, and other ordinary appointments. Foster parents are expected to attend educational advocate training so that they may be prepared to fully advocate for their foster children at school, especially those who are involved in special education services. Foster parents should take the initiative to learn all there is to know about upcoming court hearings and administrative case reviews. Trainings on understanding the court system are made available to the foster parents by Arden Shore; in addition, Arden Shore caseworkers routinely prepare their foster parents for what to expect in upcoming court hearing and case reviews. As a member of the child welfare team, foster parents must take their role as caretaker for their children seriously and advocate to all appropriate bodies for their foster children. Foster Parents are also informed of the appeal process and through Foster Pride Training and their caseworkers. They are offered assistance with an appeal if they are in the process of appealing any decision.

**19(4). The responsibility to treat children in the foster parent's care and the children's family with dignity, respect, and consideration.**

Foster parents recognize the need to treat children and their families with respect, dignity and consideration. They are encouraged to treat children and families, as they wish to be treated. This is most often stressed in discussions around confidentiality. This is an important issue and will continue to be stressed in all discussions around the children and trainings. Along with confidentiality, foster parents are encouraged to understand sensitive issues for children and their families; workers are trained to remind foster parents when a sensitive time or issue may be arising in a child's life. *Children's needs in regard to cultural practices and language are addressed with foster parents at the time of placement. This is emphasized especially when the child and/or biological family is of a different culture from the foster family. The bilingual foster care specialist provides resources to the foster family to help them understand the child's cultural/language needs.*

*The foster care specialist discusses these issues with the children in the home to assure that their cultural needs are being met with dignity and respect.* All individuals living in the foster family should command the same respect and consideration, whether they are foster children or biological children. It is important that foster children and their families are afforded the same courtesy that all members of the professional team receive. Arden Shore caseworkers discuss with their unlicensed and licensed caregivers the importance of preserving a positive attitude about the child's family. This issue is further discussed in PRIDE training, as well as the importance of confidentiality. Caseworkers emphasize to foster parents that it is important to refrain from speaking negatively about a child's family. This too is addressed in Foster Pride Training.

**20(5). The responsibility to recognize the foster parent's own individual and familial strengths and limitation 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.**

Arden Shore is a relative/traditional foster care provider. Workers discuss the family's ability to continue to provide, services, along with the child's progress in placement at least

monthly. If relative foster parents are aware of other family members at risk for having children entering placement, workers will discuss their ability to provide foster care services to other children. Children are usually placed in the relative foster family's home prior to Arden Shore's involvement with the family. The exception to this would be when a family already open to Arden Shore as an Intact family case requires foster placement or if there is a need to replace the child due to a placement disruption. In this instance, Arden Shore would help to find relative or traditional placement for the children, if this was appropriate.

The suitability of placement is gauged by the Foster Care Supervisor and Licensing worker with input from the caseworker and foster family on an ongoing basis with discussions designed to assess the appropriateness of the placement occurring at least once a month. Arden Shore's workers also ask the foster parents to identify strengths they see in themselves and their family. As a result of these discussions, the caseworker develops an understanding of the foster families strengths and needs. The caseworker uses this information to help the foster parent identify supports that may be beneficial in providing care for their foster child(ren). The caseworker discusses the viability of continued placement with the foster family and the appropriateness of the family taking additional children into care. Additionally, the caseworker provides necessary background history that assists the foster family in understanding the needs of the children in their care and children referred for placement. In addition, training is made available to the foster family to aid them in learning alternative techniques for caring for special needs children. Caseworkers solicit feedback from foster parents on what additional support is needed to best care for the child (ren) in their care. The foster family is made aware of the support the caseworker offers as well as the availability of other support services that can strengthen the family's ability to care for the child. Types of support that can be provided are: respite, counseling, additional training, placement stabilization services, System of Care services (SOC), Child & Adolescent Behavioral Services (CABS); psychiatrist, psychological testing, medication management services and tutoring.

**21(6). The responsibility to be aware of the benefits of relying on and affiliating with other foster parents and foster parent associations in improving the quality of care and service to children and families.**

Foster Parents are notified by workers through mailings and sometimes reminder phone calls, of upcoming events. Foster Parents are also notified of any formal trainings both nationally and statewide, which can enhance their skills and allow them the opportunity to network with any other foster parents. As many of the relative foster parents involved with Arden Shore are grandparents, these foster parents are also encouraged to participate in a local grandparent support group.

