

Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan 2020

Rutledge Youth Foundation, Inc.
“A Brighter Future Hand in Hand”

Rutledge Youth Foundation, Inc.
Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan
2020

Foster Parent Code
Section 340.40

Foster Parent Rights- *A foster parent's rights include, but are not limited to, the following:*

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

Foster parents are an integral part of the professional child welfare team. Their unique perspective and insights into the youth placed in their care necessitates their inclusion in the decision-making process regarding youth in care. They are encouraged and expected to share their thoughts, concerns and opinions with both the individual case manager assigned to the case and the other members of the child welfare team/Child and Family Team (CFT). Case managers work closely with foster parents to ensure that a child's placement is stable. Foster parents are encouraged to attend quarterly CFT meetings that are held to discuss any issues they are currently facing.

All foster parents are invited and encouraged to attend Individual Education Plans (IEP), DCFS Administrative Case Reviews (ACR), and court hearings, where they are expected to take an active role in ensuring the best interests of youth in their care. Rutledge Youth Foundation provides foster parents with ongoing training on their role as a foster parent within these various systems, so that they understand not only the importance of their involvement, but how to successfully communicate their thoughts, ideas, and concerns.

Feedback from foster parents regarding their experience as a member of the child welfare team is solicited at their bi-annual license monitoring visit by the foster care licensing staff. In addition, all caseworkers, the Foster Care Licensing Coordinator, and the Foster Care Supervisor, attend foster parent team meetings and encourage foster parents to share issues, concerns, and suggestions for improvement in any area. Foster parents are encouraged to meet with any staff member regarding specific concerns after the meeting. Foster parents are encouraged and welcome to request a meeting with the Foster Care Licensing Coordinator and/or the Clinical Services Director to voice their concerns or file a complaint

regarding their treatment as a team member. If the foster parent does not believe their situation has been remedied after meeting with the Foster Care Licensing Coordinator and/or Clinical Services Director they may request, verbally and in writing, a meeting with the Executive Director to outline their complaint.

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

In addition to meeting the requirements of DCFS policy Part 402: Licensure for Foster Family Homes, all prospective foster parents for unrelated children must attend, and successfully complete, the 27 hour Foster/Adopt Pride curriculum. Foster parents are also required to take 12 hours of supplemental training within 30 days of becoming licensed. Prospective foster parents for related children must complete 6 hour Foster/Adopt Pride curriculum.

All licensed foster parents must complete at least 16 hours of continuing education, including the six hour Educational Advocacy course, during a four-year term to renew their license. Foster parents who accept children determined to be specialized by DCFS, or wish to do so in the future, must complete an additional 9 hours of training related to the specialized child's specific needs. There are several training options of which foster parents can utilize. The DCFS Office of Training, DCFS Virtual Training, Rutledge Youth Foundation, and other DCFS approved training opportunities.

RYP offers mandatory *new foster parent training* once a quarter, (or whenever there is a need). It can also be done one on one in the foster home. This training primarily focuses on issues not covered in the initial pride training class. The discussion begins by identifying all those involved on the foster care team. In addition, in depth discussion of what can be expected after licensing occurs, what to do in various "emergency" situations, and an explanation of various forms and procedures are addressed. A foster parent manual, which was developed by Rutledge staff, is given at this training. This binder provides information, as well as certain procedures (including the grievance procedure) important phone numbers, websites, and various forms that may be utilized by the foster parent. A copy of the pay schedule and foster care rates are included as well. During the new foster parent training, juvenile court processes, ACR and IEP meetings are also explained.

RYP previously offered monthly foster parent meetings. Due to low attendance and lack of participation these were discontinued in May of this year. RYP continues to seek ways to provide this monthly service to foster

parents. Recent feedback indicates that distance is a factor as well as lack of time.

RYP continues to offer on-going training opportunities to foster parents via monthly newsletter as well as email. Some of these training include cultural sensitivity, LGBTQ, trauma informed parenting, and CPR training at no cost to the foster parent.

The Foster Care Licensing Coordinator sends out a yearly survey in which the foster parent may answer anonymously via text and/or mail allowing foster parents to provide feedback on the quality and availability of training, time, location, and service amenities (food, child care, etc). Foster parents are also encouraged to discuss any barriers keeping them from attending these monthly meetings.

In addition, foster parents are able to seek out their own training opportunities for which they can receive training hours. Examples of such are books, documentaries, movies and training provided by their employers that may impact their parenting of special needs children.

The Foster Parent monthly newsletter has information about ongoing training and special events offered by Rutledge Youth Foundation and other agencies in the area. In addition, foster parents will receive the current "Illinois Families Now and Forever" newsletter, which will also include upcoming training opportunities offered through the DCFS Office of Training.

Foster parents are encouraged to register for an account on the Virtual Training Center website (with the assistance of the licensing coordinator if needed). This website has several DCFS training opportunities, schedules, and course information. Foster parents can participate in online trainings for training credit toward their foster care license. The licensing representative instructs foster parents on how to set up this account at the time of licensing and publishes information on this in the monthly newsletter under the training section. The Virtual Training Center website can be found at www.dcfstraining.org.

Training of foster parents can also occur in a one-on-one setting and can be provided by either an RYP staff member or an experienced foster parent. Several foster parents have special skills or expertise in a variety of areas which they wish to share with other foster parents. An example of one such training is how to work with hair of African American children. The licensing coordinator facilitates such sharing of information with interested foster parents. This type of training is also used during times of transitioning a foster child from one placement to the next. Foster parents and staff are always encouraged to share their experiences and discuss

what has and has not been successful with children they have worked with. Care is taken to protect confidentiality of each child.

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

Case management, consultation, and crisis intervention services are available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. On call, after hour crises management is provided by the administrative team. The foster parent should contact the after hours number 685-2785 and the worker on call will return the call within 15 min.

During the licensing process all potential foster parents receive a written document with the name, address and phone number of their licensing representative who is located at the Administrative Office, (217) 525-7757, which is accessible Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Additionally, foster parents are provided the phone number to the on call crisis line, (217) 685-2785 which is staffed 24 hour, 7 days a week by Rutledge administrators.

Each case manager is responsible for 24 hour *crises management* of the children on their caseload and may be contacted by the on call worker when necessary.

Foster parents are given all relevant and important phone numbers in the foster parent and child's binder. This information is also included on the backside of the newsletter every month. If a foster parent calls the office after hours, the phone is forwarded to the on call number as well.

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

Payment to the foster parent is in accordance with the guidelines established by The Department of Children and Family Services. The payment information is reviewed by the Clinical Services Director and Licensing Coordinator before being sent via email to the business office for processing. On the 20th day of each month these payments are directly deposited into the identified foster parent account. If direct deposit is not chosen then a paper check is mailed from the post office at 4:00pm the same day. If the 20th falls on a Saturday or Sunday then the direct deposit or mail will be on the Friday prior to the 20th. Foster parents also have the ability to choose pick up their checks directly from the office. All other reimbursements, i.e. mileage, sports fees, etc. are asked to be

submitted to the licensing coordinator by the 5th day of the month for reimbursement by the 30th day of the month. This payment comes in the form of a check and will be mailed or can be picked up.

In the event of any payment concerns, the foster parents, along with the Clinical Services Manager and Licensing Coordinator will work with RYF's business office to resolve the issue within 24 hours.

The Rutledge Youth Foundation Board of Directors establishes a fee policy for foster parents as follows:

Specialized Foster Care Rate (Effective 09/01/19)

	<u>Board</u>	<u>Clothing</u>	<u>Allowance</u>	<u>Total</u>
Per Day				
Specialized	\$28.23	\$1.97	\$1.47	\$31.67

(To calculate your total rate for the month, multiply the total daily rate by the number of days that child was in your home for the particular month. Hint: \$31.67 x # days = total)

Monthly Traditional/Home of Relative Foster Care Rate (Effective 07/01/19)

<u>Child's Age</u>	<u>Board</u>	<u>Clothing</u>	<u>Allowance</u>	<u>Total</u>
0-11 months	\$384.00	\$41.00	\$14.00	\$439.00
1-4 years	\$386.00	\$46.00	\$15.00	\$447.00
5-8 years	\$390.00	\$61.00	\$16.00	\$467.00
9-11 years	\$398.00	\$71.00	\$27.00	\$496.00
12 yrs & over	\$408.00	\$81.00	\$48.00	\$537.00

What are the Financial Arrangements?

Rutledge Youth Foundation, Inc. is responsible for financial arrangements with the foster parents. Checks are mailed and or *directly deposited* on the 20th day of each month covering expenses for the preceding full calendar month. The first check will cover the cost of care from the date on which the child enters the home to the end of the calendar month.

What does the board payment cover?

The board and care rate covers expenditures for room, food, and basic hygiene products included but not limited to shampoo, soap, deodorant, and feminine hygiene.

What about the child's clothing and personal allowance?

A monthly personal allowance is paid to the foster parents for the children. The child is not expected to spend it for things that are covered by the board payment. It should be used to cover such expenses as recreation, specific name brand products, daily spending etc. Disbursement of the clothing allowance is the foster parent's responsibility. It is required that foster parents keep receipts for clothing. Children who receive their personal allowance provide their signature showing that they did receive their payment. This form is located in the child binder that all Rutledge children receive upon placement and travels with them upon moving to a new placement.

What about extra fees and respite care rates?

Rutledge Youth Foundation is responsible for the payment of any extra fees relating to a child's education, health, and recreation. Examples of this include, but are not limited to: tutoring, **approved** extra curricular and summer camps. If you are interested in enrolling your child in an educational or recreational activity, or if your child requires health care that is not paid for by the medical card, please contact your case manager **prior** to the event to discuss securing payment. Foster care licensing coordinator will submit a payable to the business office for reimbursement of services.

Payment for respite care is covered by Rutledge for up to 24 hours in a month for specialized children. Foster parents needing more than 24 hours of respite are expected to pay the daily rate to the caretaker. Foster parents are encouraged to "trade" time with other foster parents.

Do I get reimbursed for mileage for taking the child to appointments?

Rutledge will reimburse mileage for travel that is outside of the usual and customary expectation. Routine doctor, dental or school appointments are not reimbursable. Specialists, transportation to visits etc. are examples of travel that will be reimbursed. Reimbursement is .45 per mile. All foster parents are given mileage reimbursement forms and trained on how to use them. The licensing coordinator reserves the right to approve and or make exceptions to what can be reimbursed. The foster parent is asked to turn the form in to the licensing coordinator by the 5th of the month for reimbursement on or around the 30th of the month.