The Foster Care Supervisor and Licensing worker match more experienced foster parents with less experienced ones in an attempt to provide them with some additional support in foster parenting when it is apparent it is needed or when requested. All Arden Shore foster parents are recipients of foster parent newsletters, which inform them of local goings-on of foster parents in the State. Foster parents are an integral part of the foster care advisory council of the Northern Region. It is in this arena that foster parents have a strong voice to advocate for all foster parents and the children they serve. Foster Parents are encouraged to

have affiliation with both state and national Foster Parent Associations. Foster parents indicated a need for a more formal mentoring process within the agency and have agreed to meet to begin the process of developing a mentoring program. Foster parents have also expressed a desire to meet at least quarterly for support and educational purposes. Arden Shore was able to secure tickets to local sporting and cultural events and foster parents had an opportunity to meet less formally.

**22(7). The responsibility to assess the foster parent's ongoing individual training needs and take action to meet those needs. The caseworker, licensing worker and the foster parent will assess the needs of the home and the training necessary to assist with the best provision of services. This will be an ongoing process.**

When the worker is aware of trainings that will meet the foster parent's needs and will assist with caretaking, the foster parent will be informed. The caseworker will share the needs of their foster parents with the local area network when identifying training needs for the area. Arden Shore will regularly mail out any notifications of trainings that will benefit the caretakers and eventually the children in their care. PRIDE modules are specifically geared to offer the most common training request. Foster parents are encouraged to share their wishes for training with their caseworkers on a monthly basis. The introduction of a new child to a foster family may make a training need apparent, and the caseworker may suggest a suitable training at that time to the foster family in an effort to provide support. Foster parents will also be able to offer training topics at the quarterly Foster Parent meetings.

**23(8). The responsibility to develop and assist in implementing strategies to prevent placement disruptions, recognizing the traumatic impact of placement disruptions on a foster child and all members of the foster family; and the responsibility to provide emotional support for the foster children and members of the foster family if preventive strategies fail and placement disruptions occur.**

The foster parent will maintain ongoing communication with the child welfare team members; they will be a proactive member in notifying members of any emergencies, acting out behaviors, or any sudden changes in mood and behavior. They will cooperate with any services necessary to maintain placement and stabilize the children.

Arden Shore will use its own resources to provide in home counseling and other means to stabilize a placement. Caseworkers will continue to assist foster parents to stabilize a child in their care. They will continue to participate in services until any transition is complete and services are no longer necessary.

The foster family will remain active in the transition process unless the child presents a danger to themselves or others in the environment. As a member of the child welfare team, the foster family will be encouraged to recognize the effect placement disruptions have on the children they serve. As the foster families are supported in their eventual decisions to ask for the removal of a child from their home, foster families are expected to support their foster children in the transition from their home to a new foster home. Foster parents will be expected to accept the assistance of their caseworker and other support services, including SASS, placement stabilization services through System of Care, therapy, and respite in the course of the transition if that is found to be suitable in that situation. Arden Shore's

counseling division will provide counseling services, including in-home, if necessary, as well as other means to stabilize a placement. These counseling services are available in either English and Spanish. In the event that the placement becomes unstable, the case will be referred for a CAYIT (Child and Youth Investment Team) meeting to determine what the placement needs are for each child. At times, this may mean that a child may be recommended for a more restrictive environment.

Foster parents will be trained regarding the purpose and availability of stabilization services. This will be accomplished by the foster care staff. This will be a topic of a training offered at Arden Shore's offices, yet if foster parents cannot attend this training it will be conducted in home by their case worker and/or recruitment/licensing specialist, and possibly include the program supervisor as well.

Foster parents must recognize that a 14-day notice of decision is expected prior to moving a child at their request.

**24(9). The responsibility to know the impact foster parenting has on individuals and family relationships, and the responsibility to endeavor to minimize, as much as possible, any stress that results from foster parenting.**

Caseworkers work with foster parents to learn to recognize when they (the foster parents) are experiencing stress. Foster parents are offered training opportunities on stress factors identified with being a foster parent and ways to cope with that stress. Foster parent PRIDE training also contains information on the stressors of foster parenting. The foster parent is encouraged to inform the caseworker, other foster parent support, or other community supports when foster parenting is causing them stress. Involvement in the local network for foster parents will allow them the opportunity to receive support from other members, who may have experienced the same stressful events in their lives. Training and discussions with their caseworker will help the foster parent recognize the impact foster parenting can have on their family. Foster parents are encouraged to utilize the support services that are available to them as well as ongoing training to aid them in both recognizing and minimizing stressors.