Who do I contact if there is a problem with my board payment?

If there is a question regarding your board payment you may contact the business office or the foster care licensing coordinator at 217-525-7757 during regular business hours Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm.

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.

Foster parents are encouraged to participate in any placement plans made for a child who resides in their home. RYF recognizes and respects the unique relationship that foster parents have with the foster children in their home, and understands that foster parents often have a different perspective into the child's needs than the agency staff. As a member of the professional child welfare team, foster parents are encouraged to provide any information about the child and their relationships with family and other support persons, to assist the team in making placement and visitation/communication decisions as well as changes to the permanency goal.

As a member of the professional team, foster parents are provided a written placement and visitation plan in advance. Both the child and the foster parent's schedule are taken into consideration when developing the visitation plan. Foster parents are contacted by the case manager to determine availability and scheduling of visits. Foster parent input will be considered in all placement issues and can be discussed at Child and Family Team Meetings, and as well as with the case manager whenever the need arises. Foster parents are notified, in writing, 14 days in advance by the case manager of any changes or proposed changes in a child's case plan or permanency goal or as soon as case manager is aware of any changes. If a critical decision is made by the Clinical Services Manager and the agency decides that a child needs to be removed from a foster home, or if the child is requesting to be moved, the foster parent is provided with a written notice at least fourteen days prior to the move taking place. This is not in cases where an investigation is open and there is potential risk of harm to the child whereupon immediate removal of child is necessary. Foster parents are encouraged to meet with RYF staff to discuss the move and try to mediate issues. The written fourteen day notice also reminds foster parents of their right to appeal the move and how to navigate the appeal process.

DCFS Administrative Case Review notifications are sent directly to foster parents. Case managers also provide foster parents with verbal reminders

at least 14 days prior to the ACR. Foster parents are strongly encouraged to attend ACRs for children residing in their home. Foster parents are a vital member of the Child and Family Team and their input is critical for the success of the child. If a foster parent cannot participate in person, efforts will be made to allow foster parents to attend by phone, when this method is available.

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

For complaints alleging violation of licensing standards and/or rules, Rutledge Youth Foundation will make contact with the foster parent within two days of the receipt of the complaint. If a formal investigation with DCFS is parallel to the licensing complaint, the licensing worker must wait for DCP to initiate contact prior to beginning licensing investigation.

The investigation is to be completed within thirty days of the receipt of the complaint if there is not DCP involvement. The licensing representative has the ability to request extensions, and if extensions are necessary, the licensing representative will ensure that foster parents are notified of this. At any time during the investigation, the licensee may have any person of their choosing present during the process. Within 30 days after completing the investigation, Rutledge Youth Foundation makes a formal determination of whether a licensing violation has occurred. When DCP is investigating this may take longer.

Within five days of the determination, a certified letter is sent to the licensee summarizing the findings of the investigation. If it is determined that there is a violation of licensing rules and/or standards, the letter will state the licensing rule/standard violated. The letter also notifies the licensee that failure to correct the violation(s) within the time frame given for compliance may result in revocation or refusal to renew a license. If the licensee requests an informal review, they must do so in writing to the Clinical Services Manager. (See Grievance Procedure for further information).

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

Prior to or at the time of placement, the Clinical Services Manager, Foster Care Licensing Coordinator, or case manager will inform foster parents of the child's behaviors and adjustment in previous living arrangements. A new child behavior checklist has been developed and will be utilized during this process.

Foster parents are also encouraged to contact their case manager who may contact previous care providers and receive additional and relevant information pertaining to the child. Case managers may also be able to pass on successful strategies that have worked with the child in the past.

It is the case manager's responsibility, with assistance from licensing personnel, to ensure that foster parents receive additional or necessary information relevant to the care of the child at any time during placement. This may be achieved through phone call, in person visit, at a child and family team meeting or prior to or after court and ACR's. At the time of placement, RYF provides foster parents with a "child binder" that contains information regarding the child's health, education, medication, as well as the most recent service plan and social history. Case managers and foster parents must sign the CFS 600-4 form, Sharing Information with the Caregiver, as a record that case managers have provided foster parents with information on the foster child's case information and history, health and medical care, educational information and history, placement history, and behavior/social information. In addition Rutledge utilizes a child information form that gives critical information at a glance ie: SS number, DOB, previous school, known allergies, known fears, etc. This form accompanies the child at the time of placement, as well as being located in the child binder. The child binder must remain with the child upon moving to a subsequent placement.

The Clinical Services Supervisor follows up with case managers during bi-monthly supervisions to ensure that they are conveying all necessary and relevant information to foster parents. Files are peer reviewed each quarter to ensure that necessary documentation, including the CFS 600-4, are completed, signed, and in the file. The Clinical Services Manager attends Child and Family Team meetings at which time they ensure that foster parents are aware of any issues or information that may assist in caring for the child.

Case managers and foster parents share pertinent confidential information concerning the child in care. Disclosure of information to the foster parent concerning the child's family shall be limited to 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. Foster parents are trained on the importance of client confidentiality and what information can and should be shared with others. Foster Parents are asked to take the DCFS online confidentiality training just as case managers do.

Case managers are trained by the foster care supervisors, as well as licensing coordinator, and the VTC on issues of confidentiality and disclosure to foster parents. They are also encouraged to ask their supervisor questions if they are unsure regarding issues of disclosure and confidentiality.

8) The right to be provided, prior to or at the time of placement, available information in writing about the child necessary for the proper care of the child, including medical history, educational history, the child's portion of the client service plan and other relevant background information.

Prior to, or at the time of placement, the case manager will provide the foster parent with a "child binder". Information including the foster child's medical history, educational history, service plan, and other pertinent information about the foster child shall be included. The medical information will include a current medical card, medical exam, and immunization record. The educational information will include a current IEP if a child is in special education. In addition, a copy of the child's portion of the service plan, including visitation arrangements and a social history addendum will be provided. The social history addendum will describe the child's current behaviors. If the child has had previous placements then a summary on these placements and the reasons for removal shall be summarized. The child binder must remain with the child upon subsequent moves.

In addition Rutledge utilizes a child information form that gives critical information at a glance i.e.: SS number, DOB, previous school, known allergies, known fears, etc. This form accompanies the child at the time of placement, as well as being located in the child binder.

As mentioned before, case managers and foster parents must sign the CFS 600-4 form, Sharing Information with the Caregiver, as a record that case managers have provided foster parents with information on the foster child's case information and history, health and medical care, educational information and history, placement history, and behavior/social information.

Lastly, foster parents will be notified of the child's next court hearing, ACR, school meeting, counseling appointment, or any other upcoming appointments.

If a child is placed in the foster home in an emergency situation, then the case manager will have 14 business days to provide the foster parent with the written documentation described above. With the exception of the child information form, this must accompany the child to the home so that foster parent has important critical information at time of placement.

The foster care supervisors train new case managers on related policies and procedures, including confidentiality. New case managers also shadow experienced case managers during placement situations to further learn procedures regarding new placements. The foster care supervisors also follow up with new and existing case managers during weekly supervisions to ensure that the information was provided to foster parents. The case worker is required to have foster parents sign a form stating they have received the child's binder.

Foster care supervisors meet regularly with case managers to staff cases. During this time the supervisor verifies that the case manager is providing the most current and up to date information to all parties involved in the case. In addition the licensing staff reviews the child binders at the bi annual monitor visits. If information is missing, that is forwarded to the supervisor as well as the case manager for review. If it is determined that a case manager has not followed the guidelines then appropriate and relevant disciplinary action is taken by the supervisor and or clinical services director.

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

Case managers assume responsibility to inform foster parents of any scheduled court hearings, staffings, or visits with family both verbally and in writing. Notification is done at least one week in advance of any scheduled meetings or appointments, when possible. Regarding school meetings, including IEPs, it is the foster parent's responsibility to notify the case manager of the meetings, as the school will directly notify the foster parent, but not always the case manager.

Foster parents are encouraged to attend and actively participate in the decision-making and case planning of youth placed in their care. They are expected to be active members of the Child and Family Team. Foster parent involvement in Child and Family Team meetings is critical, as foster parents often have the greatest knowledge and insight concerning a child's behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. The foster parent's attendance and insight is very much expected and appreciated. During the licensing process, the licensing worker explains the benefits of attending and actively participating in meetings regarding the child. The licensing worker reinforces this during twice yearly monitor visits. The case managers also discuss the benefits of attending these meetings at the time of placement and as these meetings are scheduled. When foster parents are involved in the child's lives, the children feel accepted and tend to do better in foster care. This is highlighted when encouraging foster parent involvement.

Foster parents are also encouraged to actively participate in therapy and family visits when doing so will benefit the youth.

Foster parents are informed verbally within 24 hours of any notification of decisions made by the court, DCFS or Rutledge Youth Foundation concerning the youth. Foster parents will be notified regarding any proposed changes in the youth's case plan 14 days prior to the changes taking effect, when possible.

10) The right to be provided, in a timely and consistent manner, with 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 making a permanency plan for the child.

Disclosure of information concerning a child's family shall be limited to that information which is essential for understanding the needs of and providing care to the child in order to protect the rights of the child's family. When a positive relationship exists between the foster parents and the child's family, the child's family may consent to disclosure of additional information.

Case managers and foster parents will share pertinent confidential information concerning children in care. Disclosure of the information to foster parents 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. The information given to the foster parents include the child's health, educational, and placement history; the most recent service plan, which includes a social history addendum family visitation (if applicable), court orders, etc. Foster parents are encouraged to communicate with biological parents or other involved family members where it is mutually

agreeable and approved by the Rutledge Youth Foundation case manager. Shared parenting is both encouraged and reimbursed by RYF. Information is given on the process of shared parenting as well as prudent parenting at the new foster parent training as well as periodically in the monthly newsletter. As often as possible pre-placement visits are set up with child and foster parent so that both are able to spend time getting to know one another before placement. A Child-Caregiver Matching Tool is completed to help determine the appropriateness of the placement and to ensure the child's needs are met by the prospective foster family.

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

When movement of a child is determined by the Agency to be in the child's best interest, via a critical decision, foster parents will be given a 14 day written notice of plans to terminate the placement of the child with the foster parent and the reasons for the change/termination in placement. This notice will be waived only in cases of a court order or when the child is determined to be an imminent risk of harm.