Open and honest communication with their caseworker, as both are part of the child welfare team, is necessary, so they can work together to determine the causes of stress and solutions to handle it. Some solutions employed are mentoring, counseling, extra visits and staffings to help the foster parents strategize ways to reduce/minimize stress. When needed, experienced foster parents are open to providing mentoring, either by telephone or in person, to new foster parents. Foster parents are encouraged to build a support network. Arden Shore believes that this can assist new foster parents during stressful situations. During the placement process, caseworkers inform foster parents about the availability of respite services to assist them in stressful situations and explain how the caseworker and foster parent will work together to access respite services if this becomes necessary. Foster parents are allowed to place a voluntary hold on their status if they wish to have a period of time with no new children placed in their care.

**25(10). The responsibility to know the rewards and benefits to children, parents, families and society that come from foster parenting and to promote the foster parenting experience in a positive way.**

Foster parents have the opportunity to be the greatest recruiters for the child welfare system. They are most able to explain the experience of foster parenting and encourage other members of their community to provide services. In the past, Arden Shore has provided a community meeting at the local library for potential foster/adoptive parents. The main speaker was an Arden Shore foster parent who was able to speak about the rewards and benefits of being a foster parent.

Foster parents are encouraged to recruit other families and refer them to Arden Shore. This year we started a recruitment incentive program for foster parents. If a current foster parent refers another family to Arden Shore and that family becomes a licensed foster home, the referring foster parent receives a \$500 check. The foster family needs to be in good standing and have a placement within one year.

Foster parents are encouraged to share their experience with the child welfare team, foster parent groups, and other members of the child welfare community. Previously 2 foster/adoptive parents served on the Board of Directors and the Program Committee of the agency. We are currently trying to find additional foster parents to serve on the Board of Directors.

Foster parents are encouraged to form relationships with other foster parents in support groups. Through training, foster parents are given an opportunity to learn more about foster parenting and share their experiences with other foster parents. As foster parents are more exposed to other foster families, they are given an opportunity to share experiences and promote foster parenting.

Arden Shore encourages foster families to interact through participation in athletic or cultural events that the agency has been able to secure tickets. (i.e. Cubs game, Bulls game, Ravinia concerts. Foster parents will be encouraged through the quarterly foster parent meetings to help identify other ways they can socialize and offer each other support.

**26(11). The responsibility to know the roles, rights, and responsibilities of foster parents, other professionals in the child welfare system, the foster child, and the foster child's own family.**

The foster parent is trained by the caseworker on a regular basis to assist in understanding the child welfare system. Caseworkers also use a publication from DCFS entitled "Substitute Care and Your Child", as an additional guide to help the foster parents understand their roles and responsibilities and others on the professional team. Arden Shore caseworkers will also rely on the strengths in other foster parents to train additional foster parents. Training includes their role in Administrative Case Reviews (ACRs) and court hearings. The client service plan is discussed with the foster parent prior to the ACR with special emphasis on their part of the plan. It is especially important that foster parents understand the rights and responsibilities of the foster children in their care and the foster child's own family. The worker explains the roles, rights and responsibilities of all members of the team. This

information can be supported through service planning and participation in administrative case reviews. In addition to participating in these meetings, foster parents learn more of their role, rights and responsibilities by participating in Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, meetings with the therapist/psychiatrist, being involved in medication management when applicable; being involved in hospital meetings when applicable and participating in the Individual and Family Service Plan (IFSP). Involvement in regular training will allow them the opportunity to understand roles, rights, and responsibilities. Regular clarification by all members will allow for careful communication around expectations and responsibilities.

Through training, foster parents are afforded an opportunity to further explore their role and the roles of each professional in the child welfare team. As foster parents become more involved in the fostering process, through attending ACRs and court hearings as well as family meetings, they are given hands on insights into the roles each person plays in the life of the children and families we serve. In addition, caseworkers encourage the foster parents to ask questions about what each member's role is in the child welfare system. Foster parents are prepared for each court hearing, case review, and family meeting, so they typically know what to expect from each member of the team.

**27(12). The responsibility to know and as necessary, fulfill the foster parent's responsibility to serve as a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, and the responsibility to know the child welfare agency's policy regarding allegations that foster parents have committed child abuse or neglect and applicable administrative rule and procedures governing investigations of those allegations.**

In pre-service training the foster parent is taught that they are mandated by law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect and are expected to cooperate with the requirements of mandated reporting. All foster parents are required to sign a CANTS 22B form which is written acknowledgement of their mandated reporter responsibilities. When they sign this form the responsibilities and expectations are explained to them.