The case manager will schedule a meeting, at which the foster parent can choose to be present, to inform the child of the move. It is important that the foster parent not inform the child of the move prior to the meeting with the case manager.

If a foster parent wishes to appeal a 14-day notice to remove a child from their placement, they must do so in writing within 45 days of the date of notice (it must be within 10 days if they wish to have the placement remain intact throughout the appeal process). A meeting is then held within 5 working days of the receipt of the written appeal.

If the issue is not resolved, the written request for appeal is then forwarded to DCFS for a mediation hearing with a DCFS representative within 15 days.

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

Foster parents are encouraged to attend and participate in court proceedings regarding youth in their care. Rutledge Youth Foundation case managers notify (in writing or by phone) foster parents of the date, time and location, in addition to the court docket number for court hearings for children placed in their home as soon as it is known by the case manager.

Notification, (verbal or in writing) is given to foster parents at least 14 days prior to a Permanency Review or other court hearings. Issues regarding foster parent notification in relation to court hearing, ACRs, IEPs etc. are monitored by the foster care supervisor, who supervises the case management report.

The foster parent's right to be heard in court proceedings involving children in their care is encouraged by the case manager and all levels of administration. If foster parents are unable to attend court proceedings and they have an issue to address, they are advised by the case manager on how to submit a written report to the court.

RYF has no recourse if a judge refuses to acknowledge a foster parent's report. This varies from county to county.

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

During a DCFS investigation the child's prior history is reviewed by the DCP worker to determine any prior placements. When a child re-enters care and was once in an RYF foster home the case is referred to RYF from DCFS for review. After review, consideration is given to place the child in DCFS custody to a former foster care provider based on the following:

- a) Current capacity of caregiver
- b) Other children currently placed in the home
- c) Prior adjustment to placement in that home
- d) The child's willingness to return
- e) Access to community based services

- f) Education issues/ability of school district to meet the child's needs
- g) The foster parent(s) willingness to accept child back into the home
- h) Foster Home licensure status

If a foster parent has been determined by the supervising agency to be an appropriate placement, but the foster parent does not want to care for the child in his or her home, the foster parent is welcomed and encouraged to still play an active role in that child's life by serving as a support person or providing respite.

14) The right to have timely access to the existing appeals process with the child placement agency. The assertion of the right to appeal will be free from acts of harassment and retaliation.

If a Rutledge Youth Foundation foster parent wishes to appeal any decision made regarding licensure, placement, policy and procedure issues, or to file a grievance, they may do so by presenting a written appeal/grievance to the Clinical Services Manager explaining the nature of the complaint within 5 working days after the circumstance arises. Foster parents are given a copy of the appeal process in the initial paperwork they receive when becoming licensed and at least yearly thereafter at monitoring visits. This information is included in the foster parent binder, as well as always available at the office, and on the website. Rutledge Youth Foundation, within 5 working days of its presentation to the Clinical Services Manager, shall respond in writing to the foster parent, submitting a copy of the response to the Executive Director. Foster parents shall be free from acts of harassment and retaliation by any other party when exercising the grievance/appeal procedure.

The foster parent will be given information and brochures regarding the DCFS appeals process (Rule 337) and given information regarding the time frames for the appeals process through DCFS. Discussion of what can be appealed and how the appeals process works is discussed in initial training with all foster parents and subsequently as the need arises. Also, Service Appeal brochures are given to all new foster parents at the time of initial training. Foster parents are informed of the internal process for initiating an appeal, especially that they are to present their appeal in writing to the Foster care licensing coordinator.

15) The right to be informed of the Foster Parent Hotline established under this Act and all of the rights accorded to foster parents concerning reports of misconduct by Department employees, service providers, or contracts, confidential handling of those reports, and investigation by the Inspector General.

The Office of the Inspector General Brochure is given to each foster parent at initial licensure. The foster care licensing staff will bring a copy of this brochure to semi-annual compliance visits for current foster parents. Foster parents are given information and assisted when needed about how the Foster Parent Hotline can assist them in reporting a suspected violation concerning the agency or other child welfare providers. Training is provided at the initial new foster parent training concerning how and when to contact the foster parent hotline or OIG. The Foster Parent Hotline number is 800-624-KIDS (5437). The list of important phone numbers is included on the back of every newsletter as well as on a sheet in the foster parent binder.

**Rutledge Youth Foundation
Foster Parent Law Implementation
Plan 2020**

**Foster Parent Code
Section 340.50**

Foster Parent Responsibilities- *A foster parent's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:*

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

Rutledge Youth Foundation case managers maintain minimally 2x per month contact with the foster parents of specialized children and 1x per month for traditional or *licensed* relative foster children. This can be done either in writing, by phone, by e-mail, or in person, to help in facilitating communication and to share information regarding the child between workers, counselors, therapists, and foster parents. Foster parents are taught the importance of open communication in PRIDE training as well as in RYF training. Foster parents are encouraged to contact their licensing representative at anytime they are unable to connect with their case manager.

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 learn the importance of confidentiality in PRIDE training and in RYF training. Foster parents are trained on the importance of maintaining confidentiality of all information regarding a child and his or her family. Training on confidentiality also includes the type of information that is confidential as well as how to obtain consents when sharing information is necessary.