Relative foster parents who have not participated in pre-service training receive individual training from their foster care specialist on this important responsibility of their position. Foster parents must be examples in the community to foster the reporting of any mistreatment to any child and insist that there is a response to these issues. Foster parents are responsible for maintaining a stable, and nurturing living arrangement for all children they serve. As part of this responsibility, foster parents are expected to report any suspicion or evidence of abuse and/or neglect of any of their foster children. Further, foster parents are encouraged to serve as advocates for all children, and in this respect foster parents are asked to report any allegation of abuse to DCFS immediately. Arden Shore caseworkers also discuss with foster parents the importance of reporting abuse and neglect allegations and also the consequences and procedures of an investigation if a child in their home is alleged to be abused and/or neglected.

**28(13). The responsibility to know and receive training regarding the purpose of administrative case reviews, client service plans, and court processes, as well as any filing or time requirements associated with those proceedings; and the responsibility to actively participate in the foster parents designated role in these proceedings.**

Through Pride training, on-going group training, and individual training from their caseworker, foster parents are trained to understand the importance of their involvement in ACRs, client service plans and court hearings. Prior to each case review, caseworkers obtain foster parents input regarding the child's portions of the service plan. Any changes in the case plan or changes in the child's placement are discussed with the foster parents and their input is sought. Foster parents are notified of any upcoming meeting or court date ahead of time by the caseworker and are encouraged to attend.

**29(14). The responsibility to know the child welfare agency's appeal procedures for foster parents and the rights of foster parents under the procedure.**

Appeal procedures and rights are explained at the beginning of the foster parent and agency relationship, and again when any situation arises that it is deemed necessary. The entire appeal process is explained in the Foster Parent Handbook outlined in DCFS Rule 337. This information is also covered in Pride Training. Families who have not participated in Pride training are given the information by their foster care specialist and encouraged to ask any questions for clarification Foster parents can be assisted in the appeal process by the caseworker, the agency supervisor, and any other identified advocates of their choosing. Arden Shore informs foster parents of their rights under the appeal procedure.

**30(15). The responsibility to know and understand the importance of maintaining accurate and relevant records regarding the child's history and progress, and the responsibility to be aware of and follow the procedures and regulations of the child welfare agency with which the foster parent is licensed or affiliated.**

Foster parents are responsible for keeping records that are accurate, current, and confidential regarding the child's history. Caseworkers will provide blank documents that can assist with the record keeping process. Caseworkers encourage foster parents to keep a file for each child of important documents (ie: birth certificate, medical information etc.). These records are important and contain child's progress, history, school and medical information. Foster Pride Training offers assistance with record maintenance and the importance of accurately maintaining current data. Foster parents are provided with written documentation of regulations and expectations for keeping relevant and up to date records.

As more knowledge is obtained about the child's history, the foster parent is given the relevant information about the child's history. Involvement in family meetings, ACRs, and court hearings also afford foster parents different perspectives and firsthand information about each foster child's history and their progress. Caseworkers check regularly with foster parents and assist with how to document important information. They also instruct foster

parents on exactly what records to keep and will suggest ways to organize and keep the documents.

**31(16). The responsibility to share information, through the child welfare team, with the subsequent caregiver (whether the child's parent or another substitute caregiver) regarding the child's adjustments in the foster parent's home.**

As stated above caseworkers, work with foster parents in keeping appropriate records. Training is provided on the importance of record keeping and sharing of pertinent information. Foster parents are the greatest source of current and relevant information on the children in their care.

Their input and information is necessary in assisting with the service provision and planning for the child. The foster parent shares information with any and all members of the child welfare team. They have pertinent information on behaviors, concerns and daily living issues. They are the most able to identify milestones and should keep records of pertinent information to pass on for the child's future and social history. Foster parents have a responsibility to share their insights into the foster child's adjustment into their home with the parents and other members of the child welfare team. Each foster parent should be recognized for the great wealth of information they can provide about the child's ability to tolerate structure; the child's school performance and ability to complete homework; the child's response to discipline; what disciplinary techniques are best suited for the child in their care; and what the child reports to them about the separation from their parents. All of these insights and observations are valuable in making decisions about the child and the foster parent is the primary source that the child welfare team relies upon. This information is especially important when it is given in an attempt to create a smooth transition for a child from the foster home into another home, whether it is another foster home or back to their parent's home.

**32(17). The responsibilities to provide care and services that are respective 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.**

The role of the foster parent is to encourage and support a child's cultural identity and diversity. As needed they will seek out assistance from the child welfare team, community support systems and other foster parents to familiarize themselves with culturally relevant activities and opportunities for interaction.

Arden Shore will provide linkages to community supports, trainings, experiences and resources. Training is made available to all foster parents in learning to maintain the cultural identity of children not of their race; this is specifically offered in the case of African-American children and Latino children.