The laws and regulations regarding confidentiality are made available to the foster parents by the Foster Care Licensing Coordinator. Confidentiality issues are also discussed as part of the monitor visits twice per year. If foster parents have questions about confidentiality, they are encouraged to discuss them with the Foster Care Licensing Coordinator or the case manager.

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

Educational advocacy training is provided periodically to foster parents of all public and private agencies through the DCFS Office of Training. Case managers and administrative staff are also available to assist foster parents in advocating for children in their care within the school system and within other agencies and systems.

Court training is provided by the agency periodically to keep foster parents informed of changes within the legal system. Their role and its importance in the legal process is also discussed. The trainings are provided by Guardian Ad Litem (GAL's) and/or States Attorneys. Foster parents are encouraged to attend court hearings along with the child's case manager to support the child.

Service appeal brochures are available through the agency as well as at the Administrative Case Review. Training on the appeal process is done on an as needed basis due to the rarity of an appeal being filed.

Foster parents are encouraged to participate in Child and Family Team Meetings, CIPP meeting to determine level of care, Administrative Case Reviews and, if necessary, Clinical Staffings. Attending appointments with the child's therapist is also encouraged in order to maintain good communication about the child's progress. RYF recognizes and respects the foster parent's role in meetings, and will make accommodations for foster parents to attend by phone if they cannot attend in person.

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

It is the responsibility of the foster parents to respect and support the child's ties to his/her biological family members, including both parents and siblings, by coordinating with the Department and/or Rutledge Youth Foundation in meeting the child's parents (when possible and appropriate); sharing information regarding the child's progress with the parent; facilitating Department/RYF approved interactions between the parent and child and siblings regarding telephone calls, letters, visits, etc.; *RYF strongly* encourages a shared parenting approach to foster care. In addition, foster parents are encouraged to create "Life Books" with foster children, allowing them to document special people and events in their lives.

Case managers of the child, as well as the Foster Care Licensing Coordinator or Foster Care Supervisor, will monitor the foster parent's interactions with the child and family through ongoing observation of interaction with child at the foster home and during visits. Foster parents are taught in PRIDE training and RYF training the importance of treating children and their families with dignity, respect, and consideration. An in-service training will be held once yearly by RYF to discuss approaching issues of cultural and/ or religious differences between foster parents and foster children. If the case manager becomes concerned about any communication issues, the case manager will discuss with the foster parents so the issues can be resolved as soon as possible.

5) The responsibility to recognize the foster parents' 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.

Through intensive case management, twice-yearly monitor visits, participation in child and family team meetings, and regular foster parent interaction the Clinical Services Manager and Foster Care Licensing Coordinator assess the strengths and develop plans to address individual needs within foster families. The strength and need assessment is an on-going process and is discussed with foster parents at regular intervals such as at monitoring visits. If a weakness is discovered that needs to be addressed immediately, the foster parent is notified and a meeting is scheduled. In addition, recommendations for foster parents will be outlined in the Integrated Assessment and discussed on a regular basis.

Based on the on-going assessment process, trainings are made available to meet the foster parents training needs. In conjunction with the DCFS Office of Training, other service providers within the community and Rutledge Youth Foundation's resources, training to meet foster parent needs are readily available in most cases. Through the use of available information on the client and the Child/Caregiver Matching Tool, we are able to assess the child's needs and the ability of the caregiver to meet those needs. Children are placed in homes that are best able to meet their needs and support them in their growth and development.

The support needs of our foster parents are addressed and/or met in several ways including intensive case management, on going training and accessibility to case management and administrative staff.

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.

Rutledge Youth Foundation foster parents are offered and encouraged to attend local foster parent meetings for support, as well as to get training information. Additionally, foster parents receive copies of “Illinois Families Now and Forever” that gives information regarding Foster Parent Council Meetings held monthly as well as the statewide Foster Care Advisory Council Calendar.

Rutledge Youth Foundation previously hosted foster parent meetings every month, then went to quarterly. These meetings were designed for foster parents to share experiences and provide each other with support. Foster parents also received 1 hour of training at this meeting which further helps to develop the quality of service they provide to children and families. Given the difficulty in securing attendance at these meetings, the Licensing Coordinator has developed sub-groups of support systems among foster parents. Foster parents from each sub group are encouraged to get together, share ideas, assist each other with respite, as well as lean on one another. These “get togethers” are determined by the group itself and based on their schedules.

Rutledge provides quarterly foster family outings such as waterpark, Halloween party, Christmas party, and a spring activity to further assist with foster parent’s interaction.

7) The responsibility to assess the foster parent’s ongoing individual training needs and take action to meet those needs.

Rutledge Youth Foundation’s Foster Care Supervisor, Foster Care Licensing Coordinator, case managers, and foster parents participate in an ongoing mutual assessment process to determine the training needs of the foster parents. The Foster Care Licensing Coordinator will develop an individual training curriculum for each foster parent based on the mutual assessment process. Rutledge Youth Foundation will provide the foster parents with the requested and needed training and ongoing support. Additionally, the Foster Care Supervisor and Foster Care Licensing Coordinator will plan with the DCFS Office of Training for foster parents to receive credits for the RYF meetings/trainings. The Foster Care Licensing Coordinator announces on-going training options/events available to foster parents in the monthly foster parent newsletter.