Fifty percent of Arden Shore's current staff are bilingual/bicultural, Spanish speaking. Arden Shore's Director of Case Management, our Licensing/Recruitment Specialist, and four of our eight foster care case managers are bilingual/bicultural. The agency is committed through the foster care program, the Counseling Centers, and the Burgos contract to provide language appropriate and culturally sensitive services in Spanish to foster and biological families and children.

Arden Shore caseworkers have also offered foster parents the opportunity to link with minority foster parents in an attempt to provide firsthand cultural information about the care and support of minority children. Foster parents are encouraged to take the initiative in contacting their caseworker about training they would like to attend or in securing a cultural mentor to assist in teaching the foster family about a given culture. Whenever possible, the child's family members are employed in assisting the foster family preserve the child's cultural identity.

### **Additional Components**

#### **Involvement of Foster Parents in developing the Plan**

Each year during the month of September, all foster parents receive the current Foster Parent Implementation Plan by mail. Along with the plan, foster parents receive an invitation to a meeting with Arden Shore to develop the plan for the following year. In order to increase attendance, Arden Shore provides child care services for foster parents. Additional incentives of training hours are offered, in addition to a \$25 check, as well as providing the family with dinner on the evening of the meeting. Foster parents are also sent a comment page for them to fill out in the event that they cannot attend this meeting. They are instructed to make any comments for changes/additions toward the development of the new plan. Foster parents are also asked to sign a document indicating that they have received the current plan and that they were given the opportunity to contribute their suggestions for any changes they believe are necessary for the new plan. After the meeting takes place, Arden Shore takes into account all feedback and suggestions from foster parents to complete the new plan. The new plan, with all changes clearly marked, is then sent to all foster parents for their review. Foster parents are asked to sign a document indicating that they approve of the new plan that is being submitted. All documents are sent in either English or Spanish depending on the needs of each individual foster parent.

#### **Involvement of Arden Shore Direct Service Staff**

For all members of the Foster Care Services Team, attendance at the meeting with foster parents to develop the plan annually is mandatory. This included all direct service staff/case workers, our Licensing/Recruitment worker, the Supervisor of Foster Care, and the Director of Case Management. Prior to the meeting, all new staff receive a training regarding the Foster Parent Law and the process for submitting the plan each year. Existing staff are also expected to participate in this training as a refresher. During their regular visits, staff inform foster parents that they are invited and encouraged to attend the meeting to develop the plan. Staff also make additional visits and/or phone calls to ensure that all foster parents have been engaged in the development process.

### Identification of Foster Parents Who Had Input Into the Plan

Attached to the plan is a list of all foster parents who attended the meeting to develop the new plan. Also included are any comment pages from foster parents who were unable to attend the meeting.

### Sign-Off Approval from Foster Parents

As explained above, foster parents are asked to sign a document indicating that they had the opportunity to offer their feedback and suggestions for the new plan and another document stating that they approve of the new plan that is being submitted. This documentation will also be attached to the plan. These documents are in Spanish when needed by the family.

### Public Notification

This requirement is met in cooperation with the DCFS Office of Foster Parent Support Services.

### Previously Identified Deficiencies

All previously identified deficiencies are addressed in the annual report. A description of ways revisions were incorporated in the new plan is also included in the annual report.

### Grievance Procedure

The grievance procedure is explained below. A copy of Arden Shore's grievance procedure is also attached to the new plan. The grievance procedure is explained to foster parents during the meeting, as they are also notified as to the availability of this process. Foster parents are asked for their input as to the grievance procedure.

### Grievance Process

Arden Shore Child and Family Services has a policy and procedure in place for foster parents to participate in a grievance process. This policy/procedure includes foster parents grieving alleged violations of the Foster Parent Law. During the licensing process and yearly after that, all foster parents are given the agency's policy and procedure and grievance form. The grievance procedure is mailed to the foster parents along with the update of the Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan, both to assure their continued awareness of the grievance process as well as to obtain any suggestions for changes to this process.

If the issue can not be resolved with the assistance of the Foster Care Supervisor, the foster parent will be asked if they want to file a grievance. They will then complete the grievance form which is submitted to the Foster Care Supervisor who will forward it to the Director of Case Management or the Director of Clinical Operations. The Director of Case Management or the Clinical Operations conducts an investigation which may include face-to-face interviews, interviews with other staff and a file review. The foster parent then receives a written response within 7 days and is offered the opportunity to meet with the Director of Case Management or Clinical Operations. . If this response is not satisfactory, the foster parent has the right to meet with the President/CEO. Any alleged grievance filed by a foster parent is discussed with Arden Shore's Agency Performance Team monitor. The foster parents are informed of the availability of the grievance procedure and their right to exercise the procedure at any time. This policy follows DCFS, Medicaid and COA guidelines.