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 family if preventative strategies fail and placement disruptions occur.

Foster parents are encouraged to discuss progress, problems and successes of youth in their care with the case manager.

Case managers deal individually with the foster parent and the foster child to assess the severity of the issues and take appropriate action to mediate the situation when necessary. Case managers and foster parents are trained to assess risk and determine when it may be necessary to involve law enforcement or SASS screeners for mental health risk. This training was added to the new foster parent training curriculum that is mandatory for all new foster parents.

Case managers are in the foster home minimally 2x per month for Spec. children and a minimum of once monthly for traditional and *licensed* relative placements and more often as situations require. A case management staff member is on-call 24 hours a day and is required to be available to the foster child and parent when called upon. The number for the on-call crisis line is (217) 685-2785. The Foster Care Licensing Coordinator or licensing staff meets with the foster parents semi-annually or more often if necessary to discuss issues within the foster home, both personal and regarding children in placement. The Foster Care Licensing Coordinator and licensing staff are also available to the foster parents by telephone and email when face to face contact is not required. The therapist involved with the children in care is kept informed of placement related problems and integrates those issues into therapy sessions. If deemed appropriate by the therapist, a family session, with all involved is arranged.

Foster children are supported by their case manager and/or therapist, by being allowed to and encouraged to express their feelings regarding the situation. Processing their participation in the situation, the efforts they have made, and discussing what could have been done differently are part of this meeting.

Support for the foster parent in a failed placement is provided by the Clinical Services Manager, Foster Care Supervisor, or Foster Care Licensing Coordinator. Foster parents are encouraged to vent their frustrations, process their feelings and discuss strategies that were successful as well as those that didn't work with that child.

The availability of stabilization services through the Intensive Placement Stabilization is on going. Currently, Rutledge Youth Foundation has the Intensive Placement Stabilization contract for Local Area Network (LAN) 15 and 16. They provide placement stabilization services to those ten counties (Mason, Menard, Logan, Christian, Sangamon, Morgan, Cass, Scott, Brown, and Schulyer). These services are available for children who are in a traditional, (and with approval), specialized placement. An IPS worker will then meet with the child and the caregiver if needed, weekly or bi-monthly for up to 6 months and may be extended to a year.

Placement Stabilization training can be provided by employees of RYF who have been determined through certification that they meet the requirements of training others in the area of de-escalation and placement stabilization.

When all attempts to stabilize and or save the placement by the foster parent, case manager, Foster Care Licensing Coordinator, Clinical Director and any other members of the team have failed, the foster parent will give **14 days written notice** to the Foster Care Licensing Coordinator to remove the child from their home. Exception to this would be imminent threat of harm to foster parent, foster family, or the foster child themselves. This is of utmost importance to assist in making a smooth transition for the child to another foster home.

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.

The Foster Parent/Adoptive Parent Association hosts monthly support group meetings to foster parents. Training for foster parents to recognize stress as well as activities for stress reduction is available. Foster parents are also encouraged to contact the Foster Care Licensing Coordinator to assist with stress management. Foster parents are encouraged to seek community resources for support and stress relief. Counseling from in-house therapists is available to foster parents and their families as well.

Foster Parents are encouraged to utilize respite to avoid disruption of placement of the child. Respite care is when a foster child is temporarily (not to exceed 30 days) placed in a licensed foster home or a licensed exempt relative home. Respite care is made available to foster parents who need a temporary break. When possible, please give at least two weeks notice for respite less than three days. For respite needs requiring more than three days, please give at least 3 weeks notice to allow RYF to find a respite placement.

A voluntary hold is also available to foster parents who need an extended break from foster parenting if requested. During a voluntary hold, placements will not be made in the foster home until the foster parent decides they are ready to take children in the home. During the voluntary hold, the foster home must still comply with licensing standards. In order to request a voluntary hold, contact the Foster Care Licensing Coordinator.

The Foster Care Licensing Coordinator will also provide information on community support groups in the monthly newsletter. Lastly, foster parents are strongly encouraged to attend monthly RYF foster parent meetings as a method of gaining support from staff and other foster parents.

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 parent experience in a positive way.

Foster parents are informed of and encouraged to attend activities and meetings within the Agency. RYF and surrounding community sponsors annual holiday parties for our foster parents and their families to attend. In addition, there are many other fun activities throughout the year that our foster parents are encouraged to attend.

The Foster Care Licensing Coordinator discusses with each foster parent at initial licensure, monitor visits, and at least annually during a foster parent meeting/training, the importance of their role as foster parents and how this can be a positive impact on the lives of the children and families with whom they work, as well as on their own families. The Foster Care Licensing Coordinator also discusses the impact of fostering on the community and society as a whole, and RYF encourages foster parents to discuss their unique, positive, experiences with other members of the community.

RYF encourages our foster parents to get involved in foster parent recruitment. At initial licensure and semi-annual monitor visits, the Foster Care Licensing Coordinator explains the special role of foster parents in foster parent recruitment and provides techniques foster parents can use to assist them in foster parent recruitment. These techniques include who to recruit, where to recruit, and the type of information to be shared. The Foster Care Coordinator also posts a reminder to foster parents in the monthly newsletter reminding them of their special role and encouraging them to play an active role in foster parent recruitment. The Foster Care Coordinator invites foster parents to participate in foster parent recruitment activities within the community put on by the agency, such as writing

letters about their fostering experiences for the RYF annual newsletter. Rutledge on-goingly reaches out via Facebook for recruitment of foster parents. RYF also offers a \$100 incentive for foster parents who recruit new foster parents who successfully complete the licensing process and accepts a placement.

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.

Foster parents are an integral part of the professional team that supports the permanency plan for the child as well as their best interests. Regular meetings with the case manager assigned to the child occur on a monthly basis, quarterly meetings with the Foster Care Supervisor are also available as well as monthly meetings with the Foster Care Licensing Coordinator as needed. Foster parents are also active members in the Child and Family Team where their input is considered invaluable in regards to future planning for the child in their care. The Foster Care Licensing Coordinator and Foster Care Supervisor are available as needed, 24 hours a day for crises intervention. All foster parents have a working knowledge of how to contact these resources after regular office hours.

New foster parent training, that is mandatory for all newly licensed foster homes, is another way in which RYF provides and discusses the roles, rights, and responsibilities of the foster parents, and other members of the foster care team.

Training and co-training with the staff on the roles, rights and responsibilities of the child welfare team occur on an "as needed" basis, usually with new staff and foster parents. The Foster Care Supervisor informs new staff of the role of the foster parents as a part of the Child and Family Team. In addition, the Foster Care Supervisor follows up with all staff on the role of foster parents as members of the team and ensures that staff are informing foster parents of their critical role as a member and encouraging their active involvement. Twice per month, direct service staff is trained on issues related to case work. At least once per year, these trainings include a refresher course on Child and Family Team meetings, in which the critical role of the foster parent is highlighted.

Rutledge Youth Foundation maintains an open-door policy for employees, foster parents and clients. The Foster Care Licensing Coordinator and Foster Care Supervisor are available 24 hours per day 7 days per week to the foster parents. In addition, the grievance procedure outlines

procedures for foster parents to utilize under those kinds of circumstances.

Due to the small size of the Agency, foster parents also have access to the Executive Director, who maintains a “hands on” approach to operating the Agency. The Foster Care Licensing Coordinator and/or Clinical Services Manager are also available on at least a quarterly basis for Child and Family Team meetings.

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

Rutledge Youth Foundation provides written information as well as training regarding the foster parent’s responsibility to be a mandated reporter. Foster parents also sign a mandated reporter acknowledgment. Training involves procedures that occur if an allegation is made against them. Foster parents are also made aware of the importance of having a child with a Sexually Aggressive Children and Youth (SACY) plan in their home. Foster parents are trained to watch for signs of inappropriate behavior of a child with or without a SACY plan and report them as soon as possible to the caseworker. Foster parents are encouraged to take the mandated reporter training on the DCFS virtual training website. Foster parents are asked to please contact the case manager if they feel a hot line call is necessary. The importance of being a mandated reporter is discussed at new foster parent orientation as well as referenced in the newsletter throughout the year.

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 parent’s designated role in these proceedings.

Foster parents are informed of the importance of attending ACRs, court hearings, and other important meetings pertaining to a child placed in their home. There is an emphasis on the foster parents taking an active role and supporting the permanency plan for the child through participation in meetings and service planning.

Initial training for new foster parents is scheduled quarterly and includes training about ACRs, various types of court hearings, and service plans. Both the Foster Care Licensing Coordinator and the case manager explain how ACRs, court, and service plans relate to providing and maintaining permanency for the foster child. It is also explained to the foster parent how important their role is in each of these areas and how they help to maintain permanency as well. Foster parents are encouraged to participate in the ACRs and court hearings for the youth placed in their home as they are considered to be an integral part of the team which helps meet the child's needs.

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

Foster parents are given written information regarding Rutledge Youth Foundations procedures for appeals, which includes the rights of the foster parents in the binder/manual they receive from Rutledge at the time of new foster parent training and at the 6month monitor visit at least once yearly.

All new foster parents are trained in the appeals process, and this information is discussed on an ongoing basis as needed. Again, DCFS brochures explaining the appeals process are given to each new foster parent.

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 given training and instruction on the importance of keeping complete records on children placed in their home. Foster parents are given information regarding expectations of record keeping, including a copy of specific forms required in their file provided by RYF and DCFS. RYF provides binders both child and foster parent, for the foster parent to accurately keep and store records. The records are periodically checked by the Foster Care Licensing Coordinator at semi-annual compliance at which time feedback will be given concerning the records.

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

Training is offered to foster parents regarding communication with subsequent caregivers. Training includes, but is not limited to, the type of information to be shared and issues regarding confidentiality. Training on sharing information with subsequent caregivers is offered at licensure, but is also reiterated during licensing monitor visits and at new foster parent orientation. Rutledge Youth Foundation will make an effort to schedule a meeting to facilitate the sharing of information between caregivers, when possible.

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

Initial and ongoing training is given to foster parents regarding the importance of cultural factors for children placed in their care. Additionally, community resources and other information are made available to the foster parents if requested.

Specific training on topics of cultural sensitivity are provided on an ongoing basis (minimum of yearly). A resource from the community will be utilized to provide the training.